

COMFORTED AND COMFORTING

NO. 2640

A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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“Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.”
2 Corinthians 1:3, 4.

THE Apostle was a much-tried man and he lived in an age when all Believers were peculiarly tried. The persecutions of that time were excessively severe and every man who called himself a Christian had to carry his life in his hands. In this tribulation, the Apostle had the largest share, because he was the most prominent and indefatigable teacher that the Church of Christ then possessed. We have, here, a little insight into his inner life. He needed comfort and he received it. And he had it in such abundance that he became a comforter of others. Although, without Christ, he would have been, “of all men most miserable,” I think I may say that *with Christ* and the blessed hope of the Resurrection, he was among all men, one of the most happy.

In our text there are four things of which I would speak to you, dear Friends, hoping that they may bring good cheer to any who are cast down. The first is the comforting occupation in which Paul was employing himself—he was blessing God. “Blessed be God.” Then, secondly, we have the comforting titles which he gives to God—“The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Father of mercies and the God of all comfort.” Truly, they who know the Lord’s name do put their trust in Him. Paul knew the name of God right well and he used the most appropriate name for the time of sorrow. Then, thirdly, we shall have to consider for a little while the comforting fact which the Apostle here states, “Who comforts us in all our tribulation.” And, lastly, we shall try to see the comforting design of it all—“That we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.”

I. First, then, you who mourn and are troubled and cast down, are invited to consider THE COMFORTING OCCUPATION of the Apostle.

Most of Paul’s 14 Epistles begin with praise to God and he often breaks out into a doxology when you are hardly expecting it. He lays down his pen, bows his knees to the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ and pours out a flood of thanksgiving to the Most High. Here was a man who never knew but what he might be dead the next day, for his

enemies were many, and cruel, and mighty. And yet he spent a great part of his time in praising and blessing God!

This comforting occupation *argues that his heart was not crushed and vanquished by his troubles*. Paul was sore beset in many ways, yet he could say, and he did say, “Blessed be God.” Job was greatly tried and sorely bereaved, but he still said, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” And as long as we can keep the blessing of God to the front, it is a sure sign that whatever the adversary may have been able to take away from us, he has not taken away our confidence, which has great recompense of reward and, whatever he may have crushed, he has not crushed our heart! He may have surrounded it with bitterness, but the heart itself is not made bitter—it is a fountain that sends out a stream of sweet waters, such as this utterance of the Apostle, “Blessed be God.”

It is glorious to see how the Grace of God will enable a man to endure all the assaults of the world, the flesh and the devil—how he will be laid aside by sickness and his pains will be multiplied. How reproach may go far to break his heart, how he may be depressed in spirit and lose all temporal benefits—and yet he will still be able to say, “Blessed be the name of the Lord.” “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” “Let Him do what He pleases with me, I have made no stipulation with Him that I will only praise Him when He does according to my will. I will praise Him when He has His own way with me, even though it runs exactly contrary to mine.” It is a brave heart that still, under all pressures, gives forth only this cry, “Blessed be God.” O dear Friends, if you want to keep up your hearts—if you desire to be established and sustained, if you wish to prevent the enemy from overcoming you—let this be your comfortable occupation and say with the poet—

***“I will praise You every day,
Now Your anger’s turned away.”***

Nothing can keep your head above the waters of trouble better than crying, “Bless the Lord, O my Soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name.”

This occupation shows that the Apostle had not gratified Satan, for the devil’s purpose, so far as he has had to do with our trouble, is to make us “curse God and die.” After all the sorrow that Satan was permitted to bring to Job, the Patriarch’s heart still blessed the name of the Lord! So the devil was defeated—he could not carry out his own evil purpose and he had to slink away like a whipped cur—for Job glorified God instead of bringing dishonor upon His holy name. The tried and troubled ones who can still cry, “Blessed be the name of the Lord,” are not driven to despair, for despair shuts the mouth and makes a man sit in sullen silence, or else it opens his lips in bitter complaints and in multiplied murmurings. But, when a man can truly say, “Blessed be God,” then despair has not mastered him. He still holds his own and he has on his side a far greater force than the devil—and the most trying circumstances—can bring to bear upon him to vanquish him! O Friends, if you are afraid of being overcome, take to praising God! If you are in trouble and do not know

how to bear it, divert your thoughts by praising God! Get away from the present trial by blessing and magnifying His holy name!

Next, this state of mind which made the Apostle say, “Blessed be God,” *prophesied that God would speedily send him something to call forth new praises*. When a man blesses God for the bitter, the Lord often sends him the sweet. If he can praise God in the night, the daylight is not far off. There never was a heart that waited and wanted to praise God but the Lord soon gave it opportunities of lifting up Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to Him. It shall never be said that we were ready to praise God, but that God was not ready to bless us! So, dear Friends, praise God and He will bless you! Praise God and exalt Him, and He will soon lift you up out of your troubles. I look upon a murmuring spirit as the forewarning of stormy weather in a *rebellious soul*—and I regard a praise-ful spirit as the forecast of a happy time to come to the *loyal joyous soul*. God has prepared the heart to receive the joy which, otherwise, it might not have been fit to accept at His hands. Be comforted, then, dear Friends, if you find in your hearts the desire to praise God—and belief that the Lord will find in His heart the willingness to speedily bless you!

This comforting occupation *profits the Believer in many ways*. One advantage of blessing God is that it takes a man’s thoughts off his own trials and sorrows. We make our troubles much greater than they need be by turning them over, considering them from all points of view, weighing them and thinking and meditating upon them. You know very well that if you swallow a pill, you do not taste it—but if you get it between your teeth and bite and chew it, you will get all the bitter flavor of the drug. So, it is often a good thing to let our afflictions go right down into our soul, to swallow them at once, and say no more about them. God has sent them and, therefore, they are for your good—but when you keep brooding over your grief, you will probably hatch something out of it which you did not expect—it may be that you will find a young scorpion come from it to annoy you! They that will always be thinking upon their trials will soon find a sorrow within the sorrow which, haply, they might never have perceived if they had let it go! While we are blessing God, we are, at least for the time, taking our thoughts off our troubles and, so far, so good.

Moreover, we shall, by God’s gracious help, while we are praising Him, be lifting our soul out of our sorrow. In America, for many years they kept a day of fasting, but somebody suggested that they had better keep an annual day of thanksgiving—and they have done so ever since! The change was a good one and you and I, though sometimes we must fast, especially if the Bridegroom shall hide His face, will also find that it is a great improvement when we can turn our day of fasting into a day of thanksgiving! Do you not think, dear Friends, that sometimes, when you are very heavy of heart, it would be the best possible thing if you were to say, with Martin Luther, “Come, let us sing a Psalm and startle the devil”? If you sit down and groan and complain against God, your groans will be music to Satan’s malevolent heart! But you will vex and grieve him, if, instead of doing so, you say, “No, foul fiend, you shall never persuade me to rob God of His Glory—He shall have His full revenue of

praise from me, whether I am on my bed, sick, or able to be up and actively engaged in the duties of my calling. Whether I stand well with my fellow men, or my name has an ill savor to them, God's name has not an ill savor and, therefore, I will praise and bless Him even though nobody will praise me."

O Beloved, if your heart is sad within you, praising God will so lift it up that you will even be able to forget the trouble of the present hour! What does the eagle do when the fowler is about with his net and gun? Why, the noble bird takes to his wings and flies upwards towards the sun! And, though his bright eyes can see the foe, he knows that no bullet can reach him at that great height. So, if you Christians have close communion with your God and praise and magnify His holy name, the shots of the enemy shall not reach you—you will have risen far beyond their range. Therefore, you see the excellence of blessing and praising the Most High.

Besides, this occupation may well tend to take away the sorrows of our mortality, since, by praising God, we get a taste of the joys of *immortality*. What are the angels doing now? I cannot tell you what men all over the world are doing, but I can tell you what the angels are doing! The holy spirits before the Throne of God find it is their very Heaven to be always blessing their God! So, if you want a sip of Heaven's bliss. If on your leaf you would have a sparkling dew-drop which would tell you what the River of Life that flows at the right hand of God is like, commence at once to praise and bless the Lord your God—

**"I would begin the music here,
And so my soul would rise!
Oh for some heavenly notes to bear
My passions to the skies!"**

And there is no better way of anticipating the joys of being there than by beginning the praises of God while here!

You may also destroy your distresses by singing praises to God. By blessing the Lord, you may set your foot upon the neck of your adversaries—you can sing yourself right up from the deeps by God's gracious help. Out of the very depths you may cry unto the Lord till He shall lift you up and you shall praise Him *in excelsis*—in the very highest—and magnify His name! I give you this as one of the shortest and surest recipes for comfort—begin to praise God. The next time that a friend comes in to see you, do not tell him how long the wind has been blowing from the North, how cold the weather is for this season of the year, how your poor bones ache, how little you have coming in and all your troubles—he has probably heard the sad story many times before! Instead of that, tell him what the Lord has done for you and make him feel that the Lord is good. Your griefs and your troubles speak for themselves, but your mercies are often dumb—so try, therefore, to give them a tongue and praise the Lord with all your heart!

II. Time would fail me if I dwelt, as I would like to dwell, upon the first point, so we must advance to the second, which is, THE COMFORTING TITLES which the Apostle gives to God in our text.

The first title we may call *a name of affinity*—"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Oh, how near that brings God to

us—that He is the Father of Jesus, the Father of Christ, “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”—because Jesus has espoused our nature and become a Man. Though He is, “Light of light” and, “very God of very God,” yet is He also our Brother! “Father of Jesus”—what a delightful title that is for the good and glorious God! The great Jehovah has become very near of kin to you, my sorrowing Brother, for His Son is your Brother, your Husband, your Head and, now, the Father of Jesus is the Father of every Believer, so He is your Father if you are one of those who trust His Son! A child may not have a penny in his pocket, yet he feels quite rich enough if he has a wealthy father. You may be very, very poor, but, oh, what a rich Father you have! Jesus Christ’s Father is your Father! And as He has exalted His own dear Son, He will do the same for you in due time. Our Lord Jesus is the first-born among many brethren and the Father means to treat the other brethren even as He treats Him. Your Father has made you one of His heirs—yes, a joint heir with Jesus Christ—what more would you have? Therefore, comfort yourself with this blessed Truth of God! If you are distressed and troubled, this fact—that God is Christ’s Father and your Father—ought to be quite sufficient, by the blessing of the Holy Spirit, to fill you with intense joy!

In addition to this name of affinity, Paul gives to God a title which is *a name of gratitude*—“The Father of mercies.” Then every mercy I have ever had has been begotten of God, who is “the Father of mercies”! All temporal mercies come to God’s people from their Father. It is He who gives us bread to eat and clothes to put on. We are happy to be able to see in these common mercies a peculiar touch of the benign hand. But as for the high and heavenly mercies, the everlasting mercies, the satisfying mercies—the soul-filling mercies—these all come from God! As every beam of light comes from the father of lights [the sun], so do all mercies come from God. As all the rivers would be dried up if the sea were dry—for that is the ultimate source of the earth’s moisture—so would all our mercies be dried-up mercies, barren mercies, no mercies at all if they did not come from that great ocean of mercies, the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Well, now, Beloved, as your Father is “the Father of mercies,” can you not go to Him for all the mercy you need? If your mercies seem, just now, to be very few, can you not go to the All-Merciful and ask Him to deal out to you from His abundant store, for, “His mercy endures forever”?

The third title which Paul applies to God ought to afford the deepest possible consolation to your soul. I venture to call it *a name of hope*. “The God of all comfort.” All sorts of comforts are stored up in God. No matter what you may require to bear you up under your affliction, God has just the kind of comfort which you need—and He is ready to bestow it upon you! Rest assured of that and also believe that He will bestow it upon you if you ask it at His hands. Oh, I think this is a name full of good cheer to everyone who has grown weary because of the trials of the way through this great and terrible wilderness! God is the God of all comfort—not merely of some comfort, but of *all* comfort. If you need every kind of comfort that was ever given to men, God has it in reserve and He will give it to you! If there are any comforts to be found by God’s people in sickness,

in prison, in need, in depression—the God of all comfort will deal them out to you according as you have need of them!

This title is also *a name of discrimination*. It applies both to the persons and to the comfort—“who comforts us...by the comfort wherewith we are comforted of God.” There are some things which are called comforts of which God is not the dispenser. Alas, alas, how many persons there are who fly to the bottle when they are in distress! That is *their* comfort—they drink and, for a while, forget their misery—but the process only leads to still greater misery and degradation. We cannot say that God is the God of such comfort as that! Indeed, we do not reckon it to be comfort! Some there are who turn to dissipation that they may forget their grief. God is not the God of dissipation and, therefore, that is not a comfort to a child of God—it would only increase his misery. If he were to be dragged to it, it would not relieve his pains in the least. Whatever there is in the world—and there are many such things which men call comforts—if you cannot be sure that they are such as God sends, let them be no source of consolation to you, but rather regard them with horror! May every child of God be able to make this discrimination and say, “If God does not give me what I look upon as a comfort, it will not prove to be a comfort.”

It is not a creature who supplies the comfort, it is only the Creator. The comfort may be brought to us by a creature, and brought in God’s name, but it must come from Him! The reason why bread feeds us is because God chooses to make it do so. When medicine heals us, it is because Jehovah makes it the means of healing. But if God does not work with the means, no cure will be worked. You who have the Creator, Himself, as your Comforter, are like the man who has a well in his garden—he may not have a tap to turn it off and on when he needs a supply of water to run through the pipe, but he has the well, itself, from which he may draw as much as he needs. Remember what we sang just now—

**“Why should the soul a drop bemoan,
Who has a fountain near?
A fountain which will always run
With waters sweet and clear?”**

So much, then, upon the comforting titles which Paul uses in relation to God. I pray you to act like the bees when they dive into the petals of the flowers and suck out their honey—dive into these titles and extract the delicious honey which the Holy Spirit has stored there for you.

III. Now, thirdly, I am to speak of THE COMFORTING FACT which Paul here mentions. “The God of all comfort ...comforts us in all our tribulation.”

This was Paul’s declaration and I, also, may speak in the name of many here present and say, “That is not only true of Paul, and the Christians in his day, but it is also true of us.” *The God of all comfort has comforted us in our tribulation.* Look back, now, on the pages of your diary that bear the record of your sorrow—do they not also bear the record of the Lord’s help in the sorrow and His deliverance from the sorrow? If I cannot speak for all of you, I will speak for myself. I must do so, or else surely the very timber on which I stand might cry out against me! The Lord has been very gracious to me in many an hour of affliction. Blessed

be His name, He has never failed to bring the solace when He has made the smart—and if there has been the stroke with the rod, there has very soon been the caress of His love to follow the blow of His hand. It has been so with many of us.

But Paul speaks in the present tense—“Who comforts us in all our tribulation”—and we can also declare that *God is now comforting us who believe in Jesus*. Did you, Beloved, come into this building somewhat heavy in spirit? You are not half so heavy, now, as you were—and if you will take the good advice I am trying to give, you will go away quite relieved. Rutherford used to say that the Cross of Christ was no more a burden to the man who knew how to carry it than wings are to a bird or sails are to a ship! An affliction is a help to us, not a hindrance, when Grace comes with it to sanctify it! Remember what David said, long ago—“Cast your burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain you: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.” But if you cast your burden upon the Lord, do not go looking for it when I have pronounced the benediction—leave it altogether! The fault with many of us is that when we have cast our burden upon the Lord, we beg Him to let us have it back! And if He grants our foolish request, it comes back twice as heavy as it was before. Oh, that we were wise enough to leave our troubles with our Father who is in Heaven as little children leave things with their father! Then we shall find that He comforts us in all our tribulation.

Yes, but our text is true of the future as well as the present. Here, if we cannot speak by experience, we can speak by faith. A little child who loves his father has no doubt about his father’s comforting him next year as well as this. And you must have no doubt about what God will do for you, dear Friends, especially you aged ones. When the veterans begin to waver and doubt, I do not know what excuse to make for them. I remember the story of one who said she was afraid she would be starved. Someone asked her, “How old are you?” “Seventy-five,” she replied. “How long have you been a Christian?” “Fifty years.” “Your Heavenly Father has fed you these 50 years and yet you fear that He will let you starve during the last few years you are likely to be here?” It was very wrong of the poor old soul—mind that you do not imitate her! It is due to every honest man that we should speak of him as we have found him—but much more is it due to our faithful God! He *has* comforted, He *is* comforting and He *will* comfort. And Paul puts it in such a way as to make us feel that *He will never leave off comforting us even for a single moment*. “Who comforts us in all our tribulation”—not in some of it, but in *all* of it! Our tribulations sometimes change and a new cross is generally a very heavy one. The old crosses get, at last, to fit the back and we can carry them better than we could at the first—but a new cross galls the shoulders that have not yet grown used to it. But the Lord your God will help you in your new tribulations as well as in your old ones! And if they come thick and threefold—tribulation upon tribulation, trouble upon trouble—still, as your days, so shall your strength be, and He who has comforted and is comforting, will continue to comfort you even to the last!

IV. Now I must close with just a few remarks upon THE COMFORTING DESIGN of which our text speaks.

Why does God lay trouble upon His people and comfort them in it? *It is that He may make them comforters of others*—"that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble." A man who has never had any trouble is very awkward when he tries to comfort troubled hearts. Hence, the minister of Christ, if he is to be of much use in God's service, must have great trouble. "Prayer, meditation, and affliction," says Melancthon, "are the three things that make the minister of God." There must be prayer. There must be meditation and there must be affliction. You cannot pronounce the promise correctly in the ears of the afflicted unless you, yourself, have known its preciousness in your own hour of trial. It is God's will that the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, should often work by men according to that ancient word of His, "Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God. Speak you comfortably to Jerusalem." These comforting men are to be made—they are not born so—and they have to be made by passing through the furnace, themselves. They cannot comfort others unless they have had trouble and have been comforted in it.

More than this, *the intent of God is to make us able comforters*—"that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble." Some have the will to comfort the troubled, but they have not the power to do it. "Miserable comforters are you all," said Job to his friends! And the same has been said to many of those who have really tried to comfort the sorrowing, but who, in the process, have put their fingers into the open wounds and so made them worse instead of better. Brethren, the able comforter must be a man who knows both the trial and the promise that is suited to meet it.

Beside that, *we are to be ready comforters*, for we are "to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." Experimental knowledge helps a man to speak with power to the afflicted soul. He who has taken a certain medicine and proved the benefit of it, is the man to recommend it to another. Hence, the Lord often passes His ministers through trials which they would never have to endure if it were not for their people. Even as upon the Chief Shepherd, all the wanderings of the flock had to be laid, so, in a very minor sense, the wanderings of the flock must be borne by the under-shepherd, or else he cannot be a comforter to them. Dear Friends, the next time you get into any trouble, I would recommend you to take notes of it and to ask yourself, when it is over, "How did God comfort me?" Lay that cordial up in store, because, one of these days, you will need that comfort, again, or, if not, you will meet with somebody who is in just the same fix as you were in—and you will be able to say, "I know what will help you, for I have it down in black and white at home, how God helped me in a trouble exactly like yours."

As I was reading a book, this afternoon, this sentence struck me—"whenever you come into the mouth of the furnace, say to yourself, 'God has some great work for me to do and He is preparing me for it.'" I thought to myself, "I have not often said that in the time of trial. My thoughts have been too much taken up with the furnace to think of the good which was to result from the fire." But I am sure that what that writer said is true—God means to do something more by us, which,

speaking after the manner of men, He cannot yet do by us. We are not qualified for it. But He is going to put us through a still hotter furnace—the heat is to be more intense than any we have yet borne—and when we come out, we shall be more fit for the Master’s use!

Welcome your trials, then, Beloved! Open wide your doors and say to tribulations, “Come in, come in! This is the place where you are to lodge, for my Master said, ‘In the world you shall have tribulation.’” Welcome even that black trouble that has a mask on its face—it is no adversary coming to kill you—when the mask is taken off, you will see that, underneath it there is a bright smiling face! Some of us can say to affliction, “Come in and welcome, for the costliest jewels we ever possessed were brought by you! You have done us more good than all our joys put together.” We would have had no harvest if God had left us like the hard road outside the field. But the soil has been cut up by the sharp plow and often our very soul has been grievously tried as the harrow and the cultivator have gone over us, again and again! But all these processes have caused us to bring forth fruit to the praise and glory of God! Therefore, I say again, welcome your troubles! Do not be sorry if they travel with you for a while, for they are good guests. Many a time, by entertaining trouble, we have “entertained angels unawares.” God bless you, Brothers and Sisters, by making you a comfort to others! And probably it will be through the very trials which greatly vex you!

Now to close, there may be some poor soul here broken down under a sense of sin, some seeker who cannot find the Savior. He may speak to some of you who were brought to Christ without any strong emotion. He will begin telling you about his despair and you will look at him and say, “Dear me, where has this man come from?” Then do not try to help him, for you cannot—you have not had the experience through which he is passing. Go find the Brother who had a hard time of it in getting to the Wicket Gate, that poor fellow who tumbled into the Slough of Despond with his big burden on his back and nearly got choked in the mire. Say to him, “Brother Christian, here is another soul floundering about just as you were.” Hand him over to such a person because he will be the most likely to help him. Any of you who had great difficulty in laying hold of Christ at the first ought to be on the watch to find others who are as you were—stretch out the helping hand to them and say, “We would not have you suffer as we did if we can help it. We wish to show you the way to Jesus Christ and to get you to see it more quickly than we did. We even hope that you will, this very night, find joy and peace in believing.”

Do look after the broken-hearted ones, dear Friends! Watch for Mr. Feeble-Mind. Be on the look-out for poor Mr. Fearing, do not let them lie outside long. Help them over the wall and, as you have found mercy, administer it, in the name of God, to all who are longing to find it! May God bless you all, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 CORINTHIANS 1:1-20.**

Verse 1. *Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God.* Paul is very careful to remind the Corinthians of that fact, since some of them had gone the length of denying his Apostleship altogether.

1. *And Timothy our brother.* Whom, in all humility, he associates with himself, although he was a younger man, of far less consequence. But Paul loved him very much and, therefore, he put his name at the beginning of this Epistle side by side with his own—"and Timothy our brother."

1, 2. *Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia: Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.* Christianity is a religion of benedictions! Whereas worldly people often use the language of courtesy towards one another without meaning what they say, the saints of God put a fullness of meaning into their expressions and really wish every good thing to those to whom they write. "Grace be to you." That comes first, and then peace follows. Peace without Grace is a very dangerous possession. But a peace that grows out of the possession of Grace is a gracious peace and will lead to the peace of Heaven before long. This Grace and peace are to come "from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." There is no Grace for us apart from the Lord Jesus Christ. And though the Father is full of love and will give Grace and peace to His people, yet the Lord Jesus Christ must always be the channel through which these incomparable favors must flow to them!

3, 4. *Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.* Nothing less, then, shall be given to the tried people of God than that same comfort which was enjoyed by the Apostle Paul! It shall be shared by all who are resting where Paul rested.

5. *For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds by Christ.* The Apostles were the most tried, but they were the most comforted. They had to stand the brunt of the battle, but the Lord was their strength in a very special sense. Observe the balance in this verse—"as the sufferings," "so our consolation." And "as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds by Christ." With little trial, we may expect little comfort. It is better to leave the whole matter entirely with God, or else we might almost desire to be dug about by the spade of affliction, that we might receive more of the living waters of consolation!

6. *And whether we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we are comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.* That is the grand objective of Christians, to live for others! When God has helped us to receive both our comforts and our sorrows as matters of trust that we are to take care of for the benefit of our fellow Christians, then have we learned the lesson which Christ would teach us by them!

7. *And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so shall you also be of the consolation.* How these things are put together! God does not call His people to the one without the other—no consolation without affliction and, blessed be His name, no affliction without consolation!

8. *For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life.* Why would Paul have them know this but that they might understand that he had to suffer as they did, and even more? Sometimes God's people are apt to think that their ministers are not cast down as they are. They look upon them as a sort of superior order of beings who have no doubts and fears, no lack of strength, no despair. But that is an idle fiction and the sooner it is gone from our minds, the better! For those who lead the people of God will rather have *more* afflictions than less. Seeing that they need more instruction than others need, and that instruction usually comes with the rod—in all probability they will have more of the rod than others will. Paul, therefore, is anxious that the Corinthians should know in what seas of trouble he had to swim.

9, 10. *But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raises the dead: who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver: in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us.* It is supposed by some that the Apostle was in danger of being put to death in some extraordinary way—perhaps by wild beasts in the amphitheatre. We know that he speaks of having fought with beasts at Ephesus. We cannot tell whether there is any allusion, here, to that trial, or what it was. But it was evidently some death which, to the Apostle, seemed to be exceedingly terrible. And when he was delivered from it, it was to him like a resurrection! He speaks of it as having been worked by God that raises the dead. And he puts down this deliverance, together with some other of which he was at that very time the subject—“and does deliver”—and upon these experiences he builds his expectation that God “will yet deliver.”

11. *You also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf.* When many pray, after the blessings is received, many will give thanks. Paul rejoices to have been the object of interest to a large number of Christians everywhere in the time of his great peril. And when he escaped, he believed he would still be the object of their interest and that there would be more prayer in the world, and more praise, too, because of the dangers from which God had delivered him. It is worth while for any of us to be in sore sickness, or in great straits, if, thereby, the quantity of prayer and praise in the world shall be increased to God's Glory!

12. *For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the Grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you.* For to them he had been specially particular, that in no point they should speak of him as having used the wisdom of words. Among them

he determined not to know anything except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. To them he was like the nurse who administers milk to babes.

13, 14. *For we write none other things unto you, than what you read or acknowledge; and I trust you shall acknowledge even to the end; as also you have acknowledged us in part.* Some of them disputed his Apostleship, but most of them did not—

14. *That we are your rejoicing, even as you, also, are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus.* What a happy condition of things it is when the teacher and the taught mutually rejoice in each other! When the teacher is the joy of the flock and when he can rejoice in his people! This is profitable to all, but when there are discards, and fault-finding and the like, this is neither glorifying to God nor profitable to the people.

15-17. *And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that you might have a second benefit; and to pass by you into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia unto you, and of you to be brought on my way toward Judea. When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? Or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yes, yes, and no, no?* There were some in the Church at Corinth who said, “He promised to come and see us, but he did not keep his word.” They declared that his promise could not be depended upon and that he very easily changed his mind. Now the Apostle had done nothing of the kind! He had solid reasons for his change of purpose and reasons full of love to them—but they misrepresented him. Do not, my dear Friends, count the fiery trial of misrepresentation to be any strange thing! Even some of those whom you have loved and for whom you have been willing to lay down your lives will turn against you! It is no new thing that they should do so. They may take anything which you have done in the simplicity of your heart and turn it against you. Whenever they do so, I say again, do not think that any strange thing has happened to you—it happened to Paul—then why should not you have a similar experience?

18-20. *But as God is true, our word toward you was not yes and no. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timothy, was not yes and no, but in Him was yes. For all the promises of God in Him are yes, and in Him, Amen, unto the glory of God by us.* Paul loved to turn from some lower subject to his Lord. When he wrote the words, “yes and no,” they suggested to him the perfect constancy of the love of Christ and thankfulness for His faithful promises. So, as the thought came into his mind, he could do no other than put it into the Epistle he was writing, for he never missed an opportunity of praising the Lord Jesus Christ! I wish we could all imitate him, in this respect, far more than we have ever done, for, our Savior is worthy of all the praise we can ever give Him—and more, too!

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

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

CONSOLATION PROPORTIONATE TO SPIRITUAL SUFFERINGS NO. 13

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MARCH 11, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.**

***“For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us,
so our consolation also abounds by Christ.”
2 Corinthians 1:5.***

SEEK you rest from your distresses, you children of woe and sorrow? This is the place where you may lighten your burden and lose your cares. Oh, son of affliction and misery, would you forget for a time your pains and griefs? This is the Bethesda, the house of mercy! This is the place where God designs to cheer you and to make your distresses stay their never-ceasing course. This is the spot where His children love to be found, because here they find consolation in the midst of tribulation, joy in their sorrows and comfort in their afflictions. Even worldly men admit that there is something extremely comforting in the sacred Scriptures and in our holy religion! I have even heard it said of some that after they had, by their logic, as they thought, annihilated Christianity and proved it to be untrue, they acknowledged that they had spoilt an excellently comforting delusion and that they could almost sit down and weep to think it was not a reality. Yes, my Friends, if it were not true, you might weep. If the Bible were not the Truth of God—if we could not meet together around His mercy seat, then you might put your hands upon your loins and walk about as if you were in travail. If you had not something in the world beside your reason, beside the fleeting joys of earth—if you had not something which God had given to you, some hope beyond the sky, some refuge that should be more than terrestrial, some deliverance which should be more than earthly, then you might weep—ah, weep your heart out at your eyes and let your whole bodies waste away in one perpetual tear! You might ask the clouds to rest on your head, the rivers to roll down in streams from both your eyes, for your grief would “have need of all the watery things that nature could produce.” But, blessed be God, we have consolation, we have joy in the Holy Spirit! We find it nowhere else. We have raked the earth through, but we have never discovered a jewel. We have turned this dunghill of a world over and over a thousand times and we have found nothing that is precious. But here, in this Bible, here in the religion of the blessed Jesus, we, the sons of God, have found comfort and joy. We can truly say, “As our afflictions abound, so our consolations also abound by Christ.”

There are four things in my text to which I invite your attention. The first is *the sufferings to be expected*—"The sufferings of Christ abound in us." Secondly, *the distinction to be noticed*—*they are the sufferings of Christ*. Thirdly, *a proportion to be experienced*—as the sufferings of Christ abound, so our consolations abound. And fourthly, *the Person to be honored*. "So our consolation abounds by CHRIST."

I. Our first division, then, is THE SUFFERINGS TO BE EXPECTED. Our holy Apostle says, "The sufferings of Christ abound in us." Before we buckle on the Christian armor we ought to know what that service is which is expected of us. A recruiting sergeant often slips a shilling into the hand of some ignorant youth and tells him that Her Majesty's Service is a fine thing, that he has nothing to do but walk about in his flaming colors, that he will have no hard service—in fact, that he has nothing to do but to be a soldier and go straight on to glory! But the Christian servant, when he enlists a soldier of the Cross, never deceives him like that. Jesus Christ Himself said, "Count the cost." He wished to have no disciple who was not prepared to go all the way—"to bear hardness as a good soldier." I have sometimes heard religion described in such a way that its high coloring has displeased me. It is true, "her ways are ways of pleasantness," but it is *not true* that a Christian never has sorrow or trouble! It is true that light-eyed cheerfulness and airy-footed love can go through the world without much depression and tribulation—but it is not true that Christianity will shield a man from trouble. Nor ought it to be so represented. In fact, we ought to speak of it in the other way. Soldier of Christ, if you enlist, you will have to do hard battle! There is no bed of down for you, there is no riding to Heaven in a chariot. The rough way must be trod, mountains must be climbed, rivers must be forded, dragons must be fought, giants must be slain, difficulties must be overcome and great trials must be borne. It is not a smooth road to Heaven, believe me. For those who have gone but a very few steps therein have found it to be a rough one. It is a pleasant one, it is the most delightful in all the world—but it is not easy in itself. It is only pleasant because of the company, because of the sweet Promises on which we lean, because of our Beloved who walks with us through all the rough and thorny ferns of this vast wilderness.

Christian, expect trouble—"Count it not strange concerning the fiery trial and as though some strange thing had happened unto you." For as truly as you are a child of God, your Savior has left you His legacy—"In the world, you shall have tribulation, in Me you shall have peace." If I had no trouble I would not believe myself one of the family. If I never had a trial, I would not think myself an heir of Heaven. Children of God must not, shall not, escape the rod. Earthly parents may spoil their children, but the heavenly Father never shall His. "Whom He loves He chastens," and scourges every son whom He has chosen. His people must suffer—therefore, expect it Christian. If you are a child of God, believe it—look for it—and when it comes say, "Well, suffering, I foresaw you. You are no

stranger, I have looked for you continually.” You cannot tell how much it will lighten your trials if you await them with resignation. In fact, make it a wonder if you get through a day easily! If you remain a week without persecution, think it a remarkable thing. And if you should, perchance, live a month without heaving a sigh from your inmost heart, think it a miracle of miracles! But when the trouble comes, say, “Ah, this is what I looked for. It is marked in the chart to Heaven, the rock is put down. I will sail confidently by it—my Master has not deceived me”—

***“Why should I complain of need or distress
Temptation or pain? He told me no less.”***

But why must the Christian expect trouble? Why must he expect the sufferings of Christ to abound in him? Stand here a moment, my Brothers and Sisters, and I will show you four reasons why you must endure trial. First, look upward, then look downward, then look around you and then look within you and you will see four reasons why the sufferings of Christ should abound in you!

Look upward. Do you see your heavenly Father, a pure and holy Being, spotlessly just, perfect? Do you know that you are one day to be like He? Think you that you will easily come to be conformed to His Image? Will you not require much furnace work, much grinding in the mill of trouble, much breaking with the pestle in the mortar of affliction, much being broken under the wheels of agony? Think you it will be an easy thing for your heart to become as pure as God is? Do you think you can so soon get rid of your corruptions and become perfect, even as your Father who is in Heaven is perfect?

Lift up your eye again. Do you discern those bright spirits clad in white, purer than alabaster, more chaste, more fair than Parian marble? Behold them as they stand in Glory. Ask them from where their victory came. Some of them will tell you—they swam through seas of blood. Behold the sears of honor on their brows. See, some of them lift up their hands and tell you they were once consumed in fire—others were slain by the sword, torn in pieces by wild beasts, were destitute, afflicted, tormented. O you noble army of martyrs, you glorious hosts of the living God! Must you swim through seas of blood and shall I hope to ride to Heaven wrapped in furs and ermine? Did you endure suffering and shall I be hampered with the luxuries of this world? Did you fight and then reign and must I reign without a battle? Oh, no! By God’s help I will expect that as you suffered, so must I and as through much tribulation you entered the kingdom of Heaven, so shall I.

Next, Christian, turn your eyes downward. Do you know what foes you have beneath your feet? There are Hell and its lions against you! You were once a servant of Satan and no king will willingly lose his subjects. Do you think that Satan is pleased with you? Why, you have changed your country! You were once a liege servant of Apollyon, but now you have become a good soldier of Jesus Christ. And do you think the devil is pleased with you? I tell you no. If you had seen Satan the moment you

were converted, you would have beheld a wondrous scene. As soon as you gave your heart to Christ, Satan spread his bat-like-wings—down he flew into Hell—and summoning all his counselors he said, “Sons of the pit, true heirs of darkness, you who once were clad in light but who fell with me from high dignities—another of my servants has forsaken me. I have lost another of my family. He is gone over to the side of the Lord of Hosts. Oh you, my compeers, you fellow helpers of the powers of darkness, leave no stone unturned to destroy him. I bid you all hurl all your fiercest darts at him. Plague him. Let Hell dogs bark at him. Let fiends besiege him. Give him no rest, harass him to the death. Let the fumes of our corrupt and burning lake ever rise in his nostrils. Persecute him, the man is a traitor, give him no peace! “Since I cannot have him here to bind him in chains of adamant. Since I never can have him here to torment and afflict him, as long as you can, till his dying day, I bid you howl at him! Until he crosses the river, afflict him, grieve him, torment him. For the wretch has turned against me and become a servant of the Lord.” Such may have been the scene in Hell that very day when you did love the Lord. And do you think Satan loves you better, now? Ah, no. He will always be at you, for your enemy, “like a roaring lion, goes about seeking whom he may devour.” Expect trouble therefore, Christian, when you look beneath you.

Then, man of God, look around you. Do not be asleep. Open your eyes and look around you. Where are you? Is that man a friend next to you? No! You are in an enemy’s country. This is a wicked world. Half the people, I suppose, profess to be irreligious and those who profess to be pious often are not. “Cursed is he that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm.” “Blessed is he that trusts in the Lord and whose hope the Lord is.” “As for men of low degree, they are vanity.” The voice of the crowd is not worth having. And as for “men of high degree, they are a lie,” which is worse still. The world is not to be trusted, not to be relied upon. The true Christian treads it beneath his feet, with “all that earth calls good or great.” Look around you, my Brothers and Sisters. You will see some good hearts, strong and valiant. You will see some true souls, sincere and honest. You will see some faithful lovers of Christ. But I tell you O child of light, that where you meet one sincere man, you will meet 20 hypocrites. Where you will find one that will lead you to Heaven, you will find a score who would push you to Hell. You are in a land of enemies, not of friends. Never believe the world is good for much. Many people have burned their fingers by taking hold of it. Many a man has been injured by putting his hand into a nest of the rattlesnake—the world—thinking that the dazzling hues of the sleeping serpent were securities from harm. O Christian! The world is not your friend! If it is, then you are not God’s Friend. For he who is the Friend of the world is the enemy of God. And he who is despised of men, is often loved of Jehovah. You are in an enemy’s country, Man—therefore expect trouble—expect that the man who “eats your bread will lift up his heel against you.” Expect that

you shall be estranged from those that love you. Be assured that since you are in the land of the enemy, you shall find the enemy everywhere. When you sleep, think that you sleep on the battlefield. When you walk believe that there is an ambush in every hedge. Oh, take heed, take heed! This is not a good world to shut your eyes in. Look around you, Man. And when you are upon the watchtower, reckon surely that trouble comes!

But then, look *within* you. There is a little world in here, which is quite enough to give us trouble. A Roman once said he wished he had a window to his heart, that all people might see what was going on there. I am very glad I have not. If I had, I would shut it up as closely as Apsley House used to be. I would take care to have all the shutters up. Most of us would have great need of shutters if we had such a window! However, for one moment, peep into the window of your heart, to observe what is there. Sin is there—original sin and corruption. And, what is more, self is still within. Ah, if you had no devil to tempt you, you would tempt yourself. If there were no enemies to fight you, you would be your worst foe. If there were no world, still you would be bad enough. For “the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.” Look within you, Believer, know that you bear a cancer in your very vitals. Know that you carry within you a bombshell, ready to burst at the slightest spark of temptation. Know that you have inside your heart an evil thing, a coiled-up viper, ready to sting you and bring you into trouble, pain and unutterable misery. Take heed of your heart, Christian! And when you find sorrow, trouble and care, look within and say, “Verily, I may well receive this, considering the evil heart of unbelief which I carry about with me.”

Now do you see, Brothers and Sisters? There is no hope to escape trouble! What shall we do, then? There is no chance for us. We must bear suffering and affliction. Therefore, let us endure it cheerfully. Some of us are the officers in God’s regiments and we are the mark of all the riflemen of the enemy. Standing forward, we have to bear all the shots. What a mercy it is that not one of God’s officers ever fall in battle! God always keeps them. When the arrows fly fast, the shield of faith catches them all. And when the enemy is most angry, God is most pleased. So, for all we care, the world may go on, the devil may revile, flesh may rise, “for we are more than conquerors through Him that has loved us.” Therefore, all honor be unto God, alone. Expect suffering—this is our first point.

II. Now, secondly, there is A DISTINCTION TO BE NOTICED. Our sufferings are said to be the *sufferings of Christ*. Now, suffering in itself is *not* an evidence of Christianity! There are many people who have trials and troubles who are not children of God. I have heard some poor whining people come and say, “I know I am a child of God because I am in debt, because I am in poverty, because I am in trouble.” Do you, indeed? I know a great many *rascals* in the same condition. And I don’t believe you are a child of God any the more because you happen to be in poor

circumstances. There are abundance who are in trouble and distress besides God's children. It is not the peculiar lot of God's family—and if I had no other ground of my hope as a Christian, except my experience of trials—I should have but very poor ground, indeed! But there is a distinction to be noticed. Are these sufferings the sufferings of Christ or are they not? A man is dishonest and is put in jail for it. A man is a coward and men hiss at him for it. A man is insincere and, therefore, persons avoid him. Yet he says he is persecuted! Persecuted? Not at all—it serves him right. He deserves it. But such persons will comfort themselves with the thought that they are “the dear people of God,” because other people avoid them when it so happens that they just deserve it. They do not live as they ought to do, therefore the world's punishment is their desert. Take heed, Beloved, that your sufferings are the sufferings of Christ—be sure they are not your own sufferings. For if they are, you will get no relief—it is only when they are the sufferings of Jesus that we may take comfort.

“Well,” you say, “what is meant by our sufferings being the sufferings of Christ?” You know the word “Christ” in the Bible sometimes means the whole Church with Christ, as in 1 Corinthians 12:12 and several other passages which I cannot just now remember. But you will call to mind a Scripture where it says, “I fill up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ, for His body's sake, which is the Church.” Now, as Christ, the Head, had a certain amount of suffering to endure, so the body must also have a certain weight laid upon it. Our afflictions are the sufferings of Christ mystical, the sufferings of Christ's body, the sufferings of Christ's Church, for you know that if a man could be so tall as to have his head in Heaven and his feet at the bottom of the sea, it would be the same body and the head would feel the sufferings of the feet. So, though my Head is in Heaven and I am on earth, my griefs are Christ's griefs. My trials are Christ's trials, my afflictions, He suffers—

***“I feel in My heart all your sighs and your groans,
For you are most near Me, My flesh and my bones.
In all your distresses, your Head feels the pain,
Yet all are most necessary, not one is in vain.”***

The trials of a true Christian are as much the sufferings of Christ as the agonies of Calvary.

Still you say, “We want to discern whether our troubles are the trials of Christ.” Well, they are the trials of Christ if you suffer for Christ's sake. If you are called to endure harshness for the sake of the Truth, then those are the sufferings of Christ. If you suffer for your own sake, it may be a punishment for your own sins. But if you endure for Christ's sake, then they are the trials of Christ. “But,” say some, “is there any persecution nowadays? Do any Christians have to suffer for Christ's sake now?” Suffer, Sirs? Yes! I could unfold a tale this morning, if I pleased, of insufferable bigotry, of persecution well near as bad as that in the days of Jesus! Only our foes have not the power and the law on their side. I

could tell you of some who, from the simple fact that they choose to come and hear this despised young man, this ranting fellow, are to be looked upon as the offscouring of all things! Many are the persons who come to me who have to lead a miserable and unhappy life simply because from my lips they heard the word of Truth! Still, in spite of all that is said, they will hear it now. I have, I am sure, many before me, whose eyes would drop with tears if I were to tell their history—some who have privately sent me word of how they have to suffer for Christ's sake because they choose to hear whom they please. Why, is it not time that men should choose to do as they like? If I do not care to do just as other ministers do, have not I a right to preach as I please? If I haven't, I will—that is all. And have not other parties a right to hear me if they like, without asking the lords and governors of the present day whether the man is really clerical or not? Liberty! Liberty! Let persons do as they please. But liberty—where is it? You say it is in Britain. It is, in a measure, but not thoroughly. However, I rejoice that there are some who say, "Well, my soul is profited—and let men say what they will, I will hold hard and fast to the Truth of God and to the place where I hear the Word to my soul's edification." So, dear Hearts, go on, go on—and if you suffer for Christ's sake, they are Christ's sufferings! If you came here simply because you gained anything by it, then your sufferings would be your own. But since there is nothing to gain but the profit of your own souls, still hold on. And whatever is said, your persecution will but win you a brighter crown in Glory!

Ah, Christian, this ennobles us! My Brothers and Sisters, this makes us proud and happy to think that our trials are the trials of Jesus. Oh, I think it must have been some honor to the old soldier who stood by the Iron Duke in his battles, to be able to say, "We fight under the good old Duke, who has won so many battles—and when he wins, part of the honor will be ours." Christian, you fight side by side with Jesus! Christ is with you—every blow is a blow aimed at Christ. Every slander is a slander on Christ—the battle is the Lord's. The triumph is the Lord's. Therefore, still on to victory! I remember a story of a great commander who, having won many glorious victories, led his troops into a valley and when there, a large body of the enemy entirely surrounded him. He knew a battle was inevitable on the morning. He, therefore, went round to all the tents, to hear in what condition his soldier's minds were—whether they were dispirited or not. He came to one tent and as he listened, he heard a man say, "There is our general. He is very brave, but he is very unwise this time. He has led us into a place where we are sure to be beaten. There are so many of the enemy's cavalry, so many infantry." And then the man counted up all the troops on their own side and made them only so many. The commander, after he had heard the tale, gently drew aside a part of the tent and said, "How many do you count me for? You have counted the infantry and cavalry. But how many do you count me for—me, your mighty captain who has won so many victories." Now, Chris-

tian, I say, how many do you count Christ for? How many do you put Him down for? Have you put Him down for one? He is not one, nor a thousand—He is the “chief among ten thousand.” But He is more than that! Oh, put Him down for a high figure. And when you count up your aids and auxiliaries, put down Christ for All-in-All, for in Him victory is certain—the triumph is secure!

III. Our third point is A PROPORTION TO BE EXPERIENCED. As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so the consolations of Christ abound. Here is a blessed proportion. God always keeps a pair of scales—in this side, He puts His people’s trials, and in that He puts their consolations. When the scale of trial is nearly empty, you will always find the scale of consolation in nearly the same condition. And when the scale of trials is full, you will find the scale of consolation just as heavy. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, even so shall consolation abound by Christ. This is a matter of pure experience. Some of you do not know anything at all about it. You are not Christians, you are not born-again, you are not converted, you are unregenerate and, therefore, you have never realized this wonderful proportion between the sufferings and the consolations of a child of God. Oh, it is mysterious that when the black clouds gather most, the light within us is always the brightest! When the night lowers and the tempest is coming on, the heavenly Captain is always closest to His crew. It is a blessed thing, when we are most cast down, then it is that we are most lifted up by the consolations of Christ! Let me show you how.

The first reason is, because *trials make more room for consolation*. There is nothing that makes a man have a big heart like a great trial. I always find that little, miserable people, whose hearts are about the size of a grain of mustard seed, never have had much to try them. I have found that those people who have no sympathy for their fellows—who never weep for the sorrows of others—very seldom have had any woes of their own. Great hearts can only be made by great troubles. The spade of trouble digs the reservoir of comfort deeper and makes more room for consolation. God comes into our heart—He finds it full—He begins to break our comforts and to make it empty—then there is more room for Grace! The humbler a man is, the more comfort he will always have. I recollect walking with a farmer one day—a man who was deeply taught, although he was a plowman and really, farmers would make a great deal better preachers than many college gentlemen—and he said to me, “Depend upon it, my good Brother, if you or I ever get one inch above the ground, we shall get just that inch too high.” I believe it is true. For the lower we lie, the nearer to the ground we are—the more our troubles humble us—the more fit we are to receive comfort! And God always gives us comfort when we are most fit for it. That is one reason why consolations increase in the same ratio as our trials.

Then again, *trouble exercises our graces* and the very exercise of our graces tends to make us more comfortable and happy. Where showers

fall most, there the grass is greenest. I suppose the fogs and mists of Ireland make it “the Emerald Isle.” And wherever you find great fogs of trouble and mists of sorrow, you always find emerald green hearts—full of the beautiful verdure of the comfort and love of God. O Christian, do not say, “Where are the swallows gone? They are gone—they are dead.” They are not dead, they have skimmed the purple sea and gone to a far-off land. But they will be back again by-and-by! Child of God, say not the flowers are dead. Say not the winter has killed them and they are gone. Ah, no—though winter has coated them with the ermine of its snow, they will put up their heads again and will be alive very soon. Say not, child of God, that the sun is quenched because the cloud has hidden it. Ah, no—he is behind there, brewing summer for you. For when he comes out again, he will have made the clouds fit to drop in April showers—all of them mothers of the sweet May flowers. And oh, above all, when your God hides His face, say not that He has forgotten you! He is but tarrying a little while to make you love Him more. And when He comes, you shall have joy in the Lord and shall rejoice with unspeakable joy! Waiting exercises our grace. Waiting, tries our faith—therefore wait on in hope. For though the promise tarry, it can never come too late!

Another reason why we are often most happy in our troubles is this—*then we have the closest dealings with God*. I speak from heart knowledge and real experience. We never have such close dealings with God as when we are in tribulation. When the barn is full, man can live without God. When the purse is bursting with gold, we somehow can do without so much prayer. But once your gourds are taken away, you need your God. Once cleanse away the idols out of the house, then you must go and honor Jehovah! Some of you do not pray half as much as you ought. If you are the children of God, you will have the whip and when you have that whip, you will run to your Father. It is a fine day and the child walks before its father. But there is a lion in the road—now he comes and takes his father’s hand. He could run half-a-mile before him when all was fine and fair. But once bring the lion and it is “Father! Father!” as close as he can be. It is even so with the Christian. Let all be well and he forgets God. Jeshurun waxes fat and he begins to kick against God. But take away his hopes, blast his joys, let the infant lie in the coffin, let the crops be blasted, let the herd be cut off from the stall. Let the husband’s broad shoulders be in the grave, let the children be fatherless—then it is that God is a God, indeed! Oh, strip me naked! Take all I have from me! Make me poor, a beggar, penniless, helpless! Dash that cistern in pieces, crush that hope, quench the stars—put out the sun, shroud the moon in darkness and place me all alone in space, without a friend, without a helper—still, “Out of the depths will I cry unto You, O God.” There is no cry so good as that which comes from the bottom of the mountains, no prayer half so hearty as that which comes up from the depths of the soul through deep trials and afflictions. Hence they bring us to God and we are happier. For that is the way to be happy—to live near to God. So that

while troubles abound, they drive us to God and then consolations abound.

Some people call troubles weights. Verily they are so. A ship that has large sails and a fair wind, needs ballast. Troubles are the ballast of a Believer. The eyes are the pumps which fetch out the bilge-water of his soul and keep him from sinking. But if trials are weights, I will tell you of a happy secret. There is such a thing as making a weight lift you. If I have a weight chained to me, it keeps me down. But give me pulleys and certain appliances and I can make it lift me up. Yes, there is such a thing as making troubles raise me towards Heaven! A gentlemen once asked a friend concerning a beautiful horse of his, feeding about in the pasture with a clog on its foot, "Why do you clog such a noble animal?" "Sir," he said, "I would a great deal sooner clog him than lose him—he is given to leap hedges." That is why God clogs His people. He would rather clog them than lose them. For if He did not clog them, they would leap the hedges and be gone. They need a tether to prevent their straying and their God binds them with afflictions to keep them near to Him—to preserve them—and have them in His Presence. Blessed fact—as our troubles abound, our consolations also abound!

IV. Now we close up with our last point. And may the Holy Spirit once more strengthen me to speak a word or two to you. THERE IS A PERSON TO BE HONORED. It is a fact that Christians can rejoice in deep distress. It is a Truth—put them in prison and they will still sing. Like many birds, they sing best in their cages. It is true that when waves roll over them, their soul never sinks. It is true they have a buoyancy about them which keeps their heads always above the water and helps them to sing in the dark, dark night, "God is with me still." But to whom shall we give the honor? To whom shall the glory be given? Oh, to Jesus, to Jesus! For the text says it is all by Jesus. It is not because I am a Christian that I get joy in my trouble—not necessarily so. It is not always the fact that troubles bring their consolations. But it is *Christ* who comes to me. I am sick in my chamber. Christ comes up stairs, He sits by my bedside and He talks sweet words to me. I am dying. The chilly cold waters of Jordan have touched my feet. I feel my blood stagnate and freeze. I must die. Christ puts His arms around me and says, "Fear not, Beloved. To die is to be blessed, the waters of death have their fountainhead in Heaven, they are not bitter, they are sweet as nectar, for they flow from the Throne of God." I wade in the stream, the billows gather around me. I feel that my heart and my flesh fail. But there is the same Voice in my ears, "Fear not. I am with you! Be not dismayed. I am your God." Now, I come to the borders of the infinite unknown—that country "from whose river no traveler returns." I stand almost afraid to enter the realm of shades. But a sweet Voice says, "I will be with you wherever you go. If you should make your bed in Hades, I will be with you." And I still go on, content to die, for Jesus cheers me. He is my consolation and my hope! Ah, you who know not that matchless name, Jesus—you have lost the sweetest

note which ever can give melody! Ah, you who have never been entranced by the precious sonnet contained in that one word, Jesus—you who know not that Jesus means, I-ES-U, (“I ease you”), you have lost the joy and comfort of your lives and you must live miserable and unhappy. But the Christian can rejoice, since Christ will never forsake him, never leave him, but will be with him always!

A word or two to characters—first, I have a word with you who are *expecting troubles* and are very sad because you are looking forward to them. Take the advice of the common people and “never cross a bridge till you get to it.” Follow my advice—never bring your troubles nearer than they are, for they will be sure to come down upon you soon enough. I know that many persons fret themselves about their trials before they come. What on earth is the good of it? If you will show me any benefit in it, I will say go on, but to me it seems quite enough for the father to lay the rod on the child without the child chastising itself. Why should you do so? You, who are afraid of trouble, why should you be so? The trial may never overtake you. And if it does come, strength will come with it. Therefore, up with you, Man! Why are you sitting down groaning because of forebodings?—

**“Religion never was designed
To make our pleasures less.”**

Up! Up! Why will you sit down and be frozen to death? When trouble comes, *then* fight it with manful heart and strong. Plunge into the stream, accoutered as you are and swim it through, but oh, do not fear it *before* it comes!

Then Christian *in trouble*, I have a word to say to you. So my Brothers and Sisters, you are in trouble—you have come into the waves of affliction, have you? No strange thing, is it? You have been there many times before. “Ah,” but you say, “this is the worst I ever had. I have come up here this morning with a millstone round my neck. I have a mine of lead in my heart—I am miserable, I am unhappy, I am exceedingly cast down.” Well, but, as your troubles abound, so shall your consolation! Brothers and Sisters, have you hung your harp upon the willows? I am glad you have not broken the harp altogether. Better to hang it on the willows than to break it. Be sure not to break it. Instead of being distressed about your trouble, *rejoice* in it. You will then honor God. You will glorify Christ. You will bring sinners to Jesus, if you will sing in the depths of trouble—for then they will say, “There must be something in religion, after all, otherwise the man would not be so happy.”

Then one word with you who are almost driven to despair. I would stretch my hands out if I could, this morning—for I believe a preacher ought to be a Briareus with a thousand hands to fetch out his hearers, one by one, and speak to them. There is a man here quite despairing—almost every hope gone. Brothers and Sisters, shall I tell you what to do? You have fallen off the main deck, you are in the sea, the floods surround you, you seem to have no hope, you grab at straws. What shall you do

now? Why lie upon the sea of trouble and *float* upon it! Be still and know that God is God and you will never perish. All your kicking and struggling will sink you deeper. But lie still—for behold the life boat comes. Christ is coming to your help. Soon He will deliver you and fetch you out of all your perplexities!

Lastly, some of you have no interest in this sermon at all. I never try to deceive my hearers by making them believe that all I say belongs to all who hear me. There are different characters in God's Word—it is yours to search your own hearts this day—and see whether you are God's people, or not. As the Lord lives before whom I stand, there are two classes here. I do not acknowledge the distinction of aristocratic and democratic. In my sight and in God's sight, every man is alike! We are made of one flesh and blood. We do not have china gentlemen and earthenware poor people. We are all made of the same mold of fashion. There is one distinction and only one. You are all either the children of God, or children of the devil! You are all either born-again, or dead in trespasses and sins! It is yours to let the question ring in your ears—"Where am I? Is yon black tyrant, with his fiery sword, my king? Or do I acknowledge Jehovah-Jesus as my Strength, my Shield, my Savior?" I shall not force you to answer it, I shall not say anything to you about it. Only answer it yourselves, let your hearts speak, let your souls speak. All I can do is to propose the question. God apply it to your souls! I beseech Him to send it home and make the arrow stick fast!—

***"Is Jesus mine! I am now prepared
To meet with what I thought most hard.
Yes, let the winds of trouble blow
And comforts melt away like snow,
No blasted trees, nor failing crops
Can hinder my eternal hopes.
Though creatures change, the Lord's the same,
Then let me triumph in His name."***

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

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

SENTENCE OF DEATH— THE DEATH OF SELF-TRUST NO. 1536

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 2, 1880,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raises the dead.”
2 Corinthians 1:9.***

WE are justified, dear Friends, in speaking about our own experience when the mention of it will be for the benefit of others. Especially is this the case with leaders in the Church such as Paul, for their experience is rich and deep and the rehearsal of it comes with great weight and is peculiarly valuable. We are all the better when we are distressed for discovering that such an one as Paul was also subject to heaviness—we feel safe in following the line of conduct which was marked out by the great Apostle and we are hopeful that if he came out of his troubles which were so great, we may, also, be delivered out of ours which are comparatively so little.

These footprints on the sand of time help us to take heart. By tracing the footsteps of the flock, we are helped to return to the fold and to the Shepherd. It would have been a great calamity if such men as David and Paul had, through a fear of seeming egotistical, withheld from us a sight of their inner selves. God has been pleased to fill a large part of the Bible with biographies and histories of human actions in order that we who are men, ourselves, may learn from them. Where a biography concerns mainly the inner rather than the outer life, as in the Psalms and in Paul's Epistles, we are all the more strengthened, instructed, directed and comforted, for it is in the *inner* life that we are most perplexed and most in danger of going astray.

God grant us Grace to make good use of the treasure of experience which is stored up for us in His Word! How rich, how varied, how admirably selected! If one man can learn by the life of another, surely we ought to learn from such memorable lives as those immortalized in the Scriptures. Especially may we see ourselves as in a mirror while we steadily look into the heart of Paul. As to our own experience of trial and of delivering mercy, it is sent for our good and we should endeavor to profit to the utmost by it. But it was never intended that it should end with our private and personal benefit. In the kingdom of God no man lives unto himself. We are bound to comfort others by the comfort which the Lord has comforted us. We are under solemn obligation to seek out mourners and such as are in tried circumstances, that we may communicate to them the cheering testimony which we are personally able to bear to the love and faithfulness of God.

Our Lord has handed out to us spiritual riches of joy that we may communicate to others who are in need of consolation through great tribulation. You may think that you are not called upon to preach and possibly you may neither have the ability nor the opportunity for such public witness bearing, but your *experience* is a treasure of which you are the trustee and you are bound by the law of gratitude to make use of all you know, all you have felt, all you have learned by personal experience for the comforting and the building up of your Brothers and Sisters in Christ. To be reticent is sometimes to be treacherous—you may be found unfaithful to your charge unless you endeavor to improve for the general good the dealings of the Lord with your soul. I would exhort every Christian to reflect the light which falls upon him.

Brother, echo your Master's voice faithfully and clearly! What the Lord has whispered to you in your ear in closets, proclaim according to your ability upon the housetops! If you have found honey, eat of it, yet eat not the feast *alone*, but call in others who can appreciate its sweetness that they may rejoice with you! If you have discovered a well, drink and quench your thirst, but hasten forthwith to call the whole caravan, that every traveler may also drink! If you have been sick and you have been healed, tell the glad news to all sick folk around you and let them know where they, too, may find a cure.

Perhaps your telling of the news may have more weight with men than all our preaching—they know you and have seen the change which Grace has worked in you and you will, by your own experience, give them proof and evidence which they cannot deny. May the Holy Spirit help you in this thing. Let this stand for the preface to our sermon and let us learn, once and for all, that, as Paul used his experience for the comfort and edification of the Churches, so is every Believer called upon to use their experience for the benefit of his fellow Christians. The particular experience of which Paul speaks was a certain *trial*, or probably *series* of trials, which he endured in Asia. You know how he was stoned at Lystra and how he was followed by his malicious countrymen from town to town wherever he went, that they might excite the mob against him.

You recollect the uproar at Ephesus and the constant danger to which Paul was exposed from perils of all kinds, but it must not be forgotten that he appears to have been suffering, at the same time, grievous sickness of body and that the multiple, together, caused very deep depression of mind. His tribulations abounded—outside were fights and within were fears. I call to your notice the strong expressions which he uses in the 8th verse—“We were *pressed*”—he says. The word is such as you would use if you were speaking of a cart loaded with sheaves till it could not bear up under the weight—it is overloaded and threatens to break down and fall by the way. Or the word might be used if you spoke of a man who was weighted with too great a burden, under which he was ready to fall. Or, perhaps, better still, if you were speaking of a ship which had taken too much cargo and sank nearly to the water's edge, looking as if it must sink altogether through excessive pressure.

Paul says that this was his condition of mind when he was in Asia—“We were pressed.” To strengthen the language he adds, “out of measure.”

He was pressed out of measure. He could convey no idea of the degree of pressure put upon him—it seemed to be beyond the measure of his strength. All trials, we are taught in Scripture, are sent to us in measure and so were Paul's, but for the time being he, himself, could see no limit to them and he seemed to be quite crushed. Paul could not tell how much he was tried. He could not calculate the pressure—it was more severe than he could estimate! So great, so heavy was the burden upon his mind, that he gave up calculating its weight.

Then he adds another word, "above strength," because a man may be pressed out of measure and yet he may have such remarkable strength that he may bear up under it all. The posts and bars and gates of Gaza must have pressed Samson and they must have pressed him out of measure, but still, not beyond his *strength* because gigantic force was given to those mighty limbs of his so that he readily *carried* what would have crushed another man! Paul says that the pressure put upon him was beyond his strength, He was quite unable to cope with it and his spirits so failed him that he adds, "insomuch that we despaired even of life."

He gave himself up for a dead man, for no way of escape was visible to him. Into whatever town he entered, he was followed by the Jews. The fickle mob soon turned against him—even the converts were not always faithful. He had been stoned and beaten with rods and men had sworn to take his life. Perils of robbers beset him in lonely places while tumult and assault befell him in the cities. Meanwhile, the thorn in his flesh worried him, afflictions and cares of all kinds weighed upon him and altogether his mind was bowed down under the pressure which had come upon him. What a deep bass there is in this note, "We were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life"! May we be spared so grievous a condition, or if that cannot be, may we be profited by it.

We shall, in the sermon of this morning, as the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, may help us, endeavor to show the *reason* for such affliction and the good effect of it. First, I shall direct your attention to the disease mentioned in the text as one to be prevented by the sentence of death—"that we should not trust in ourselves." Secondly, we shall dwell, for a little, upon the treatment, "we had the sentence of death in ourselves." And thirdly, we will observe the cure—"we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raises the dead."

I. The first point is THE DISEASE—the tendency to trust in ourselves. And we remark upon it, first, that this is a disease to which all men are liable, for even Paul was in danger of it. I do not say that Paul *did* trust in himself, but that he might have done so and would have done so, if it had not been for the Lord's prudent dealings with him both in the matter of this great trial in Asia and in the incident of the thorn in the flesh. Where a sharp preventive is used, it is clear that a strong liability exists. My Brothers and Sisters, I should have thought that Paul was the last man to be in danger of trusting in himself!

He was so amazingly converted, so remarkably clear in his views of the Gospel! Indeed, he was so thorough in his faith, so intense in his zeal, so eminent in his humility that all could see that his reliance was upon

Grace alone. No writer that ever lived has set in so clear a light the fact that all things are of God and that we must walk by faith and depend alone upon God if we would find salvation and eternal life! And yet you see, my Brethren, it was possible that the great teacher of Grace could have trusted in himself! He was a man in whose life we see no sort of self-confidence. I cannot recall *anything* that he did or said which looks like vanity or pride. He exhibits deep humility of spirit and great faith in God and he evidently had no confidence in himself—such confidence he was always disclaiming. He looked upon his own works and his own righteousness as dross and dung that he may win Christ. And when he does speak of himself, it is generally with special self-denials—“I, yet not I, but the Grace of God which was with me.” “By the Grace of God,” says he, “I am what I am.”

It is plain, then, that no clearness of knowledge, no purity of intent and no depth of experience can altogether kill in our corrupt nature the propensity to self-reliance. We are so foolish that we readily yield to the witchery which would cause us to trust in ourselves. This wide-spread folly has no respect for knowledge, age, or experience, but even feeds upon them! I have heard men say several times and I have been ashamed as I have heard the boast—“I am sure there is no likelihood that I should ever trust in myself. I know better.” Brother, you are trusting in yourself when you say that—the subtle poison is in your veins even now! You do not know what folly you can commit. You are such a fool that even while you say, “I know my folly,” you are probably even, then, betraying your self-conceit.

What do we know? We know not of what spirit we are. We are capable of almost everything that the devil is capable of. Yes, and if the Grace of God should leave us, though we had been exalted to stand like Paul and say, “I am not a whit behind the very chief of the Apostles,” yet should we fall, like Lucifer, and perish with pride! The silliest of the vices may overcome the wisest of saints! Trust in *self* is one of the most foolish of sins, though the commonness of it hides its contemptible character. When we say, “I am surprised that I should have acted so unwisely,” we betray our secret pride and confess that we thought ourselves wonderfully wise.

If, my Brothers and Sisters, you knew yourself, you would not be surprised at *anything* that you might do. If you had a proper estimate of yourself, it would rather cause you surprise that you were *ever* right than that you were sadly wrong, for such is the natural weakness, folly and vanity of our deceitful hearts that when we err, even in the most foolish way, it may be said of us that we are only acting out our own selves and we would do the same again, if not worse, were we left by the Spirit of God.

Notice, secondly, that trusting in self is evil in all men, since it was evil in an Apostle. Paul speaks of it as a fault which God, in mercy, prevented, “that we should not trust in ourselves.” Why, Beloved, if you or I were to trust in ourselves, we should be fit objects for ridicule and derision, for what is there in us that we can trust? But as for Paul, in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, laying himself out for the Church of God with heroic zeal and wearing himself out with self-denials—at first

sight it seems that there was something in him whereof he might glory! He walked with God and was like his Master and Lord.

He was an humble but admirable imitation of the Lord Jesus and the mind that was in Christ was also in him! He was a noble man—we cannot find another man like he! He was one of the most beautiful, well-balanced, forceful and influential of human characters and yet it would have been a most injurious thing for him to have trusted in himself in any degree. He was singularly judicious, far-seeing and prudent—and yet he might not rely on himself. If this is so—if his Revelations from God; if his deep experience; if his intense consecration; if his remarkable wisdom; if his splendid education; if his logical mind and fervent spirit—if all these combined could not warrant his trusting in himself, what folly would be *ours* if we became self-sufficient?

If a lion's strength is insufficient, what can the dogs do? If the oak trembles, how can the brambles boast? If such poor things as we are dare to be self-confident, we deserve to smart for it! May God keep us from this evil in all its disguises, whether it beguiles us in the form of boasting of our own righteousness, or flatters us into reliance upon our own judgment! In any shape it is a sin against God and a mischief to ourselves! May the God of all Grace destroy it, root and branch.

We see, dear Friends, in the next place, that it must be highly injurious to trust in ourselves, since God Himself interposed to prevent His dear servant from falling into it. The Lord warded off the evil by sending Paul a great trouble when he was in Asia—thus does our all-wise and almighty God arrange Providence to prevent His servants from falling into self-trust. Depend upon it, He is doing the same for us since we have even a greater need—He is arranging all our ways and steps that we may not wander into self-conceit. Perhaps our heavenly Father is, at this present time, afflicting some of you, denying you your heart's desire, or taking from you the delight of your eyes. Perhaps He is placing you in circumstances where you are puzzled and bewildered and do not know what to do—and all for this reason—that you may become sick of yourself and fond of Christ—that you may know your own folly and may trust yourself with purpose of heart to the Divine Wisdom, for, rest assured, nothing can happen to you that is much worse than to trust yourselves!

A man may escape from poverty, but if he falls into self-confidence he has, of two evils, fallen into the worse! A man may escape from great blunders and yet if he grows proud because he was so prudent, it may happen that his conceit of his own wisdom may be a worse evil than the mistakes which he might have made. *Anything* is better than vain-glory and self-esteem. Self-trust before God is a monster evil which the Lord will not endure! Indeed, He so abhors it that He has pronounced a curse upon it—"Cursed is the man that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm." That dread word of warning emphatically applies to those who trust in *themselves*. Let me, then, think most solemnly of the fact that if I am relying upon myself for acceptance with God, or for power to serve Him, I am cursed!

I am so and I must be so, because trusting in myself means idolatry and idolatry is a cursed thing. The self-truster puts himself into God's

place, for God alone is to be relied upon. “Trust in Him at all times, you people. Pour out your heart before Him.” Trusting in yourself, you lift yourself into the Throne where God alone may sit and so you become a traitor. To trust yourself is the result of a gross falsehood and it also imputes falsehood to the God of Truth, for you do, as it were, deny that God can be believed and you assert that *you* can be trusted, whereas the Lord declares that no man is the proper object of trust. “He that trusts in his own heart,” He says, “is a fool.” But you will not have it so and, therefore, you make God out to be a liar!

To trust in one’s self is a piece of impertinent pride, insulting to the Majesty of Heaven. It is a preference of *ourselves* to God, so that we take our own opinion in preference to His Revelation. We follow our own whim in preference to His Providential direction. We, as it were, become gods to ourselves and act as if we knew better than God. It is, therefore, a very high crime and misdemeanor against the Majesty of Heaven that we should trust in ourselves. And in whomever this evil exists, it makes a man intolerable to God! Yet, Brothers and Sisters, this fourth remark must be made, that this evil is very hard to cure—for it seems that to prevent it in Paul it was necessary for the Great Physician to go the length of making Paul feel the sentence of death in himself—nothing short of this could cure the tendency.

On another occasion it is written, “Lest I should be exalted above measure, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me.” In the case mentioned in our text, the buffeting of Satan does not seem to have sufficed and God, in His Providence and love, deemed it necessary to cause the sentence of death to ring out its knell in the Apostle’s heart. A sentence of death! Can you conceive the feeling of a man who has just seen the judge put on the black cap and pronounce the sentence of death? The condemned cell, the iron bars, the prison fare, the grim guards—these are nothing compared to the death-sentence—the sentence of death! This is terrible! Paul must feel that woe!

A sharp knife was necessary to cut out the cancer of self-trust even from such an one as Paul. This bitter potion, bitter as gall, he must drink even to the dregs. The sentence must not only be in his ears, but be in his very *self*. “We had the sentence of death in ourselves.” Nothing short of this could prevent his being polluted with self-trust, for if less suffering would have sufficed, the Lord would have spared him so dread a sorrow. As stones fall towards the earth, so do we gravitate towards self. If we are zealous, self-trust says, “What a zealous man you are! You can certainly carry everything before you.” If we grow diffident, then this same pride whispers, “What a humble, modest person you are! You are not conceited or rash, you can well be trusted.”

If God grants us a little success in working for Him, we blow the trumpets that all men may be aware of it. Our Lord can scarcely send us on the most common errand without danger of our becoming like Jack-in-Office—too proud to be borne with! The Lord cannot allow us a little sweet communion with Christ but what we say, “Oh, what joy I have had! What delights at His table! What a precious season of private prayer! I am somebody!” Yes, we are prone to sacrifice before this most base idol—I say

the most base idol—for surely there is no idolatry so utterly degrading as the worship of one's self! Alas, we cannot get rid of the flavor of the Egyptian leeks and onions! Self clings to us as a foul odor not to be gotten out of our unclean flesh!

Does the Lord teach us much of His Word? Then we grow proud of knowledge. Does the Lord help us to comfort His people? Then we set up ourselves, at once, as something wonderful in the Church. Does Christ reveal Himself to us as He does not to the world? Ah, then our heads are ready to smite the stars, we are so great! God save us from this subtle malady, this spiritual leprosy! I think I may add, even, if nothing else *but* the sentence of death in ourselves can stop us from trusting in ourselves, then let even this remedy be used.

II. But now I invite you for a few minutes to look at THE TREATMENT ordained for the Apostle's cure—"We had the sentence of death in ourselves," which means, first, that he seemed to hear the verdict of death passed upon him by the conditions which surrounded him. So continually hounded by his malicious countrymen, he felt certain that one day or other they would cause his destruction he was so frequently subject to popular violence. He felt that his life was not worth a moment's purchase and, therefore, so sick in body and so depressed in spirit he felt that he might, at any moment, expire.

The original conveys the idea, not only of a verdict from without, but of an answer of assent from within. There was an echo in his consciousness—an inward dread—a sort of apprehension that he was soon to die. The world threatened him with death and he felt that one of these days the threat would be carried out and that very speedily. And yet it was not so—he survived all the designs of the foe. My Brothers and Sisters, we often feel a thousand deaths in fearing one. We die before we die and find ourselves alive to die again! Death seems certain and yet the bird escapes even out of the fowler's hands. Just when he was about to wring its neck it flew aloft. Listen! How it sings, far above his reach. "Unto God the Lord belong the escapes from death."

A witty saying puts it, "Let us never say die till we are dead." But then we shall most truly say we live forever and ever! Let us postpone despair till the evil comes. Into a low state of spirit was Paul brought—death appeared imminent and his eyes of faith gazed into the eternities and this prevented his trusting in himself. The man who feels that he is about to die is no longer able to trust in himself. After this manner the remedy works our health. What earthly thing can help us when we are about to die? Paul needed not to say, "My riches will not help me," for he had no wealth. He had no need to say, "My lands and broad acres cannot comfort me, now," for he had not even a foot of land to call his own—his whole estate lay in a few needles with which he made and mended tents.

His trade implements and a manuscript book or two were all his possessions. He says, in effect, "Nothing on earth can help me now. My tongue, with which I preached, cannot plead with Death, whose deaf ears no oratory can charm. My epistles and my power of writing cannot stand me in any stead, for no pen can arrest the death warrant—it is written and I must die. Friends cannot help me. Titus, Timothy, none of these can

come to my aid. Neither Barnabas nor Silas can pass through the death stream with me—I must ford the torrent alone.” He felt as every man must who is a true Christian and is about to die, that he must commit his spirit unto Christ and watch for His appearing. He determined whether he died or lived that he would spend and be spent for the Lord Jesus.

Brothers and Sisters, we do not yet know what dying is—the way to the other land is an untrod path as yet. We read about Heaven and so on, but we know very little of the way there. To the mind of one about to die, the unknown frequently causes a creeping sensation of fear and the heart is full of horror. Paul felt the chill of death coming over him and by this means his trust in himself was killed and he was driven to rely upon his God! If nothing else will cure us of self-confidence we may be content to have the rope about our neck, or to lay our neck upon the block, or to feel the death rattle in our throats! We may be satisfied to sink as in the deep waters if this would cure us of trusting in ourselves!

Such was the case with Paul, when his gracious Master put forth His hand to turn Him aside from all glorying in the flesh. What was more, I think Paul means, here, that the sentence of death which he heard outside worked within his soul a sense of entire helplessness. He was striving to fight for the kingdom and Gospel of Christ, but he saw that he must be baffled if he had nothing to rely upon but himself—he was hampered and hemmed in on every side by the opposing Jews who would not permit him to go about his work in peace. He despaired even of his life. He was not able to get at his work, for these persons were always about him, howling at him, uttering falsehoods against him and hindering him. He became so worried and wearied that he was pressed and oppressed, immeasurably loaded and brought into such a state of mind that all inward comfort failed him and he was obliged to look above for succor.

His faculties were cramped as with a mortal rigor, his reason argued against him and his imagination rather created terrors than expectations. He knew the experience so poetically described by Kirke White in his hymn upon the star of Bethlehem—

**“Deep horror, then, my vitals froze,
Death struck, I ceased the tide to stem.”**

And he also knew the joy of the other two lines of the verse—

**“When suddenly a star arose,
It was the star of Bethlehem.”**

Paul’s mind was so struck with death within himself that he could not stem the torrent and would have drifted to despair had he not given himself up into the hands of Divine Grace and proved the loving power of God.

My Brothers and Sisters, you may never have experienced this and I do not wish that you may do so to the same extent as the Apostle, for the Lord may not bring you into a condition of exaltation where you are so exposed to the peril of self-confidence and, therefore, it may not be necessary to make you feel, to the same extent, this sentence of death. But I am aware that some of God’s people here know what it is to see death written upon everything within them and around them and these dare not trust in themselves!

Ah, there are times with some of us when we appear to lose all power to think aright; when we set ourselves to a subject and our brain will not ex-

ercise itself upon it; when we wish to do right and cannot tell which of two courses is the proper one. At times we cannot make out our way—we kneel to pray and find that we cannot pray as we would like to do—the whole energy and force of our spirit seems to be shriveled up as though the desert heat had blown over the meadow of our soul and left every blade of grass and flower dead beneath its burning breath. Such things *do* happen to men and when they happen, this is God's severe but effectual treatment whereby He prevents their trusting in themselves!

You have said, sometimes, of a very useful person—"God honors that man and I am afraid he will be proud." You might well tremble for him were it not that behind the door God whips the man and makes him loathe himself in dust and ashes! If the great Father favors any one of you with usefulness to any great extent or degree, depend upon it, He will favor you, also, with humiliations and spiritual conflicts, unless, indeed, you have so much Grace that you do not need these correctives and this is not the case with many. Brothers and Sisters, take the bitter with the sweet—*all* things work together for good, not one alone, neither the exaltation nor the depression, alone—but "all things work together for good to them that love God."

The compound brings the benefit to us. As one drug in a compound medicine counteracts another and the whole result is health, so is it with the total sum of different Providences—it brings benefit to us and glory to God. I think I need not say any more about this remedy, except to notice that the Lord uses the same treatment in dealing with men who as yet are not saved. Why is it that one of the first works of Grace on a man is to take away all his comfort and hope? I will soon tell you. Suppose that a poor man had fallen into such a state of mind that he could not bear the sun, but lived in perpetual candle light? He dreamed that no light could equal his poor tapers and he despised the sun—only candles for him—he hated daylight!

By the way, I am not wild in this supposition, for there are people who cannot worship God without candles, even in the daylight and yet they are not said to be insane! But to return to the imaginary case, our poor, weak-minded friend is prejudiced against the sun and we aim to bring him into brightness. How shall we proceed? I think we had better blow out his candles and leave him in the dark and then, perhaps, he will be willing to try the light of Heaven. Then I would take him outdoors and let him see the sun. And, after he had once beheld its superior light, he would never be able to praise his poor candles again! The first thing is to blow his candles out—and the first thing to bring a man to Christ, the Divine Light—is to put out his own feeble tapers of *self-trust*.

I have heard of one who fell into the water and sank and a strong swimmer standing on the shore did not at the same instant plunge in, though fully resolved to rescue him. The man went down the second time and then he who would rescue him was in the water swimming near him, but not too near, waiting very cautiously till his time came. He who was drowning was a strong, energetic man and the other was too prudent to expose himself to the risk of being dragged under by his struggles. He let the man go down for the third time and then he knew that his strength

was quite exhausted and, swimming to him, he grasped him and drew him to shore. If he had seized him at first, while the drowning man had strength, they would have gone down together!

The first part of human salvation is the sentence of death upon all human power and merit. When all hope in self is quite gone, Christ comes in and, with His Divine Grace rescues the soul from destruction. As long as you think you can swim, you will kick and struggle and drown! But when you see the futility of all your own efforts and perceive that you are without strength, you will leave yourselves with Jesus and be saved. The *eternal* power will come in when *your* power goes out. The sentence of death in yourselves will prevent your trusting in yourselves—death recorded and death confessed to be a just penalty will expel all vain hope and Grace will be welcomed and the heart will believe with a true faith worked in it by the Spirit of God!

III. Thirdly, let us think of THE CURE. It was sharp medicine, but it worked well with Paul, for we find, first, that Paul's self-trust was prevented—every rising token of it was effectually removed. He says, "We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves." Under this influence he preached as though he never might preach again—a dying man to dying men! I have heard of Brethren who do not expect to die. I do not wish to disturb their hope if it gives them comfort, but I know there is something very salutary in my own sense of the nearness of death. Christ may come, it is true, and this faith has the same effect as the expectation of going Home to Him, but one way or the other, the sense of the *insecurity* of this mortal life is good for us.

To bring death very near to the mind is a solemn, searching, sanctifying exercise. Our forefathers of centuries ago were known to have a human skull on the table where they read their Bibles. I do not recommend so sickening a device—we can have a memento of death in better form than that! Still, it is greatly wise to talk about our last hours, to be familiar with the grave, to walk among those little hillocks where our predecessors sleep and to remember that all the world is like a sandy beach where, after the tide has gone, innumerable little worm casts cover all the plain. Such a worm cast, I, too, shall leave behind me. This world is full of death's handiwork, a very morgue—no, better—name it a God's acre, a sleeping place where myriads lie waiting for the awakening trumpet! We, too, may expect to sleep with them and, therefore, we must not confide in ourselves.

Are you a dying man and can you trust yourself? More frail than the moth, driven up and down like a sere leaf in the tempest, can you trust yourself? I hope a sense of death will work a cure of that tendency in us. When the sentence of death assumes the form of an experience of despair as to everything that is of our own selves, then it has thoroughly worked the cure. I have gone up and down in my own soul where once sweet things did sing and fair hopes bloomed and I have searched in every chamber to hear a note or find a flower and I have found nothing but silence and death. I have gone abroad into the fields of my imagination where once I saw much that made my heart right glad and I have seen a valley of dry bones where only death reigned. Everything which I formerly

rejoiced in was touched by the paralyzing hand—all was dead within me, sentence was passed and apparently executed upon my whole being.

If a man does not trust God then, when will he? And if this does not take him off from self-confidence, what is to do it? This treatment never fails when the Holy Spirit uses it. Remember, this was only *half* the result in Paul's case, for he does not only say that by this sentence of death he was delivered from trusting in himself, but he was led to trust "in God which raises the dead." Now, my Brothers and Sisters, we have come out of the gloom of the sepulcher into the glory of the resurrection! "God which raises the dead" is our hope! The doctrine of the Resurrection is essential to the Christian system and Paul takes it for granted.

When he was delivered from trusting in himself because of the sentence of death, the first thing he did was to trust in the God and Father of His risen Lord. For first he argued thus—If I die, what does it matter? God can raise me from the dead. If they stone me, if they smite me with the sword, if they fling me headlong into the sea, I shall rise again! I know that my Redeemer lives and that I shall see Him when He appears. He inferred, also, that if God could raise him from the dead, He could preserve him from a violent death. He that could restore him, if he were dead and rotten in the tomb, could certainly keep him from dying till all his lifework was accomplished. This inference is unquestionably true—

***"Plagues and deaths around me fly,
But till He bids I cannot die!
Not a single shaft can hit
Till the God of love thinks fit."***

Immortal is every Believer till his work is done! Paul felt this and was comforted.

He argued yet further that if God can raise the dead and call together the separate atoms of a body long since dissolved and rebuild the house out of such ruin, then surely He could take his fainting powers, over which the sentence of death has passed and He could use them for His own purposes! Thus would I also reason with myself when I am deeply depressed. He can make me feel His life within me again! And He can make great use of me under all my weaknesses and difficulties. It needs Omnipotence to wake the dead! That same Omnipotence can make me triumph and enable me to do its will, whatever may stand in my way! Is not this a blessed form of argument—that God, who raises the dead can do for me, can do *in* me, can do *by* me great things for which His name shall have glory forever and ever?

Brothers and Sisters, we need to get away, more and more, from ourselves and we shall never do it till we write this down in our books—that *self* is dead—we *must* make a corpse of it. We sometimes hear that in setting forth the balance sheet of a banking establishment a mistake was committed by putting down a doubtful asset at too high a value—we must keep clear of such a blunder in making up our *spiritual* balances. There is no fear of undue depreciation if you say of anything which belongs to self, "it is good for nothing! Set it down as *worthless*." If, then, you have written yourself down at twenty shillings in the pound, my dear Brother, I warn you that you will never realize it. But you say, "I never thought to get more

than half-a-crown in the pound out of self”—you will never get that in good money!

“Well, I will put it down at a farthing in the pound.” You will never realize even that! It will cost you more to get it than it is worth—it is altogether a deception! He that trusts in himself not only gets not a farthing in the pound out of what he trusted in, but he is a loser by his foolish confidence. I should not like to realize myself—it would be an awful loss and leave a great gap in my checking account, for what am I but a mass of wounds, a bag of necessities, a mountain of weakness, a world of infirmities and nothing else worth mentioning? Do not put yourself down in your spiritual assets at all except as a *debt*, a *liability* and an *encumbrance*. Say, “Self is *dead*,” and you will be happy if you find that he *is* dead, for the most of your trouble will come from his being too much alive!

That old corrupt nature—ah, the vagabond—if he were, indeed, dead and would never struggle again, what a mercy! But there is still life in the old dog—life of a troublesome sort, full of mischief! Wisdom reckons self as a dead and worthless thing, to be mortified, but never to be trusted. Folly talks otherwise and bids you think well of yourself, but do not listen to its doting. He says, “You are getting to be an old man now; those gray hairs have brought experience and wisdom—you are not like those young chits of children that have just come into the Church.” No, but there is no fool like an old fool! Mind you, do not become another example of that old saying! Do not say to yourself, “Ah, now you are a man of wide experience, you are! You are not like those narrow-minded people who never went beyond their cottage or the hedges of their little farm. You have had a splendidly wide experience.”

Ah, but no blunder is so great as the blunder of a great man! No man is capable of doing so much mischief as the man who has capacity for doing great good. “Oh, but,” says someone, “I am so careful, so guarded, that there can be no fear of *me*.” Yet no one is so likely to sleep as the watchman who flatters himself that he does not even doze! So it used to be in the old days—and you watchful people are sure to go wrong if you are proud of being watchful. If, on the other hand, you feel that you are not as watchful as you ought to be and pray to be made more so, you will be kept right. Trust in ourselves is a kind of manna which will breed worms and stink and it will make our house unbearable and ourselves sick. Sweep it out! Oh, for a state of weakness that is strong in the Divine strength! Oh, to be nothing! To be NOTHING, that God may be All in All! Amen and amen! So let it be!

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THE TENSES NO. 2718

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 17, 1901.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 13, 1880.**

***Who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us;
in whom we trust that He will still deliver us.”
2 Corinthians 1:10.***

WHEN children are learning their grammar, they have to pay particular attention to the tenses of the verbs. And it is also important for Christians to remember their tenses—to remember the past, the present and the future. Our text brings all three very vividly before us and reminds us that God has delivered, does deliver and will yet deliver.

First, let us think for a little while concerning the past. How old are you, my Friend? How many of your years have you employed profitably and how many have you allowed to run to waste? For how many years have you worked the will of the flesh and been a servant of sin and Satan? How long have you been born again? What is your age spiritually? Take down the record of your life and examine it, from the days of your childhood, through youth and early manhood, up till now. It is a book which should do us good to read. In some respects, all its pages may make us weep and yet, viewed in another light, many of them may give us cause to sing. This is the one book in the library that many people do not like to take down and read, for there are so many blots in it and so many humbling records. Yet “God requires that which is past,” and it is a token of wisdom for a man to talk with his past years and to learn from them the many lessons they are able to teach. All the days we have lived will go before us to the Judgment Seat and each one will bear its record and leave it there. So let us not be oblivious of that which God remembers, but let us remember it that we may be penitent for all that has been wrong in it, and that we may be grateful for all that has been right.

Next, think about the second part of life, namely, the time present. And here let me urge upon you, dear Friends, the importance of valuing the present. In fact, time present is the only time that you have. The past has gone and you cannot recall it—the future will never really be yours for, when it comes, it will be present, too. It is only in the present that we live, so that if we waste these precious hours that are now with us, we waste all that we have. If we serve not God today, when will we serve Him? Tomorrow? No, for when that opportunity comes, “tomorrow” will

have been changed into “today.” Let us endeavor, as God shall help us, to watch our moments so as not to waste one of them.

It is a good thing to have our life divided up into short periods. The other day I saw John Wesley’s diary, or rather, horary, for it had in it not merely an entry for every day, but for every hour—and not only for every hour, but usually there was a distinct occupation for every 20 minutes! The good man made his days to have many hours in them—and his hours seemed to have more minutes in them than most men’s hours have—because he did not waste any of them, but diligently used them all in his Master’s service. God help us all to do the same by paying great attention to the present portion of our life!

As for the future, there is an idle curiosity which prompts men to try to live in it that we must renounce. But there is a gracious expectation which enables us to live in it—a holy anxiety which prompts us to prepare for it. It is greatly wise for us to talk with those years that are to come if we talk with them in view of their end. I would have you familiar with your graves, for you will soon be in them—and still more familiar with your resurrection dwelling place, remembering that God “has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” Let us often project ourselves beyond the present into the future—to gather strength from the future is frequently the best way to deal with the present. You will be more easily able to bear your present burdens when you think how short is the time in which you will have to carry them. Your “light affliction, which is but for a moment,” will seem scarcely like a feather’s weight to you when you anticipate the “far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory” which God has prepared for you!

I recommend to you, therefore, this rule of three, and advise you always to consider the past, the present and the future. And just now I invite you to do so in connection with the delivering mercy of God. He *has* delivered us. He *does* deliver us. He *will* deliver us. And, first, I am going to point out to you *three trains of thought*. Next, *three lines of argument*. And, thirdly, *three inferences*.

I. First, THE TEXT SUGGESTS THREE TRAINS OF THOUGHT.

The first is *memory, which tells us of the deliverances in the past*—“Who delivered us from so great a death.” Take the words exactly as Paul wrote them and recall how God has delivered some of us from death. A few here, perhaps, have been very near to death in battle or in tempest. Many more of us have been very near to death in sickness. Some of us have, several times in our lives, looked into eternity—our illness has been no child’s play and we have realized the possibility, or even the *probability* of our soon passing away from all the engagements of this mortal life—and standing before our God. But we have been raised up again—we have come forth from our chamber tottering on our staff, perhaps, through weakness, yet we are still preserved—the living, the living—to praise the Lord as we do this day. I have no doubt that almost all of you have had, at one time or another, some very special proof that, “unto God the Lord belong the issues from death.”

Our past deliverances, however, have not only been from physical death. We have had greater deliverances than that. There was, first of all, our deliverance from *spiritual* death. Do you not remember the time, dear Brother, dear Sister, when you were brought out of nature's darkness into God's marvelous light? You say that you do not know the day when this great change took place—never mind if you do not—it is not at all essential if you can now say, "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." Some of us do remember the very day when we came to Christ and rested in Him and we do, with our whole heart and soul, bless Him that we were delivered from that terrible death which had so long held us in captivity! God rescued us by His Grace and enabled us to come forth from our grave of sin, looking unto Jesus and longing to be made like He.

Further, some of you remember when you were delivered from despair. It is an awful thing to be driven away from all hope of salvation and to be at your wits end. You were not all brought to Christ in a terrible tempest, as some of us were—many of you came to Him under happier circumstances. Be very thankful that it was so—but some of us were hard put to it when we tried to touch the hem of His garment. We were pressed and crushed in the crowd and seemed to lose our very breath. I remember how, when I was under conviction of sin, my soul rolled to and fro and staggered like a drunken man, yet the Lord delivered me and taught me to rest upon Him—and thus even full assurance became possible although I had thought, before, that mercy could never reach me! Beloved, if I am describing your experience as well as my own, let us together bless the Lord for His mercy in delivering us from so great a death! The remembrance of our deliverance from sin and despair must take the first rank among our grateful reminiscences!

But since then, have you not many times been delivered out of temptation? You said, with the Psalmist, "My feet were almost gone; my steps had well near slipped," yet the Lord graciously preserved you. If you look back with careful eyes, you will see many occasions where, if it had not been for interposing mercy, you would either have fallen into the bog on your right hand, or into the quagmire on your left. If the Lord had not piloted your vessel, it would have been wrecked on the rocks of Scylla or engulfed in the whirlpool of Charybdis! Do you not wonder, sometimes, how you ever got through that peculiar temptation which was so suitable to your circumstances and so fascinating to your flesh? You did not know, at the time, that it was a temptation and you had not the necessary wisdom to meet the craft of Satan! Yet you were not taken captive in the Satanic net, cunningly as it was spread—and for that deliverance you must bless the name of the Lord!

There are some of you who ought to praise Him for deliverances over which you wept at the time. He would not let you have what you desired—you were disappointed and you talked about your heart being broken. Ah, but the Lord's dealings with you saved you from having a real broken heart! You said, "Alas! Alas! I have lost something which I fondly cherished!" It was well that you did lose it, for that which you thought

was a bracelet sparkling with jewels was a viper which, had you grasped it, would have stung you to death! Blessed be God for not hearing some of our prayers! Blessed be the Lord for not gratifying many of our desires!

We ought to praise Him, too, for our deliverances in the time of trouble. You are not all tried alike. I am very thankful that some of you are not troubled as others are, but I know that I am addressing some whose trials have been very many and very heavy. Your road has been a very rough one. John Bunyan truly says, "A Christian is seldom long at ease—when one trouble's gone, another does him seize." And that has been true in the lives of many of us. We can say with the Psalmist, "We went through fire and through water." Some of God's children have been brought very low in their circumstances so that they have had to live "from hand to mouth"—though I do not know that many of us live very differently from that—but there are some godly people who never have any reserve even if they do not actually come to need. I do not know that there is anything very grievous in that, for the sparrows and the ravens live in that style, yet God cares for them. But some of you find it to be a trial to have scantiness in the home, or sickness in your own person, or one who is dear to you as your own life constantly afflicted. There are all sorts of losses and crosses, trials and troubles for the godly to endure. Yes, but none of these things have crushed us yet, for the Lord has delivered us!

Here is a poor widow and she wonders how she ever brought up that large family of little children. She scarcely knew how to provide for them all when she had a husband and yet, when the head of the house was gone, they were provided for! It is very wonderful, yet it was done. And you who seemed to see all your prospects suddenly dissolve like the mirage of the desert, were helped, too. You said at one time, "If such-and-such a thing should happen it would kill me." It did happen, yet it did not kill you, for you are here to testify to the Lord's delivering mercy! One Job's messenger after another came to bring you evil tidings, yet the Lord delivered you from the trials which threatened to crush you! I cannot stay to mention all those past deliverances and, probably, most of them are not even known to us. Glory be to God for unknown mercies—favors which came in the night when we most needed them, favors which helped us to sleep and to awake refreshed—favors that stole, with silent footfall, into our home and our heart and went away leaving traces of the sacred oil of Divine Mercy behind them!

That is the first train of thought—*memory*, which tells of deliverances in the past.

The second is *observation*, which calls attention to present deliverance—"and does deliver." Open your eyes my Brothers and Sisters, and see how God is delivering you at this moment! I do not say that with the most widely opened eyes you will perceive all your deliverances, for, many times, you have been saved from trouble, while, on other occasions, you have been delivered out of it. I have often told you the story of the good old Puritan who met his son at a half-way house. When the young man came in, he said, "Father, I had a very special Providence as I

rode here today.” “What was that, my son?” “My horse stumbled three times very badly, yet I was not thrown.” “And I have had an equally special Providence in riding here,” his father answered. “What was that?” “My horse never stumbled all the way, so I was not thrown.” You know that if we are in a railway accident and escape from any hurt, we say, “What a Providence!” Yes, but what a Providence it was when you were preserved from a railway accident by staying at home! Oftentimes we do not see the very thing that has the most of mercy in it. What evidences of Divine deliverance there are in the fact that you are here at this moment! A comparatively trifling incident might have resulted in your death. You may be, tomorrow morning, in doubt as to which of two ways you should take but there will be the Providence of God directing you which to choose—and your choice of that one may affect the rest of your life!

If you are not just now being assailed by any temptation, it is because God is delivering you from it. Yet it may be that Satan is planning some fresh temptation with which to assail you. But, though he desires to have you that he may sift you as wheat, Christ is praying for you, that your faith fail not. We might have fallen into doctrinal error had it not been for God’s restraining mercy. How apt thoughtful people are to be carried away by the particular novelty of the hour! It seems as if they could not resist the cogency of the argument by which the new teaching is supported, but we have been kept from yielding to it by having our hearts established in the faith, so that we have not believed every novel doctrine, but have judged it by the Word of God and so have been kept from wandering into devious ways.

How graciously God is preserving many of us from the tongue of slander! It is a wonderful thing for any man to live much in public without being accused of some vile crime. And the woman who lives in the most retired position, the housewife who does nothing but look after her own children, will find somebody or other slandering her. You cannot always escape from the envenomed tongue of slander, be you what you will and where you will—and for God to keep the reputation of any Christian unstained year after year is a subject for the greatest thankfulness.

We do not know where or what we might have been if God’s gracious protection had not been like a wall of fire around us, as it is even now, for the Lord does still deliver all those who put their trust in Him. I want you, dear Brothers and Sisters, to believe with unquestioning confidence that God is delivering you just now. You know that He has delivered you—be quite as sure that He is delivering you at this moment. “Oh,” says one, “I am shut up in the dungeon of despair.” Yes, but your Lord has a key that can open the door and let you out. “Yes, but I am in great need.” But He knows all about it and He has His basket in His hand full of good things with which He is going to supply all your needs. Oh,” says another, “but I am sinking in the flood.” But He is throwing the lifebelt to you. “Oh, but I am fainting!” But He is putting a bottle of sweet perfume to your nose to refresh your spirit. God is near you, to revive and cheer your fainting soul! Perhaps someone says, “I find faith concerning the past and concerning the ultimate future tolerably easy, but it is faith for

the next hour or two I cannot so readily exercise." At certain times it is found that a trial is peculiarly present, but one cannot always realize that God is "a very present help in trouble," yet it is true. He *has* delivered and He *does* deliver.

The third train of thought is this—*expectation looks out of the window upon the future*— "in whom we trust that He will still deliver us." Yes, dear Friends, there may be many trials before you, but there is a mass of mercy kept in store to meet those trials! Troubles such as you have never yet known, as well as repetitions of those you have experienced will surely come upon you, but as your days are, so shall your strength be, for your Lord will continue to deliver you. As the eyes gradually fail and the limbs grow weak, and the infirmities of age creep over us, we are apt to be distressed, yet our Lord will not forsake us. When severe sickness invades our mortal frame and our pains are multiplied and intensified, we wonder how we shall hold out to the end—and especially as we look forward to the time of death, not always viewing it in the true light, we say, "What shall we do in the swellings of Jordan? How shall we be able to bear the stern realities of our last hours?" Be of good comfort my Brother, my Sister! He who *has* delivered, and *does* deliver, *will yet* deliver!

As surely as the trial comes, the way of escape shall be opened up for you by your Lord. Will you try to realize all this of which I have been speaking? He *has* delivered you, then give Him your gratitude. He *is* delivering you, then give Him your confidence. He *will* deliver you, then give Him a full and joyful expectation and begin, even now, to praise Him for mercies which are yet to come and for Grace which you have not tasted yet, but which you shall taste in His good time!

II. Now, in the second place, THE TEXT SUPPLIES THREE LINES OF ARGUMENT, all running to the same point.

The point to be proved is that the Lord will deliver His people. And I argue that *He will deliver us in the future because He has already begun to deliver us*. There is a chain of continuity here—He *has* delivered, He *does* deliver and He *will* deliver. He began to work for our deliverance long before we sought Him. The first movement was not from us to God, but from God to us! We were lying dead in trespasses and sins and He came and quickened us. He gave His Son to die for us many centuries before we were born. He provided the Gospel for us long before you and I had ever sinned. In all things He had the start and was beforehand with us. Yet He need not have done all this, except that it was by His own choice and free will that He acted. I rejoice in the free will of God which moved Him to deliver us! Surely, then, since the motive that impelled Him to save us must have been in Himself, alone, that motive is still there. If He had begun to deliver us because He saw some goodness in us, or because we first applied to Him, then He might leave us, but as the commencement was with Himself, spontaneously out of His own heart, depend upon it that as He began the work, He will carry it on!

God has no more knowledge of any one of us than He had at the first. When He began with us, He knew what we would be. He foresaw all our

sins and all our follies, all our ingratitude and all our backsliding. He did not enter blindfolded upon a task which, after second thoughts, He would have to relinquish, but even from eternity, He saw us just as we have turned out to be. Yet He began with us and, having begun with the deliberation of eternal love, let us be quite sure that He will prosecute His gracious purpose with the perseverance of eternal love! If there had been, at the first, some reason in us why God should begin to deliver us, then that reason being removed from us, God might cease to deliver us. But as the reason was not in us, but in *Himself*, since He can never change, the reason for our deliverance abides the same, and the argument is good and clear—God *has* delivered us, then He *will* deliver us!

The next argument comes from the fact that *as He is now delivering us, therefore He will continue to do so*. Here is the continuity of His Grace. Now look, Beloved—He has, up to this hour, continued to deliver you and me who have trusted Him. How many times has He delivered me? Out of how many troubles have I been delivered? From how many sins have I been delivered? Well, then, if the Lord has kept on delivering me so long, I argue that if He had ever meant to stop, He would have stopped before now! And, therefore—

***“His love in time past forbids me to think
He’ll leave me at last in trouble to sink.
Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review,
Confirms His good pleasure to help me quite through.”***

When a man begins to build, we reckon that he will finish the building if he can. We know that our God can complete what He has commenced, so we conclude that He will do so. I feel that He has gone so far with me that He cannot give me up now—

***“Can He have taught me to trust in His name,
And thus far have brought me to put me to shame?”***

No, that can never be! And many of you must feel just as I do about this matter. Some of you are, as it were, sitting on the very doorstep of Heaven. You are over 80 years of age, so you cannot be here long. Can you not trust the Lord for the few months or years you have yet to live? He has been helping you, my aged Sister, ever since you were a girl, and He has delivered you out of all sorts of troubles—do you think that He will leave you now? And my dear venerable Brother, you knew the Lord when you were but a boy and He has never left you yet—will He forsake you now? No, blessed be His name, He will not! All those years of His favor go to confirm us in the conviction that He will keep on delivering us till He brings us safely Home.

The Lord has not only delivered us so often, but He has also done it in such a wonderful way that He must go on working in a similar fashion! What marvelous wisdom has He sometimes displayed in delivering us from the consequences of our own folly! Often has He seemed to lavish His mercy upon us that He might help us in our time of need—and not once has He failed us. There is not one broken promise of His, nor one Covenant blessing that He has ever withheld from us. If any of you who have known Him the longest, have anything to say against your God, say it. But you have not. You have never had any reason for doubting Him,

nor have you ever had any suspicion of His faithfulness raised in your mind by anything that He has done which might lead you to mistrust Him in the future. He *has* delivered, He *is* delivering and He *will still* deliver. There are two arguments drawn from the past and the present.

The best argument, however, comes *from God Himself*—"in whom we trust." He is always the same and everything is always present to His unchanging mind. What was the Nature of God when He first determined to deliver me? Was it love? Then it is now love. What was the motive which impelled the Son of God when He came from above and snatched me from the deep waters? It was love, surprising love and it is surprising love which still moves Him to deliver me! Did I sing about His faithfulness the other day? That faithfulness is the same today! Have I adored His wisdom? That wisdom is not exhausted!

There is not only the same Nature in God as there always was, but there is also the same unchanging purpose. You and I shift and change and we are obliged to do so because we make rash promises and faulty plans. But God, who is infinitely wise, always keeps to His purpose. Now, if it was His original purpose to save us—and it must have been, or He would never have delivered us as He has done—that purpose still stands and shall stand forever! Though earth's old columns bow. Though Heaven and earth shall pass away as the morning frost dissolves in the beams of the rising sun, yet the decree of the Immutable Jehovah shall never be changed. "For the Lord of Hosts has purposed, and who shall disannul it? And His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?"

III. Time fails me, so I can only very briefly show you that THE TEXT IS OPEN TO THREE INFERENCES.

The first inference I draw from it is that *we shall always be in danger so long as we are here*. The Lord has delivered, does deliver and He will deliver, so we shall always need Divine deliverance while we are in this world. We must not expect to ever be out of gunshot of the enemy. You may depend upon it, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, that you will always have tribulation as long as you are in the world. You will have trials in the flesh, you will have trials in the spirit, you will have trials from God and trials from Satan! And if, at any time, you are a long while without any trouble, keep a good lookout for it, for it is probably on the way! We should always suspect some danger near when we perceive too much delight. When God has given us a long stretch of smooth sailing, it well behooves us to steer our vessel cautiously and to be ready to furl our sails at any moment, for a cyclone may be upon us before we know where we are!

We need not *ask* the Lord to send us trouble, but when it comes, let us have the Grace to accept it and to glorify God in it. While we are in this world, we shall always know that it is the world, so let us not make any mistake about the matter—the devil is the devil, the world is the world and the flesh is the flesh. None of these things have changed and the mercy is that God has not changed—He is still the same as He always was! If I found that the world was not the world, I might be afraid that God was not God, but that can never be the case. So, as trials are

always arising, I may fairly suspect that they always will come while this time-state lasts. but I also fully believe that God will always be the same and that He will deliver all who trust in Him.

The second inference from the text is that *we may constantly expect a display of God's delivering Grace*. The past says, "He has delivered." The present says, "He does deliver." And the future says, "He will yet deliver." Yesterday, God was very gracious to me, I need not tell you how. Today He has been very gracious to me. Tomorrow He will be very gracious to me and the same will be true the next day, and the next day, and the next day, until there shall be no more days and time shall be swallowed up in eternity! Between here and Heaven, every minute that the Christian lives will be a minute of Grace. From here to the Throne of the Highest, you will have to be continually supplied with new Grace from the Lord who sits on high.

Dear Brother, you never live a truly holy, happy, blessed day except by Divine Grace! You never think a right thought, never do a right act—you never make any advance Heavenward except by Grace. I like to think that it is so, that every day I am a monument of mercy! That every day a fresh display of Sovereign Grace is made to me. That every day my Father feeds me, my Savior cleanses me, the Comforter sustains me! Every day new manifestations of the loving kindness of the Lord break forth upon my wondering soul and give me fresh visions of His *miraculous* love. I could not find another word to express what I wanted to say—that one seemed too leap into my mouth just then—His *miraculous* love! And so it is miracle-working love making the Christian's life to be a series of miracles, at which angels shall gaze forever in astonished adoration of the amazing love of God to guilty men! So I reckon that we may go onward with great confidence, for, although every day will bring dangers, every day will also witness Divine deliverances!

Thirdly, the last inference I draw from the text is that *our whole life should be filled with praise of God our Deliverer*. How does it run? He delivered us and now we deliver ourselves? No, no, no! He delivered us. He does deliver us—but what about the future? We must deliver ourselves? No, no, no! He has delivered! He does deliver and *He will still deliver*—the same Person, working in the beginning, in the center and at the close. It is all of God from first to last! There is not one deliverance which you have ever had which you can ascribe to anyone but the Lord, alone. Inside Heaven's gate all the praise is given to the Triune Jehovah—"Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be." And outside Heaven's gate, let us sing the same song, to the same tune! Let it always be to the praise of Grace, Grace, GRACE. To the God of Grace, the Father of Grace, the Christ of Grace, the Holy Spirit and His Grace and to God be all the glory, forever and for ever! Amen.

**EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALMS 16; 63.**

Psalm 16:1. *Preserve me, O God: for in You I put my trust.* Ah, Brothers and Sisters! When we think of our daily dangers and when we remember the sinfulness of our nature, this petition may well be our frequent prayer! “Preserve me, O God.” And this may well be our plea, as well as the Psalmist’s, “for in You I put my trust.” We trust in the name of the Lord, for we can never expect to be preserved except by His protecting Grace.

2, 3. *O my soul, you have said unto the Lord, You are my Lord: my goodness is nothing apart from You; as for the saints that are in the earth, they are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight.* “My God, I would gladly prove my gratitude to You if I could, but what can I do for One so great as You are? You are infinitely above me. You need nothing from my hands. What, then, can I do to show my love to You? By my care for your people I may prove what I would do for You if I could. Are they hungry? I will feed them. Are they sick? I will visit them. If my goodness cannot reach the great Head of the Church, it shall at least wash the feet, for I do love You, O my God, and I want, in some practical way, to show that I love You!”

4. *Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god: their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names on my lips.* He who sincerely loves the true God cannot have any regard for His rivals. He will have no communion with false gods in any shape or form.

5. *The LORD is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup.* That is the Believer’s portion—his God. The Levites, as a tribe, had no inheritance in the land of Canaan, but God was their portion—and who shall dare to say that they had not the best of it? Now, child of God, if you could have your choice, what would you choose—goods or God? Earthly wealth, or the God who is the source of all good things?

5. *You maintain my lot.* One of our great men has for his motto, “I will maintain it.” But the Psalmist’s is a much better one—“You maintain my lot.” It is better to have God for our Guardian than to have all possible human strength with which to defend ourselves.

6. *The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yes, I have a goodly heritage.* The Jewish rulers stretched the measuring or dividing lines over the plots of land that fell to the different members of the family. But here the man of God declares that since God was his portion, the lines had fallen to him in pleasant places! There is no choice of places, or times, or circumstances with the man who thoroughly loves his God. He can find God in loneliness and so enjoy the best company. If he has God in poverty, he has great riches. O happy man who has God to be his all!

7. *I will bless the Lord who has given me counsel.* “He has talked with me, checked me, rebuked me, instructed me, encouraged me. ‘I will bless Jehovah, who has given me counsel.’” That does not, at first sight, look as if it were one of the choicest of blessings, yet the Psalmist mentions it immediately after he has declared that the lines have fallen on him in pleasant places—as if he felt that one of the choicest blessings of the Covenant was that God had been his Counselor.

7. *My heart also instructs me in the night seasons.* “God makes my heart, my conscience, my inmost being to give me instruction. What a blessing that must have been to David! A man who has no inward monitor because he has stifled his conscience so that it no longer holds him by the ear, and speaks with him, is poor, indeed! But blessed is he who has his God and his conscience to counsel and instruct him.

8. *I have set the LORD always before me. Because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.* Brother, have you always acted on the straight? Have you so conducted your business that you need not be ashamed of God Himself to look at it? Then do not be afraid of anything that may happen to you, for you will come out all right at the last. There may be great trouble in store for you and you may be stripped of all that you possess—but you shall never be ashamed.

9. *Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices: my flesh also shall rest in hope.* Every good thing belongs to the man who belongs to God! He need not be afraid even of the grave, for he can adopt the language which is here Prophetically used for Christ, Himself. He is not afraid to die, for he can say—

10. *For You will not leave my soul in Sheol.* The place of the departed, the intermediate state into which the soul passes at death.

10. *Neither will You suffer Your Holy One to see corruption.* In the fullest sense, this verse belongs to Christ, alone, but, still, what belongs to the Head is also the portion of the members of His mystical body.

11. *You will show me the path of life: in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand there are pleasures forevermore.* And this is the portion of every Believer. “Here little, but hereafter much,” says Bunyan, but I will venture to alter it, and say, “Here much, but hereafter *more* shall be our inheritance from age to age.”

Psalm 63:1. *O God, You are my God; early will I seek You.* Because You are mine, therefore will I seek You.” A sense of possession makes us long for the enjoyment of all that is really ours.

1. *My soul thirsts for You my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is.* “Nothing but You can content me. Everything else, or everyone else falls short of my desire. There is no water that can slake such a thirst as mine unless I drink from You, You overflowing well.”

2. *To see Your power and Your Glory, so as I have seen You in the sanctuary.* Past enjoyment of our Lord’s Presence inspires us with earnest desire for fresh manifestations of His face. If we have ever seen God’s power and Glory when we have come into the courts of His house, we long to see them again, whether we are in the wilderness or in the sanctuary.

3. *Because Your loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise You.* Is not that word “loving kindness” one of the noblest terms in our own or in any other language? The word, kin, is at the root of kind and kindred, so that loving kindness, or loving kinness, is such conduct as we may expect from those who are akin to us. God’s kindness to us, through Jesus Christ, His Son and our Savior, brings to us a loving

kindness that is better than life, and for which our lips can never praise Him enough.

4. *Thus will I bless You while I live: I will lift up my hands in Your name.* “For very joy, I will lift them up, and clap them before You. Though, before, they hung down as though I were dispirited and could never work again, yet now, I will lift up my hands in Your name.”

5. *My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness.* God’s flowers always bloom double. God’s blessings are like marrow and fatness—there is in them a double satisfaction of the most intense kind! “My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness.”

5. *And my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips.* The Psalmist speaks as if each of his lips had a separate joy and as though, together, they would express the double joy for the double satisfaction which his God had given to him.

6. *When I remember You upon my bed, and meditate on You in the night watches.* “Even then shall I have joy, for Your Presence makes even the darkness to be light.”

7. *Because You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings will I rejoice.* “If I cannot get into the light of Your Countenance, the very shadow of Your wings shall make me glad. Only let me be near You—that is all I crave.”

7. *My soul follows hard after You.* “I am like a dog who loves to keep close to his master’s heels.”

8-11. *Your right hand upholds me. But those that seek my soul, to destroy it, shall go into the lower parts of the earth. They shall fall by the sword: they shall be a portion for foxes, But the king shall rejoice in God; everyone that swears by Him shall glory: but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.* Stopped with a shovelful of earth, in many cases, for it seems as if some liars would never cease lying as long as they are alive.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—196,733, 735

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

THE POWER OF PRAYER AND THE PLEASURE OF PRAISE NO. 507

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 3, 1863,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“You also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf. For our rejoicing in this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the Grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world and more abundantly to you.”
2 Corinthians 1:11,12.*

THE Apostle Paul had, by singular Providences, been delivered from imminent peril in Asia. During the great riot at Ephesus, when Demetrius and his fellow shrine-makers raised a great tumult against him, because they saw that their craft was in danger, Paul's life was greatly in jeopardy. Consequently he writes, “We were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life.” The Apostle attributes to God, alone, his singular preservation. And if he referred also to the occasion when he was stoned and left for dead, there is much appropriateness in his blessing “God which raised the dead.”

The Apostle, moreover, argues from the fact that God had thus delivered him in the past, and was still his helper in the present, that He would be with him also in the future. Paul is a master at all arithmetic—his faith was always a ready-reckoner—we here find him computing by the Believer's *Rule of Three*. He argues from the past to the present, and from the present to things yet to come. The verse preceding our text is a brilliant example of this arriving at a comfortable conclusion by the *Rule of Three*—“Who delivered us from so great a death and does deliver: in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us.”

Because our God is, “the same yesterday, today and forever,” His love in time past is an infallible assurance of His kindness today, and an equally certain pledge of His faithfulness on the morrow. Whatever our circumstances may be, however perplexed may be our pathway, and however dark our horizon, if we argue by the rule of, “He has, He does, He will,” our comfort can never be destroyed. Courage, then, O you afflicted seed of Israel. If you had a changeable God to deal with, your souls might be full of bitterness—but because He is, “the same yesterday, today and forever,” every repeated manifestation of His Grace should make it more easy for you to rest upon Him. Every renewed experience of His fidelity should confirm your confidence in His Grace. May the most blessed Spirit teach us to grow in holy confidence in our ever faithful Lord.

Although our Apostle thus acknowledged God's hand, and God's hand alone, in his deliverance, yet he was not so foolish as to deny or undervalue the second causes. On the contrary, having first praised the God of All Comfort, he now remembers with gratitude the earnest prayers of the many loving intercessors. Gratitude to God must never become an excuse

for ingratitude to man. It is true that Jehovah shielded the Apostle of the Gentiles, but He did it in answer to prayer. The chosen vessel was not broken by the rod of the wicked, for the outstretched hand of the God of Heaven was his defense—but that hand was outstretched because the people of Corinth, and the saints of God everywhere had prevailed at the Throne of Grace by their united supplications.

With gratitude those successful pleadings are mentioned in the text, “You also helping together by prayer for us,” and he desires the Brothers and Sisters now to unite their praises with his, “that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf.” He adds that he has a claim upon their love since he was not as some who were unfaithful to their trust, but his conscience was clear that he had preached the Word simply and with sincerity.

While speaking upon these topics, may the anointing Spirit now descend to make them profitable to us. We shall, first, *acknowledge the power of united prayer*. Secondly, *excite you to united praise*. And then, in the third place, *urge our joyful claim upon you—a claim which is not ours alone, but belongs to all ministers of God who in sincerity labor for souls*.

I. First, then, dear Friends, it is my duty and my privilege this morning to ACKNOWLEDGE THE POWER OF UNITED PRAYER.

It has pleased God to make prayer the abounding and rejoicing river through which most of our choice mercies flow to us. It is the golden key which unlocks the well-stored granaries of our heavenly Joseph. It is written upon each of the mercies of the Covenant, “For this will I be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them.” There are mercies which come unsought, for God is found of them that sought not for Him. But there are other favors which are only bestowed upon the men who ask, and therefore receive—who seek, and therefore find—who knock, and therefore gain an entrance.

Why God has been pleased to command us to pray at all it is not difficult to discover, for prayer *glorifies God*, by putting man in the most humble posture of worship. The creature in prayer acknowledges his Creator with reverence and confesses Him to be the giver of every good and perfect gift. The eye is lifted up to behold the Glory of the Lord, while the knees are bent to the earth in the lowliness of acknowledged weakness. Though prayer is not the highest mode of adoration, or otherwise it would be continued by the saints in Heaven, yet it is the most humble, and so the most fitting, to set forth the Glory of the Perfect One as it is beheld by imperfect flesh and blood.

From the “Our Father,” in which we claim relationship, right on to, “the kingdom and the power and the glory,” which we ascribe to the only true God, every sentence of prayer honors the Most High. The groans and tears of humble petitioners are as truly acceptable as the continual, “Holy, Holy, Holy,” of the Cherubim and Seraphim. For in their very essence all truthful confessions of personal fault are but a homage paid to the Infinite perfections of the Lord of Hosts. More honored is the Lord by our prayers than by the unceasing smoke of the holy incense of the altar which stood before the veil.

Moreover, the act of prayer *teaches us our unworthiness*, which is no small blessing to such proud beings as we are. If God gave us favors without constraining us to pray for them, we should never know how poor we

are. But a true prayer is an inventory of wants, a catalog of necessities, a suit in *forma pauperis*, an exposure of secret wounds, a revelation of hidden poverty. While it is an application to Divine wealth, it is a confession of human emptiness. I believe that the most healthy state of a Christian is to be always empty—and always depending upon the Lord for supplies. To be always poor in self and rich in Jesus—weak as water personally—but mighty through God to do great exploits. And therefore the *use* of prayer—because while it adores God, it lays the creature where he should be—in the very dust.

Prayer is in itself, apart from the answer which it brings, a great benefit to the Christian. As the runner gains strength for the race by daily exercise, so for the great race of life we acquire energy by the hallowed labor of prayer. Prayer plumes the wings of God's young eaglets that they may learn to mount above the clouds. Prayer girds the loins of God's warriors and sends them forth to combat with their sinews braced and their muscles firm. An earnest pleader comes out of his closet, even as the sun rises from the chambers of the east, rejoicing like a strong man to run his race.

Prayer is that uplifted hand of Moses which routs the Amalekites more than the sword of Joshua. It is the arrow shot from the chamber of the Prophet foreboding defeat to the Syrians. What if I say that prayer clothes the Believer with the attributes of Deity, girds human weakness with Divine strength, turns human folly into heavenly wisdom, and gives to troubled mortals the serenity of the immortal God? I know not what prayer cannot do! I thank You, great God, for the Mercy Seat, a choice gift of Your marvelous loving kindness. Help us to use it aright!

As many mercies are conveyed from Heaven in the ship of prayer, so *there are many choice and special favors which can only be brought to us by the fleets of united prayer*. Many are the good things which God will give to His lonely Elijahs and Daniels, but if two of you agree as touching anything that you shall ask, there is no limit to God's bountiful answers. Peter might never have been brought out of prison if it had not been that prayer was made without ceasing by *all* the Church for him. Pentecost might never have come if *all* the disciples had not been, "with one accord in one place," waiting for the descent of the tongues of fire. God is pleased to give many mercies to one pleader, but at times He seems to say, "You shall all appear before Me and entreat My favor, for I will not see your face, unless even your younger Brothers and Sisters are with you."

Why is this, dear Friends? I take it that thus our gracious Lord sets forth His own esteem for the communion of saints. "I believe in the communion of saints" is one article of the great Christian creed, but how few there are who understand it. Oh, there is such a thing as real union among God's people. We may be called by different names—

***"But all the servants of our King
In Heaven and earth are one."***

We cannot afford to lose the help and love of our Brothers and Sisters. Augustine says, "The poor are made for the rich and the rich are made for the poor." I do not doubt but that strong saints are made for weak saints, and that the weak saints bring special benedictions upon the full grown. There is a fitness in the whole body—each joint owes something to every other—and the whole body is bound together and compacted by that which every joint supplies. There are certain glands in the human body

which the anatomist hardly understands. He can say of the liver, for instance, that it yields a very valuable fluid of the utmost value in the bodily economy. But there are other secretions whose distinct value he cannot ascertain. Yet, doubtless, if that gland were removed, the whole body might suffer to a high degree.

And so, beloved Friends, there may be some Believers of whom we may say, "I do not know the use of them. I cannot tell what good that Christian does." Yet were that insignificant, and apparently useless member removed, the whole body might be made to suffer, the whole frame might become sick, and the whole heart faint. This is probably the reason why many a weighty gift of Heaven's love is only granted to combined petitioning—that we may perceive the use of the whole body and so may be compelled to recognize the real vital union which Divine Grace has made—and daily maintains among the people of God. Is it not a happy thought, dear Friends, that the very poorest and most obscure Church member can add something to the body's strength?

We cannot all preach. We cannot all rule. We cannot all give gold and silver—but we can all contribute our prayers. There is no convert, though he is but two or three days old in Divine Grace, but can pray. There is no bedridden Sister in Jesus who cannot pray. There is no sick, aged, imbecile, obscure, illiterate, or penniless Believer who cannot add his supplications to the general stock. This is the Church's riches. We put boxes at the door that we may receive your offerings to God's cause—remember there is a spiritual chest within the Church into which we should all drop our loving intercessions, as into the treasury of the Lord. Even the widow *without* her two mites can give her offering to *this* treasury. See, then, dear Friends, what union and communion there are among the people of God, since there are certain mercies which are only bestowed while the saints unitedly pray.

How we ought to feel this bond of union! How we ought to pray for one another! How, as often as the Church meets together for supplication, should we all make it our bounded duty to be there! I would that some of you who are absent from the Prayer Meeting upon any little excuse would reflect how much you rob us all. The Prayer Meeting is an invaluable institution, ministering strength to all other meetings and agencies. Are there not many of you who might, by a little pinching of your time and pressing of your labors, come among us a little oftener? And what if you should lose a customer now and then, do you not think that this loss could be well made up to you by your gains on other days? Or if not so, would not the spiritual profit much more than counterbalance any little temporal loss? "Not forgetting the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is."

We are now prepared for a further observation. This *united prayer should especially be made for the ministers of God*. It is for them, peculiarly, that this public prayer is intended. Paul asks for it—"Brethren, pray for us." And all God's ministers to the latest time will ever confess that this is the secret source of their strength. The prayers of the people must be the might of the ministers. Shall I try to show you why the minister, more than any other man in the Church, needs the earnest prayers of the people? Is not *his position the most perilous*? Satan's orders to the hosts of Hell are, "Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the ministers

of God.” He knows if he can once smite through the heart one of these, there will be a general confusion. For if the champion is dead, then the people fly.

It is around the standard bearer that the fight is thickest. There the battle-axes ring upon the helmets. There the arrows are bent upon the armor, for the enemy knows that if he can cut down the standard, or cleave the skull of its bearer, he will strike a heavy blow and cause deep discouragement. Press around us, then, you men at arms! Knights of the red cross rally for our defense, for the fight grows hot! We beseech you, if you elect us to the office of the ministry, stand fast at our side in our hourly conflicts. I noticed on returning from Rotterdam, when we were crossing the bar at the mouth of the Maas, where by reason of a neap tide and a bad wind, the navigation was exceedingly dangerous, that orders were issued—“All hands on deck!”

So methinks the life of a minister is so perilous, that I may well cry, “All hands on deck”—every man to prayer! Let even the weakest saint become instant in supplication. The minister, standing in such a perilous position, has, moreover, *a solemn weight of responsibility resting on him*. Every man should be his brother’s keeper in a measure, but woe to the watchmen of God if they are not faithful, for at their hands shall the blood of souls be required. At their door shall God lay the ruin of men if they preach not the Gospel fully and faithfully.

There are times when this burden of the Lord weighs upon God’s ministers until they cry out in pain as if their hearts would burst with anguish. I marked the captain as we crossed that bar throwing the lead, himself, into the sea. And when one asked why he did not let the sailors do it, he said, “At this point, just now, I dare not trust any man but myself to heave the lead, for we have hardly six inches between our ship and the bottom.” And, indeed, we felt the vessel touch once or twice most unpleasantly. So there will come times with every preacher of the Gospel—if he is what he should be—when he will be in dread suspense for his hearers. He will not be able to discharge his duty by proxy, but must personally labor for men—not even trusting himself to preach—but calling upon his God for help since he is now overwhelmed with the burden of men’s souls.

Oh, do pray for us! If God gives us to you, and if you accept the gift most cheerfully, do not so despise both God and us as to leave us penniless and poverty-stricken because your prayers are withheld. Moreover, the preservation of the minister *is one of the most important objects to the Church*. You may lose a sailor from the ship, and that is very bad, both for him and for you. But if the pilot should fall over, or the captain should be smitten with sickness, or the helmsman be washed from the wheel, then what is the vessel to do? Therefore, though prayer is to be put up for every other person in the Church, yet for the minister is it to be offered first and foremost, because of the position which he occupies.

And then, *how much more is asked of him than of you?* If you are to keep a private table for individual instruction, he is, as it were, to keep a *public* table, a feast of good things for all comers. And how shall he do this unless his Master gives him rich provisions? You are to shine as a candle in a house—the minister has to be as a lighthouse—to be seen far across the deep. And how shall he shine the whole night long unless he is

trimmed by his Master, and fresh oil is given him from Heaven? His influence is wider than yours—if it is for evil, he shall be a deadly upas, with spreading boughs poisoning all beneath his shadow. But if God makes him a star in His right hand, his ray of light shall cheer with its genial influence whole nations, and whole periods of time. If there is any truth in all this, I implore you, yield us generously and constantly the assistance of your prayers.

I find that in the original, the word for, “helping together,” implies very earnest WORK. Some people’s prayers have no work in them. But the only prayer which prevails with God is a real working-man’s prayer—where the petitioner, like a Samson, shakes the gates of Mercy, and labors to pull them up rather than be denied an entrance. We do not want *fingertip* prayers, which only touch the burden—we need *shoulder* prayers—which bear a load of earnestness, and are not to be denied their desire. We do not want those dainty runaway knocks at the door of mercy, which professors give when they show off at Prayer Meetings. We ask for the knocking of a man who means to have, and means to stop at Mercy’s gate till it opens and all his need shall be supplied.

The energetic, vehement violence of the man who is not to be denied, but intends to carry Heaven by storm until he wins his heart’s desire—this is the prayer which ministers covet of their people. Melancthon, it is said, derived great comfort from the information that certain poor weavers, women and children, had met together to pray for the Reformation. Yes, Melancthon—there was solid ground for comfort here. Depend on it, it was not Luther only, but the thousands of poor persons who sung psalms at the plow-tail, and the hundreds of serving men and women who offered supplications, that made the Reformation what it was.

We are told of Paulus Phagius, a celebrated Hebrew scholar, very useful in introducing the Reformation into this country, that one of his frequent requests of his younger scholars was that they would continue in prayer, so that God might be pleased to pour out a blessing in answer to them. Have I not said a hundred times that all the blessings that God has given us here, all the increase to our Church, has been due, under God, to your earnest, fervent supplications? There have been Heaven-moving seasons both in this house and at New Park Street. We have had times when we have felt we could die sooner than not be heard. When we carried our Church on our bosom as a mother carries her child. When we felt a yearning and a travailing in birth for the souls of men.

We may truly say, when we see our Church daily increasing, and the multitudes still hanging upon our lips to listen to the Word, “What has God worked?” Shall we now cease from our prayers? Shall we now say unto the Great High Priest, “It is enough”? Shall we now pluck the glowing coals from the altar and quench the burning incense? Shall we now refuse to bring the morning and evening lambs of prayer and praise to the sacrifice? O children of Ephraim, being armed and carrying bows, will you turn your backs in the day of battle? The flood is divided before you. The Jordan is driven back! Will you refuse to march through the depths? God, even your God, goes up before you. The shout of a King is heard in the midst of your hosts!

Will you now be recreant and refuse to go up and possess the land? Will you now lose your first love? Shall “Ichabod” be written upon the fore-

front of this tabernacle? Shall it be said that God has forsaken you? Shall the day come in which the daughters of Philistia shall rejoice, and the sons of Syria shall triumph? If not, to your knees again, with all the force of prayer! If not, to your vehement supplications once more! If not, if you would not see good blighted and evil triumphant, clasp hands again—and in the name of Him who ever lives to intercede—once more be prevalent in prayer that the blessing may again descend! “You also helping together by prayer for us.”

II. We must now EXCITE YOU TO PRAISE. Praise should always follow answered prayer. The mist of earth’s gratitude should rise as the sun of Heaven’s love warms the ground. Has the Lord been gracious to you, and inclined His ear to the voice of your supplication? Then praise Him as long as you live. Deny not a song to Him who has answered your prayer, and given you the desire of your heart. To be silent over God’s mercies is to incur the guilt of shocking ingratitude, and ingratitude is one of the worst of crimes.

I trust, dear Friends, you will not act as basely as the nine lepers, who after they had been healed of their leprosy, returned not to give thanks unto the healing Lord. To forget to praise God is to refuse to benefit ourselves, for praise, like prayer, is exceedingly useful to the spiritual man. It is a high and healthful exercise. To dance, like David, before the Lord, is to quicken the blood in the veins, and make the pulse beat at a healthier rate. Praise gives to us a great feast, like that of Solomon, who gave to every man a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine.

Praise is the most heavenly of Christian duties. The angels pray not, but they cease not to praise both day and night. To bless God for mercies received is to benefit our fellow men—“the humble shall hear thereof and be glad.” Others who have been in like circumstances shall take comfort if we can say, “Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together, this poor man cried, and the Lord heard him.” Tongue-tied Christians are a sad dishonor to the Church. We have some such—some whom the devil has gagged—and the loudest music they ever make is when they are champing the bit of their silence. I would, my Brothers and Sisters, that in all such cases the tongue of the dumb may sing.

To go a step further here. As praise is good and pleasant, blessing man and glorifying God, *united praise has a very special commendation*. United praise is like music in concert. The sound of one instrument is exceedingly sweet, but when hundreds of instruments, both wind and stringed, are all combined, then the orchestra sends forth a noble volume of harmony. The praise of one Christian is accepted before God like a grain of incense, but the praise of many is like a censor full of frankincense smoking up before the Lord. Combined praise is an anticipation of Heaven, for in that general assembly they all, together, with one heart and voice, praise the Lord—

**“Ten thousand thousand are their tongues,
But all their joys are one.”**

Public praise is very agreeable to the Christian himself. How many burdens has it removed? I am sure when I hear the shout of praise in this house it warms my heart. It is at times a little too slow for my taste, and I must urge you to quicken your pace, that the rolling waves of majestic praise may display their full force! Yet with all drawbacks, to my heart

there is no music like yours. My Dutch friends praise the Lord so very slowly that one might very well go to sleep, lulled by their lengthened strains. Even there, however, the many voices make a grand harmony of praise.

I love to hear God's people sing when they really do sing, not when it is a *drawing* out somewhere between harmony and discord. O for a sacred song, a shout of lofty praise in which every man's soul beats the time, and every man's tongue sounds the tune—and each singer feels a high ambition to excel his fellow in gratitude and love! There is something exceedingly delightful in the union of true hearts in the worship of God—and when these hearts are expressed in *song*—how sweet the charming sounds. I think we ought to have a Praise Meeting once a week. We have a Prayer Meeting every Monday, and a Prayer Meeting every Saturday, and a Prayer Meeting every morning, but why do we not have a *Praise Meeting*? Surely seasons should be set apart for services made up of praise from beginning to end. Let us try the plan at once.

As I said about united prayer, that it should be offered specially for ministers, *so should united praise often take the same aspect*. The whole company should praise and bless God for the mercy rendered to the Church through its pastors. Hear how our Apostle puts it again—"That for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons, thanks may be given by many on our behalf." Brethren, we ought to praise God for good ministers *that they live*—for when they die much of their work dies with them. It is astonishing how a reformation will press on while Luther and Calvin live, and how it will cease as soon as the reformers die.

The spirits of good men are immortal only in a sense. The Churches of God in this age are like the Israelites in the times of the Judges. When the judges died they went after graven images again. And it is so now. While God spares the man, the Church prospers, but when the man dies, the zeal which he blew to a flame smolders among the ashes in nine cases out of ten, if not in ninety-nine out of every hundred. The prosperity of a Church rests on the minister's life. God so ordains it to humble us. There should be gratitude, then, for spared life.

But there should be great gratitude for *preserved character*, for oh, when a minister falls, what a disgrace it is! Why, when you read in the police reports the sad case of the Rev. Mr. _____, who chose to call himself a Baptist minister, everybody says, "What a shocking thing! What a bad set the Baptists must be." Now, any fool in the world may call himself a Baptist minister. Our liberty is so complete that no law or order exists. Any man who can get a dozen to listen to him preach is a minister, at least to them. Therefore you cannot suppose but what there will be some hypocrites who will take the name in order to get some sort of reputation.

If the true minister is kept and made to hold fast his integrity, there should be constant gratitude to God on his behalf. If the minister is kept *well supplied with goodly matter*. If he is like a springing well. If God gives him to bring out of His treasury things both new and old to feed His people, there should be hearty thanks. And if he is kept *sound*, if he goes not aside to philosophy on the one hand, nor to a narrowness of doctrine on the other, there should be thanksgiving there. If God gives to the masses the will to hear him, and above all, if souls are converted and saints are edified, there should be never-ceasing honor and praise to God.

Ah, I am talking now about what you all know, and you just nod your heads to it, and think there is not much in it. But if you were made to live in Holland for a little time you would soon appreciate these remarks. While traveling there, I stayed in houses with godly men—men of God with whom I could hold sweet communion—who cannot attend what was once their place of worship. Why not? “Sir,” they say, “can I go to a place of worship when the most of the ministers deny every Word of Scripture? Not those of the Reformed Church only, but of every sect in Holland! How can I listen to the traitors who swear to the Calvinistic or Lutheran articles, and then go into the pulpit and deny the reality of the resurrection, or assert that the ascension of Jesus is a mere spiritual parable?”

I find that in the Netherlands they are fifty years in advance of us in infidelity. We shall soon catch up with them if gentlemen of a certain school I know of are suffered to multiply. The Dutch Divines have taken great strides in Neologism, till now the people love the Truth of God and there are multitudes that are willing to hear it. But these are compelled absolutely to refuse to go to Church at all, lest by any means they should give countenance to the heretical and false doctrines which are preached to them every Sunday.

Ah, if God were once to take away from England the ministers who preach the Gospel boldly and plainly, you would cry to God to give you the candlestick back again. We may indeed say of England—

“With all your faults I love you still.”

We have a colonial bishop who avows his unbelief. We have a few men of all denominations who are quietly sliding from the Truth. But, thank God they are nothing as of yet. They are but as a drop in a bucket compared to the Churches of Christ, and those among us who are not quite as Calvinistic as we might wish. I thank God, there are many who never dispute the inspiration of Scripture, nor doubt the great Truth of justification by faith. We have still preserved among us men that are faithful to God, and preach the whole Truth as it is in Jesus.

Be thankful for your ministers, I say again, for if you were placed where some Believers are, you would cry out to your God—“Lord, send us back Your Prophets. Send us a famine of bread or a famine of water, but send us not a famine of the Word of God!”

I ask for myself this morning, as your minister, your thanksgivings to be mingled with mine in praising God for the help which He has vouchsafed to me in the very arduous work of the last fortnight. Praise be to God for the acceptance which He gave me in that country among all ranks of the people. I speak to His praise and not to mine, for this has been a vow with me, that if God will give me a harvest, I will not have an ear of corn of it, but He shall have it all. I found, in all the places where I went, great multitudes of people, crowds who could not understand the preacher, but who wanted to see his face, because God had blessed his translated sermons to their souls.

Multitudes gave me the grip of brotherly kindness and, with tears in their eyes, invoked, in the Dutch language, every blessing upon my head. I hoped to preach to some fifties and hundreds, and instead of that, there were so many that the great cathedrals were not too large. This surprised me, and made me glad—and caused me to rejoice in God—and I ask you to rejoice with me. I thank God for the acceptance which He gave me

among all ranks of the people. While the poor crowded to shake hands, till they almost pulled me in pieces, it pleased God to move the heart of the Queen of Holland to send for me, and for an hour and a quarter I was privileged to talk with her concerning the things which make for our peace.

I sought no interview with her. It was her own wish. And then I lifted up my soul to God that I might talk of nothing but Christ, and might preach to her of nothing but Jesus. And so it pleased the Master to help me. And I left that very amiable lady, not having shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. Gratified was I, indeed, to find myself received cordially by all denominations, so that on the Saturday at Amsterdam I preached in the Mennonite Church in the morning, and at the Old Dutch Reformed Church in the evening. The next Sunday morning in the English Presbyterian Church, and then again, in the evening, in the Dutch Free Church.

Sometimes I was allowed to preach in the great cathedrals, as in the Dom Kirk at Utrecht, and in Peter's Kirk, at Leyden, not having the poor only, but the nobility and the gentry of the land, who, of course, could understand English better than most of the poor, who have had no opportunity of learning it. I felt, while going from town to town, the Master helping me continually to preach. I never knew such elasticity of spirit, such bounding of heart in my life before. And I come back, not wearied and tired, though preaching twice every day, but fuller of strength and vigor than when I first set out!

I give God the glory for the many souls I have heard of who have been converted through the reading of the printed sermons, and for the loving blessings of those who followed us to the water's edge with many tears, saying to us—"Do your diligence to come again before winter," and urging us once more to preach the Word in that land. There may be mingled with this some touch of egotism. The Lord knows whether it is so or not, but I am not conscious of it. I do praise and bless His name, that in a land where there is so much philosophy, He has helped me to preach His Truth so simply, that I never uttered a word as a mere doctrinalist, but I preached Christ and nothing but Christ. Rejoice with me, my dear Brothers and Sisters. I must have you rejoice in it, or if you will not, I must rejoice alone, but my loaf of praise is too great for me to eat it all.

III. And we come to a close. I have to urge THE JOYFUL CLAIMS which the Apostle gives in the twelfth verse, as a reason WHY THERE SHOULD BE PRAYER AND PRAISE. "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the Grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world and more abundantly to you."

Ah, after all, a man's comfort must come, next to the finished salvation of God, from the testimony of his own conscience. And to a minister, what a testimony it is that he has preached the Gospel in simplicity, to which there are two senses—preached it not with double-mindedness—saying one thing and meaning another. And he has preached it, not as oarsmen row—looking one way and pulling another—but preached it meaning what he said, having a single heart, desiring God's Glory and the salvation of men.

And what a blessing to have preached it simply, that is to say, without hard words, without polished phrases, never studying elocutionary graces, never straining after oratorical embellishments. How accursed must be the life of a man who profanes the pulpit to the dignity of eloquence! How desperate will be his deathbed when he remembers that he made an exhibition of his powers of speech rather than of the solid things which make for the winning of souls! That conscience may well be easy that can speak of having dealt with God's Truth in simplicity.

The Apostle says, also, that he had preached it with sincerity. That is, he had preached it meaning it, feeling it—preached it so that none could accuse him of being false. The Greek word has something in it of sunlight, and he is the true minister of God who preaches what he would wish to have hung up in the sunlight, or who has the sunlight shining right through him. I am afraid we are none of us like white glass—most of us are colored a little—but he is happy who seeks to get rid of the coloring matter as much as possible, so that the light of the Gospel may shine right straight, clear as it comes from the Sun of Righteousness, through him.

Paul had preached with simplicity and sincerity. And he adds, "Not with fleshly wisdom." Oh, what stories have I heard of what fleshly wisdom will do! And I have learned a lesson during the last fortnight which I would that England would learn. There are three schools of theological error over yonder, and each one leaps over the back of its fellow. Some of them hold that all the facts of Scripture are only myths. Others of them say that there are some good things in the Bible, though there are a great many mistakes. And others go further still, and fling the whole Bible away altogether as to its Inspiration, though they still preach it, and still lean on it, saying that they do that merely for the edification of the vulgar—merely holding it up for the sake of the masses—though I ought to add merely to get their living as well.

Sad! Sad! Sad that the Church has gone to such a length as that—the Old Dutch Reformed Church—the very mirror of Calvinism, standing fast and firm in its creeds to all the doctrines we love, and yet gone astray to latitudinarian and licentious liberty. Oh, how earnestly should we decry fleshly wisdom! I am afraid, dear Friends, that sometimes some of you, when you hear a minister, like him to put it pretty well, and you find fault unless he shows some degree of talent. I wonder whether that is not a sin? I am half inclined to think it is.

I sometimes think whether we ought not to look less every day to talent, and more and more to the matter of the Gospel that is preached. Whether if a man is blessed with elocutionary power we may, perhaps, be more profited by him—whether that is not a weakness. Whether we had not better go back to the days of fishermen once again, and give men no sort of education whatever, but just send them to preach the Truth of God simply. This, rather than go the length they are now going, giving men, I know not what, of all sorts of learning that is of no earthly use to them, but which only helps them to pervert the simplicity of God. I love that word in my text—"Not with fleshly wisdom."

And now I lay my claim, as my conscience bears me witness—I lay my claim to this boasting of our Apostle. I have preached God's Gospel in simplicity. I do not know how I can preach it more simply, nor can I more

honestly declare it. I have preached it sincerely—the Searcher of all hearts knows that. And I have not preached it with fleshly wisdom, and that for one excellent reason—that I have not any—and have been compelled to keep to the simple testimony of the Lord. But if I have done anything, it has been done by the Grace of God.

If any success has been achieved, it has been Divine Grace that has done it all. “And more especially to you.” For though our word has gone forth to many lands, and our testimony belts the globe, yet, “more especially to you.” You have we warned. You have we entreated. You have we exhorted. With you have we pleaded. Over you have we wept. For you have we prayed. To some of you we have been a spiritual parent in Christ. To many of you as a nursing father. To many of you as a teacher and an edifier in the Gospel. And we hope to *all* of you a sincere *friend* in Christ Jesus. Therefore do I claim your prayers—*yours* more than any other people’s.

And though there will be not a few who will remember us in their supplications, I do conjure *you*, inasmuch as it has been, “especially to you,” let me especially have your prayers. Some will say that it is unkind even for me to suppose that you do not pray. Well, I do not so suppose it out of unkindness, but there may be some who forget—some who forget to plead. Oh, do pray for me still! The whole congregation is not saved yet. There are some that hear us that are not yet converted. Plead with God for their sakes. There are some hard hearts unbroken! Ask God to make the hammer strike. And while there are some still unmelted, pray God to make the Word like a fire!

This great London needs to be stirred from end to end. Pray for all your ministers, that God may make them mighty. The Church wants more still of the loud voice of God to wake it from its sleep. Ask God to bless all His sent servants. Plead with Him with Divine energy, that so His kingdom may come, and His will may be done on earth as it is in Heaven.

O that you all believed in Jesus! For until you do, you cannot pray nor praise! O that you all believed in Jesus! Remember, this is the only way of salvation. Trust Jesus, for he that believes on Him is not condemned, but he that believes not is condemned already, because he believes not on the Son of God. Trust Jesus and you shall be saved. May Christ accept you now, for His own love’s sake. Amen.

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ALL THE PROMISES NO. 2657

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 14, 1900.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 31, 1882.**

***“For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen,
to the glory of God through us.”
2 Corinthians 1:20.***

As the result of a very simple incident, a sublime Truth of God may be proclaimed. It was so in the instance referred to in this chapter. These Corinthians had misrepresented the Apostle Paul and spoken ill of him. He might have ignored their unkindness and said nothing about it, but, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he was led to act otherwise and, while defending his own character for consistency, he also vindicated the consistency and truthfulness of God. We might never have had this precious verse if Paul had not been so ill-treated by these men of Corinth. They did him great wrong and caused him much sorrow of heart, for a man who was so sincere and upright could not but be sorely vexed by their unjust suspicions and misrepresentations. Yet you see how the evil was overruled by God for good and through their unsavory gossip and slander this sweet sentence was pressed out of Paul—“For all the promises of God in Christ are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God by us.

There are many things which, at first, we may regret, but for which we are afterwards exceedingly grateful. I have felt half inclined to thank the Pharisees and scribes for some of their cruel attacks upon our blessed Lord, Himself, for, in answering them, He has given us lessons which we now highly prize. Perhaps we might never have had those three wonderful parables of the lost sheep, the lost silver and the lost son, if those cavilers had not spoken evil of Him because all the publicans and sinners drew near to hear Him.

The fact was that Paul had intended to visit the Christians at Corinth, again, but he felt compelled to alter his decision and so he did not go to them, because he would only have gone in order to chastise or rebuke them, they had behaved so badly. In their folly and in their coolness towards the Apostle, they misconstrued his actions and they said, “We cannot rely upon his word and we do not know what he will do. He promised that he would come to us, but he has changed his mind.” The Apostle declares here that he did not use lightness, or fickleness, either in giving his conditional promise, or in retracting it. He was not accustomed to speak outside thinking what he was going to say. He was prompted by a

worthy motive when he made the proposition to go to them—and an equally good motive swayed him when he resolved not to go. He tells them that his mind was not of the “yes and no” order, but when he said, “yes,” he meant it. His yes was yes, and if he said, “no,” he meant it—his no was no.

This remark led the Apostle to further say that the Gospel which he preached was not of the “yes and no” kind. It was something certain, settled, positive, fixed—it was not a variable gospel, nor a deceptive gospel. It was not a chameleon gospel which changed its color according to the light which fell upon it, but it was a clear and distinct Gospel, given in all sincerity by the truthful and truth-loving Savior who never used words in a double sense, but who said what He meant and meant what He said! It was by this process of reasoning that the Apostle was led to the statement contained in our text concerning Christ—“All the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God by us.” That is now to be the theme of our meditation.

I. The first thing I notice in the text is the destiny OF THE PROMISES. Notice the Apostle’s words—“For all the promises of God in Him are yes.”

These promises were all made *according to the purpose of His own will*. We sometimes read, or hear, or speak of the promises written in God’s Word, but do not give them as much credit as if they were the promises of a friend, or of our father, or our brother! If we valued them more, we should believe them better. We have many proverbs to remind us what poor and frail things the promises of men are, but those of which Paul writes are “the promises of God.” Men often change their minds—even the Apostle did that and, therefore, he was wise to try to take the thoughts of those to whom he was writing off from the promises even of an Apostle, which were liable to change, and which might very properly not be carried out because of altered circumstances—and lead them away to the promises of God which are unfailing and unchangeable, and are always fulfilled to His Glory and to our profit. We know little what solemn things we are trifling with when we say that we cannot believe a certain promise. What? Has it come to this—that God’s own children cannot believe Him? Is it so, that we, who say that “we love Him because He first loved us,” yet add to that declaration, “but there are *some* of His promises which we cannot believe”? I am afraid that we talk far too flip-pantly about our unbelief and that we seek to shelter one another in it, instead of whipping ourselves out of it. To be unbelieving may be painful, but there is a more serious consideration than that, for it is sinful! It is heinous to the last degree when we feel—much more when we *express*—any incredulity with regard to “the promises of God.” Just turn that thought over in your minds for a minute or two and see whether it does not crimson your face with shame to think that you should have had any suspicion about the fulfillment of promises made by “God, who cannot lie.”

Even in the case of a man, a promise is something which comes from him and yet, in a sense, still remains with him. He cannot speak of a promise and let it blow away with the wind. It is his promise after he has uttered it and those to whom it was given can bring it back to him and

say, "That is your promise, will you not fulfill it?" If a man repudiates his own pledged word, he does, in fact, repudiate the fruit of himself, the outgoing of his own life! And every promise of God partakes of His Nature—there is something Divine in it, something which comes distinctly from God and which He will continue to acknowledge as His. Though it may have been spoken two, or three thousand years ago, or longer than that, yet it is still His promise and part and parcel of Himself. Well, then, if God will acknowledge it as His promise, shall I, to whom it is given in Infinite Mercy, doubt whether it is His promise or not? And shall I even venture to go further than that and, *knowing* it to be His promise, shall I begin to question how He can fulfill it, or whether He *will* fulfill it or not? God forbid! The dignity of the promise must not be insulted by our doubting it!

Kindly observe the position of the promise which is a very singular one. *It is a kind of link between the Divine thought and the Divine act.* It is not at all a necessary link, so far as God is concerned, but it is often a most necessary and consoling link to us. There is the eternal purpose that has always been in God's secret mind and His promise is the shadow which that purpose casts upon the revealed page. It is the Divine decree made manifest and it stands there—bright and sparkling, between the decree, which our eyes cannot and dare not look upon—and the blessed fulfillment which is to be our joy and delight forever! I confess that I cannot think of God's eternal purposes outside the utmost awe and reverence for, to me, there is something very solemn and impressive about them. I know that some people speak as though they would trample them in the mire if they could, but whenever I hear a word against the promises, the Providences, the decrees and the purposes of God, I feel inclined to do as a Negro slave did, under certain circumstances, in the presence of his master.

While waiting upon his master, who frequently took the name of God in vain and blasphemed it most terribly in his cursing, the black man bowed his head. His master asked him why he did so and he replied that it was because his soul was full of trembling at the very name of God and he wished to do Him reverence, even while He was being blasphemed and insulted. So, whenever I hear or read of anyone speaking or writing against the Divine decrees I at once feel anxious to bow my head and to prostrate myself in homage before that eternal mind which knows no new thought—for God knew all things from the beginning—and to adore that Infinite Wisdom which has planned everything from the flitting of a sparrow to the flight of the archangel! It is very wonderful to me to think of a promise in the Scriptures being virtually the manifestation of God's everlasting purposes. I might compare the purpose to God Himself—invisible—and the promise to the Incarnate God, who was born at Bethlehem and who came to earth to be seen of men. Think yet again of the promise of God and you will see how a sense of its dignity grows upon you while you are meditating upon it.

Consider, next, that *the Truth of God is irrevocably bound up with His promise.* If a man says, "Such a thing shall be done," he ought to do it if it is in his power. We have no right to break promises that we have made.

We feel that if we do, men will learn to distrust us and soon will care nothing at all for our promises. But, Beloved—and we speak with the utmost reverence concerning the Most High—His Character for truthfulness would be lost if His promises were not kept! And, while it would be an awful loss to us to miss what He has promised, it would be a far greater loss to Him to lose His truthfulness! We rejoice that, as a matter of fact, this is a thing which can *never* happen! All things except this are possible with God, but it is not possible for Him to be God and yet to fail in the fulfillment of His promises. The two ideas will not run together at all! If He is God, He must be true to His Truth, and He will be! So, when I read a promise in His Word, I read something which is as certain as a fact already accomplished, since, if it were not to come to pass, God's Glory would suffer an eclipse—and His veracity would be impugned. But that can never be!

Nor is the Truth of God the only attribute which would suffer if He failed to fulfill His promise, for *His immutability would also be put in jeopardy*. If He makes a promise, and yet does not fulfill it in due time, then He must have changed. The motives which led to the making of the promise have now no influence over Him and He has become something different from what He was when He made the promise. But God must be immutable! It cannot be possible for Him to change for the better, for He is infinitely good! And, certainly, He cannot change for the worse, for, if He did, then He would be something less than He might be—and so He would not be God at all! Change is impossible to Him! He can never change His will, and His promise, as one of the most solemn declarations of His will, must be fulfilled when He has once made it. Surely, no one of us would wish or dare to deny either the truthfulness or the unchangeableness of God!

Further, *His power is bound up with His promise*. Shall it ever be said that God failed to keep His promise because He could not keep it, or because He miscalculated His resources, or His arm waxed short, or the great deeps of His eternal Godhead became dried up? No! That cannot be, for what He has promised He will always be able to perform.

So, then, if we slight the promises of God, we slight also His Truth, His Immutability and His power.

And we also seriously *compromise His mercy and His love*. It was love that moved Him to give the promise. He might have bestowed the blessing outside promising to do so and that would have been a gracious proof of His love. But, because the promise has a sweet, consoling power in it, He has been pleased to give it to us as a further proof of His love. And if He does not grant the blessing at once when He promises it, the delay is all for loving reasons. But, having given the promise, He must keep it because of His love. His love would be changed if it did not constrain Him to fulfill what it caused Him to promise. But that can never be and we must not—we dare not—cast such a slight upon the promise of God as to imagine, for a moment, that it can remain unfulfilled!

So much, then, concerning the dignity of the promises.

II. Still keeping closely to the text, I want you to notice, next, the range of the PROMISES, for Paul here speaks of “the promises of God.”

There is a prospect for you—"All the promises." There are very many of them and they are found in both the Old and the New Testaments. There was one given at the gates of the Garden of Eden, very near the commencement of human history. There is another right at the end of the Revelation. "Surely I come quickly." The Bible is a Book of precious promises! All the way we have to travel, they seem to be like a series of stepping stones across the stream of time, and we may march from one promise to another and never wet our feet all the way from earth to Heaven if we do but know how to keep our eyes open and to find the right promise to step upon. "All the promises"—the Old Testament ones as well as those in the New Testament—are sure and steadfast! The conditional promises—if we believe, and if we repent—God will certainly fulfill. And the unconditional ones—the promises of the Everlasting Covenant in which He pledges Himself to give men repentance and to give them new hearts and right spirits—He will keep them, too!

God will fulfill all temporal promises. Bread shall be given you and water shall be assured unto you if you are the Lord's children. He will keep His promises about temporal affairs as well as those which concern everlasting joys and blessings. "No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." You may speak of the promises in any way that you please—and then you may say that the Lord will keep them all! You may pick out the promise to the prisoner, the promise to the sinner, the promise to the backslider, the promise to the doubting one, the promise to the aged, the promise to the young, the promise to her that halts, the promise to the barren woman, the promise to the strong, the promise to those who have full assurance of faith, the promise to those who love the Lord, the promise to those who delight themselves in the Lord—and then you may confidently declare, concerning all these promises to all sorts and conditions of people—that the Lord will surely keep every one of them!

"All the promises." Why, here is a grand granary full! Who can sort them all out? Promises of pardon to the seeking sinner! Promises of justification to the believing child! Promises of sanctification to him who is struggling against sin! Promises of the supply of all kinds of spiritual food to the flock of Christ! Promises of guidance! Promises of preservation! Promises of holy education! Promises of peace and joy! Promises of hope! Promises of the sustenance of our love! Promises for death! Promises for judgment! Promises for glory! Promises that reach to all eternity! "All the promises." What a range of vision this expression opens up! Go forth and lift up your eyes and gaze upon the stars. See whether you can number them all—do they not far exceed all your powers of mathematics? Yet, if you could count the stars, weigh them in scales and tabulate the measure of their light, you could not count the promises of God, or estimate their true value, or know how infinitely precious is the Divine Light which streams from them into a believing soul! If God does not fulfill a single promise to me for the next 50 years, I shall be perfectly satisfied to live on the promises, themselves, if my faith shall but be sustained by His Grace! I may fairly talk thus, for you would say, "I do not need a single penny to spend, as long as ever I live, if I can but always

have plenty of notes. I shall never care if I do not see a sovereign, again, so long as I can always have the promise of the Bank of England to pay me on demand all that I need!

So let it be with the promises of God! Men's promises are but breath, they would never feed us. But God's promises can satisfy us, for they are the substance of the things hoped for! And faith, the evidence of things not seen, rejoices to see that which is invisible, to lay hold of that which it cannot touch, and to feed upon that which, as yet, it cannot taste. Faith works wonders! It enables a man to project himself right into eternity! He sits down and sighs, and sorrows, and then he says to himself, "This will never do. I will trust in the Lord." And, in an instant, by faith, he walks the golden streets and sings the everlasting songs! He is not obliged to live in this narrow sphere of time and sense, for by faith he spreads his wings and like the lark, he ascends and sings. He soars far more rapidly than even the eagle and finds himself already enjoying the things which God has prepared for them that love Him! And so he is happy in the Lord.

III. Now I must turn to my third point, which is in the very heart of the text—"For *all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen.*" These words teach us THE STABILITY OF THE PROMISES.

The promises of God are very firm for, first, *they are settled on an everlasting basis*, for they are promises in Christ. As I look at the text, I can see two words leaping up out of it. And as I look at it again, I see the same two words leaping up again—"in Him." "All promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen." There is a great thought which I cannot fully open up to you, now—you must lie awake tonight and think it over and pray over it—"All the promises of God in Him." What a great Christ you have, to have "all the promises of God" within Himself! The range of the promises seems to be infinite and yet Christ is great enough to be the circumference that shuts them all in! I rejoice in this great Truth of God, that "all the promises of God" are in Christ Jesus our Lord!

And in Christ they are said to be, "Yes." That is a Greek word, so this is a message to Gentiles. "And in Him Amen." That is a *Hebrew* word and is, therefore, for the Jews. You may have noticed how whenever the Holy Spirit wishes to impress any Truth upon us with more than usual solemnity, He uses two languages, as in the case of, "Abba, Father." In this way, all the saints of God, whether they are Jews or Gentiles, may have their portion of meat in due season.

"All the promises of God in Him are "Yes." That is, they are certain. "And in Him Amen." That is, they are accomplished. We may say after every promise of God, "Yes, so it is. Amen, so let it be." There is but a slight variation in the meaning of the words, but it is enough to let us see that there is no tautology here, not even if the words are translated, "All the promises of God are Yes." That is, true. "And they are Amen." That is, they shall be accomplished in Christ Jesus.

The stability of the promises in Christ is established beyond all hazard. First, because Christ is God's Witness. If anyone asks, "Did God make this promise?" Christ comes forward and says, "Yes, I heard Him say it." Christ is "the faithful and true Witness." He bears witness of God and for

God to the sons of men. And He sets His seal to every Divine promise and certifies it with His, “Yes and Amen.”

Next, the promises are sure in Christ because He is God’s Representative. He is always doing the Father’s will, even as He has done it in the past. When He came to earth and died upon the Cross, He accomplished the work of redemption upon which God’s heart was set and He is still doing the Father’s will. Whatever Jesus has said, God has said, for He speaks the Words of God. The Father sent Him into the world as His Representative and He spoke not merely His own Words, but the Words of the Father who sent Him.

Then, next, Jesus, is the Surety of the Covenant. The promise was first made to Adam. If Adam keeps the command of God and does not touch the forbidden fruit, he and those whom he represents shall have all manner of good things. But Adam transgressed the Law of the Lord so that Covenant was made void. The Second Covenant is on this wise. If Jesus Christ, the Second Adam, will do this and that, then all whom He represents shall have the blessings guaranteed in the Covenant. The Lord Jesus has done all that He agreed to do—He has kept the Law and so has honored it—and He has also died and borne the sentence of the Law. He has thus offered both an active and a passive obedience to the Law of God and now all the promises of God must be kept to Christ, for they are, “Yes and Amen” in Him. Take those great promises in the 53rd of Isaiah—“He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied: by His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong; because He has poured out His soul unto death and He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.” These are promises, first to the Head, and then to us, the members of His mystical body—first to the Second Adam and then to all who, by a living faith, are included in His federal Headship. So the promises are, “Yes and Amen” in Him.

And as long as Jesus Christ lives, they are also, “Yes and Amen” in this sense—that He is seeing to their being carried out. He is interceding before the Throne of God for us that the promises of God may meet our distresses. O Brothers and Sisters, all the promises must be true in Christ because God spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all! And, having given Him, will He not, with Him, also freely give us all things? If God had meant to run back from any promise, He would surely have run back from the promise to give His only-begotten Son! But, having fulfilled *that*, what promise is there that He will ever break? Moreover, in the gift of Christ He has virtually and really given us all things, for if Christ is yours, all things are yours! All things are in Christ, so, having Him, you possess all! There is no desire of your spirit, or need of your nature that shall remain unsatisfied when once you have Christ as yours. You have Heaven, earth and all things that are or ever shall be, encompassed in that blessed One whose very name is, “the Amen, the faithful and true Witness.” O Beloved, rejoice with all your heart that every promise of God is sure in Christ Jesus to all His true seed!

IV. Now let us consider the last words of the text. “For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, *to the glory of God through us.*” This impression teaches us **THE RESULT OF THE PROMISES.**

So, then, dear Friends, the promises of God are His Glory. There is no pretended god that has ever been supposed to make promises like those of our God. Turn to the Koran and see what Mohammed has promised. Ah, me! What a beggarly array of promises does he set before his followers! Turn to Brahma and Buddha and read all the so-called sacred books written by their priests, and see what their gods are said to have promised. You can put the essence of it all into an eggshell and not even see it! But our God has promised more than Heaven and earth can hold! He has promised to give Himself to His people! He is the great Promiser—the mighty Promiser. I set the promises of God in comparison and contrast with all the promises that were ever made in connection with all false systems of religion under Heaven and unhesitatingly declare that there are none that can compare for an instant with the promises of the Most High!

It was greatly to God’s Glory to make those promises all sure, for they all depended at first upon the condition that Christ should obey the Father’s will. And He has done it and oh, what a glory it is to God that, “He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life!” The gift of the Redeemer, the life of the Redeemer, the death of the Redeemer, the intercession of the Redeemer, the making the promises sure—all this is greatly to the Glory of God.

And now it is to the Glory of God to keep every promise that He has made. There is not one which, if it were broken, would redound to His praise or increase His honor. No, and there is not one but, when it is kept, reflects fresh honor upon Him and brings still further renown to His ever-blessed name!

If I had time, I would enlarge upon all these points, but as it is already past our usual hour for closing the service, I must end my discourse with a brief reference to the last words in our text. “To the glory of God by us.” While I was thinking earnestly over my text, I fancied that the two little words, “by us,” seemed to spoil that grand word, “glory,” and that greater word, “God.” “To the glory of God”—“by us.” What a contrast! It is even more marked than in that old story of the organ-blower who would persist in saying, “We did it,” when all that *he* did was just pump the air into the organ. Must we be mentioned at all? Is it not a pity to bring us in?

But, as I turned the subject over in my mind, I thought, “Oh, no, no—it is quite right to bring us in here!” Now look. God wants to have the glory of being merciful. Yes, but He cannot have that glory unless there is a sinner somewhere to whom He can show mercy. A sinner is an essential part of the whole business! Suppose that the king who made the great supper had said to his servants, “Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in”—and that they had come back to him and said, “There is not a single creature under the hedges or in the highways! There is not even a solitary beggar anywhere about the streets or lanes of the city!” Then he could not have had the feast, whatever dainties he might have prepared, if he had not anybody to eat them. It

would have been a mournful business to have the oxen and fatlings killed and heaped upon the tables, yet nobody to sit down to partake of them. Even the king, if he is to have honor, must be dependent for once on the beggars in the highways and hedges! Is not this amazing? God wants to show His power in pardoning my sin, but He cannot do it if I have no sin to be pardoned! And if I do not come to Him to be pardoned and do not ask for His mercy, then it lies like dead capital never spent! The Lord delights to help the weak—it is His joy to do it. But suppose that there is no weak person anywhere—what is to happen then?

Ah, but I think I hear the weak souls crying out, “By us! By us! ‘To the glory of God by us.’ He delights to help the poor and needy and He cannot do so if there are not some poor and needy ones for Him to help. So, when we seek His aid, it is ‘to the glory of God by us.’” And the Lord delights to make His strength perfect in our weakness. I think I hear Paul crying out and He is the man who wrote these words, “by us”—“God is glorified by my weakness.” And I hear many of you who are trying to serve your Lord and Master, saying, “Ah, then, that is why such weak ones as we feel ourselves to be used, ‘to the glory of God by us.’”

Come along, then, all you who need God’s mercy. You have laid hold of one of His promises and feel that you need and must have all that it includes. With utmost reverence would I say that God Himself cannot be glorified by His promises without you! If He intends to feed the hungry, then the hungry are essential to the accomplishment of His purpose! If He would clothe the naked, then there must be naked ones for Him to clothe! Is there not a mine of comfort here for you who have been almost outside hope? I trust that some of you poor lost ones will say in your hearts, if you do not utter it with your voices, “Are we really essential to God’s Glory? Does God need our poverty, our sinfulness and our nothingness in order that He may, through them, display the greatness of His Grace? Then we will certainly come to Him just as we are.” Do so, I pray you. Come! Come!! Come!!! May the Holy Spirit, by His Omnipotent Grace draw you now, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 CORINTHIANS 1; 2:1.**

2 Corinthians 1:1. *Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia.* Paul is very jealous of his Apostleship. There were some in Corinth who denied it and, therefore, he takes care, at the very commencement of this Epistle—as he does in beginning most of his letters—to write concerning himself, “Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God.” But with what humility of mind does he associate Timothy with himself! Frequently he puts Timothy, his own convert, one so young and so much beneath him in position and attainments, on a level with himself! And if we also can help our younger brethren, how willingly should we put ourselves side by side with them!

2. *Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.* What a wonderful source of Grace and peace! “God our Fa-

ther.” How can He give other than Grace and peace to His own children? “And from the Lord Jesus Christ,” our redeeming Savior, who has given Himself for us, and who has engraved our names on the palms of His hands—is there not an abundant supply of Grace and peace to be found in the very music of His name?

3. *Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort.* Let me read those titles again. “The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Father of mercies. The God of all comfort.” Do not the second and third titles derive much of their significance from the first one? It is because God is “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” that He becomes “the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort.”

4. *Who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.* Experience teaches the first rank of God’s servants—and their experience of sorrow and consolation is often the means of enabling them to be the means of blessing to others. Almost everything that the minister of the Gospel enjoys or endures will be found to be sent to him for the elect’s sake, that he may know how to teach them the lessons he has, himself, learned.

5. *For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds by Christ.* Are we not willing to endure the greater suffering that we may enjoy the greater consolation?

6. *And whether we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we are comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.* We receive both suffering and consolation for the sake of others and we are bound to give out, again, all that we receive. It is the essence of the true Christian life, first to be dependent upon God for everything, and then to give forth to all around us that which God has poured into our spirit. The heart would soon die if it pumped in the blood and never pumped it out again—but it is by that perpetual process of giving out what it has received that it continues in life! And the highest form of Christian life is the reception of all that comes to us out of the fullness of Christ and then the free giving out of what He has bestowed.

7-10. *And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so shall you be also of the consolation. For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: but we had the sentence of death in ourselves that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead: who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver: in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us.* No doubt Paul did preach all the better and with the greater confidence in God because he preached, like Richard Baxter, “as a dying man to dying men.” His life was frequently in danger and on this occasion it was so in a very remarkable degree. So, when he was again able to testify for his Master, he realized that he had no time to waste and, therefore, he wrote and spoke with the utmost earnestness. He felt himself in jeopardy every hour and, therefore, he fell back upon

his God and trusted alone in Him. Anything that works to this end for us, also, is an undisguised blessing.

11. *You also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf.* Much prayer leads to much thanksgiving. It should be a great cause for joy when numbers of Christians unite in praying for any Christian minister, for they will also unite in praising God on his behalf when that which they asked for him is granted!

12. *For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshy wisdom, but by the Grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world and more abundantly to you-ward.* There had been whispers among these Corinthians that Paul had concealed a double meaning in some of his writings, and also that he had made a promise which he never intended to keep. So now he calls upon them to bear witness that he never was a man to act according to policy, but he was a straightforward, honest, plain-dealing man, full of godly sincerity and unselfishness. He had abundantly proved all this to the Corinthians, for, lest they should have any occasion for speaking against him, he would not take at their hands the support to which he was entitled—but he labored at his trade of tent-making that they might not have anything to say concerning him except that he was disinterested in all his endeavors to serve them. Paul evidently felt their unkindness very much, but his conscience assured him that their accusations were unjust.

13, 14. *For we write none other things unto you than what you read or acknowledge; and I trust you shall acknowledge even to the end; as also you have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as you also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus.* See how Paul restrains himself in writing to these people? He had good cause to be offended, for they had touched him in a point about which he was very jealous, namely, his integrity. But here he speaks with great moderation of spirit—and herein lay his strength. Every Christian, when he has to defend himself against false accusations, should use soft words and hard arguments.

15, 16. *And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that you might have a second benefit; and to pass by you into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia unto you, and of you to be brought on my way toward Judaea.* He had planned to see them in his going and also in his returning, but he could not carry out the idea which was in his mind. The wisest of men often find their plans impracticable—and even an Inspired man is not always inspired! God guides him when guidance is absolutely necessary, but, at other times, He leaves him to arrange according to his own judgment—and to find out that his judgment is not Infallible. “I had a mind,” he says, “to come and see you twice.”

17. *When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? “Did I make up my mind hastily and then did I change it all of a sudden without good reason? Had I failed to think before I decided and, therefore, did I find it necessary to revoke my promise?”*

17, 18. *Or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yes, yes, and no, no? But as God is true, our*

word toward you was not yes and no. He binds up his own ministry with himself, and he says, "You charge me with being fickle, but you know better! You are well aware that I am not one who says one thing, today, and another thing tomorrow. You know that I have been open and aboveboard in all my dealings with you, and that I have never stooped to policy and craftiness, but have spoken that which I believed, whatever might come of it."

19. *For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not Yes, and No, but in Him was Yes. He declares that he preached the Truth of God straightforwardly and consistently, and that he did not say one thing, one day, and another thing a few days later.*

20. *For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us. Christ is no quicksand, slipping and sliding away, and so ruining those who cling to Him. He is the Rock of Ages and He stands fast forever. His Gospel is one and the same at all times. You see that as Paul grows warm, he advances in his argument. If the Corinthians suspected his honesty in making a promise, the next thing they would do would be to suspect the Gospel—and after that they would suspect Christ, Himself, who is the Truth!*

21-23. *Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us, is God, who has also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts. Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth. "If I had come, I would have been obliged to rebuke you and reprove you. I would have had to be like an armed man going to battle, or an officer of the law carrying out the sentence pronounced upon a criminal, but I could not bear to do that, so I felt it would be better and wiser to stay away and, therefore, I did not visit you as I had proposed."*

24. *Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith you stand.*

Chapter 2. Verse 1. *But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness. And they ought to have had enough confidence in him to know that he had a very good and sufficient reason for not fulfilling his conditional promise.*

Let us, dear Friends, who, are one in Christ, trust each other, for, if suspicion is once bred among the people of God, it will mean farewell to all fellowship.

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

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

THE TWO EFFECTS OF THE GOSPEL

NO. 26

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MAY 27, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL STRAND.**

***“For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved and in them that perish. To the one we are the savor of death unto death. And to the other the savor of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?”
2 Corinthians 2:15, 16.***

THESE are the words of Paul, speaking on the behalf of himself and his Brothers, the Apostles. They are true concerning all those who by the Spirit are chosen, qualified and thrust into the vineyard to preach God's Gospel. I have often admired the 14th verse of this Chapter, especially when I have remembered from whose lips the words fell, “Now thanks be unto God, which always causes us to triumph in Christ and makes manifest the savor of His knowledge by us in every place.” Picture Paul, the aged, the man who had been beaten five times with “forty stripes save one,” who had been dragged forth for dead, the man of great sufferings who had passed through whole seas of persecution—only think of him saying, at the close of his ministerial career, “Now thanks be unto God, which always causes us to triumph in Christ”! To triumph when shipwrecked, to triumph when scourged, to triumph in the stocks, to triumph under the stones, to triumph amidst the hiss of the world! To triumph when he was driven from the city and shook off the dust from his feet—to triumph at all times in Christ Jesus! Now, if some ministers of modern times should talk thus, we would think little of it for they enjoy the world's applause. They can always go to their place in ease and peace. They have an admiring people and no open foes—against them not a dog does move his tongue—everything is safe and pleasant. For them to say, “Now thanks be unto God, which always causes us to triumph” is a very little thing. But for one like Paul—so trampled on, so tried, so distressed, to say it—then, we say, out spoke a hero—here is a man who had true faith in God and in the Divinity of his mission!

And, my Brothers, how sweet is that consolation which Paul applied to his own heart amid all his troubles. “Notwithstanding all,” he says, “God makes known the savor of His knowledge by us in every place.” Ah, with this thought, a minister may lay his head upon his pillow—“God makes

manifest the savor of His knowledge.” With this he may shut his eyes when his career is over and with this he may open them in Heaven—“God has made known by me the savor of His knowledge in every place.” Then follow the words of my text, of which I shall speak, dividing it into three particulars. Our first remark shall be that *although the Gospel is “a sweet savor” in every place, yet it produces different effects in different persons*—“to one it is the savor of death unto death. And to the other the savor of life unto life.” Our second observation shall be, that *ministers of the Gospel are not responsible for their success*, for it is said, “We are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved and in them that perish.” And thirdly, *the Gospel minister’s place is by no means a light one*—his duty is very weighty. The Apostle, himself, said, “Who is sufficient for these things?”

I. Our first remark is that THE GOSPEL PRODUCES DIFFERENT EFFECTS. It must seem a strange thing, but it is strangely true that there is scarcely ever a good thing in the world of which some little evil is not the consequence. Let the sun shine in brilliance—it shall moisten the wax, it shall harden clay. Let it pour down floods of light on the tropics—it will cause vegetation to be extremely luxuriant, the richest and choicest fruits shall ripen and the fairest of all flowers shall bloom—but who does not know that there the worst of reptiles and the most venomous snakes are also brought forth? So it is with the Gospel. Although it is the very sun of righteousness to the world, although it is God’s best gift, although nothing can be in the least comparable to the vast amount of benefit which it bestows upon the human race, yet even of that we must confess that sometimes it is the “savor of death unto death.” But then we are not to blame the Gospel for this. It is not the fault of God’s Truth. It is the fault of those who do not receive it. It is the “savor of life unto life” to everyone that listens to its sound with a heart that is open to its reception. It is only “death unto death” to the man who hates the Truth, despises it, scoffs at it and tries to oppose its progress. It is of that character we must speak first.

1. The Gospel is to *some* men “a savor of death unto death.” Now, this depends very much upon what the Gospel is because there are some things called, “Gospel,” that are “a savor of death unto death” to everybody that hears them. John Berridge says he preached morality till there was not a moral man left in the village. And there is no way of injuring morality like legal preaching. The preaching of good works and the exhorting of men to holiness—as the means of salvation—is very much admired in theory—but when brought into practice, it is found not only ineffectual, but more than that—it becomes even “a savor of death unto

death.” So it has been found and I think even the great Chalmers, himself, confessed that for years and years before he knew the Lord, he preached nothing but morality and precepts. But he never found a drunkard reclaimed by strewing on him merely the evils of drunkenness. Nor did he find a swearer stop his swearing because he told him the heinousness of the sin. It was not until he began to preach the love of Jesus in His great heart of mercy—it was not until he preached the Gospel as it was in Christ—in some of its clearness, fullness, power and the Doctrine that, “by Grace you are saved, through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God,” that he ever met with success! But when he did preach salvation by faith, by shoals the drunkards came from their cups and swearers refrained their lips from evil speaking! By God’s Grace thieves became honest men and unrighteous and ungodly persons bowed to the scepter of Jesus. But you must confess, as I said before, that though the Gospel does in the main produce the best effect upon almost all who hear it either by restraining them from sin, or compelling them to Christ—it is a great fact and a solemn one, upon which I hardly know how to speak this morning—that to some men the preaching of Christ’s Gospel is “death unto death,” and produces evil instead of good.

(1.) And the first sense is this. *Many men are hardened in their sins by hearing the Gospel.* Oh, ‘tis terribly and solemnly true that of all sinners, some sanctuary sinners are the worst! Those who can dive deepest into sin and have the most quiet consciences and hardest hearts are some who are to be found in God’s own House! I know that a faithful ministry will often prick them and the stern denunciations of a Boanerges will frequently make them shake. I am aware that the Word of God will sometimes make their blood curdle within them. But I know (for I have seen the men) that there are many who turn the Grace of God into licentiousness and make even God’s Truth a stalking-horse for the devil and abuse God’s Grace to palate their sin. Such men have I found among those who hear the Doctrines of Grace in their fullness. They will say, “I am elect, therefore I may swear. I am one of those who were chosen of God before the foundation of the world and, therefore, I may live as I like.” I have seen the man who stood upon the table of a public house and grasping the glass in his hand, said, “Mates! I can say more than any of you. I am one of those who are redeemed with Jesus’ precious blood”—and then he drank his tumbler of ale and danced again before them and sang vile and blasphemous songs. Now, that is a man to whom the Gospel is “a savor of death unto death.” He hears the Truth, but he perverts it. He takes what is intended by God for his good and what does he do? He commits suicide with it! That knife which was given him to open the secrets of the

Gospel he drives into his own heart. That which is the purest of all Truth and the highest of all morality he turns into the panderer of his vice and makes it a scaffold to aid in building up his wickedness and sin. Are there any of you here like that man—who love to hear *the Gospel*, as you call it—and yet live impurely? Are there any here who can sit down and say you are the children of God and still behave like liege servants of the devil? Be it known unto you that you are liars and hypocrites, for the Truth is not in you at all! “If any man is born of God, he cannot sin.” God’s elect will not be allowed to fall into continual sin. They will never “turn the Grace of God into licentiousness.” But it will be their endeavor, as much as in them lies, to keep near to Jesus. Rest assured of this—“By their fruits you shall know them.” “A good tree cannot bring forth corrupt fruit; neither can an evil tree bring forth good fruit.” Such men, however, are continually turning the Gospel into evil. They sin with a high hand, from the very fact that they have heard what they consider excuses for their vice. There is nothing under Heaven, I conceive, more liable to lead men astray than a perverted Gospel. A Truth perverted is generally worse than a Doctrine which all know to be false. As fire, one of the most useful of the elements, can also cause the fiercest of conflagrations, so the Gospel, the best thing we have, can be turned to the vilest account. This is one sense in which it is “a savor of death unto death.”

(2.) But another. It is a fact that *the Gospel of Jesus Christ will increase some men’s damnation at the last great day*. Again, I startle myself when I have said it. For it seems too horrible a thought for us to venture to utter—that the Gospel of Christ will make Hell hotter to some men than it otherwise would have been. Men would all have sunk to Hell had it not been for the Gospel. The Grace of God reclaims “a multitude that no man can number.” It secures a countless army who shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.” But, at the same time, it causes those who reject it, their damnation to be even more dreadful. And let me tell you why.

First, *because men sin against greater light*. And the light we have is an excellent measure of our guilt. What a Hottentot might do without a crime would be the greatest sin to me because I am taught better. And what some even in London might do with impunity—set down, as it might be, as a sin by God, but not so exceedingly sinful—would be to me the very height of transgression because I have from my youth up been tutored to piety. The Gospel comes upon men like the light from Heaven. What a wanderer must he be who strays in the light! If he who is blind falls into the ditch, we can pity him, but if a man, with the light on his

eyeballs dashes himself from the precipice and loses his own soul, is not pity out of the question?—

***“How they deserve the deepest Hell,
That slight the joys above!
What chains of vengeance must they feel,
Who laugh at Sovereign Love!”***

It will increase your condemnation, I tell you all, unless you find Jesus Christ to be your Savior. To have had the light and not to walk by it shall be *the* condemnation, the very essence of it. This shall be the virus of the guilt—that the “light came into the world and the darkness comprehended it not.” For “men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.”

Again—it must increase your condemnation if you *oppose the Gospel*. If God devises a scheme of mercy and man rises up against it, how great must his sin be? Who shall tell the great guilt incurred by such men as Pilate, Herod and the Jews? Oh, who shall picture out, or even faintly sketch, the doom of those who cried, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” And who shall tell what place in Hell shall be hot enough for the man who slanders God’s minister, who speaks against His people, who hates His Truth, who would, if he could, utterly cut off the godly from the land? Ah, God help the infidel! God help the blasphemer! God save his soul—for of all men least would I choose to be that man! Do you think, Sirs, that God will not take account of what men have said? One man has cursed Christ. He has called Him a charlatan. Another has declared, (knowing that he spoke a lie), that the Gospel was otherwise. A third has proclaimed his licentious maxims and then has pointed to God’s Word and said, “There are worse things there!” A fourth has abused God’s ministers and held up their imperfections to ridicule. Do you think God shall forget all this at the Last Day? When His enemies come before Him, shall He take them by the hand and say, “The other day you did call My servant a dog and spit on him and for this I will give you Heaven”? Rather, if the sin has not been cancelled by the blood of Christ, will He not say, “Depart, cursed one, into the Hell which you did scoff at! Leave that Heaven which you did despise. And learn that though you said there was no God, this right arm shall teach you eternally the lesson that there is one! For he who discovers it not by My works of benevolence shall learn it by My deeds of vengeance—therefore depart, again, I say!”? It *shall* increase men’s Hell that they have opposed God’s Truth. Now, is not this a very solemn view of the Gospel, that it is, indeed, to many, “a savor of death unto death”?

(3.) Yet, once more. I believe *the Gospel makes some men in this world more miserable than they would be*. The drunkard could drink and could revel in his intoxication with greater joy if he did not hear it said, “All

drunkards shall have their portion in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone.” How jovially the Sabbath-breaker would riot through his Sabbaths if the Bible did not say, “Remember the Sabbath, to keep it holy”! And how happily could the libertine and licentious man drive on in his mad career if he were not told, “The wages of sin is death and after death the judgment”! But the Truth puts the bitter in his cup. The warnings of God freeze the current of his soul. The Gospel is like the skeleton at the Egyptian feast. Though by day he laughed at it, by night he will quiver as the aspen leaf and when the shades of evening gather around him, he will shake at a whisper. At the thought of a future state, his joy is spoiled and immortality, instead of being a benefit to him, is in its very contemplation the misery of his existence! The sweet wooing of mercy are to him no more harmonious than peals of thunder because he knows he despises them. Yes, I have known some who have been in such misery under the Gospel because they would not give up their sins, that they have been ready to take their own lives. Oh, terrible thought! The Gospel is “a savor of death unto death.” Unto how many here is it so? Who are now hearing God’s Word to be damned by it? Who shall retire to be hardened by the sound of the Truth? Why, every man who does not believe it—for unto those that receive it, it is “a savor of life unto life”—but to unbelievers it is a curse and “a savor of death unto death.”

2. But, blessed be God, the Gospel has a second power. Besides being “death unto death,” it is “a savor of life unto life.” Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, some of us could speak, if we were allowed this morning, of the Gospel as being “a savor of life” to us. We can look back to that hour when we were “dead in trespasses and sins.” In vain all Sinai’s thunders, in vain the rousing of the watchmen. We slept on in the death-sleep of our transgressions. An angel could not have awakened us. But we look back with joy to that hour when first we stepped within the walls of a sanctuary and savingly heard the voice of mercy. With some of you it is but a few weeks. I know where you are and who you are. But a few weeks or months ago you, too, were far from God. But now you are brought to love Him. Can you look back, my Brothers and Sisters, to that very moment when the Gospel was “a savor of life” to you—when you did cast away your sins, renounce the lusts and turning to God’s Word, by His Grace, received it with full purpose of heart? Ah, that hour—of all hours the sweetest! Nothing can be compared with it! I knew a person who for 40 or 50 years had been completely deaf. Sitting one morning at her cottage door as some vehicle was passing she thought she heard melodious music. It was not music, it was but the sound of the vehicle. Her ears had suddenly opened and that rough sound seemed to her like the music

of Heaven because it was the first she had heard for so many years! Even so, the first time our ears were opened to hear the words of love—the assurance of our pardon—we never heard the Word so well as we did then! It never seemed so sweet. And perhaps, even now, we look back and say—

***“What peaceful hours I then enjoyed!
How sweet their memory still!”***

When first it was “a savor of life” unto our souls!

Then, Beloved, if it ever has been “a savor of life,” it will *always* be “a savor of life,” because it says it is not a savor of life unto death, but “a savor of life unto life.” Now I must aim another blow at my antagonists the Arminians. I cannot help it. They will have it that sometimes the Gospel is a savor of life unto death. They tell us that a man may receive spiritual life and yet may die eternally. That is to say, a man may be forgiven and yet be punished afterwards. He may be justified from all sin and yet after that, his transgressions can be laid on his shoulders again. They say a man may be born of God and yet die. A man may be loved of God and yet God may hate him tomorrow. Oh, I cannot bear to speak of such Doctrines of lies! Let those believe them that will. As for me, I so deeply believe in the Immutable Love of Jesus, that I suppose that if one Believer were to be in Hell, Christ, Himself, would not long stay in Heaven, but would soon cry, “To the rescue! To the rescue!” Oh, if Jesus Christ were in Glory with one of the gems missing in His crown and Satan had that gem in Hell, Satan would say, “Aha, Prince of Light and Glory, I have one of Your jewels!” And he would hold it up and then he would say, “Aha, You did die for this man, but You had not strength enough to save him. You did love him once—where is Your love? It is not worth having, for You did hate him afterwards!” And how would Satan chuckle over that heir of Heaven and hold him up and say, “This man was redeemed. Jesus Christ purchased him with His blood”—and plunging him in the waves of Hell, he would say, “There, purchased one! See how I can rob the Son of God!” And then again he would say, “This man was forgiven! Behold the justice of God! He is to be punished after he is forgiven. Christ suffered for this man’s sins and yet,” says Satan with a malignant joy, “I have him afterwards, for God exacted the punishment twice!”

Shall that ever be said? Ah, no. It is “a savor of life unto *life*,” and not of life unto death. Away with your vile gospel, Arminian! Preach it where you please. But my Master said, “I give unto My sheep eternal life.” You give to your sheep temporary life and they lose it. But my Master says, “I give unto My sheep ETERNAL life and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hands.” I generally wax warm when

I get to this subject because I think few Doctrines more vital than that of the Perseverance of the Saints. If ever one child of God did perish, or if I knew it were possible that one could, I should conclude at once that I must and I suppose each of you would do the same. And then where is the joy and happiness of the Gospel? Again I tell you the Arminian gospel is the shell without the kernel. It is the husk without the fruit and those who love it may have it. We will not quarrel with them. Let them go and preach it. Let them go and tell poor sinners that if they believe in Jesus they will be damned after all—that Jesus Christ will forgive them and yet the Father send them to Hell. Go and preach your gospel, Arminian and who will listen to it? And if they do listen, is it worth their hearing? I say no. For if I am to stand after conversion on the same footing as I did before conversion, then it is of no use for me to have been converted at all. But whom He loves He loves to the end—

**“Once in Christ, in Christ forever—
Nothing from His love can sever.”**

It is “a savor of life unto life.” And not only “life unto life” in this world, but of “life unto life” eternal! Everyone who has this life shall receive the next life. For “the Lord will give Grace and Glory and no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.”

I am obliged to leave this point. But if my Master will but take it up and make His word a savor of “life unto life” this morning, I shall rejoice in what I have said.

II. Our second remark was that THE MINISTER IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS SUCCESS. He *is* responsible for what he preaches. He is accountable for his life and actions. But he is not responsible for other people. If I do but preach God’s Word, if there never were a soul saved, the King would say, “Well done, good and faithful servant!” If I do but tell my message—if none should listen to it—He would say, “you have fought the good fight—receive your crown.” You hear the words of the text—“We are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, as well in them that perish, as in them that are saved.” This will appear more clear, if I just tell you what a Gospel minister is called in the Bible. Sometimes he is called an *ambassador*. Now, for what is an ambassador responsible? He goes to a country as a diplomatic agent. He carries terms of peace to the conference—he uses all his talents for his master. He tries to show that the war is inimical to the prosperity of the different countries. He endeavors to bring about peace—but the other kings haughtily refuse it. When he comes home, does his master say, “Why did you not make peace?” “Why, my Lord,” he would say, “I told them the terms. But they said nothing.” “Well, then,” he will say, “you have done your duty. I am not to condemn

you if the war continues.” Again—the minister of the Gospel is called a *fisherman*. Now a fisherman is not responsible for the quantity of fish he catches, but for the *way he fishes*. That is a mercy for some ministers, I am sure, for they have neither caught fish, nor even attracted any around their nets. They have been spending all their life fishing with most elegant silk lines and gold and silver hooks. They always use nicely polished phrases. But the fish will not bite for all that. Whereas we of a rougher order have put the hook into the jaws of hundreds. However, if we cast the Gospel net in the right place, even if we catch none, the Master will find no fault with us. He will say, “Fisherman! Did you labor? Did you throw the net into the sea in the time of storms?” “Yes, my Lord, I did.” “What have you caught?” “Only one or two.” “Well, I could have sent you a shoal, if it so pleased Me. It is not *your* fault. I give in My Sovereignty where I please, or withhold when I choose. But as for you, you have well labored, therefore there is your reward.” Sometimes the minister is called a *sower*. Now, no farmer expects a sower to be responsible for the harvest. All he is responsible for is—does he sow the seed? And does he sow the right seed? If he scatters it on good soil, then he is happy. But if it falls by the wayside and the fowls of the air devour it, who shall blame the sower? Could he help it? No, he did his duty. He scattered the seed broadcast and there he left it. Who is to blame? Certainly not the sower. So, Beloved, if a minister comes to Heaven with but one sheaf on his shoulder, his Master will say, “O reaper! Once a sower! Where did you gather your sheaf?” “My Lord, I sowed upon the rock and it would not grow, only one seed on a chance Sunday morning was blown a little awry by the wind and it fell on a prepared heart. And this is my one sheaf.” “Hallelujah!” the angelic choirs resound, “one sheaf from a rock is more honor to God than a thousand sheaves from a good soil—therefore let him take his seat as near the Throne as yon man, who, stooping beneath his many sheaves, comes from some fertile land, bringing his sheaves with him.” I believe that if there are degrees in Glory, they will not be in proportion to success, but in proportion to the earnestness of our endeavors. If we mean right and if with all our heart we strive to do the right thing, as ministers—if we never see any effect—still shall we receive the crown. But how much more happy is the man who shall have it in Heaven said to him, “He shines forever, because he was wise and won many souls unto righteousness”?

It is always my greatest joy to believe that if I should enter Heaven, I shall in future days see Heaven’s gates open and in shall fly a cherub, who, looking me in the face, will smilingly pass along to God’s Throne and there bow down before Him. And when he has paid his homage and

his adoration, he may fly to me and though, unknown, shall clasp my hand. And if there were tears in Heaven, surely I should weep and he would say, "Brother, from your lips I heard the Word. Your voice first admonished me of my sin. Here I am and you the instrument of my salvation." And as the gates open one after another, still will they come in, souls ransomed, souls ransomed. And for each one of these a star—for each one of these another gem in the diadem of Glory—for each one of them another honor and another note in the song of praise. Blessed be that man who shall die in the Lord and his works shall follow him. For thus says the Spirit. What will become of some good Christians now in Exeter Hall if crowns in Heaven are measured in value by the souls that are saved? Some of you will have a crown in Heaven without a single star in it. I read a little while ago a piece upon the starless crown in Heaven—a man in Heaven with a crown without a star! Not one saved by him! He will sit in Heaven as happy as he can be, for Sovereign Mercy saved him. But oh, to be in Heaven without a single star! Mother! What do you say to be in Heaven without one of your children to deck your brow with a star? Minister! What would you say to be a polished preacher and yet have no star? Writer! Will it well become you to have written even as gloriously as Milton, if you should be found in Heaven without a star? I am afraid we pay too little regard to this. Men will sit down and write huge folios and tomes that they may have them put in libraries forever and have their names handed down by fame! But how few are looking to win stars forever in Heaven! Toil on, child of God, toil on! For if you wish to serve God, your bread cast upon the waters shall be found after many days. If you send in the feet of the ox or the donkey, you shall reap a glorious harvest in that day when He comes to gather in His elect. The minister is not responsible for his success.

III. But yet, in the last place, TO PREACH THE GOSPEL IS HIGH AND SOLEMN WORK. The ministry has been very often degraded into a trade. In these days, men are taken and made into ministers who would have made good captains at sea, who could have waited well at the counter, but who were never intended for the pulpit. They are selected by man, they are crammed with literature, they are educated up to a certain point, they are turned out ready dressed. And persons call them ministers. I wish them all God-speed, everyone of them, for as good Joseph Irons used to say, "God be with many of them if it is only to make them hold their tongues." Man-made ministers are of no use in this world and the sooner we get rid of them, the better! Their way is this—they prepare their manuscripts very carefully, then read it on the Sunday most sweetly in *sotto voce* and so the people go away pleased. But that is not God's

way of preaching! If so, I am sufficient to preach forever, I can buy manuscript sermons for a shilling, that is to say, provided they have been preached fifty times before. But if I use them for the first time, the price is a guinea, or more! But that is not the way. Preaching God's Word is not what some seem to think, mere child's play—a mere business or trade to be taken up by anyone. A man ought to feel first that he has a solemn *call* to it. Next, he ought to know that he really possesses the Spirit of God and that when he speaks, there is an influence upon him that enables him to speak as God would have him. Otherwise he has no business in the pulpit. He has no right to be there, even if the living is his own property. He has not been called to preach God's Truth and unto him God says, "What have you to do, to declare My statutes?"

But you say "What is there difficult about preaching God's Gospel?" Well it must be somewhat hard, for Paul said, "Who is sufficient for these things?" And first I will tell you, it is difficult because it is so hard as not to be warped by your own prejudices in preaching the Word. You need to say a stern thing and your heart says, "Master! In so doing you will condemn yourself." Then the temptation is not to say it. Another trial is, you are afraid of displeasing the rich in your congregations. You think, "If I say such-and-such a thing, So-and-So will be offended—such an one does not approve of that Doctrine. I had better leave it out." Or perhaps you will happen to win the applause of the multitude and you must not say anything that will displease them, for if they cry, "Hosanna," today, they will cry, "Crucify, crucify," tomorrow. All these things work on a minister's heart. He is a man like yourselves. And he feels it. Then comes again the sharp knife of criticism and the arrows of those who hate him and hate his Lord. And he cannot help feeling it sometimes. He may put on his armor and cry, "I care not for your malice," but there were seasons when the archers sorely grieved even Joseph.

Then he stands in another danger, lest he should come out and defend himself. For he is a great fool whoever tries to do it. He who leaves his detractors alone and, like the eagle, cares not for the chattering of the sparrows, or like the lion will not turn aside to rend the snarling jackal—he is the man—and he shall be honored. But the danger is we want to set ourselves right. And oh, who is sufficient to steer clear from these rocks of danger? "Who is sufficient," my Brothers, "for these things?"—to stand up and to proclaim Sabbath after Sabbath and weekday after weekday, "the unsearchable riches of Christ"?

Having said this much, I may draw the inference—to close up—which is—if the Gospel is "a savor of life unto life," and if the minister's work is solemn work, how well it becomes all lovers of the Truth to plead for all

those who preach it, that they may be “sufficient for these things.” To lose my Prayer-Book, as I have often told you, is the worst thing that can happen to me. To have no one to pray for me would place me in a dreadful condition! “Perhaps,” says a good poet, “the day when the world shall perish will be the day it is unwhitened by a prayer.” And perhaps the day when a minister turns aside from the Truth of God, will be the day when his people fail to pray for him—when there was not a single voice supplicating Grace on his behalf. I am sure it must be so with me. Give me the numerous hosts of men and women whom it has been my pride and glory to see in my place before I came to this hall—give me those praying people who on the Monday evening met in such a multitude to pray to God for a blessing—and we will overcome Hell, itself, in spite of all that may oppose us! All our perils are nothing, so long as we have prayer. Increase my congregation. Give me the polite and the noble—give me influence and understanding—and I should fail to do anything without a praying Church! My Beloved! Shall I ever lose your prayers? Will you ever cease your supplications? Our toils are nearly ended in this great place and happy shall we be to return to our much-loved sanctuary. Will you then ever cease to pray? I fear you have not uttered so many prayers this morning as you should have done. I fear there has not been so much earnest devotion as might have been poured forth. For my own part, I have not felt the wondrous power I sometimes experience. I will not lay it at your doors. But never let it be said, “Those people, once so fervent, have become cold!” Let not Laodiceanism get into Southwark. Let us leave it here in the West End, if it is to be anywhere. Let us not carry it with us. Let us “strive together for the faith once delivered unto the saints”—and knowing in what a sad position the standard bearer stands, I beseech you rally round him. For it will be ill with the army—

“If the standard bearer falls, as fall full well he may.

For never saw I promise yet, of such a deadly fray.”

Stand up my Friends! Grasp the banner yourselves and maintain it erect until the day shall come, when standing on the last conquered castle of Hell’s domains, we shall raise the shout, “Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! The Lord God Omnipotent reigns!” Till that time, fight on!

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

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

SPIRITUAL LIBERTY

NO. 9

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, FEBRUARY 18, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL STRAND.**

***“Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”
2 Corinthians 3:17.***

LIBERTY is the birthright of every man. He may be born a pauper. He may be a foundling. His parentage may be altogether unknown. But liberty is his inalienable birthright. Black may be his skin. He may live uneducated and untaught. He may be poor as poverty, itself. He may never have a foot of land to call his own. He may scarcely have a particle of clothing, save a few rags to cover him—but, poor as he is, nature has fashioned him for freedom—he has a right to be free and if he has not liberty, it is his birthright and he ought not to be content until he wins it!

Liberty is the heirloom of all the sons and daughters of Adam. But where do you find liberty unaccompanied by religion? True it is that all men have a right to liberty, but it is equally true that you do not meet it in any country except where you find the Spirit of the Lord. “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” Thank God this is a free country! This is a land where I can breathe the air and say it is untainted by the groan of a single slave. My lungs receive it and I know there has never been mingled with its vapors the tear of a single slave woman shed over her child which has been sold from her. This land is the home of liberty. But why is it so? I take it, it is not so much because of our institutions as because the Spirit of the Lord is here—the spirit of true and hearty religion! There was a time, remember, when England was no more free than any other country, when men could not speak their sentiments freely, when kings were despots, when Parliaments were but a name. Who won our liberties for us? Who has loosed our chains? Under the hand of God, I say the men of religion—men like the great and glorious Cromwell, who would have liberty of conscience, or die—men who, if they could not reach kings’ hearts because they were unsearchable in cunning, would strike kings low, rather than they would be slaves. We owe our liberty to men of religion—to men of the stern Puritan school—men who scorned to play the coward and yield their principles at the command of man. And if we are ever to maintain our liberty (as God grant we may) it shall be kept in England by religious liberty—by religion! This Bible is the Magna Charta of old Britain! Its Truths, its Doctrines have snapped our fetters and they never can be riveted on again, while men,

with God's Spirit in their hearts, go forth to speak its Truths. In no other land, save where the Bible is unclasped—in no other realm, save where the Gospel is preached—can you find liberty! Roam through other countries and you speak with bated breath. You are afraid. You feel you are under an iron hand. The sword is above you. You are not free. Why? Because you are under the tyranny engendered by a false religion—you have not free Protestantism there and it is not till Protestantism comes, that there can be freedom! It is where the Spirit of the Lord is that there is liberty and nowhere else. Men talk about being free—they describe model governments, Platonic republics, or Owenite paradises, but they are dreamy theorists. For there can be no freedom in the world, save, “where the Spirit of the Lord is.”

I have commenced with this idea because I think worldly men ought to be told that if religion does not save them, yet it has done much for them—that the influence of religion has won them their liberties.

But the liberty of the text is no such freedom as this—it is an infinitely greater and better one! Great as civil or religious liberty may be, the liberty of my text transcendentally exceeds. There is a liberty, dear Friends, which Christian men and women, alone, enjoy. For even in Great Britain there are men who taste not the sweet air of liberty. There are some who are afraid to speak as men, who have to cringe and fawn, bow and stoop. They have no will of their own, no principles, no voice, no courage and who cannot stand erect in conscious independence! He is the free man, whom the Truth makes free. He who has Divine Grace in his heart is free, he cares for no one. He has right upon his side. He has God within him—the indwelling Spirit of the Holy Spirit. He is a prince of the blood royal of Heaven. He is a noble, having the true patent of nobility. He is one of God's elect, distinguished, chosen children. He is not the man to bend, or meanly cringe. No! Sooner would he walk the burning furnace with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—sooner would he be cast into the lion's den with Daniel, than yield a point in principle. He is a free man. “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” in its fullest, highest and widest sense!

God give you, Friends, that “Spirit of the Lord,” for without it, even in a free country, you may still be bondsmen. And where there are no serfs in body, you may be slaves in soul. The text speaks of Spiritual liberty—and now I address the children of God. Spiritual liberty, Brothers and Sisters, you and I enjoy if we have “the Spirit of the Lord” within us. What does this imply? It implies that there was a time when we had *not* that Spiritual liberty—when we were slaves. But a little while ago all of us who now are free in Christ Jesus, were slaves of the devil—we were led captives at his will. We talked of free will, but free will is a slave. We boasted that we could do what we pleased. But oh, what a slavish and

dreamy liberty we had! It was a fancied freedom. We were slaves to our lusts and passions—slaves to sin. But now we are freed from sin. We are delivered from our tyrant. A stronger than he has cast out the strong man armed and we are free!

Let us now examine, a little more closely, in what our liberty consists.

I. And first, my Friends, “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” from the *Bondage of Sin*. Ah, I know I shall speak feelingly to some of you when I talk about the bondage of sin. You know what that misery means. Of all bondage and slavery in this world, there is none more horrible than the bondage of sin. Tell me of Israel in Egypt preparing their tale of bricks unsupplied with straw. Tell me of the Negro beneath the lash of his cruel taskmaster and I confess it is a bondage fearful to be borne. But there is one far worse—the bondage of a convicted sinner when he is brought to feel the burden of his guilt! The bondage of a man when once his sins are baying him, like hounds about a weary stag! The bondage of a man when the burden of sin is on his shoulder—a burden too heavy for his soul to bear—a burden which will sink him forever in the depths of everlasting torment, unless he escapes from it. I think I see such a person. He has never a smile upon his face—dark clouds have gathered on his brow—solemn and serious he stands. His very words are sighs. His songs are groans. His smiles are tears. And when he seems most happy, hot drops of grief roll in burning showers, scalding furrows on his cheek. Ask him *what he is* and he tells you he is “a wretch undone.” Ask him *how he is* and he confesses that he is “misery incarnate.” Ask him what he *shall be* and he says, “I shall be lost in flames forever and there is no hope.” Behold him alone in his retirement—when he lays his head on his pillow, up he starts again—at night he dreams of torment and by day he almost feels that of which he dreamed. Such is the poor convicted sinner under bondage! Such have I been in my days and such have you been, Friends. I speak to those who understand it.

You have passed through that gloomy Slough of Despond. You have gone through that dark Valley of Penitence—you have been made to drink the bitter cup of repentance—and I know you will say, “Amen” when I declare that of all bondage this is the most painful—the bondage of the Law, the bondage of corruption. “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from it?” But the Christian is free! He can smile, now, though he wept before. He can rejoice now, whereas he lamented. “There is,” he says, “no sin upon my conscience, now, there is no crime upon my breast. I need not walk through the earth fearful of every shadow and afraid of every man I meet, for sin is washed away—my spirit is no more guilty!” It is pure, it is holy. There no longer rests the frown of God upon me! My Father smiles—I see His eyes—they are glancing love—I hear His voice—it is full of sweetness. I am forgiven, I am forgiven, I am forgiven!

All hail, you breaker of fetters! Glorious Jesus! Ah, that moment when first the bondage passed away! I think I recollect it now. I saw Jesus on His Cross before me. I thought on Him and as I mused upon His death and sufferings, I thought I saw Him cast a look on me. And when He gazed on me, I looked at Him and said—

**“Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to Your bosom fly.”**

He said “Come,” and I flew to Him and clasped Him and when He let me go, again, I wondered where my burden was. It was gone! There, in the sepulcher it lay and I felt light as air! Like a winged sylph, I could fly over mountains of trouble and despair. And oh, what liberty and joy I had! I could leap with ecstasy for I had much forgiven and now I was freed from sin. Beloved, this is the first liberty of the children of God. “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” from the bondage of sin!

2. Liberty from the penalty of sin. What is it? Eternal death—torment forever—that is the sad penalty of sin. It is no sweet thing to fear that if I died, now, I might be in Hell. It is no pleasant thought for me to stand here and believe that if I dropped down I must sink into the arms of Satan and have him for my tormentor. Why, Sirs, it is a thought that would plague me! It is a thought that would be the bitterest curse of my existence. I would rather be dead and rotting in the tomb rather than walk the earth with the thought that I might suffer such a penalty as this. There are some of you here who know right well that if you die, Hell is your portion. You don't attempt to deny it. You believe the Bible and there you read your doom, “He that believes not shall be damned.” You cannot put yourselves among Believers. You are still without Christ. Have any of you been brought into such a condition that you believe yourself so full of sin that God could not be just if He did not punish you? Have you not felt that you have so rebelled against God by secret crimes, yes, I say, by *secret* crimes and by open transgression, that if He did not punish you, He would cease to be God and lay aside His scepter? And then you have trembled, groaned and cried out under the fear of the penalty of sin. You thought when you dreamed, that you saw that burning lake whose waves are fire and whose billows are ever blazing brimstone! And each day you walked the earth it was with fear and dread lest the next step should let you into the pit of Hell which is without a bottom! But Christian, Christian, you are free from the penalty of sin! Do you know it? Can you recognize the fact? You are free at this moment from the penalty of sin! Not only are you forgiven, but you never can be punished on account of your sins however great and enormous they may have been—

**“The moment a sinner believes,
And trusts in his crucified God—
His pardon at once he receives**

Salvation in full through His blood,”

and he never can be punished on account of sin! Talk of the punishment of a Believer! There is not such a thing. The afflictions of this mortal life are not punishments for sin to Christians—they are fatherly chastisements and not the punishments of a Judge. For me there is no Hell. Let it smoke and burn—if I am a Believer I shall never have my portion there. For me there are no eternal racks, no torments—for if I am justified—I cannot be condemned!

Jesus has suffered the punishment in my place and God would be unjust if He were to punish me again—Christ has suffered once and satisfied justice forever! When conscience tells me I am a sinner, I tell conscience I stand in Christ’s place and Christ stands in mine. True, I am a sinner, but Christ died for sinners. True, I deserve punishment, but if my Ransom died, will God ask for the debt twice? Impossible! He has cancelled it. There never was and never shall be one Believer in Hell. We are free from punishment and we never need quake on account of it. However horrible it may be—if it is eternal, as we know it is—it is nothing to us, for we never can suffer it. Heaven shall open its pearly portals to admit us. And Hell’s iron gates are barred forever against every Believer. Glorious liberty of the children of God!

3. But there is one fact more startling than both of these things and I dare say some of you will object to it. Nevertheless it is God’s Truth and if you don’t like it, you must leave it! There is *liberty from the guilt of sin*. This is the wonder of wonders. The Christian is positively not guilty any longer the moment he believes. Now, if Her Majesty in her goodness spares a murderer by giving him a free pardon, that man cannot be punished—but still he will be a guilty man. She may give him a thousand pardons and the Law cannot touch him, but still he will be guilty. The crime will always be on his head and he will be branded as a murderer as long as he lives! The Christian is not only delivered from the bondage and from the punishment, but he is positively absolved from the guilt! Now this is something at which you will stand amazed. You say, “What? Is a Christian no more a sinner in God’s sight?” I answer, he is a sinner as considered in himself. But in the Person of Christ, he is no more a sinner than the angel Gabriel. For snowy as angelic wings and spotless as cherubic robes, an angel cannot be more pure than the poor blood-washed sinner when he is made whiter than snow! Do you understand how it is that the very guilt of the sinner is taken away? Here I stand, today, a guilty and condemned traitor—Christ comes for my salvation—He bid me leave my cell, “I will stand where you are. I will be your Substitute. I will be the Sinner. All your guilt is to be imputed to Me. I will die for it, I will suffer for it. I will have your sins.” Then stripping Himself of His robes, He says, “There, put them on. You shall be considered as if

you were Christ. You shall be the Righteous One. I will take *your* place, you take *Mine*.” Then He casts around me a glorious robe of perfect righteousness. And when I behold it, I exclaim, “Strangely, my Soul, are you arrayed, with my elder Brother’s garments.” Jesus Christ’s crown is on my head. His spotless robes are round my loins and His golden sandals are the shoes of my feet. And now is there any sin? The sin is on Christ—the righteousness is on me! Ask for the sinner, Justice! Let the voice of Justice cry, “Bring forth the sinner!” The sinner is brought. Who does the executioner lead forth? It is the Incarnate Son of God! True, He did not commit the sin. He was without fault. But it is imputed to Him—He stands in the sinner’s place.

Now Justice cries, “Bring forth the righteous, the perfectly righteous.” Whom do I see? Lo, the Church is brought, each Believer is brought. Justice says, “Are these perfectly righteous?” “Yes they are. What Christ did is theirs, what they did is laid on Christ. His righteousness is theirs—their sins are His.” I appeal to you, you ungodly. This seems strange and startling, does it not? You have set it down to hyper-Calvinism and you laugh at it. Set it down for what you please, Sirs! God has set it up as His Truth—He has made us righteous through the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. And now, if I am a true Believer, I stand here freed from every sin. There is not a crime against me in the Book of God, it is blotted out forever. It is cancelled. And not only can I never be punished, but I have nothing to be punished for! Christ has atoned for my sins and I have received His righteousness, “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”

4. Furthermore, the Christian, while delivered from the guilt and punishment of sin, is likewise delivered from *the dominion of it*. Every living man, before he is converted, is a slave to lust. Profane men glory in free living and free thinking. They call *this* free living—a full glass, a Bacchanalian revel, shouting wantonness, chambering. Free living, Sir? Let the slave hold up his fetters and jingle them in my ears and say, “This is music and I am free.” The man is a poor maniac. Let the man chained in his cell, the madman of Bethlem, tell me he is a king and grin a horrible smile. I say, “Ah, poor wretch, I know why he thinks he is a king. He is demented and is mad.” So it is with the worldling who says he is free. Free, Sir? You are a slave! You think you are happy. But at night, when you lay yourself upon your bed, how many times have you tossed from side to side sleepless and ill at ease? And when you awake, have you not said, “Ah, that yesterday—that yesterday!” And though you plunged into another day of sin, that “yesterday,” like a Hell-dog, barked at you and followed at your heels. You know it, Sir—sin is a bondage and a slavery! And have you ever tried to get rid of that slavery? “Yes,” you say, “I have.” But I will tell you what has been the end of it. When you have tried, you

have bound your fetters firmer than ever. You have riveted your chains. A sinner without Grace attempting to reform himself is like Sisyphus rolling the stone up hill, which always comes down with greater force. A man without Grace attempting to save himself, is engaged in as hopeless a task as the daughters of Danaus, when they attempted to fill a vast vessel with bottomless buckets. He has a bow without a string, a sword without a blade, a gun without powder! He needs strength. I grant you, he may produce a hollow reformation. He may dig around the volcano and sow flowers around its crater. But when it once begins to stir again, it shall move the earth away and the hot lava shall roll over all the fair flowers which he had planted—and devastate both his works and his righteousness!

A sinner without Divine Grace is a slave—he cannot deliver himself from his sins! But not so the Christian! Is he a slave to his sin? Is a true-born heir of God a slave? Oh, no! He does not sin because he is born of God. He does not live in uncleanness because he is an heir of immortality. You beggars of the earth may stoop to deeds of wrong, but princes of Heaven's blood must follow acts of right. You poor worldlings, mean and pitiful wretches in God's sight—you may live in dishonesty and unrighteousness, but the heir of Heaven cannot. He loves his Lord. He is free from the power of sin. His work is righteousness and his end his everlasting life. We are free from the dominion of sin!

5. Once more—"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" in all holy acts of love—*liberty from a slavish fear of law*. Many people are honest because they are afraid of the policeman. Many are sober because they are afraid of the eye of the public. Many persons are seemingly religious because of their neighbors. There is much virtue which is like the juice of the grape—it has to be squeezed before you get it. It is not like the generous drop of the honeycomb, distilling willingly and freely. I am bold to say that if a man is destitute of the Grace of God, his works are only works of slavery, he feels forced to do them.

I know before I came into the liberty of the children of God, if I went to God's House, I went because I thought I must do it. If I prayed, it was because I feared some misfortune would happen in the day if I did not. If I ever thanked God for a mercy, it was because I thought I should not get another if I were not thankful. If I performed a righteous deed it was with the hope that very likely God would reward me at last and I should be winning some crown in Heaven. A poor slave, a mere Gibeonite, hewing wood and drawing water. If I could have left off doing it, I would have loved to do so. If I could have had my will, there would have been no Chapel attendance for me, no religion for me—I would have lived in the world and followed the ways of Satan if I could have done as I pleased. As for righteousness, it was slavery. Sin would have been my liberty.

But now, Christian, what is your liberty? What makes you come to the House of God today?—

***“Love made your willing feet
In swift obedience move.”***

What makes you bend your knees in prayer? It is because you like to talk with your Father who sees in secret. What is it that opens your purses and makes you give liberally? It is because you love the poor children of God and you feel so much being given to you that it is a privilege to give something back to Christ. What is it that burdens you to live honestly, righteously and soberly? Is it the fear of the jail? No. You might pull the jail down. You might annihilate the convict settlements. You might hurl all chains into the sea. And we should be just as holy as we are now. Some people say, “Then, Sir, you mean to say that Christians may live as they like?” I wish they could, Sir. If I could live as I liked, I would, always live holily. If a Christian could live as he liked, he would always live as he ought. It is a slavery to him to sin—righteousness is his delight! Oh, if I could but live as I like, I would desire to live as I ought! If I could but live as I would I would live as God commands me. The greatest happiness of a Christian is to be holy! It is no slavery to him. Put him where you will, he will not sin. Expose him to any temptation, if it were not for that evil heart still remaining, you would never find him sinning. Holiness is his pleasure—sin is his slavery. Ah, you poor bondsmen who come to Church or Chapel because you must! Ah, you poor slavish moralists that are honest because of the fetters and sober because of the prison. Ah, you poor slaves!

We are not so. We are not under the Law, but under Grace. Call us Antinomians if you will. We will even glory in the scandalous title! We are freed from the Law, but we are freed from it that we may obey it more than we ever did! The true-born child of God serves his Master more than he ever did! As old Erskine says—

***“Slight now His loving presence if they can—
No, no, His conquering kindness leads the van!
When everlasting love exerts the sway,
They judge themselves most kindly bound to obey—
Bound by redeeming love in stricter sense,
Than ever Adam was in innocence.”***

6. But to conclude, “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” from *the fear of death*. O Death! How many a sweet cup have you made bitter. O Death! How many a revel have you broken up. O Death! How many a gluttonous banquet have you spoiled. O Death! How many a sinful pleasure have you turned into pain. Take, my Friends, the telescope this morning and look through the vista of a few years and what do you see? Grim Death in the distance grasping his scythe. He is coming, coming, coming. And what is behind him? Ah, that depends upon your cha-

racter. If you are the sons of God, there is the palm branch. If you are not, you know what follows Death—Hell follows him! O Death! Your specter has haunted many a house where sin otherwise would have rioted. O Death! Your chilly hand has touched many a heart that was big with lust and made it start, frightened from its crime! Oh, how many men are slaves to the fear of Death? Half the people in the world are afraid to die. There are some madmen who can march up to the cannon's mouth. There are some fools who rush with bloody hands before their Maker's tribunal. But most men fear to die. Who is the man that does not fear to die? I will tell you. The man that is a Believer—fear to die? Thank God, I do not! The cholera may come again next summer—I pray God it may not, but if it does, it matters not to me—I will toil and visit the sick by night and by day, until I drop—and if it takes me, sudden death is sudden Glory!

And so—with the weakest saint in this hall—the prospect of dissolution does not make you tremble. Sometimes you fear, but more often you rejoice. You sit down calmly and think of dying. What is death? It is a low porch through which you stoop to enter Heaven. What is life? It is a narrow screen that separates us from Glory and death kindly removes it. I recollect a saying of a good old woman, who said, “Afraid to die, Sir? I have dipped my foot in Jordan every morning before breakfast for the last fifty years and do you think I am afraid to die now?” Die? Beloved, we die hundreds of times! We “die daily,” we die every morning, we die each night when we sleep. By faith we die and so dying will be old work when we come to it! We shall say, “Ah, Death! You and I have been old acquaintances. I have had you in my bedroom every night. I have talked with you each day. I have had the skull upon my dressing table and I have oftentimes thought of you. Death! You are come at last, but you are a welcome guest—you are an angel of light and the best friend I have had.” Why dread death since there is no fear of God's leaving you when you come to die? Here I must tell you that anecdote of the good Welch lady, who, when she lay a-dying, was visited by her minister. He said to her, “Sister are you sinking?” She answered him not a word, but looked at him with an incredulous eye. He repeated the question, “Sister, are you sinking?” She looked at him, again, as if she could not believe that he would ask such a question! At last, rising a little in the bed, she said, “*Sinking? Sinking? Did you ever know a sinner sink through a rock? If I had been standing on the sand, I might sink—but thank God I am on the Rock of Ages—and there is no sinking there.*” How glorious to die! Oh, angels, come! Oh, cohorts of the Lord of Hosts, stretch, stretch your broad wings and lift us up from earth. O, winged seraphs, bear us far above the reach of these inferior things. But till you come, I'll sing—

“Since Jesus is mine, I'll not fear undressing—

***But gladly put off these garments of clay!
To die in the Lord is a covenant blessing,
Since Jesus to Glory, though death leads the way.”***

And now, dear Friends, I have shown you as briefly as I can the negative side of this liberty. I have tried to tell you, as well as I could put it in a few words, what we are *freed from*. But there are two sides to such questions as this. There are some glorious things that we are *free to*. Not only are we freed from sin in every sense from the Law and from the fear of death—but we are free to do something. I shall not occupy many moments, but shall just run over a few things we are free to, for, my Brother and Sister Christians, “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” And that liberty gives us certain rights and privileges.

In the first place, we are free to *Heaven’s charter*. There is Heaven’s charter—the Magna Charta—the Bible. And, my Brothers and Sisters, you are free to it. There is a choice passage here—“When you pass through the river I will be with you and the floods shall not overflow you.” You are free to that! Here is another—“Mountains may depart and hills may be removed, but My loving kindness shall not depart”—you are free to that! Here is another—“Having loved His own, He loved them unto the end.” You are free to that! “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” Here is a chapter touching election—you are free to that if you are elect. Here is another, speaking of the non-condemnation of the righteous and their justification—you are free to that. You are free to all that is in the Bible! Here is a never-failing treasure filled with boundless stores of Divine Grace. It is the bank of Heaven—you may draw from it as much as you please without let or hindrance. Bring nothing with you except faith! Bring as much faith as you can get and you are welcome to all that is in the Bible. There is not a promise—not a Word in it—that is not yours. In the depths of tribulation let it comfort you. Mid waves of distress let it cheer you. When sorrows surround you, let it be your helper. This is your Father’s love token—let it never be shut up and covered with dust. You are free to it—use, then, your freedom!

Next, recollect that you are free to the Throne of Grace. It is the privilege of Englishmen that they can always send a petition to Parliament. And it is the privilege of a Believer that he can always send a petition to the Throne of God. I am free to God’s Throne. If I want to talk to God tomorrow morning, I can. If tonight I wish to have conversation with my Master, I can go to Him. I have a right to go to His Throne. It matters not how much I may have sinned—I go and ask for pardon. It signifies nothing how poor I am—I go and plead His promise that He will provide all things necessary. I have a right to go to His Throne at all times—in midnight’s dark hour, or in noontide’s heat. Wherever I am, if Fate commands me to the utmost verge of the wide earth, I have still constant

admission to His Throne! Use that right, Beloved—use that right! There is not one of you that lives up to his privilege. Many a gentleman will live beyond his income, spending more than he has coming in. But there is not a Christian that does that—I mean that lives up to his *spiritual* income. Oh, no, you have an infinite income—an income of promises—an income of Grace. And no Christian ever lived up to his income. Some people say, “If I had more money I would have a larger house, horses, carriage and so on.” Very well and good. But I wish the Christian would do the same. I wish they would set up a larger house and do greater things for God—look more happy and take those tears away from their eyes—

***“Religion never was designed
To make our pleasures less.”***

With such stores in the bank and so much in hand that God gives you, you have no right to be poor! Up! Rejoice! Rejoice! The Christian ought to live up to his income—not below it.

Then, if you have the “Spirit of the Lord,” dear Friends, you have a right to enter into the City. There are many of the freemen of the city of London here, I dare say and that is a great privilege, very likely. I am not a freeman of London, but I am a freeman of a better City—

***“Savior, if of Zion’s city,
I, by Grace, a member am,
Let the world revile or pity,
I will glory in Your name.”***

You have a right to the freedom of Zion’s city and you do not exercise it. I want to have a word with some of you. You are very good Christian people, but you have never joined the Church yet. You know it is quite right, that he that believes should be baptized. But I suppose you are afraid of being drowned, for you never come. Then the Lord’s Table is spread once every month and it is free to all God’s children, but you never approach it. Why is that? It is your banquet. I do not think if I were an alderman I should omit the city banquet! And being a Christian, I cannot omit the Christian banquet. It is the banquet of the saints—

***“Never did angels taste above
Redeeming Grace and dying love.”***

Some of you never come to the Lord’s Table. You neglect His ordinances. He says, “This do in remembrance of Me.” You have obtained the freedom of the City, but you won’t take it up. You have a right to enter in through the gates into the City, but you stand outside. Come in Brothers and Sisters! I will give you my hand. Don’t remain outside the Church any longer, for you have a right to come in!

Then, to conclude, you have the freedom of Jerusalem, the mother of us all. That is the best gift. We are free to *Heaven*. When a Christian dies, he knows the *open sesame* that can open the gates of Heaven! He knows

the password that can make the gates fly wide open. He has the white stone whereby he shall be known as a ransomed one and that shall pass him at the barrier. He has the passport that shall let him into the dominions of Jehovah! He has liberty to enter into Heaven. I think I see you, you unconverted, in the land of shades, wandering up and down to find your portion. You come to the porch of Heaven. It is great and lofty. The gate has written over it, "The righteous only are admitted here." As you stand, you look for the porter. A tall archangel appears from above the gate and you say, "Angel, let me in." "Where is your robe?" You search and you have none. You have only some few rags of your own spinning, but no wedding garment. "Let me in," you say, "for the Fiends are after me to drag me to yonder pit of Hell. Oh, let me in." But with a quiet glance the angel lifts up his finger and says, "Read up there." And you read, "None but the righteous enter here." Then you tremble, your knees knock together, your hands shake. Were your bones of brass they might melt and were your ribs of iron they might be dissolved. Ah, there you stand, shivering, quaking, trembling. But not long, for a Voice which frightens you from your feet and lays you prostrate, cries, "Depart you cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels."

O dear Hearers, shall that be *your* portion? My Friends, as I love you—I do this morning and hope I always will—shall this be your lot? Will you not have freedom to enter into the City? Will you not seek that Spirit which gives liberty? Ah, I know you will not have it if left to yourselves. Some of you, perhaps, never will. O God, grant that that number may be but few, but may the number of the saved be great, indeed!

***"Turn, then my soul unto Your rest
The ransom of your great High Priest,
Has set the captive free!
Trust to His efficacious blood
Nor fear your banishment from God,
Since Jesus died for thee."***

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

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

NOT SUFFICIENT AND YET SUFFICIENT NO. 2160

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 24, 1890,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God, who also has made us able ministers of the new testament, not of the letter, but of the Spirit: for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.”
2 Corinthians 3:5, 6.***

Read also the Revised Version of the same text, for it will be often used in this discourse—

***“Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to account anything as from ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God; who also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit: for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.”
2 Corinthians 3:5, 6.***

PAUL had given some account of what God had done by him and had described the work in these words—“You are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.” Before he had worked out that charming figure, he had asked the question in the 16th verse of the second chapter—“Who is sufficient for these things?” I seem to hear that question repeated as he finishes the description. The more wonderful the work, the more intense the inquiry—“Who is sufficient for these things?”

Who can turn hearts of stone into flesh? Who can write without ink? Who can write on the heart? Who can so write that what is written shall be eternal? “Who is sufficient for these things?” The more we study the work of Grace worked by God through his ministers, the more are we forced to ask, “Who is sufficient for these things?” To raise the dead, to turn a stone to flesh—who is sufficient for these? To give eyes to the blind and ears to the deaf. To subdue the proud will and enlighten the darkened heart. To deliver men from the fascinations of sin and Satan. To bring them out of darkness into God’s marvelous light. To turn rebels into sons of God—who is sufficient for all these things? Yet nothing less than this will bring salvation! Here we have a chain of miracles—an Alpine range of wonders piled upon each other—yet no one marvel can be dispensed with and we are to be the ministers by whom such miracles are worked! “Who is sufficient for these things?”

Having asked the question, Paul now gives an answer to it in the words of my text. All these wonders have been worked—men have had their minds written upon by the finger of God and the stony heart has become a tablet of flesh—and all this has been done by the agency of men! Ministers have been, in God’s hands, the means of working stupendous wonders of Grace, yes, of turning the world upside down and

of saving men from going down into the Pit! Since these things have been done, there must have been some kind of sufficiency, or adaptation in the means by which they were done. From where did it come? Was it natural to the men, or did they acquire it by education, or by practice, or by imitation? The Apostle goes on to answer the question by telling us what that sufficiency was *not* and what it was. He replies to his own inquiry—"Who is sufficient for these things?"

I. By your leave we shall first of all regard the text as AN ANSWER TO THE MINISTER'S QUESTION, "Who is sufficient for these things?" The answer is given first in the negative and secondly, in the positive. "Who is sufficient for these things?" *The negative reply* is—"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves." In this instance *the best of preachers denies self-sufficiency*. Remember who it is that is writing. It is Paul, called to be an Apostle, to whom the Lord Jesus had *personally* appeared—a man of singular zeal and activity—and of remarkable ability in the things of God.

He was not a whit behind the chief of the Apostles, an expounder of the Truth of God, a founder of Churches, a father of myriads of souls! Yet he says, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves." He was, when he wrote this Epistle, no beginner in holy oratory, but a well-exercised Evangelist. He had been deeply taught of God. He had preached the Word fully and had gained an experience unrivalled. Beginning with a wonderful conversion, going on through sufferings, persecutions, journeys and labors, he had become a man of great weight and influence. Although long dead, his word would be law to us at this moment. And yet he confesses, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves."

Here was a man, too, who had been inspired by the Holy Spirit—a man to write Epistles to Churches—a man who spoke with Divine authority and would not allow that authority to be questioned, for he felt that he was truly sent of God. And yet you see him bowing humbly down before the Throne of heavenly Grace and admitting his own impotence in these words—"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves." I cannot leave this point, for here we have a most successful soul-winner making his lowly acknowledgment. How many were already in Heaven, converted under the ministry of the Apostle Paul?! How many on earth were on the road to Glory, led there by his teaching? How many had he inspired with the courage of martyrs, with the holiness of saints? He was a mine of spiritual wealth to the Churches. I know no man who did more for the propagation of the faith than the indefatigable Paul! And yet he cries, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves."

Brethren, if Paul is not sufficient of himself, what are you and I? Where are you, you lay preachers and Sunday school teachers, and workers for God in different ways? Do you indulge the dream of self-sufficiency? Be ashamed of your folly in the presence of a great man who knew what he said and who spoke under the direction of the Spirit of God who wrote deliberately, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves." And this negative is strengthened by the fact that *he did not feel sufficient in a very necessary point*—"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves." I believe that our old translation is as good as good can be and that it sets forth the meaning of the Greek bet-

ter than any other—"We are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves."

I do not intend to insist upon this meaning as the only one, for I will bring in the Revised Version directly. Still, our version is to be defended and in any case its meaning must be retained. What? Was not the Apostle able to do his own thinking? Must he receive thinking-Grace—help to think aright? In these days we are rather overdone with "great thinkers." Wherever you go you hear of "advanced thinking," "modern thought" and so forth. It is true that ten bushels of the stuff are not worth half a farthing in the estimate of those who hunger for spiritual food—but chaff takes up much room—and as the wind blows it about it excites great attention. A fourth part of a cab of doves' dung, worth nothing in ordinary times, fetched a long price during the famine in Samaria. And today, when there is a famine of true theological learning, a great fuss is made concerning the crude speculations of vainglorious "thinkers."

I do not believe the Apostle ever tried to think upon religious matters otherwise than as the Spirit of God taught him. He was content to abide within the circle of Inspiration. I pray that we may never travel beyond our orbit and quit the Divine circuit of Revelation. I find enough in my Bible to think about without going beyond that sphere. If we should ever exhaust Holy Scripture, we might then try to think something "as of ourselves." But as we shall never do that, we may be satisfied to tarry in Revelation as in a land which flows with milk and honey. Let us not aim at being original thinkers, but at being witnesses and heralds of what God says to men.

Our Lord Jesus strove not to be an original thinker, for he said, "My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me." The Holy Spirit does not speak as an original thinker, for the Lord Jesus said, "He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you." As we have reminded you before, the original thinker of the Bible is one of whom it is said, "When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own." We are not wishful to emulate him in such originality! We are not sufficient to think anything as from ourselves! Yet, thinking is the preacher's domain. He has to think of the fitness of a subject for his discourse, but he will not find his right subject by mere thinking—he must wait upon his Master for guidance. When he has found his subject he must work it out in his own mind and yet he is so insufficient in and of himself that he will not work it out aright unless he cries to the Holy Spirit to aid his thought and open to him the Scriptures.

When the time has come for him to tell out what he has thought, he has to think over his subject aloud and speak with the mouth that which he has molded in his mind—and in this he is greatly dependent upon the help of God. In pouring from one bottle into another how much is spilt! How often does it happen that as the neck of a bottle may be too small to receive what is abundantly poured out, so the mind to be filled may not be sufficiently receptive! To think aloud, which means to speak instructively, is no easy thing—and so to speak that men are *saved* by our speaking is quite beyond us! In this matter "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves." This impotence

even in thought puts the preacher into a very low condition. In that position let him be content to remain! Let him look to the Lord for his thinking and speaking—and then he will do well!

In the whole matter we are of ourselves insufficient. The Revised Version puts it—“Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to account anything as from ourselves.” Now this declaration has a further and wider sweep than the former for, as I understand it, it includes all that I have said about thinking and with it every other matter which is involved in our holy service. “We are not sufficient to account anything as from ourselves”—we have not enough sufficiency to be able to reckon any *part* of our ability as coming from ourselves! Does a man wish to reach the human mind with heavenly Truth? He must do it by the sufficiency of God! Does he wish to get at peculiar cases? He must be instructed by the Spirit of God! Does he desire to awake the careless? Let him look to the quickening Spirit! Does he wish to comfort the disconsolate and cheer the despairing? He is not sufficient of himself for this—let him call upon the Comforter, even the Spirit of God!

As to that deep mystery of our holy faith which is called regeneration, or the new birth, the preacher may not *dare* to think that he can perform this! Into that secret chamber where men are born from above none can intrude. He that works the new birth is God alone. In the new creation, as in the old, He takes counsel with none. Of this, especially, all must say, “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to account anything as from ourselves.” *Thus all must be of God.* Our thought of Divine doctrine; our preparation for the delivery of that thought; the choice of words for utterance—the very tone and especially the spirit, the feeling, the faith with which the preacher delivers his message—all these are essential things and in none of them is the preacher sufficient of himself. You see, then, what the great Doctor of Grace, the grand teacher of the New Covenant, thought of human sufficiency! If he felt that for the least as well as for the greatest thing in our ministry we must look to God, surely our experience confirms his statement! Let us take the lowest place and in humble consciousness of inability, let us look to the Strong for strength—but never be so foolish as to rely upon ourselves.

We will now joyfully consider how the question is answered *positively*. There is an answer to the question, “Who is sufficient for these things?” The answer is, “All who trust in the Lord are made sufficient as ministers of a new covenant.” This is explained to us in the first sentence, “*Our sufficiency is from God.*” In God there is all the wisdom, all the thought, all the love, all the power, all the conquering energy which a minister can require! And to work upon the hearts of men there lies in the Omnipotent Grace of God a fullness of might so that the stony heart shall be transformed and on its fleshy tablet shall be written the will of the Lord! That our sufficiency should be of God is infinitely better than if it were of ourselves, for then our sufficiency cannot be questioned, cannot be suspended, cannot be exhausted!

If you had to bear your own charges, you might soon be bankrupt. But now you are like a child that travels with his father and his father pays for everything. He has no care about cost. He is not called upon to exercise a pinching economy. He draws upon an inexhaustible purse for

all he needs and leads a princely life—for his father pays for all. Our sufficiency is of God—let us practically enjoy this Truth of God. We are poor, leaking vessels and the only way for us to keep full is to put our pitcher under the perpetual flow of boundless Grace. Then, despite its leakage, the cup will always be full to the brim! “Our sufficiency is of God.” “I do not feel able,” cries one, “to win a soul. I feel it is a work too hard for me.” Continue to feel that Truth of God, but at the same time let faith balance the feeling by reminding you that “Our sufficiency is of God.” Brother, if God sent you He will go with you! And if God gives you a message to deliver, He will prepare the ears and the hearts for that message. Blessed words are these for every minister of Christ and for all of you who in any way are working for His dear name! “Our sufficiency is of God.”

In very deed *we are made sufficient*, for the Apostle says, “Who also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant.” The Lord makes His servants sufficient for the work required of them. If we had to change the heart, we should not be sufficient—if we had to write upon the heart by the power of the Spirit, we should not be sufficient, for the Spirit of God is not at our command. But if we occupy only this position—that we bear witness to God’s New Covenant promises—then His Grace makes us sufficient! There is a little valve in an engine which if it is touched will set its whole machinery in motion. That engine may be turning a number of wheels and we should not be able to do the work of all this machinery—and yet, in another sense, we are quite capable of doing all the work—for by turning a certain handle the engine puts forth its power, the wheels move and the work is done. A little child with a trembling finger can set loose tremendous forces and so accomplish enormous results.

Beloved, we are made much of by God, but we of ourselves are *nothing*. I said to myself, as I came here this morning—What is my part in the matter? Set in a valley of dry bones, I ask myself, “can these dry bones live?” If I had to make them live, “Who is sufficient for these things?” But my work is not to make the dry bones live! The breath from the four winds will do that! My work is not even to put the bones together, bone to its bone. I could not refashion the scattered anatomies. What have I to do, then? I have but to prophesy and say, “Thus says the Lord.” Now, for this, Divine Grace has given me a sufficiency. It is not, “Thus I say.” Not “Thus I think.” But, “O you dry bones, hear the Word of the Lord.” For that proclamation I have received ability from the Holy Spirit and I do not fear to exercise it! We are made sufficient to be ministers of the New Covenant.

Hear a lesson. Dear Christian lady, you have been lamenting, “Alas, I am not sufficient for my class.” You are sufficient if this is what the Lord has called you to do. To pray for those girls—to tell them the way of salvation and with loving heart to weep them to the Savior—the Lord can make you sufficient for this. Yonder dear Friend says, “I have been preaching in a village and the people are so dull that I cannot move them. I am not sufficient for the task.” Go and confess that fact to your Lord and then begin again with the sufficiency of God—and you will mark a change come over the spirit of the scene! I pray you, do not de-

spair! The painful discovery of your own insufficiency ought to be the means of leading you to the Lord and so of girding you with new strength!

The Apostle evidently means that *through Grace we are adapted to the work*—"He has made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant." We are not ministers of the Old Covenant of command and threats—if we were so, we might exceedingly fear and quake. We are sent to be ministers of the Spirit of that Covenant which says, "A new heart, also, will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." We are ministers of a Covenant of pure Grace in which God, and not man, is the worker! We are, by the Truth spoken in love, to convey to men's hearts the Holy Spirit. We are ministers, not of the letter of the Law, which kills—but of the Spirit, that gives life.

"Oh!" says one, "that is hard work." It seems to me, on the contrary, to be the easiest of work when Divine power works in us! Shall I tell you what is needed to make a man sufficient for it? He must be able to bear personal witness to the Truth of God. Were you ever filled with life by the Spirit of the New Covenant—the Covenant of gracious promise? Then you can tell poor sinners where life is to be had. Were you slain by the Law and are you made alive by the Spirit of God? Then you will preach of the Law of God tremblingly and you will speak of life in Jesus Christ with living certainty! Do you know in your own soul what it is to be quickened by the Holy Spirit? If not, hands off the ark of God! But if Divine power has come upon you and you have been made to live the life of faith in Christ Jesus, then you have one point of ability to be a minister.

Beyond this, a living, loving heart is a great necessity. Have tender sympathy with those who have not so learned Christ and feel an intense desire that they may obtain eternal life. Bring your spiritual life into contact with their spiritual death and as one candle lights another, so may the Lord convey life into other hearts by your testimony! If our part were other than it is we might despair—but if we are called upon to be witnesses for God and sympathizers with God, then this ability is to be had—yes, we trust the Lord has already "made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant."

Dear Friends, there must be in us great longing of heart to be of service to our fellow men. He that can come into his pulpit and preach, saying to himself, "I do not care whether souls are saved or not," will win no hearts for Jesus. But, oh, if God the Holy Spirit makes you tender towards never-dying souls and eager to snatch them from the eternal burnings, then you have that kind of ability which will fit you for the Master's use! You see those wires which pass along our roads—they are nothing but dead metal. Are they sufficient of themselves to spy out what is happening in the capital of France and to report it here? No, not of themselves.

Yet that unconscious wire is quite sufficient to accomplish the transmission of news from Paris. Information is obtained and the wires flash the message under the sea to our door! The wire is quite sufficient, though not sufficient of itself. The Lord uses us as His telegraph wires to communicate between Himself and fallen men. And we, by His al-

mighty power, are made to convey to them the Truth with power. It flashes from our heart and tongue to the ears and heart of the man whom the Lord intends to bless. The words which we speak are not ours, but the words of our Lord who said, "The words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit, and they are life." May many of my hearers know this in their own cases!

II. I have worked out my first point and we have viewed our text as the answer to the minister's question. Secondly, we must view the text as A DIRECTION TO THE HEARER'S THOUGHTS. These thoughts must again be both negative and positive. The first negative counsel I suggest to you is this—*trust not your own sufficiency*. If we who preach to you and if those who were far greater than we are felt bound to say, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves," how little must *your* sufficiency be!

It is very wonderful how fully in Scripture the inability of man is set out. Here we see our inability to *think* aright—"We are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves." In another passage we find that a good will is of the Lord. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." To will aright is more than to think aright—but we never make so distinct an advance as to will that which is good until we are made willing. When we get as far as that, we pull up all of a sudden and make a dead halt, finding, with the Apostle, "To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not"—then are we driven to God for power to turn our willing into acting.

In this going to God we are brought to a stand-still again, for we read and feel that, "We know not what we should pray for as we ought." What can we do, if even in prayer we fail? Suppose we are taught to pray and, helped by the Spirit of God, we begin to work—yet we cannot keep on working without fresh Grace—for David, when he had worked up the people to a very high degree of consecration, thought it necessary to pray that the Lord would "keep this forever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of Your people." Our Savior prayed, "Father, keep them," for we soon go back to the old deadness and lethargy unless He that first made us alive *keeps* us alive.

Are any of you carelessly saying to yourselves, "I can be saved just whenever I like. I shall put off thought upon religious matters for I can believe and pray and live rightly at my own option. My salvation lies in my own power and the keys of Heaven swing at my belt. I can delay as long as I please and then at last cry, 'Lord have mercy upon me!' and go straight away from the sewers to Heaven." You will find the Truth of God to be quite another thing. "It is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy." I shall pray God that this wicked self-sufficiency of yours may be driven out and that you may learn the meaning of Jonah's words, "Salvation is of the Lord." I think this is a plain teaching of our text.

The next lesson I suggest to you is, *seek not another ministry*. It may be right, as far as I am concerned, that you should choose another *preacher*—but do not so on the ground that we are not sufficient—for He "made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant." Some run about

from one preacher to another hoping to find a peculiar something in one which they have not found in another—but in all true preachers the sufficiency is one—for “our sufficiency is of God.” Try the spirits and hear only the man who preaches the Truth of God, but look for nothing in the *man*. Anxiously wish to find eternal life and if you are so seeking, our preaching is sufficient to bring it to you, for it has already brought it to thousands. In this house of prayer so many have found eternal life in Christ Jesus that we seek no letters of commendation as to our sufficiency in God. He has used us and can use us again—and you, by earnestly hearing the Gospel, if you are willing and obedient—shall eat the good of the land. But if you do not bow your necks to the scepter of Divine Grace, it shall not be through *our* deficiency that you are lost, but through your own rejection of the Savior!

The next negative lesson that the hearer should learn is, *rely not on your own thoughts*. Here the Apostle says, “We are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves.” Do not, I pray you, therefore, indulge the *thinking* faculty at the expense of *believing*. Some are always trying to dive deep into things and they go so far down into mysterious subjects and debated doctrines that they stir up the mud at the bottom and cannot see anything themselves—neither can we see what they are doing. What do you think? A man is perishing. A life belt is thrown to him and he will not touch it till he knows in what shop the belt was made and whether the workpeople are paid good wages. Poor soul! He will die because his mind is so enquiring and his senses have gone wool-gathering at an unseasonable time.

Jesus Christ is the Savior for sinners. Believe in Him and you shall live—be washed in His blood and you shall be whiter than snow. Continually raising critical questions and prying into the infinite nothingness will surely land you on the dark shores of despair and death. Happy are they who believe, take the Word of God and rest thereon. “Still,” says one, “surely you would have us think?” Yes, think as much as ever you can, but I am not authorized to preach to you, “He that *thinks* and is baptized shall be saved.” I am commanded to tell you, “He that *believes* and is baptized shall be saved.” “But is there not such a thing as honest doubt?” cries one. I suppose there may be, but all that doubt which is now so popular and ostentatiously labels itself, “honest doubt,” I am a little suspicious of.

If I were walking over lonely fields at night and should meet a man and he took the trouble to assure me over and over again that he was an honest man, I should not feel much reassured. If a man were cutting a pane of glass out of my window, in the middle of the night, and when challenged answered that he was an honest man, I think I should let my dog loose and leave *him* to decide the question. When a sect everlastingly prefaces all it has to say by claiming to be honest, I am rather inclined to suspect that it needs to give assurance. The Chinese trader who put up over his shop, “*No cheat here,*” turned out to be the biggest rogue in the street. If you are honest, you will confess that you have sinned and then you will come to Jesus for that remission of sins which comes through His sacrifice. Look to Jesus and live! He has borne away the sin of all Believers. He suffered in the sinner’s place and whoever

believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. Oh, if you believe in Him, that act of believing shall do more for you than seven ages of thinking could accomplish so long as you refuse to accept the Savior whom God Himself has provided!

Once more, as a negative direction to the hearer, *let none of us be content with the letter*. Let no man rest in the hearing of the Law and the trying to keep the Commandments, for by the works of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in God's sight. What is meant by the letter here is evidently the Law, if you note the context. The Law condemns and so is the ministration of death—the Gospel brings the promise of the Spirit and so is life. Be not satisfied with merely knowing the letter of even the New Testament. Be not content with knowing the Doctrines of Grace and being called orthodox. Seek to feel the power of Gospel Truth. There is a dead orthodoxy as well as a dead heterodoxy. You must have the Spirit as well as the letter, or else the letter will be a savor of death to you. Power must be present as well as form, or else “having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof,” you shall be no nearer Heaven than if you had not even the form.

Now, gather direction positively. First, *look beyond us who are preachers—yes, look to the Spirit of God*. In the meetings of the Society of Friends they sometimes sit still and nobody speaks. It would do us good to have an occasional silence, if so the people would learn to look clean away from human agency to the power of God. I think we may continue speaking and yet if you are wise you will put no reliance upon us or our speaking apart from the Lord our God. Think not that you have done a good deed in merely coming to hear us talk. O Friends, there must be more than words in the Gospel ministry or all will be in vain! There must be a secret heavenly power in our testimony or it is no better than dead. Our Gospel is not a sword that glitters, but an edge that cuts, wounds, and kills! Do you know the power of the Word? If not, I pray God you may know it, for without the Spirit of the Lord you are nothing and have nothing. If you hear the preacher and his thoughts, but have never felt the Holy Spirit revealing to you Truth in the love of it, and in the power of it, you are in an evil case.

Further, *look beyond thought by faith*. Think, as we have already said, but still labor most after believing. To believe is to follow the way of salvation. Evermore it is written, “The just shall live by faith.” “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” “He that believes on Him is not condemned, but he that believes not is condemned already.” O my Hearer, your chief business is to *believe* on the Son of God! To speak plainly, you have to believe in Christ or to be damned! Whatever your own thoughts may be, you must accept God's thoughts and yield your understanding, yours affections and your will—and accept God's terms of Grace which are that you are nothing, and that Christ is everything. Oh, I pray you, dear Hearers, if you do not, by our ministry, get help in the matter of *faith*, do not think that you have been helped at all! All mere thinking out of problems and working out of propositions will leave you where you were. It is believing that brings eternal life into the soul and the more believing there is, the more does that life abound.

Next, *look beyond the outward command even of the New Testament*. I need not exhort you to look beyond the commands of the Old Testament—you have done so—but even with the New Testament you must not rest in the outward form of it. To believe that *faith* will save you, will not save you—you must *exercise* faith itself. To recognize that the Believer should be baptized will not save you, but you must yourself believe and be baptized. Neither will the Baptism save you unless you are buried with Christ in it. You must come and take Christ and be washed from your sins in His precious blood or you will die in your sins. To believe that the Holy Spirit can new-create you will not new-create you—you must in very deed be made a new creature in Christ Jesus by the Holy Spirit! Get beyond the mere shells of doctrine and taste the heavenly kernel which is the true food of the soul.

My dear Hearers, I am terribly afraid lest I should be ministering to your comfort while you are out of Christ. I come not here to be a fiddler at your feast of sin. I would not set the tune for you to dance by. My music is of another sort—it is a certain sound which calls you to do battle for your lives against your sins. I pray you, put no reliance upon the externals of religion, but seek the inward and spiritual Grace of which they are meant to be the channels. Repent! Believe! Lay hold on Christ and quit your hold of sin! Let not this exhortation be mere words to you. May the Spirit of power go with the command that you may repent and believe the Gospel and so may be saved! I beseech those of you who are regular hearers of the Gospel to get beyond even the best of hearing. I will not say, “If you do not mean to lay hold on Christ do not come to hear, and thus increase your condemnation,” for you might take me at my word and then I should be sorry for your absence.

I should like you to remain within gunshot of the Gospel, for you may yet feel its power. But there are persons coming here regularly and sitting in their pews, who are, I fear, deceiving their own souls by the very fact of their coming here. They think because they have heard a sermon that they must be the better for it. Alas, they may be all the worse for their hearing, for it may have flattered them in their self-righteousness and made them more secure in their pride! Is it not foolish for any man to say, “I must be a good fellow for I hear nothing unsound. I keep to the old Gospel and I am a constant attendant on the means of Grace”? If you do not get the Grace of the means, the means of Grace will be of no use to you! May God the Holy Spirit help you to get away from the mere letter to the real soul and Spirit of the whole business! May you feel, believe and actually yield your heart to Christ!

I have known some who were brought up to hear the Truth of God from their childhood and almost as a matter of course they joined the Church in their youth and stood well as to moral character for years. But after a while they grew indifferent to Divine things and gradually wandered away into sheer worldliness, almost blaming others for allowing them to make a profession. In their case the Holy Spirit never wrote upon the tablets of flesh but I scratched a letter or two on the unchanged stone. The work was never done by the Holy Spirit, but by parental influence and pastoral persuasion—and so in due season it all vanished. I pray God to save you from the religion which is born of ex-

citement and revivalism and shows itself in spasms. Come to close work with God by confessing your sin and laying hold on Christ Crucified with a real, living faith! May the Truth of God be written on your hearts by the Spirit. God grant it!

III. I finish, now, by A LESSON TO THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH. To you people of God, in your endeavor to spread the Gospel, I say, first, whispering it in your ear, *trust no man who is self-sufficient*. Oh, yes, he can do it! It is easy for him to preach fine sermons. Bless you! He can do it at any time and anywhere. He can convince and convert souls in any quantity. Did you read in the paper, "Glorious meeting! Eighteen souls out for salvation"? He was speaking that evening. *He* can fetch them. Certain other preachers doubt him, but that is all jealousy. He can do it—that he can.

Let such a man go where pride is at home. Our lowly Lord will not have him. Christ's men are more apt at weeping than at bragging—they feel their inability rather than their ability. The man who does everything *for* the Lord is the man who cannot do anything *without* the Lord. The man that knows he is nobody, God will make somebody—but he that is strong and mighty, king and lord, master in the realm of thought, who can make his own theology and so forth—he shall wander on till he loses himself among the dark mountains to his sure destruction! Do not be in a hurry to put self-confidence into a leading position—he will be better in the rear rank—if in the army at all.

Next, *doubt not the sufficiency of the Gospel in any case*. Since our sufficiency is of God, you may take the Gospel down that dark, horrible slum where there are none but thieves and harlots—and it will do its work. Since our sufficiency is of God, with God all things are possible. You have a horrible neighbor who seldom speaks without an oath—he is as wicked a man as ever lived and therefore you never give him a sermon, or speak to him about Christ, for you fear that your Gospel is not suitable for him. He is just the very man that God may bless! Go and try the unlikely one! Behold how the Pharisees and scribes enter not into the kingdom but the publicans and harlots, conscious of their guilt, welcome the Savior! Despair of nobody. If there is a spot on earth where the Missionary Society has no chance, to that place it ought first to send! Difficulties should be invitations and impossibilities should be attractions. For "our sufficiency is of God." Is it not so?

The next lesson is *value the New Covenant*. See how Paul puts it—"We are sufficient ministers of a new covenant." In some congregations people never hear the word, "covenant" and yet he that understands the two Covenants has the key of theology! The Covenants are the diamond hinges on which the golden doors of Grace are made to turn. Dear Christian people, I pray you, value Covenant blessings. Value the New Covenant of your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ—the Covenant, not of *works*, but of *Grace* which runs after this fashion—"I will, and they shall"—the Covenant which secures the salvation of the chosen by guaranteeing all that is needed for eternal life. Prize the New Covenant and often speak of it!

Next, *let life be seen in all we do*. If our ministry is not of the letter, but of the Spirit, and of the Spirit that gives life, our hearers ought to

have an abundance of life! Many professors seem to have life only in a part of them. Some have life in the jaw and can talk religion, but none in the hands, for they cannot act it. Some have life in the head, but they have none in the heart. Some I know have never much life in their hands, especially that hand which goes into their pocket, for it goes in dead and comes out empty. Perhaps there would be some life in it if you made them an offer of a guinea—then they might stretch out their hand to *receive* it. We need to be filled with life to the fullest! Give me a Christian man all alive! Every bit and particle of us should respond to the Gospel. Let but the Gospel whisper and we should be awake to hear it!

When joy is the note, let us be glad. When faith is the note, let us believe up to the hilt. And when love is spoken of, may coals of juniper burn in our hearts. I hope many of that sort are here—yet there are some who are dead and cold. If they give you a shake of the hand you feel as though a dead fish were touching you—they are as cold as icebergs. Warm-hearted fellowship is a sweet sign of life. And lastly, *glorify God, you members of the Church, in all that is done*. If the will of God is written on any heart, praise God for it. When any are converted, they should let the minister know—the instrument will have a rich reward in knowing that a soul is brought to Christ! But above all, there should be joy in the Church and praise to God over every soul that is saved.

And shall there not be some souls saved this morning? O my Hearer, I pray God it may be *your* soul! Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ? Then you are born of God! Do you believe in your heart that God has raised Christ from the dead? Then you shall be saved! Will you yield yourself up to Jesus that He should be your Savior and your Lord? Do you lie at the feet of the All-Merciful One, confess your sin and plead the blood of Christ? Go your way—your sins, which are many, are forgiven you—and let God have the glory of it forever and ever.

Brothers and Sisters if God has blessed you, *pray for us*. We are not sufficient of ourselves even to *think* anything from ourselves. Therefore pray the Lord to be our sufficiency. Brethren, when God has blessed us, praise with us, for if the Lord has done it all, He must have all the glory forever and ever. Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
2 Corinthians 2:14-17; 3.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—906, 407, 455.**

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WHY THE GOSPEL IS HIDDEN

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“But if our Gospel is hidden, it is hidden to those who are lost.”
2 Corinthians 4:3.

In this verse and the following one we have a very brief yet very full description of what every minister of the Gospel ought to preach. In the first place, he is to preach *the Gospel*—not metaphysics, not politics, not mere morality, not simply doctrines as such. He is to preach the Gospel, which signifies good news, something new and something good—so good that nothing else can equal it—the glad tidings of mercy for the guilty, the blessed tidings of God coming down to man that man may go up to God, the welcome tidings of atonement made for human guilt! It is also new as well as good—it comes as a strange novelty to the attentive ear. Mythology never dreamed it, human wit could never have invented it, even angelic intellect could not have devised a scheme—

“So just to God, so safe for man.”

The business of the Christian minister is to preach this Good News, to publish to the sinners the glad tidings that there is a Savior, to point the guilty to Christ and to be constantly saying to each individual sinner, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” I care not what may be the learning or eloquence of the minister, though he may speak with the tongue of men and angles, if he does not preach Christ and bid sinners trust in Him, he has mistaken his mission and missed the grand objective for which he was sent!

This Gospel is called in the text “*our Gospel*.” By this expression I understand that the minister must accept it for himself before he can hold it out to others. I am myself to look to Jesus as my own personal Savior—and then I am to cry to others, “Look unto Him, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.” I must be able to say—

***“I came to Jesus, and I drank
Of that life-giving stream”—***

and then, but not till then, I am to cry, “Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters.” What a miserable wretch must he be who preaches to others a Gospel in which he has, himself, no share! He spreads the table and invites others to come to the feast, while he, himself, is starving! He is like a plague-stricken physician who knows the remedy for the disease and sees others cured by it, yet dies with the remedy in his hand. Ah me,

of all the portions, that must be most dreadful in the world to come, as well as most uncomfortable in this present life! Surely it must be the portion of the man who preaches to others what he has never experienced in his own soul. Paul might well call it “our Gospel,” for it had saved him, the chief of sinners, and made him a beloved Apostle of Jesus Christ. He might well call it “our Gospel” for he had held it fast in time of persecution and amid all the perils to which he had been exposed—and he was, at last, to give his life as a sacrifice for it! And it must be “our Gospel,” too, “to have and to hold,” or else we cannot preach it with any power!

In the verse following our text, something more is said about the Gospel—it is there called “*the glorious Gospel.*” There was something in it that aroused and inflamed the Apostle’s noblest thoughts. Paul was no boaster. “God forbid that I should glory,” he said—but there was one exception—“save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” He did not stand up as a mere apologist for the Gospel, or say, “I can defend it against all comers and maintain that it is reasonable,” but he gloried in it as the best and highest Truth of God—as wiser than all the Stoic’s wisdom and more full of joy than all the Epicurean’s pleasure! He gloried in that Gospel which brings full and free forgiveness to the penitent! That Gospel which takes the meanest and basest of mankind and makes them princes in the court of the King of kings! That Gospel which comes to men in poverty, in slavery, in the degradation of superstition, idolatry and crime—and lifts them up out of the horrible pit and the miry clay, sets their feet upon the Rock of Ages, cleanses them, clothes them, puts a new song into their mouth, preserves them from falling and, at last, brings them where they shall see the face of God and dwell forever in His Presence! It is, indeed, a glorious Gospel which can do all this! Yet, alas, the most of men are like the rooster on the dunghill who, when he found a pearl, said that he would sooner have found a grain of barley—they think more of their corn and their wine, their feasts and their mirth, than they do of the inexpressibly glorious things of the Kingdom of Heaven. Oh, that they were wise enough to perceive the glories of this glorious Gospel!

Paul further calls it “*the glorious Gospel of Christ.*” And well he might, for it is all about Christ from beginning to end! Give me a true preacher of the glorious Gospel of Christ and I will gladly listen to him. I would like him to be an educated minister if that is possible, for there is no need for my ears to be tortured by mistakes in grammar, but I do not care so much about that as about the other matter! I would sooner hear Christ’s Gospel preached ungrammatically than I would hear the best philosophy set forth in the most orderly sentences, but with the Gospel of Christ left out. When the table is spread for dinner, it is well to have a clean tablecloth, china, glass and cutlery of all the right sort and in their proper places—but if there is no food on the dishes, all those other things are a mere mockery to the hungry ones who are waiting to be fed! Sooner, by far, would I go to a bare table and eat from a wooden bowl something

that would appease my appetite, than I would go to a well-spread table on which there was nothing to eat! Yes, it is Christ, Christ, Christ whom we have to preach! And if we leave Him out, we leave out the very soul of the Gospel! Christless sermons make merriment for Hell. Christless preachers, Christless Sunday school teachers, Christless class leaders, Christless tract distributors—what are all these doing? They are simply setting the mill to grind without putting any grist into the hopper—all their labor is in vain! If you leave Jesus Christ out, you are simply beating the air, or going to war without any weapon with which you can smite the foe!

Dear Friend, if you are unconverted, let me pause here for a few moments to remind you that this is not a Gospel of self, nor a Gospel of works, nor a Gospel of baptism, nor a Gospel of priests, nor a Gospel of ministers, but it is “the glorious Gospel of Christ!” Forget the men who preach it if you will, but, oh, forget not the bleeding, dying Savior to whom they bid you look. Your hope must be in Him and in Him, alone! To Him would we affectionately point you and we pray the Holy Spirit to shut your eyes to everything but Him whom God has set forth to be a Propitiation for sin—

***“There is life for a look at the Crucified One!
There is life at this moment for thee!
Then look, Sinner—look unto Him and be saved—
Unto Him who was nailed to the tree!
It is not the tears of repentance or prayers,
But the blood that atones for the soul—
On Him, then, who shed it, believing at once
Your weight of iniquities roll!
We are healed by His stripes—would you add to the Word?
And He is our righteousness made—
The best robe of Heaven He bids you put on,
Oh, could you be better arrayed?
Then doubt not your welcome, since God has declared
There remains no more to be done!
That once in the end of the world He appeared
And completed the work He begun.”***

With this rather long introduction, I now come to the three points upon which I am going to briefly speak, but very solemnly, for I think they concern many of you who are here, tonight. So, firstly, I ask, *why is this Gospel hidden from some people?* Secondly, *what is the state of those from whom it is hidden?* And, thirdly, *what is to be feared concerning them in the future?*

I. First, then, WHY IS THIS GOSPEL HIDDEN FROM SOME PEOPLE?

It is evident that there are some persons in the world who do not understand the Gospel—and I will venture to say that the Gospel is never understood until it is received. You might have thought that men could very readily understand anything as simple as, “Believe, and live,” yet those of us who have been converted must confess that we did not understand the Gospel until we received it. I am sure that I never fully

comprehended the plan of salvation until I believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. And when I did believe, the whole matter seemed so simple that I wondered why I had not understood it before! You notice that the Apostle decreed that it was not his fault that the Gospel was hidden from some people. And although we would not put ourselves on a level with any Apostle, we are as clear upon this point of plain speaking as any Apostle who ever lived! If “our Gospel” is hidden from any of our hearers, it is not because of the fine language that we use! We fear that there *are some* who, in preaching the Gospel, indulge in such eloquent oratory that their Gospel is hidden from their hearers—but this is not a sin which can be laid at our door. We use what Whitefield called, “market language.” We use a great many more Saxon words than Latin words. If we had to find out the Gospel through the types and symbols of the Law, we might have a difficulty in understanding it, but the Gospel we have to preach is simply this, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. Trust in Him as suffering as a Substitute in your place and you shall be saved.” Can anything be more simple than that? We try to use the plainest similitudes so as to bring the Truth of God within the comprehension of the weakest of our hearers. We make it a matter of conscience, as in the sight of God, to speak to men very simply so that each one, after he has heard the message, is compelled to admit that it has been delivered to him very plainly. How is it, then, that you do not understand it?

Certainly, *it is not because we hide the Gospel in a long roll of ceremonies*. We have never said to you, “You must be christened in your infancy, you must have sponsors to promise all sorts of things in your name and then, as you grow up, you must be confirmed and must take the responsibility upon yourselves.” Oh, no! We have never talked like that! We point you to the Divinely-Inspired Bible and tell you that all you need to know is plainly recorded there. We point you to the Eternal Word who became Incarnate and we say, with all the emphasis of which we are capable—

**“None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good!”**

We bid you not to trust in forms and ceremonies, but to look alone to Jesus Christ and Him Crucified, so that it cannot be for lack of plainness that the Gospel is not understood!

And again, *it cannot be because of any obscurity in the Gospel, itself*. I will venture to say that there is no proposition in the world more simple than the one which the Gospel sets before us. The formula, “Twice two are four,” is so simple that a child’s mind can understand it. And the degree of intellect which can comprehend is sufficient—so far a intellect is concerned—to comprehend Paul’s declaration, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” Or John’s, “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” To trust Jesus Christ, as far as it is an intellectual act, is a matter that does not require the slightest education—there is no need to sit

down and calculate. Here is Jesus Christ standing in the sinner's place. God punished the sinner's guilt upon Christ instead of upon the sinner—all that the sinner is bidden to do is to trust Christ to save him—and, as soon as he does that, he is saved! What could be simpler than that? I grant you that as the Gospel is sometimes preached, there is obscurity in it, but there is no obscurity in the Gospel, itself! Well then, if it so, and it is, why is it that the Gospel is hidden from some people? And the answer is that “the god of this world has blinded the minds of those who believe not.” Let us see how this is.

First of all, *the Gospel is hidden from some men because they have never felt sin to be an evil.* “Why,” they say, “do you talk to us about the punishment of sin? Why do you tell us that God punished His own Son in the place of sinners? We believe in the universal fatherhood of God, so we have no need of any Doctrine of Substitution.” So *you* think that it is a small thing to offend the Most High God, but *He* thinks it is a very great thing! You consider that sin is a mere trifle, scarcely worth thinking about, but God regards it as exceedingly sinful—an evil and an accursed thing which He will, by no means, pardon except in them who trust His Son, the Divinely appointed Substitute and Savior. If you realized what sin is, you would soon understand the Gospel! If the Holy Spirit shall teach you that sin is the most deadly and most damnable thing of which you can conceive, you will at once understand the Glory of the Gospel that shows how you can be completely delivered from its curse, penalty and power through the mercy of God in giving His only-begotten Son to die in your place! You love sin—that is the fact of the matter—and you suppose that one is no more offensive to God than it is to yourself. Fool that you are, you are fascinated by the serpent that has filled your veins with the venom which shall burn in you forever and ever unless you shall look by faith to Him who was lifted up upon the Cross even as Moses lifted up the bronze serpent in the wilderness that all who looked upon it might live! May God give you Grace to see sin as it really is in His sight, for then will you realize your need of a Savior and you will give heed to the Gospel which bids you believe in Him that you may be saved!

Another reason why men do not understand the Gospel is that *they do not understand themselves.* Some of you who are here tonight think that you can save yourselves. I know what your thoughts are—they are to this effect—that if you do your best, if you say your prayers, if you attend church or chapel, if you give some to the poor, then you will go to Heaven. You have not yet learned that all you do is tainted with the leprosy of sin and, therefore, cannot be acceptable to God! Your best works are bad since you do them with the motive that you may be saved by them—selfishness, therefore, is at the bottom of them all! You are not serving God by your good works! You are all the while trying to serve yourselves. If you knew yourselves better, you would know that all your works are nothing but sin until the Holy Spirit brings you to know your *need* of

Christ—and then to *know* Christ as the very Savior you need! If I am not in need, I have no need of the gifts of charity. And if you do not know how needy you are *spiritually*, you will never apply to Christ for aid. But once let the real needs of your soul stare you in the face—that you realize that you are “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked,” then the simple Gospel message, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved,” will be so welcome to your soul that it will almost leap out of your body to lay hold of it!

Yet another reason why men do not understand the Gospel is *because their will is not subdued*. “We want to know,” they say, “why the requirements of the Gospel are so strict.” Oh, Sirs, that is not the language for you to use to your God! The message to you is, “Except you are converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.” That hectoring spirit which says, “Why is this the only way of salvation? Why is this precept enjoined? Who is the Lord that we should serve Him?”—that spirit has been the eternal ruin of many! There is no likelihood that you will ever understand the Gospel while you are of this humor. Come down, Man, come down—there is no blessing for you while you set yourself up high! May the Lord make you know the corruptions and abominations which dwell in your heart that, in the Presence of the thrice-holy God, you may demean yourself after another and a humbler fashion! But while that wicked will of yours says, “I will not do what God requires,” there is no hope whatever that you will be able to understand the Gospel!

There are some who cannot understand the Gospel *because it interferes with their worldly interests*. If you take a sovereign out of your pocket and cover the word, “God,” in your Bible with it, of course you cannot see the word! There are a great many men who never seem to see anything beyond pounds, shillings and pence—they never look above their ledgers—they never rise to anything that is Godlike and Divine. They have no more spirituality than so many pigs at a trough! They say they cannot understand the Gospel, but how can they when their understanding has been eaten through and through with the canker of their gold? There are many here to whom I am a stranger, but I should like to put this question to any of you who do not understand the Gospel—Is there not in your hearts a desire *not to* understand it? Is it not a sorrowful fact that many of you do not comprehend Gospel preachers because you do not want to trouble yourselves by comprehending them or have an uneasy consciousness that Gospel Truth and your pleasures will not agree? You are like men who are on the way to bankruptcy, but who dare not examine their books to see how they stand! Yet did you ever know a man retrieve his position by refusing to look his difficulties in the face? Is it not the most sensible plan to know the worst of your case and to know it at once? I have known some who did not want to understand the Gospel because they were engaged in a business which would not bear examination. There are others who are hindered by their besetting sins. If

the Lord Jesus Christ would grant pardons and yet allow men to keep their sins, what a host of disciples of that sort He might have! But He says that though sin is as dear to us as our right arm, it is to be cut off—and though it is as precious as our right eye, it is to be plucked out! Yet many will not agree to these conditions and, therefore, the Gospel is hidden from them.

II. Now I must try very briefly to answer the second question, WHAT IS THE STATE OF THOSE FROM WHOM THE GOSPEL IS HIDDEN?

Paul says that *they are lost*—“If our Gospel is hidden, it is hidden to those who are lost.” But, Paul, are you not very uncharitable in saying that men are lost? Preachers nowadays tell them that they will all get to Heaven at last. Ah, Beloved, the Apostles knew nothing of this modern, maudlin “charity!” They said, as their Master said before them, “He that believes not shall be damned.” Our Lord Jesus Christ knew that there was no alternative between believing and being lost. But in what sense are they from whom the Gospel is hidden, lost?

Well, first, *they are lost to the church*. You may be a subscriber to the funds of the church, you may attend the service of the church, you may even be an ardent admirer of the preacher and find a certain measure of interest in listening to his discourses. But if the Gospel is still hidden from you, if you do not understand it and believe on the Christ of whom it speaks—you are lost to the church of which many around you are members—and if you remain as you are, you will be lost to the one great Church of the first-born and will never form a part of the general assembly of the redeemed around the Throne of God above!

It is a dreadful thing for anyone to be lost. I do not know if there is a more dreadful word in the English language than that word, “lost.” Do you remember, my Friend, when you came home from work one night and your wife met you with the sad news that your little Mary was lost, how you hurried from one police station to another? And your poor distracted wife went tearing up and down one street after another seeking for tidings of your lost child! It was her misfortune to be lost in *that* sense, but I hope you may never have a child lost in a sense in which it shall be her *crime* when the mother, night after night, searches the cold streets for any trace of her poor lost daughter! Ah, Sinner, *you are lost to God in that sense*. You have turned away from Him who made you. You have despised the love that He has lavished upon you. You have forgotten all the care that He has taken of you. I am quite sure that you are not happy while you are thus lost—how can you be happy? You are not at rest. Your soul is like a ship drifting in a storm with neither a rudder to guide her, nor an anchor to hold her and unless the Lord shall mercifully interpose to save you, you will be lost forever!

What a mercy it is, Sinner, that you are not yet “lost” in the full meaning of that term, as you soon will be if you do not repent of your sin and turn unto the Lord! But even now it is a terrible thing to be lost in any

sense—and if you are not saved, you are lost—you must be either the one or the other, you cannot be partly saved and partly lost! I will ask every one of you again tonight to do what I asked my congregation once before to do. You are either lost or saved, so will you definitely decide which word applies to your case and write it down and sign your name to it? I remember that on the previous occasion when I made this request, there was one Brother, who, after sincere heart searching, felt that he was lost, so he wrote down that word and signed his name below it. When he had done so and looked at the word, “Lost,” written with his own hand, and with his signature appended to it—and felt that it might be brought forward as evidence against him at the Last Great Day, it broke the heart that had never been broken before and brought him as a true penitent to the Savior's feet, so that before that night passed away he could write himself down as, “Saved,” just as truthfully as he had before acknowledged that he was lost! I pray that this Brother's experience may be repeated in many of you here. Do not hesitate to look thoroughly into your own case. If you are saved, it is not difficult for you to know that you are. And if you are not saved, it is well that you should know it at once! If you think you are saved when you are not, your ruin will be all the more terrible because you had not the courage to find out the truth! If there is any doubt about the matter, let it be cleared up at once. Go to Jesus Christ this very moment! Confess your sin to Him and trust to His precious blood to wash it all away! And then you will be no longer lost, but shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation!

III. Now, in a few closing sentences, let me answer the third question, WHAT IS TO BE FEARED CONCERNING THOSE FROM WHOM THE GOSPEL IS HIDDEN?

It is to be feared that in addition to their natural blindness, a second film has been cast over their eyes by “the god of this world.” That is a very remarkable expression, “the god of this world.” Does this world, then, really worship the devil? There are devil-worshippers in certain far-off lands—and we hold up our hands in horror and say, “What shockingly bad people!” Yet there are also many devil-worshippers in this land! The lover of pleasure—what is he better than a devil-worshipper? It is the devil in his best suit of clothes whom some people worship, but it is still the devil! Worship the devil with the golden hoofs, but it is the same devil all the while! If I were to be lost, it would make little difference to me whether I was lost in a gold mine, or in a coal mine. If I were to break my neck on a slab of gold, it would be no better for me than breaking it upon a slab of stone! So, if you are lost, you will find little comfort in the thought that you are lost in a more respectable way than others are!

When “the god of this world” comes to a man who is already blind by nature, he seeks to “make assurance doubly sure” by bandaging his eyes so securely that the Light of the Gospel shall be still more completely hidden from him! If such a man attends a place of worship, the devil persuades him that he is not a sinner, so that he need not take to him the

preacher's warnings and exhortations. Another says, "I don't intend to trouble about any of these things—my one aim is to get on in the world." Yes, just so, "the god of this world" has blinded his eyes! So effectually does Satan blind the man that he cannot see his own depravity! O Soul, what shall it profit you if you shall gain the whole world, and yet be lost forever? What if you shall die upon a bed of down and wake up among the lost in Hell? May God give all of us the Grace to look upon the two worlds in their proper light! If the next world is only a trifle, trifle with it! If this world is everything, make everything of it! As you possess an immortal spirit, think well where that spirit is to spend eternity. As all have sinned and come short of the Glory of God, you are a sinner and you need salvation, so do, I entreat you, trust in Him who alone can save the guilty, "for there is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved," but the name of Jesus—and He is able to save unto the uttermost all who come unto God by Him. I said just now that I do entreat you to trust in Him, and so I do, yet this is not half so much my business as it is yours. The preacher of the Gospel ought to be in earnest, but when he has faithfully delivered his message, the responsibility is transferred to his hearers. As the Lord lives, I will take no responsibility of yours upon myself—to our own Master you and I must stand or fall! But, as your fellow man. As one who devoutly desires that you should not be lost, I do beseech you to seek Divine Grace from God to get rid of the scales from your eyes so that you may see sin, salvation and everything else as they are in His sight—and may look to Jesus and find eternal life in Him!

Some of you young men are perhaps going to Oxford or Cambridge. Well, study hard, be senior wranglers if you can, but with all the knowledge that you may acquire, do get a clear understanding of eternal things and seek the wisdom that comes from above. When you wear the degrees which earthly knowledge will procure for you, may you also wear the higher degree which God shall confer upon you as the children of the Kingdom, children of God by faith in Christ Jesus! Sit at the feet of divines and philosophers if you will, but also sit at the feet of Jesus and learn of Him, for so shall you have honor and glory that shall last forever! Seek after the honor which comes from God—which can only be found by believing in Jesus and seeking to please Him in all things!

My time has gone and your time for repentance and faith is almost gone. May the realities of eternity be deeply impressed upon us all—and may we be prepared—when death shall summon us to stand before God, to prove that the Gospel was not hidden from us, so that we may not be among "those who are lost." May God save us, by His Grace, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 CORINTHIANS 4; 5:1-9.**

2 Corinthians 4:1-2. *Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the Truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.* Paul's description of his own ministry and also that of Timothy should be true of every servant of Jesus Christ! There must be no dishonesty, or craftiness, or deceit about the minister of the Word of God—and it is by the manifestation of the Truth of God that he must commend himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God! He may not win every man's approval, yet even those who differ from him must perceive his loyalty to his Lord.

3, 4. *But if our Gospel is hidden, it is hidden to those who are lost: in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.* [See Sermons #1663, Volume 28—THE TRUE GOSPEL IS NO HIDDEN GOSPEL and #2304, Volume 39—BLINDED BY SATAN—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] The light of the Gospel is so glorious and bright that it is only hidden from those who have been blinded by Satan, “the god of this world.” The only hope for them is to believe in Jesus who can give sight to the spiritually blind as easily as He gave sight to the physically blind when He was here in the flesh.

5. *For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.* “Christ Jesus the Lord” is to be the great theme of our preaching! And when it is so, we naturally take our right position with regard to our hearers, as Paul and Timothy did—“and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.”

6, 7. *For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.* God might have put the priceless treasure of the Gospel into the golden vessel of cherubim and seraphim—and He might have sent angels who would never suffer, who would never err, who would never sin—to preach the Word. But instead of doing so, He has chosen to send the Gospel to men by commonplace beings like themselves. “We have this treasure in earthen vessels,” and this redounds much to God's Glory and, dear Friends, the great objective of the sending of the Gospel into the world is the Glory of God! He would manifest His mercy to men that His mercy might be glorified and, therefore, He has committed the Gospel not to the trust of perfect men, but to the trust of poor, shallow, earthen vessels like ourselves!

8, 9. *We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.* The Apostle is here speaking for himself and all the members of the Apostolic college and, also, for all the early saints. They ap-

pear to have been very much troubled and sometimes to have been very much perplexed. I meet with certain brethren, now and then, who have no troubles—they are so supremely wise that they are never perplexed and so eminently holy that they do not appear to belong to the ordinary democracy of Christianity—but are altogether supernatural beings! Well, I do not belong to their clique and it does not seem to me that Paul and the Apostles and the early Christians did. Those great pioneers of the Church of Christ were men who were troubled on every side—perplexed, persecuted, cast down—in fact, they were men of like passions with ourselves!

10, 11. *Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life, also, of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we who live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life, also, of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.* So you see, Brothers and Sisters, to have an anticipation of death upon one is no hindrance to one's work, but a great help to it—to bear about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus is a great help towards the manifestation of the life of Christ! When we begin to reckon that we shall live long, we are very apt to live loosely. But to live as though tomorrow might be the Judgment Day, or as though today the King might come in His Glory—that is the style of living which is the best of all! “A short life and a holy one”—lengthened as God may please, but reckoned by us as short even at the longest—may that be the Christian's motto. As the worldling says, “A short life and a merry one.” But we say, “A short life if God so wills it, but a holy one whether it is long or short.”

12. *So then death works in us, but life in you.* These Apostolic men lived as if they were on the borders of the grave—lived expecting to die a cruel death—and in this way spiritual life was brought to the Corinthians and others who witnessed their holy lives and heroic deaths.

13-16. *We, having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak; knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise us up, also, by Jesus, and shall present us with you. For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant Grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the Glory of God. For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perishes, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.* As the flesh goes down, so, by God's Grace, the spirit goes up! You know that there are heavy weights that keep men down to the earth, but he who understands mechanics knows that by the use of wheels and pulleys those same heavy weights may be made to lift a man—and God often makes the weights and burdens associated with bodily decay lift up the inward spirit.

17, 18. *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things*

which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

2 Corinthians 5:1, 2. *For we know that if our earthly house of the tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan. In this poor body it is our lot often to groan, but the groan is a hopeful one, for it is a birth-pang and it will bring joy in due time—"For in this we groan."*

2-6. *Earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from Heaven: if it is that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now He that has worked us for the same thing is God, who also has given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident. That is a blessed experience, "always confident." There are some Christians who are never confident and some who are afraid of being confident. I know some who, if they see this holy confidence in other Christians, begin to tremble for their eternal safety. Never mind about them, Brothers and Sisters—if God gives you a holy confidence in Him, hold fast to it and do not let it go, whatever anyone may say!*

6-9. *Knowing that, while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord, (for we walk by faith, not by sight). We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Therefore we labor, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him.* [See Sermon #1303, Volume 22—THE BELIEVER IN THE BODY AND OUT OF THE BODY—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] That is our main business—whether we live or whether we die is of no consequence at all! But to be accepted of Christ—so to live is to be well-pleasing to God. Be this our heavenly ambition and may the Holy Spirit graciously enable us to attain to it!

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

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

THE TRUE GOSPEL IS NO HIDDEN GOSPEL NO. 1663

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 4, 1882,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

***“But if our Gospel is hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.”
2 Corinthians 4:3, 4.***

I THINK in this case the Revised New Testament gives a better translation than does the Authorized Version and I will, therefore, read it, “But even if our Gospel is veiled, it is veiled in them that are perishing, in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the Gospel of the Glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn upon them.” Paul had been speaking of Moses with the veil over his face and we lose the track of his thought if we use the word, “hid,” instead of, “veiled.” Our Gospel wears no veil, but exhibits all the Glory of its countenance to the sons of men. Oh that they may be able to steadfastly behold it and see in it their own salvation and the Glory of the Lord!

Observe at the outset the confidence with which Paul speaks. It is abundantly evident that he has no doubt whatever that the Gospel which he proclaims is assuredly true. No, that it is so manifestly true that if those who have heard it do not accept it, it must be because the god of this world has blinded their minds! The accent of conviction makes every word emphatic. He believes and is sure! And he is convinced that those who do not believe must be under the thralldom of the devil. This is not the ordinary style in which the Gospel is preached nowadays! We hear men courteously *apologize* for stating anything as absolute, for they are fearful of being thought narrow-minded and bigoted! We hear them *prove* what is clear as noonday and back up with arguments what God, Himself, has said—as if the sun needed candles to exhibit it, or as if God’s Word needed the support of human reasoning!

The Apostle did not take the defensive ground at all! He carried the war across the border and assailed the unbelievers. He came forth fresh from God with a Revelation and his every word seemed to challenge men with—“This is God’s Word. Believe it, for if you do not, you will incur sin and prove that you are lost and are under the influence of the devil.” When the Gospel was preached in that royal style, it prevailed mightily and annihilated opposition! Cavilers came, of course. “What will this babbler say?” was a common question, but the heralds of the Cross made short work of all cavilers, for they simply went on declaring the glorious Gospel! Their one word was, “This is from God! If you believe it, you shall be saved. If you reject it you shall be damned.”

They made no bones about it, but spoke like men who believed in their message and judged that it left unbelievers without excuse. They never altered their doctrine or softened the penalty of refusing it. Like fire among stubble, the Gospel consumed all before it when it was preached as God's Revelation. It does not spread, today, with equal rapidity because many of its teachers have adopted what they fancy are wiser methods—they have become less certain and more indifferent and, therefore, they reason and argue where they should proclaim and assert! Some preachers rake up all the nonsense that any scientific or unscientific man likes to bring forward and spend half their time in trying to answer it! What can be the use of untying the knots which are tied by skeptics? They only tie more! It is not for my servant to dispute my message, but to *deliver* it correctly, as mine, and there leave it.

If we get back, again, to the old platform, and speak as from God, we shall not speak in vain, for He will surely honor His own Word. The preacher should either speak in God's name or hold his tongue. My Brother, if the Lord has not sent you with a message, go to bed, or to school, or mind your farm—for what does it matter what you have to say on your own? If Heaven has given you a message, speak it out as he ought to speak who is called to be the mouth for God! If we are to make up our Gospel as we go along, out of our own heads, and compound our own theology as chemists make up mixtures of drugs, we have an endless task before us and failure stares us in the face! Alas for the weakness of human wit and the fallacy of mortal reasoning!

But if we have to deliver what God declares, we have a simple task and one which must lead to grand results, for the Lord has said, "My Word shall not return unto Me void." Where did the Apostle learn to speak thus positively? He tells us in the first verse of the chapter, "Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not." He had, himself, been once a persecutor and he had been convinced of his error by the appearance of the Lord Jesus to him. This was a great deed of mercy. He now knew that his sins were forgiven. He felt in his own heart that he was a regenerated man, changed, cleansed, newly created and this was, to him, overwhelming evidence that the Gospel was from God. To himself, at any rate, the Gospel was a Truth of God past argument, needing no other demonstration than its marvelous effect upon himself!

Having received mercy for himself, he judged that other men were in need of mercy even as he was, and that the same Gospel which had brought light and comfort to his own soul would bring salvation to them, also. This braced him to his work. By this consciousness he was made to speak as one having authority. There was no hesitancy about him, for he spoke what he felt. Ah, Friends, we not only deliver a message which we believe to be from God, but we tell out that which we have tested and tried within our own souls! An unconverted preacher must be in a sorry plight, for he lacks evidence of the Truth of God which he proclaims. A man who is not familiar with the effect of the Gospel upon his own heart must endure much disquietude when he stands up to preach upon it. What does he really know about it if he has never felt its power?

But if he has been converted by its means, then he is confident and is not to be moved by the questions and quibbles of those who oppose him. His inner consciousness strengthens him in the delivery of his message. We must also feel the influence of the Word of God that we may speak what we know and testify what we have seen. Having received mercy we cannot but speak of that mercy positively as of a thing which we have tested and handled—and knowing that it is God who has given us the mercy, we cannot but speak with anxious desire that others may partake of Divine Grace.

We now come to consider our text. Our first observation shall be the Gospel is, in itself, a glorious light, for in the fourth verse Paul speaks of the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ. Secondly, this Gospel is, in itself, plain and simple. Thirdly, if we preach it as we ought to preach it, we keep it plain and do not muddle it up by worldly wisdom. And fourthly, it being in itself a great light and in itself, clear, therefore the preaching being clear, if men do not see it, it is because they are lost—it is a fatal sign when men are unable to perceive the light of the Gospel of the Glory of Jesus Christ.

I. First, then, THE GOSPEL IS IN ITSELF A GLORIOUS LIGHT. In countless places it is so described in the New Testament. This is the light which has come into the world. “The darkness is past, and the true light now shines.” Observe that this light reveals the Glory of Christ. This is the new translation and it is a valuable one— “The light of the Gospel of the Glory of Christ.” You know the Hebrews had a different mode of expression from the Greek and if we are to read the Greek as though Paul Hebraized it, then we read it according to the version we have here— “the glorious Gospel of Christ.” But if we read the Greek as Greek, then it runs, “the light of the Gospel of the Glory of Christ.” The renderings are equally true, but the second one has a fullness and freshness of sense about it worthy of special note.

The Gospel reveals the Glory of Christ. It tells us that He is the eternal Son of the Father, by whom all things were made, for whom all things were created and by whom they continue to exist. This might not have been good news to us if it had stood alone, though it ought always to be good for the creature to be informed of his Creator. But the Gospel further reveals to us that this ever-blessed Son of the Highest came down to earth in infinite pity, espoused our nature, was born at Bethlehem and became as truly Man as He was assuredly God. This was the first note of the Gospel and there was so much delight in it that it set all the angels in Heaven singing—and the shepherds who kept watch over their flocks by night heard the chorales of the first Christmas rung out from the midnight sky—“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”

It could not but mean peace to man that God should become Man! It could not but mean mercy to the guilty that the Heir of Glory should be born into their race! It must be good news to us that the offended One should take upon Himself the nature of the offender! So the first pure Gospel music rang out that made glad the ear of mankind! The Lord God

Omnipotent became Immanuel—God With Us! “Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and His name shall be called Wonderful.” This is the beginning of the Gospel of the Glory of Christ—He gained a greater Glory by laying aside His Divine Glory!

Furthermore, the Gospel tells us that this same mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace dwelt here among men, preaching and teaching, and working miracles of matchless mercy, everywhere proving Himself to be man’s brother, sympathetic and tender and gentle, receiving to Himself even the lowest of the people and bowing Himself to the least of the race. It is written, “Then drew near unto Him the publicans and sinners for to hear Him.” And again He took little children into His arms and blessed them, and said, “Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not.” There was a Gospel about all that He did and a Glory which men who are pure in heart both see and admire!

His life was good news—it was a new and a glad thing that God should dwell among men and be found in fashion as a Man. The God that hates sin and whose wrath burns against iniquity, tabernacled among sinners and saw and felt their evil ways and prayed for them, “Father, forgive them.” His Glory lay in His being so patient, gentle and self-sacrificing, and yet so just and true. Well did John say, “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His Glory, the Glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father), full of Grace and truth.” But the Gospel’s biggest bell, which rings out with clearest note, is that this Son of God, in due time, gave Himself for our sins, making an offering of His whole Human Nature as a propitiation for the guilt of men! Herein is an excessive Glory of love!

What a sight it was to see Him in the garden oppressed with our load of guilt till the bloody sweat was forced from Him! To see Him bearing that stupendous weight up to the Cross and there hanging in agonies of death, bearing the desertion of His Father and all the thick clouds of darkness that came of it—dying—the “Just for the unjust to bring us to God”! It was the Glory of Christ that He was there bereft of all Glory! Never can a more glorious thing be said of Him than that He, for our sakes, was obedient to *death*, even the death of the Cross! And this is the Gospel we preach, the Gospel of Substitution, that Jesus stood in the sinner’s place and bore in the sinner’s stead what was due to the Law of God on account of man’s transgression.

Tell it out among the heathen that the Lord reigns from the Cross—

***“Fling out the banner! Let it float
Skyward and seaward, high and wide!
Our Glory only in the Cross,
Our only hope, the Crucified.”***

No more gladsome news could come to man than that the Incarnate God had borne man’s sins and died in man’s place! Yet there is another note, for He that died and was buried is *risen* from the dead and has borne our nature up into Glory—and there He wears it at the Father’s right hand. His loving heart is still occupied with the same Divine errand that brought Him down below—He is, by His intercession, saving sinners whom He purchased with His blood! He is able to save them to the uttermost who

come unto God by Him, seeing He always lives to make intercession for them!

This is the Gospel of the Glory of Christ! It is our Lord's Glory that He mediates between man and God, pleading for the unjust ones, using as His all-prevailing argument the blood which He has shed. But I must not leave out the fact that He who now in Glory pleads for sinners will speedily come, again, to gather all His own unto Himself, to shed abroad on them the fullness of His own Glory and to take them up to be with Him where He is. There is wondrous light in the Gospel, both for the future and the present! It sets forth to us the Glory of Christ, the Glory of love, the Glory of mercy, the Glory of a blood which can wash the blackest, white! The Glory of a plea which can make the poorest prayer, acceptable! The Glory of a living and triumphant Savior, who, having put His hands to the work, will not fail nor be discouraged till all the purposes of infinite love shall be achieved by Him. This is "the Gospel of the Glory of Christ" and the light of it is exceedingly clear and bright!

We are now called to a second Truth of God—the Gospel is a light which reveals God, Himself, for, according to our text, the Lord Jesus is the image of God. Did not Jesus say, "He that has seen Me has seen the Father"? For, first, our Lord Jesus is the image of God in this sense, that He is essentially One with God. He is "the brightness of the Father's Glory and the express image of His Person." He is "very God of very God," as the creed has it, and I know not how better to express the idea. Our Lord Himself said, "I and My Father are One." But the text means more than that. Christ is the image of God in this sense, that He shows us what God is. If you know the Character of Jesus, you know the Character of God.

God Himself is invisible and is not seen of mortal eyes; neither can He be comprehended of finite mind. He cannot, indeed, be truly known at all except by the teaching of the Holy Spirit. But all that *can* be known of God is fairly written in capital letters in the Person of Jesus. What higher conception of God can you have? Even those who have denied our Lord's Deity have yet been subdued into admiration by His matchless Character. Read His life through and see if you could improve it. Can you suggest anything that should be left out, or anything that could be added? He is God and in Him we see God as far as it is possible for us to discern that matchless Father of our spirits! Thus the Gospel is full of light, revealing, first, the Mediator and then the Lord God, Himself.

Now, dear Friends, this Gospel of the Glory of Christ is really light to us, that is to say, it brings with it all that the metaphor of light sets forth. First of all it brings illumination. It is a lighting up of the soul "to know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." It is light to the understanding to be able to see that the Only-Begotten has revealed the Father. Man feels after God as if, by chance, he may find Him and the heathen stumbles upon this and that in his blind groping. Perhaps the world was nearest the truth when it called Him, "the unknown God." When the wisdom of this world once began to define and to describe the Deity—then it proved its own folly. "The world by wisdom knew not God,"

but in the Person of the Lord Jesus we have the true icon, the image and representation of the Godhead.

It cannot be said of true Christians, "You worship you know not what," for we know what we worship! Each one of us can affirm, "I know whom I have believed." We have no question about who is our God, or what He is. There is a knowledge given by the Gospel to men which creates daylight in the understanding. But it is light in another sense, namely, that of comfort. Let a man see God in Jesus Christ and he cannot be unhappy. Is it sin that burdened him? Let him see Jesus Christ bearing sin in His own body on the Cross and let him believe in this same Sin-Bearer—and that burden is gone! Let him be fretting under the cares and trials of life and let him get a view, by faith, of Jesus—an infinitely greater Sufferer—sympathizing with him in his sorrow and surely the sting of his grief is removed!

Is he afraid to die? Let him hear Jesus say, "I am the Resurrection and the Life," and he shall be taught to *long* for death rather than to dread it! Is he troubled about the things to come? Does the awful future hover darkly before him? Let him only hear Jesus say, "I am He that lives and was dead, and am alive forevermore, amen, and hold the keys of Hell and death," and he will no longer be afraid of the separate world of spirits of which Christ has the key nor will he tremble at the burning of the world and the ruin of creation—for he has a hold upon One who has said—"Because I live, you shall live, also." Never did such another light ever shine upon the sons of men! Neither for instruction nor for comfort can this eternal Truth of God be rivaled!

It were not in the power of an archangel to tell you the joy which this "Gospel of the Glory of Christ" has given to the sons and daughters of affliction! Wherever it comes, it liberates the captive mind and removes the pains of remorse. At the very sight of it, tearful eyes are brightened till they flash with delight! Oh, the joy unspeakable of having Christ to be our Savior and the glorious God to be our Father! He is rich to all the intents of bliss who knows this. This is light and all else is darkness!

We now advance a step, and observe that—**II. THIS GOSPEL IS, IN ITSELF, MOST PLAIN AND CLEAR.** The Gospel contains nothing which can perplex anybody unless he wishes to be perplexed. There is nothing in the Gospel which a man may not apprehend if he desires to apprehend it. It is all plain to the man who yields his understanding to his God. Whenever I get a book which puzzles me, very much, to make out its meaning, I wish I could send it back to the author and tell him to write it over, again, because I am sure he is not very clear about his own meaning—or else he could easily make me know what he meant. A man has never fairly mastered a subject until he is able to communicate his thoughts on that subject so that persons of ordinary intelligence can tell what he means.

Now, the Lord has, in His own mind, a clearly-defined way of salvation for men and He has expressed Himself without ambiguity. Certain divines like to preach an incomprehensible Gospel, for it gives them the air of wisdom in the judgment of the foolish. Certain hearers prefer sermons which they cannot understand. To them the difficult and intricate are as marrow

and fatness. I heard of one who said he liked a bit of gristle in the sermons, or a bone to try his teeth upon. We could easily gratify such friends, but we see no authority in Scripture for gratifying this longing. I carefully endeavor to take the stones out of the fruit before preparing the dish. When we are eating, it is by no means a good thing to swallow the bones, for our digestion might not master them and we might be injured by their presence within.

Souls want *spiritual* nutriment, not problems and riddles. So, when a man preaches the Gospel so that you cannot make heads or tails of it, you need not fret, for what he has to say is not worth your trouble in listening to it! If it is the Lord's own Gospel, you who are doers of the Lord's will can understand it. And if you cannot, it is not the Gospel of the Glory of Christ, but a gospel of human inventing! The true Gospel is simplicity itself. Listen! That God should come among men and espouse our Nature is so far a great mystery that we do not know how it could be! Blessed be God, we do not *need* to know how it was done—we only know that it *was* done and that fact is enough for us. We understand that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we rejoice therein. Observe the doctrine of the Atonement—this, also, as a fact is plain enough! How it became right for Christ to suffer in our place and for His sufferings to be an expiation for our sins may be a very deep question, but the fact is clearly revealed.

I do not think Substitution to be a bewildering mystery, but some do. What if it is? The secret reason of it is nothing to us! If God has set forth Christ to be a Propitiation for our sins, our most reasonable course is to accept Him. We need not quarrel with Grace because we cannot understand everything about it. It is wiser to eat that which is set before us than to die of hunger because we do not know all the secrets of cooking! I am not asked to understand *how* God justifies us in Christ, but I am asked to *believe* that He does! The fact is plain enough and the fact is the objective of *faith*. That Jesus should suffer in my place is a simple matter of the Truth of God and in it there is no darkness at all. That precious doctrine that we are justified by faith—that all the merit of Christ's glorious work comes to us simply by our *believing*—is there any difficulty about that? I know that men may argue till they are blue in the face, but the doctrine is plain as a pikestaff!

At times persons enquire, "What is believing?" Well, it is *trusting*, depending, leaning upon, relying upon—that is all. Is there anything hard about that? Do you want to put on your spectacles to see through it? Will it require a week to work your way into the idea? No, the fact that God was made flesh and dwelt among us, and that being found in fashion as a Man, He became obedient to death for our sakes and that He now bids us simply trust Him and we shall live, is as simple as any Truth within the sphere of knowledge! Some people would like a gospel of puzzlement—they prefer a little confusion of the intellect—they love to wander in a luminous haze in which nothing is clearly defined. They feel that they are getting on when they are leaving others behind and rising into sublime absurdity!

Now, suppose the Gospel consisted in terrible mysteries, bristling with matters hard to be understood? Suppose it required 18 volumes to be read through before you could see it? Suppose it needed mathematical precision and classical elegance before you could see it—millions would never get to Heaven, for they have never read through a single volume and, therefore, they are not likely to digest a library! Some men are so busy and some have their brains so constituted that they never will be deep students—and if the Gospel required of them deep thought and long research—they might give themselves up for lost. If men needed to be philosophers in order to be Christians, the majority of men would be out of the pale of hope! If the masses of the people must read hard before they can catch the idea of salvation by faith in Christ Jesus, they will never catch the idea—they must inevitably perish.

And would you, learned men, like them to perish? I fear that some of you have less concern about that than about your own credit for talent and thought! For the sake of getting a profound little gospel all to yourselves, you would dig a moat around the Cross of Christ to keep the vulgar crowd from intruding! That is *not* the Gospel, nor the spirit of the Lord Jesus! Take care lest you miss the Truth of God yourselves! I fear that while you are fumbling for the latch of Heaven's gate, the people whom you despise will get inside the door and be singing, "Glory, hallelujah, we have found the Savior." The Lord permits the disputer of this world to stumble, while those who receive the Kingdom of God as little children, find out the great secret and rejoice in it!

Suppose the Gospel had been such a difficult thing to explain and such a very hard matter to understand—what would become of the many who are now rejoicing in Christ and yet have, by birth and constitution, the most shallow capacities? It is wonderful how one but little raised above an idiot can yet grasp the Gospel! What a blessing that it is so! I have heard of a poor boy whom his teachers had been instructing for years and, one day, they said to him, "Well, Jack, have you a soul?" "No, I've got no soul." They feared that they had lost their labor, but their minds were changed when he added, "I had a soul, once, and I lost it. And Jesus Christ came and found it and so I let Him keep it." That was better Gospel than we get from many a learned divine! He had the whole thing at his fingertips! Christ had found his soul and was keeping it for him—even He who will not fail to keep that which we have committed to His charge.

We clap our hands for joy because the Gospel reveals the plain man's pathway to Heaven and makes the most illiterate wise unto salvation! The shepherd on Salisbury Plain can understand the Gospel as well as the Bishop in Salisbury Cathedral! And the dairyman's daughter can feel its power as fully as a Princess! Suppose the Gospel were hard to be understood, what should we do at our deathbed? We are sent to see persons who have neglected attendance upon the means of Grace and are dying in ignorance. It is our sorrowful task to explain the path of life to them when they are entering upon the dark descent of death.

While the lamp continues to burn, we have hope and, therefore, we proceed to state the way by which a sinner may return to God. Is it not

well to have it packed away in a small compass and expressed in common words? We tell them that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners and that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. What could we do if the Gospel were not, thus, plain? Must I have a handcart and wheel it about with me, so as to carry to each dying man half-a-dozen folios in Latin? Nothing of the kind! Right well do Cowper's often-quoted lines set forth the plainness of the Gospel and rebuke those who reject it on that account—

***“Oh how unlike the complex work of man,
Heaven's easy, artless, unencumbered plan!
No meretricious graces to beguile,
No clustering ornaments to clog the pile—
From ostentation as from weakness free,
It stands like the sky-blue arch we see,
Majestic in its own simplicity!
Inscribed above the portal from afar
Conspicuous as the brightness of a star,
Legible only by the light they give,
Stand the soul-quickenning words—
Believe and Live!
Too many, shocked at what should charm them must,
Despise the plain direction and are lost.
Heaven on such terms? (They cry with proud disdain)—
Incredible! Impossible and vain!—
Rebel because 'tis easy to obey,
And scorn, for its own sake, the gracious way.”***

III. Thirdly, IN THE TRUE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL, THIS SIMPLICITY IS PRESERVED. Paul expressly said— “Having this hope in us, we use great plainness of speech.” And again, “My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.” The Apostle Paul was a deep thinker, a man of profound insight and subtle mind. The bent of his mind was such that he would have made a metaphysician of supreme rank, or a mystic of the deepest darkness—but he went against his natural inclinations and devoted all his energies to the unveiling of the Gospel! It was a sublime self-denial for him to put on one side all his logic among the other things which he counted loss for Christ—for he says, “I determined not to know anything among men save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”

He “determined.” He was resolute and had made up his mind to it, or he would not have accomplished it. He was the man who wrote some things hard to be understood, which Peter mentions, but when he came to the Gospel, he would have nothing but simplicity! He was tender among them as a nurse with her child and made himself an instructor of babes, dealing out the Word of God with such plainness as children would require! The true man of God will not veil the Gospel beneath performances and ceremonies! Mark those who do this and avoid them! We see “His Reverence” walking with clasped hands to the right and to the left, repeating Latin sentences unknown by the people! He turns and bobs, and turns again! We see his face for a moment and then his back. I suppose it is all meant for edification—but I, poor creature—cannot find the least instruction in it, nor, as far as I can discover, do the people who are looking on!

What do these little boys in pretty gowns, making such a smoke, mean? And what are these flowers and images on the altar? What a splendid cross is that which adorns the priest's back! It seems to be made of roses. The folks look on and some are wondering where he buys his lace, while others are speculating as to the quantity of wax which will be consumed in those candles every hour—and there is the end of it—Christ is veiled behind the millinery, if He is there at all! I know numbers who would disdain to do that and yet they hide their Lord under finery of *language*. It is a grand thing to mount aloft upon the wings of eloquence and display the Glory of speech till you ascend, in a splendid peroration, as many another exhibition closes with fireworks. But this is not becoming to preachers of the Lord Jesus!

I always tell our young men that one of their commandments should be, "You shall not ramble on." To attempt anything grand in language when we are preaching salvation is to leave our proper work! Our one business is to tell out the Gospel *plainly*. We deal in bread, not in flowers! Let tawdry ornaments be left to the stage or to the bar, where men amuse themselves or dispute for gain—or let these poor gewgaws be reserved for the Senate where men will defend or denounce according as it suits their party. It is not ours to make the worse appear the better, or to hide the Truth of God under floods of words. As for us, we are to hide ourselves behind the Cross and make men know that Jesus Christ came to save the lost—and that if they believe in Him they shall be saved at once and forever! If we do not make them know this, we have missed our mark, however grandly we have performed. What? Shall we become acrobats with words, or jugglers displaying wonders? Then God is insulted, His Gospel is degraded and souls are left to perish!

I venture to put in a word for myself and then leave this point. I can say with the Apostle, "I have used great plainness of speech" and, therefore, if the Gospel which I have preached is hidden, I have not produced the veil. I have used vulgar words when I thought that they would be better understood and I have told all sorts of simple stories when I thought I could make the Gospel known. I have never used a hard word where I could help it. My one desire has been by manifesting the Truth of God to touch your consciences and win your hearts. If you see not the light, it is not because I have hidden it from you.

IV. With this we close. IF THE GOSPEL IS VEILED TO OUR HEARERS, IT IS A FATAL SIGN. "If our Gospel is hid, it is hid to them that are lost." The god of this world has blinded their unbelieving eyes lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ should dawn upon them. Not to believe, understand, appreciate and accept the Gospel is a sign of perishing. I want to put this very plainly to any here who say that they have not received the Gospel because they cannot understand it and they see nothing remarkable in it. If you have heard it plainly preached, it is so plain in itself that if it is hid from your eyes it is because you are still in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity!

You who receive the Gospel are saved! Faith is the saving token. If you believe that Jesus is the Christ, you are born of God—if you have accepted

Him as your Savior whom God sets forth as such—then you are saved. But if you say, “No, I cannot see it,” then your eyes are blinded and you are lost! The sun is bright enough, but those who have no sight are not enlightened. Do you say, “I cannot receive the Gospel. I need something more difficult”? By sinful pride your judgment is perverted and your heart is hardened! While you are still among the unbelieving, you are still among the perishing—and the god of this world blindfolds you! O Spirit of God, convince men of this sin—that they believe not on Jesus Christ. This work is out of Your servant’s power, but, oh, You perform it! Oh that our text, like a sharp knife, may cut deep and reach the conscience! May this Truth of God pierce between the joints and marrow and discern the thoughts and intents of your hearts!

According to the text, he that believes not on Jesus Christ is a lost man. God has lost you—you are not His servant. The Church has lost you—you are not working for the Truth. The world has lost you, really—you yield no lasting service to it. You have lost yourself to right, to joy, to Heaven. You are lost, lost, lost, like the prodigal son when he was away from his father’s house. You are lost like the sheep that went astray from the fold. It is not only that you *will be* lost, but that you *are* lost, for, “He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed on the Son of God.” Press those two words upon your conscience— “Condemned already”—lost even now! You are perishing! That is to say, you are gradually passing into that condition in which you must abide forever as one that has perished before God and become utterly useless and dead.

It is an appalling truth that this is proved by the fact that you do not understand the Gospel, or, if you understand it, you do not appreciate it—you do not see beauty or Glory in it, or, if you do, in a measure appreciate it, and see some Glory in it, yet it has never stirred your affection or drawn your heart towards its great Subject. In a word, you have not come to trust in Jesus! He is the only One that you can trust to salvation and yet you reject Him! It must be the simplest thing in all world to trust in Christ and yet you will not do that simple thing! Trust in Him should be attended to at once and ought not to be delayed—and yet you have delayed for years! If faith brings salvation, why not have salvation? Why abide, still, in unbelief—in unbelief of the most glorious Truth that God, Himself, ever revealed to men—in unbelief of that which you dare not deny? Oh, what a condition to be in—willfully in darkness, shutting your eyes to the Light of God! You are certainly lost!

The Apostle explains how a man gets into that condition. He says that Satan, the god of this world, has blinded his mind. What a thought it is that Satan should set up to be God! Christ is the image of God. Satan is the imitator of God—he mimics God and holds an usurped power over men’s minds and thoughts. To maintain his power, he takes great care that his dupes should not see the light of the Gospel. The veils he uses are such as men’s selfish hearts approve, for he speaks thus—“If you were to become a Christian, you would never get on in the world.” He claps a sovereign on each eye and then you cannot see, though the sun shines at midday! Pride binds a silken band across the eyes and thus, again, the

Light of God is excluded. Satan whispers, "If you become a Christian, you will be laughed at!" And he hoodwinks his victim with fear of ridicule. He has many a crafty device by which he perverts the human judgment till they cannot see that which is self-evident—and will not believe that which is unquestionable!

He makes the gain of Heaven to seem inconsiderable when weighed with the little loss which religion may involve. He hides from the soul the bliss of forgiven sin, of adoption into God's family and the certainty of eternal Glory by throwing dust into the eyes, so that the mind cannot look at things truthfully. What shall I say, in closing, but this—are you lost, any of you? Upon the showing of the text all of you *are* to whom the Gospel is hidden! Well, but thank God you may yet be found—lost today, but you need not be lost tomorrow! Lost while sitting in these pews—but you may be found before you leave the Tabernacle! The Good Shepherd has come to find His lost sheep. Have you any desire after Him? Have you any wish to return to Him? Then look to Him with a trustful glance!

You are not lost if so you look, nor shall you ever be! He that believes in Jesus is saved and saved *eternally*. Are any of you blinded? You must be so if the Gospel is hid from you, so that you cannot see its brightness. Ah, but you need not *remain* in the dark! There is One here, today, who opens blind eyes! Cry to Him as did the two blind men, "You, Son of David, have mercy on me! You, Son of David, have mercy on me!" The Messiah came on purpose to give sight to the blind—it was a part of His commission when He came forth from the Father's Glory. He will give sight to you! Oh seek it! Is the god of this world your master? He must be if you do not see the Glory of the Gospel! But he need not be your god any longer! I pray the Holy Spirit to help you to dethrone this intruder. Why should you adore *him*? What good has he ever done for you? What is there about his character that makes him worthy to be your god?

Break off his yoke! Burst the fetters which now hold you his slave. The true God has come in the flesh to set you free and to destroy all the works of the devil! Whatever keeps you from beholding the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ can be removed. I am sent to say, in my Master's name, "Whoever believes in Him is not condemned: he that believes and is baptized shall be saved." "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Trust the Savior, trust the Incarnate God! Trust Him now and trust Him at once—and though a moment ago you were black as Hell's midnight, you shall be clean and bright as Heaven's eternal noon!

In one instant sins that have taken you 50 years to accumulate shall disappear! The transgressions of all your days shall be plunged beneath the sea and shall be found no more! Only be willing and obedient—and yield yourselves up to the Incarnate God who always lives to take care of those who put their trust in Him! May the Lord bless you, dear Friends, forevermore. Amen and amen.

THE GOSPEL OF THE GLORY OF CHRIST

NO. 2077

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, MARCH 31, 1889,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*"The light of the glorious Gospel of Christ."
2 Corinthians 4:4*

SHINING in the center of the verse, like a pearl in its setting, you find these words. Literally and accurately translated, they run thus—"The light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ." This is the form given to my text in the Revised Version and I shall follow it because, word for word, it follows the original.

Paul was a man of one idea. The Gospel of Christ had saturated his soul as the dew saturated Gideon's fleece. He could think of nothing else and speak of nothing else but the glory of Christ Crucified. Important events in politics transpired in the Apostle's day but I cannot remember an allusion to them. Great social problems were to be solved, but his one and only solution was the preaching of that great Savior who is to cleanse the Augean stables of the world. For Paul there was but one thing worth living for and that one thing was worth dying for. He did not count even his life dear unto him that he might win Christ and be found in Him.

Therefore his spirits rose or sank according to the prosperity or decline of the kingdom of Christ. When he writes an Epistle his mood varies according to the spiritual condition of the people to whom he writes. If their faith grows exceedingly and if from them sounds forth the Word of God, then he is jubilant in his tone. But if they are declining in Divine Grace, if there are divisions among them, if false doctrine is ravaging them like a wolf in the sheepfold—then he is solemn in spirit and he writes with a heavy hand. In this case Paul laments the condition of those who could not see what was so plain to himself—namely, the Gospel of the glory of Christ.

He saw most clearly the glory of his Lord and that precious Gospel which is built up thereon and he marveled that others could not see it also. Considering their case with care he sorrowfully perceived that they must first have shut their eyes by willful unbelief. Therefore he felt Satan had exercised his evil power and had utterly blinded them. The blaze of the Gospel is so bright, that even with their eyes averted, some measure of light must have entered their minds—unless some especial evil power had operated to hold them in darkness. The devil himself, Paul perceived, must have blinded them, but even Satan found it a great task to shut out the glorious light. To accomplish it he had to amass all his power as "the god of this world."

It required a great amount of cunning to close the perceptive faculties of men against the clear and forcible light of the Truth of the Gospel. The light of the glorious Gospel, like that of the morning dawn, would have been seen even by dim eyes had not the infernal prince blindfolded the thoughts of men and made their minds as dark as his own. The light of the Gospel is intense, and by a faithful ministry it is flashed in the very faces of men. Therefore, in fear of losing his subjects, the Prince of Darkness hastens to blind their eyes. Jesus comes to give sight, but Satan comes to destroy it. They each know the value of those eyes by which men look and live. The battle rages at the mental Eye Gate. The conflict between the two champions is raised upon the question—shall men behold the light—or shall they abide in darkness?

I wonder whether there are any here at this time who have long been willing unbelievers and have at last come to be quite unable to perceive any glory in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus. When they hear it faithfully preached they flippantly criticize the style of the speaker. But the matter of which he speaks appears to them to be of small consequence. They pass by the Cross itself and the sorrow of the Lord is nothing to them. These may be very intelligent men and women in other matters and yet have no perception of the spiritual Truth of God. They can perceive a thousand beauties in nature but none in Divine Grace. They have drunk of the Castilian fountain but have never sipped of “the waters of Shiloh that go softly.”

They can discuss at large upon the sublime and beautiful. But they see neither beauty nor sublimity in Him who is all that is lovely and all that is heavenly. I pray that while I am speaking of the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ that light may penetrate their minds. May God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness speak again the almighty fiat, saying, “Let there be light.” And there shall be light. May the miracle of the old creation be repeated in the new creation to the praise of the glory of Divine Grace.

First, this morning I shall ask you to think upon Paul’s words and consider his name for the Gospel—it is “the Gospel of the glory of Christ.” Secondly, let us consider the light which streams from that Gospel of the glory of Christ. When we have thought of these two things, let us consider what to do with this light, this marvelous light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ.

I. At the outset LET US CONSIDER PAUL’S NAME FOR THE GOSPEL—“the Gospel of the glory of Christ.”

It is very evident that the Apostle felt that the Gospel was solely and altogether of Christ. The Anointed was, in his view, the one subject of the glad tidings from beginning to end. When He was born the angels proclaimed good tidings of great joy to the sons of men. And after His death His human messengers went forth to all nations with messages of love. His death is the birth of our hope—His resurrection is the rising of our buried joy. His session at the right hand of God is the prophecy of our eternal bliss. Christ is the Author of the Gospel, the Subject of the Gospel

and the end of the Gospel. His hand is seen in every letter of that wonderful Epistle of Divine love called the New Testament, or New Covenant.

He Himself is glad tidings to us in every point and the Gospel is from Him in every sense. That is not Gospel which does not relate to Jesus. If there is no mark of blood upon it, the roll of tidings may be rejected as a forgery. As Christ is the Subject, so is He the Object of the Gospel—His Glory is promoted by the Gospel. It is the Gospel of His Glory among the sons of men in all ages and it will be so throughout eternity. The Gospel, and the sinners saved by it, will glorify the Son of God forever.

To Paul the Gospel was always a glorious Gospel. He never had dim views of its excellence. He never spoke of it as though it stood in doubtful competition with Judaism, or heathenism, or the philosophies of the Stoics and the Epicureans. These things were but dross to him in comparison with the “much fine gold” of the Gospel. He spoke of it in glowing terms—he felt it to be a great privilege and responsibility to be put in trust with it and to be allowed to preach it. It was the joy of his heart to live upon it himself and it was his one aim to proclaim it to others. “The glorious Gospel of the blessed God” was his one absorbing science and he determined to know nothing else.

O you that are beginning to think lightly of the old Gospel and dream that it is becoming powerless—may the Spirit that rested upon the Apostle rest upon you till you, also, shall perceive the glory of the method of Divine Grace and shall speak of it fervently as “the glorious Gospel of Christ”!

Returning to the literal translation, we remark that the Apostle saw that the excellence of the Gospel lay in the glory of Christ. I shall try to show you this. The glorious Savior is the Substance of the glorious Gospel. In speaking of this theme I can only repeat what you know already, and in that repetition I shall not strive after elaborate expressions but tell the story simply, after the manner of the Apostle who says, “Seeing, then, that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech.” The glory of Christ would be insulted by attempts to set it forth with finery of words. Let it be seen in its own light.

The glory of the Gospel, then, lies very much in the glory of our Lord’s Person. He who is the Savior of men is God—“God over all, blessed forever.” Is it not written, “When He brings in the first begotten into the world, He says, And let all the angels of God worship Him”? With the angels of God we worship Jesus Christ as God. Our Redeemer is also man—man like ourselves with this exception—that in Him there is no taint of natural depravity and no act of sin has ever stained His Character. Behold the glory of Him who is God and Man mysteriously united in one Person! He is unique—He is the brightness of the Father’s glory and the Brother born for adversity.

This is the Gospel—that the Son of God, Himself, gloriously undertook the salvation of men and therefore was made flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His Glory. If we had here a vast hospital full of sick people it would be the best of news for those languishing there. If I could tell

them that a great Physician had devoted Himself to their healing—the more I extolled the Physician who had come to visit them—the more would there be good news for them. If I could say to them, “The Physician who is coming to succor you is possessed of infallible wisdom and unerring skill and in Him are united loving tenderness and infinite power”—how they would smile upon their beds!

Why, the very news would half restore them! Should it not be much more so with desponding and despairing souls when they hear that He who has come to save is none other than the glorious Christ of God? The mysteriously majestic Person of Christ is the mainstay of the Gospel. He who is able to save is no angel and no mere man—He is “Emmanuel, God with us.” Infinite are His resources, boundless is His Grace. O, you guilty ones who lie upon beds of remorse, ready to die of grief, here is a Savior such as you need. When you think of what you are and despair—think also of what He is—and take heart.

If I made you doubt the Deity of the Savior I should cut away the foundation of your only hope. But while you see Him to be God, you remember that nothing is too hard for Him. If I caused you to doubt His proper Manhood I should also rob you of comfort, since you would not recognize in Him the tender sympathy which grows out of kinship. Beloved, the Lord Jesus stands before you commissioned by the eternal God with the Spirit of the Lord resting upon Him without measure. And thus, being in Nature and Person the first and the best, His message of salvation is to you most full and sure and His Glory is *Gospel* to you.

The glory of Christ lies not only in His Person but in His love. Remember this, and see the Gospel which lies in it. From all eternity the Son of God has loved His people—even from of old, “His delights were with the sons of men.” Long before He came on earth He so loved the men whom His Father gave Him that He determined to be one with them and for their redemption to pay the dreadful price of life for life. He saw the whole company of His chosen in the glass of His foreknowledge and loved them with an everlasting love. The love which glowed in the heart of our Redeemer “in the beginning”—that same love will never know an end!

Here, to us, is His Glory. He loved us so that Heaven could not hold Him. He loved us so that He descended to redeem us. And having come among us amid our sin and shame, He loves us still. “Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.” Love, you have reached your utmost glory in the heart of the Divine Savior! And the glory of this love which is without beginning, boundary, change, or close, is the very lifeblood of the Gospel. The love of Jesus is the glad tidings of great joy. Our great Physician loves the sick and delights to heal them. He comes into the wards among the palsied and the plague-stricken with an intense longing to bless them. Jesus is the sinner’s Friend. How rapturously does my soul sing of Him as “Jesus, lover of my soul”! A gracious Gospel lies in the glory of the love of Christ!

This being so, Beloved, we next see the glory of His incarnation. To us it was the glory of Christ that He was born at Bethlehem and dwelt at Naz-

areth. It looks like dishonor that He should be the carpenter's son. But throughout all ages this shall be the glory of the Mediator—that He deigned to be partaker of our flesh and blood. There is glory in His poverty and shame—glory in His having nowhere to lay His head. Glory in His weariness and hunger. Surpassing glory springs from Gethsemane and the bloody sweat, from Calvary and the death of the Cross. All Heaven could not yield Him such renown as that which comes from the spitting and the scourging, the nailing and the piercing.

A glory of Divine Grace and tenderness surrounds the incarnate God. And this, to those convicted of sin, is the Gospel. When we see God in human flesh we expect reconciliation. When we see that He took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses we hope for pardon and healing. Born of a virgin, our Lord has come among us and has lived on earth a life of service and of suffering—there must be hope for us. He came not into the world to condemn the world but that the world through Him might be saved. I pray you can see the glory of His life of doing good, of working miracles of mercy, of tender care for the fallen. Then ask yourselves whether there is not in His life among men good news for all sad hearts.

Did God Himself cover His Glory with a veil of our inferior clay? Then He means well to men. Humanity thus honored by union with the Godhead is not utterly abhorred. In the Word made flesh we see the Glory of God, and noting how love predominates, how condescending pity reigns, we see in this a Gospel of Divine Grace for all believing men.

The glory of Christ is further seen in His atoning sacrifice. But you stop me and say, "That was His humiliation and His shame." Yes, it is true, and therefore it is His Glory. Is not the Christ to every loving heart most of all glorious in the death of the Cross? What garment does so well become our Beloved as the vesture dipped in His own blood? He is altogether lovely. Let Him be arrayed as He may. But when our believing hearts behold Him covered with bloody sweat we gaze upon Him with adoring amazement and rapturous love. His flowing crimson bedecks Him with a robe more glorious than the imperial purple. We fall at His feet with sevenfold reverence when we behold the marks of His passion.

Is He not most of all illustrious as our dying Substitute? Beloved, here lies the marrow of the Gospel. Jesus Christ suffered in our place. "He His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree." That glory of His Cross which we again declare to be greater glory than any other, is Gospel to us. On His Cross He bore the whole weight of Divine justice in our place. The iron rod of Jehovah which would have broken us into pieces like potters' vessels fell on Him. He "became obedient to death, even the death of the Cross," and in that act He slew death and overcame him that had the power of death, that is, the devil—

***"His Cross a sure foundation laid
For glory and renown,
When through the regions of the dead
He passed to reach the crown."***

Beloved, the glory of His sacrificial death by which He blotted out our sin and magnified the Law is the Gospel of our salvation.

We will now travel a little further to His resurrection—wherein His Glory is more palpable to us. He could not be held by the bonds of death. He was dead—His holy body could die but it could not see corruption. Having slept a little while within the chamber of the tomb, He arose and came forth to light and liberty—the living Christ glorified by His resurrection. Who shall tell the glory of the risen Lord?—

***“Rising, He brought our Heaven to light,
And took possession of the joy.”***

Rising, He sealed our justification. Rising, He rifled the sepulcher and released the captives of death. He was “declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead.”

Let us rejoice that He is not dead, but ever lives to make intercession for us. This is the Gospel to us—because He lives we shall live also. “He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them.” Oh the glory of our risen Lord! Consider it deeply, meditate upon it earnestly. And as you do so, hear the clear sound of glad tidings of great joy. For our greatest consolation we do not look to this precept or to that promise so much as to Jesus Himself. It is He who has by His rising from the dead given us the surest pledge and guarantee of our deliverance from the prison of guilt, the dungeon of despair and the sepulcher of death.

Once more—lift up your eyes a little higher and note the glory of our Lord’s enthronement and of His second coming. He sits at the right hand of God. He that once was hung upon the tree of shame now sits on the Throne of universal dominion. Instead of the nail, behold the scepter of all worlds in His most blessed hand. All things are put under His feet. Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, is now crowned with glory and honor and this is the Gospel to us. For it is plain that He has conquered all our enemies and has all power in Heaven and in earth on our behalf. His acceptance with God is the acceptance of all whom He loves. And He loves all who trust Him.

His sitting in glory is a pledge that the whole of the redeemed by blood shall sit there in due time. His second coming, for which we daily look, is our most Divine hope. Perhaps before we fall asleep the Lord shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the trump of the archangel and the voice of God. And then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Then will our weary days be ended—the strife of tongues, the struggle against sin, the stratagems of error—all will be finished and truth and holiness shall reign supreme!

O my Brethren—if I could but break loose from the impediments of mouth and tongue and speak my heart without these cumbrous organs—then would I make you rejoice in the glory of my Divine Master upon His Throne today and in His glorious appearing at the appointed hour. If we could see Him as John did in Patmos we might swoon at His feet. But it would be with the rapture of hope and not with the chill of despair. Mark

this—the less you make of Christ, the less Gospel you have to trust in. If you get rid of Christ from your creed you have at the same time destroyed all its good news.

The more Gospel we would preach, the more of Christ we must proclaim. If you lift up Christ, you lift up the Gospel. If you dream of preaching the Gospel without exalting Christ in it you will give the people husks instead of true bread. In proportion as the Lord Jesus is set up on a glorious high throne He becomes salvation to the sons of men. A little Christ means a little Gospel. But the true Gospel is the Gospel of the glory of Christ.

II. Secondly, LET US CONSIDER THE LIGHT OF THIS GOSPEL. Our Apostle speaks of “the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ.”

That light is, first of all, unveiled. Whatever light there was in the Law—and there was much—it was latent light. The veil on the face of Moses was typical of the way in which the ceremonies of the Law were hidden from the sight of men. We forget that a great majority of those things we read in the Law were never seen by the Israelites as a people. Do not suppose that any Israelite ever looked within the veil—none but the high priest ever entered there. Even the Holy Place outside the veil was reserved for the priests. The most of the sacrificial *types* were as much matters of faith to the Israelites as the *meaning* is a matter of faith to us.

They did not even see the patterns of the heavenly things—they had to be told of them. And in the hearing they had to exercise faith as we also do. But, my Brethren, our Gospel is not of the veil which hides, but of the lamp which shines. We use no reserve among you. I solemnly declare before God that I believe nothing which I do not preach among you openly and I give no sense to the words which I use but that which is natural to them. “For we are not as many, which corrupt the Word of God: but as of sincerity but as from God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.”

We have heard of preachers who believe very differently from what they openly say. The deed of trust requires some little consonance with evangelical doctrine, but they loathe it in their souls and tell their Brethren so in private. But as for us, “we have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully.” We dare preach everything that we believe and preach it as plainly as possible. The more you know us through and through, the more glad we shall be. Our Gospel is one which may be advertised everywhere—we have nothing to conceal.

I have heard that William Gadsby of Manchester, traveling on a coach one day, asked two heretical Divines to tell him how a sinner is justified in the sight of God. “No,” said they, “you won’t catch us in that fashion. Whatever answer we gave you would be repeated all over Manchester within a week.” “Oh,” said he, “then I will tell you. A sinner is justified in the sight of God by faith in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. Go and tell that all over Manchester and all over England as quickly as you like. For I believe nothing that I am ashamed of.”

Light rejoices to proclaim itself. The Gospel is a light and lights are not meant to be hidden under bushels or beds. If they are buried in that way, they will burn their way to resurrection and the bushels and the beds will be consumed and make all the greater light. The Gospel of the blessed God is intended to be conspicuous as the lighthouse on the rock which is seen afar. It is so illuminating that everyone in the house may see by it. The Gospel which is not known is of no value—the true Gospel is as much intended to be understood as light is meant to be seen.

This light, in the next place, is all its own. You cannot illuminate the Gospel—it is itself an illumination. Would I not be an idiot if I were to say to my deacon behind me, “Dear Friend, kindly get me a candle—I want to show these people the sun. I do not see the sun just now but I will lead them into the street and by the help of this candle we will search the sky till we find it”? I think I hear you say, “Our pastor is out of his mind.” Such conduct might well justify the suspicion. It is not by human light that we can show the Gospel of God. Not by rhetoric and reasoning do men perceive the light of the Gospel. There is a self-manifesting and a self-evidencing power in the Gospel. It runs on its own feet and needs no crutches.

If men would read their Bibles they would, as a rule, believe their Bibles. But they will not read them. If men would hear the Gospel attentively, they would, as a general rule, believe the Gospel. But they will not give it the attention it deserves. It needs no effort to see a bright light. If men would only open their eyes to the light of the Gospel they would see it. If they would only think upon the glory of the Gospel of Christ, its light would find its way into their souls. Where the Gospel shines in all its brilliance, men have to put up their shutters to keep out its light. But they do even worse—they call in the devil to gouge out their eyes that they may not be forced to see.

In itself the Gospel has such a wonderful power of making itself felt, that if men did not resist its influence it would reveal Divine things to them. I wish I could induce unbelievers here to read the story of the crucifixion every morning and to keep on reading it and studying it. For I am persuaded that the light which streams from the Cross would, by the blessing of God, open their eyes and enter their souls savingly. For, mark you—the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ is Divine light.

Paul tells us this when he says, “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” The Gospel is either Divine or it is a lie—it has a supernatural power about it or else it is an impostor. The true power of the Gospel of Christ lies not in its natural reasonableness, in its adaptation to human need, in its moral beauty, but in the attendant power of the Spirit of God. God is in the Gospel and therefore it is mighty.

We may preach to you for a thousand years altogether and never a soul of you would receive Christ unless the same Spirit that spoke light into the primeval dark should say, “Let there be light.” Salvation is a *super-*

natural process. God Himself must come upon the scene before the eyes of a man born blind will see. How this Truth exalts God and lowers man! Yes. And the lower we are brought, the better. When we get to feel our utter helplessness, then will our extremity prove to be the opportunity of the Grace of God. O heavenly light, shine now into the soul of all who hear or read this sermon!

This light is a revealing light. Whenever the light of the glory of Christ comes streaming into the heart it reveals the hidden things of darkness. When the glory of Christ is seen, then we see our own shame and sinfulness. Did it need God Himself to redeem us? Then we must have been in dire bondage. Did it need the incarnate God should die? Then sin must be exceeding sinful! That is a deep pit which needs that God should come from Heaven to lift us out of it. We never see the impotence and depravity of human nature as well as in the light of the glory of Christ.

When He is seen as undertaking this tremendous work and as putting His almighty shoulder to it, then we clearly perceive what help man needed and how great was his fall. What a revelation it is when the light shines into the secret chambers of imagery and the idol gods are made manifest in all their hideousness! May God send this light to many, that their ruin, their doom, their remedy, and their way of obtaining it may be plainly perceived.

The light of the Gospel also enlivens. No other light will give life to the dead. You may make the strongest light in the world flash frequently upon a corpse but there will be neither breath nor pulse. But the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ brings life with it. "The life was the light of men." "Awake, you that sleep, and arise from the dead and Christ shall give you light." Darkness is death, but the light of God is life. Let but this Sun of Righteousness arise and He not only brings healing but life. Shine, glorious Lord—let Your glory shine forth! And as it pours its brilliance into the minds of men their dead hearts shall beat with the life of hope and holiness and they will see the Lord!

This light is photographic—you get that in the neighborhood of the text—in the last verse of the third chapter. See the Revised Version—"But we all, with unveiled face, reflecting as a mirror, the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit." The light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ imprints Christ's image upon the character of Believers. We see Him, and seeing His love we learn to love. Seeing His life we learn to live. Seeing His full atonement, we hate evil—seeing His resurrection, we rise to newness of life. By the power of the Spirit working from day to day we are quietly transformed from our old likeness and conformed to the likeness of Christ till our deformity is lost in a blessed comeliness of conformity to Him.

If we saw Him more clearly and more constantly we should grow into His likeness more rapidly. No sanctification is worth having but that which comes of communion with the holy Lord through the power of the Holy Spirit. You may read the biographies of good men and you may copy them in all simplicity. But in the end you may become a caricature of per-

fection and not the very image itself. The perfect character of Jesus is yet the most easy to imitate. It is safe to copy Jesus. For in Him is no excess or defect. And strange to say, that character which is in some aspects inimitable is in others the most imitable of all.

I have often been depressed in view of the high character of certain saints whom I honor because I have felt that I could never be like they are under any circumstances. I know one who is full of faith and goodness. But he is always solemn and constantly absorbed “in high meditations.” I never could grow exactly like he is, for there are certain mirthful elements in my constitution. And if they were taken away I should not be the same man. When I look at my Lord I see much in Him that is supernatural but nothing that is unnatural. We see in Him humanity in perfection. But the perfection never conceals the humanity. He is so holy as to be a perfect model—so human as to be a model available for poor creatures such as we are. Beloved, the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ is photographic.

Yet further—it creates peace and joy. This light brings delight. I cannot imagine a man unhappy who clearly perceives the light of the glory of Christ. Is Christ glorious? Then it does not much matter what becomes of me. Have you ever heard of the dying and wounded soldiers in Napoleon’s wars who still clung to their emperor with an idolatrous love in the hour of death? Lifting himself upon his elbow, the soldier of the Old Guard gave one more cheer for the great captain. If the dying warrior saw Napoleon riding over the field he would with his last gasp cry, “Vive l’Empereur!” and then expire.

We read of one that when the surgeons were trying to extract a bullet from his chest said, “Go a little deeper and you will find the Emperor.” He had him on his heart. Infinitely more commendable is the loyalty of the Believer to the Lord Christ. Though we die in a ditch, what does it matter so long as “God also has highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven and things in earth and things under the earth. And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father”?

It makes the sick saint well to think of the triumphs of his Lord. Have you ever, when you have been sitting here heavy in heart, been borne aloft on wings of delight when we have been singing—

**“Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all”?**

Surely there is a Gospel in the glory of Christ to our sad hearts. That Gospel lifts us out of the dumps of doubt and fear into the clear blue sky of heavenly fellowship. God grant that we may feel this uplifting more and more! Thus have I tried to describe the qualities of this light. But you must see it for yourselves.

III. And now I close by saying, LET US CONSIDER WHAT WE SHALL DO WITH THIS LIGHT.

Do with it? Look towards it. Let us first indulge ourselves with a long and steady gaze upon it. No man can look long at the sun for it would blind him. But you may look at Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness, as long as you please and your eyes will grow stronger the longer you gaze on His perfections. I beseech you, Beloved in the Lord, to get alone and give yourself to meditate upon the glory of the once-despised Jesus. Track Him from the cradle to the Cross, from the Cross to the crown. I cannot suggest to you any subject more instructive, more comforting, more ennobling than this. Look at this light—or it is a pleasant thing to behold—this sun.

Have you ever heard how the Laplanders climb the hills when the sun is at last about to appear after the weary winter months? How they rejoice in the first beams of the rising sun! So let us rise to lofty meditation and look to our Lord and Master till we perceive His mediatorial glory and are blessed thereby. Have you no time? Give up your newspaper for a week that you may sanctify the time to the noble end of considering the glory of your Lord. If you will, I will warrant that you shall get a thousand times more out of such thought than from skimming the daily journal. Look unto Jesus and the light within will grow like the glory of Heaven.

If you say that a man cannot always stand looking at the sun, I admit it, and change my advice to you. See all things by this light. How differently things look in sunlight to what they do by gaslight or candlelight! Let us regard all things by their appearance in the light of the glory of Christ. Then if you hear a sermon which does not glorify Christ it will be a lost discourse to you. Do not endure to see your Lord set in a low place. Hear no more of that talk which makes little of His blood and of His Substitution. You read a book—a very clever book—but instead of honoring Christ it glorifies human nature and you have soon had enough of it. Only that which is a good Gospel glorifies Christ—in this light you see things truly.

Many of the wise men of the period ought to be treated as Diogenes treated Alexander. The conqueror of the world said to the man in the tub, “What can I do for you?” He thought he could do everything for the poor philosopher. Diogenes only replied, “Get out of the sunlight.” These wise people cannot do us a greater favor than to remove their learned selves from standing between us and the sunlight of the ever-blessed Gospel of the glory of Christ. These Alexanders may go on ruling the Christian world, and the infidel world, but they have not conquered us. Our faith and joy lie *outside* the world—in yonder Sun of Righteousness whose light is the rejoicing of our eyes!

Beloved, when asked what we should do with this light, I answer again—value it. Esteem the glorious Gospel of Christ more than all besides. See at what rate the devil reckons it! He takes the trouble himself, to come up from the bottomless pit to blind men’s eyes for fear they should see it. When he perceives the blaze of the Gospel of the Glory of God, he says to himself, “Ah, they will be seeing the Truth of God and so they will escape from me. I must go myself and blind them.” So the “god of this age,” as he esteems himself, comes to unbelievers and blindfolds them in one way or another. He thrusts the hot iron of fatal unbelief upon

men's inward eyes and seals them in blackest night lest they should see "the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ." Since, then, the devil thinks so much of this light, let us spread it with all diligence. If Satan hates it, let us love it. If this is the great gun which he dreads—let us wheel it to the front and keep up a constant cannonade from it.

The Gospel is our Mons Meg, the biggest gun in the castle. But it is not out of date—it will carry a ball far enough to reach the heart of the sinner who is furthest from God. Satan trembles when he hears the roar of the Gospel gun. Let it never be silent.

Let us also hold it out with the greatest confidence. This light must win in the long run. If you came to this building in the middle of the night somebody might say to you, "How can we get the darkness out of this building?" It would be a hopeless task. How could it be done? You cannot pump out the darkness. But if you fill the house with light the darkness will vanish of itself. Preach Christ and away goes the god of this world. Exalt Christ and down goes the devil. Beloved, let us persuade men to let this light shine around them. They cannot see it because of unbelief. But if it shines around them, it may bring them eyes. God the Holy Spirit blessing it, light will beget sight. Induce your friends to hear the Gospel and read the Word of God and who can tell but they will be saved?

And, lastly, let all who try to preach and teach keep Christ always in the front. The Gospel must have Christ as its center and its circumference. In fact, as its All in All. The Gospel is not the Gospel without Christ. The Gospel will have no dominant idea in it but Christ. It is a noble steed but it will bear no rider but He whose vesture is dipped in blood. I have read of the famous horse Bucephalus, that when he was brought out with his royal trappings upon him he would not allow one even of the highest nobles of the court to mount him. He would carry no one but Alexander, the king.

The Gospel is glorious in its going when it bears Jesus in the saddle. But if you preach *yourself* or human philosophy the Gospel will fling you over its head. Let us sing with the blessed virgin, "My soul does magnify the Lord and my spirit does rejoice in God my Savior." This is a Gospel sonnet—this is a song which our Well-Beloved deserves of us. O you preachers and teachers, lift up Christ! He is as the serpent on the pole and all who look to Him shall live forever.

Look to Him all you that are dying of serpent bites—for looking you shall LIVE. God bless these words in which I have desired to glorify my Lord! Amen.

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BLINDED BY SATAN

NO. 2304

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 16, 1893.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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***“The god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not.”
2 Corinthians 4:4.***

THE practice of blinding men is a horrible process, too horrible for us to say another word about it, but there is also a *spiritual* blindness which comes upon some men. These are, to begin with, unbelievers. The god of this world does not blind Believers—but he blinds the minds of them which believe not. It is, therefore, a very dangerous thing not to believe on the Son of God. The penalty of unbelief is death and condemnation—and that penalty begins to fall on men when, in consequence of their unbelief, their foolish heart is darkened, their intellect loses the power to perceive spiritual objects—and the god of this world blinds their mental vision. Ah, my Hearers, how anxious Satan is to secure your destruction, since, rather than that you should see the saving Light of God, he takes the trouble to blind your eyes! God grant that no man here may die under this dreadful deprivation of Light which is caused by Satanic influence upon the minds of men who have not believed in Jesus!

Remember that this blindness to spiritual things is quite consistent with much sharpness as to natural things. A man may be a very keen politician. He may be a first-rate man of business. He may be an eminent scientist, a profound thinker and, yet, he may be blinded as to spiritual Truths of God. How often is it true, “You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes”! As an old writer says, “Poor, ignorant men often find the door to Heaven and enter in, while the learned are looking for the latch.” Yes, a man may have clear eyes for worldly things. He may be very keen as to his insight into the problems of life and, yet, the god of this world may have blinded his eyes!

What is more remarkable, still, a man may have much Scriptural knowledge. He may understand, in the letter, the things of the Kingdom of God. He may be very orthodox in his beliefs and may be able to give an answer to those who ask him what he believes, and why he believes—but, still, he may have no *spiritual* perception of the reality of these things. A person may know something of botany from books and he may even understand the Linnaean system of classifying plants, but he may never, after all, have seen the primrose by the river's brim, nor have gathered a single flower out of the garden. He is a poor botanist, is he not? He who has studied natural history in his own chamber, but has never seen a liv-

ing animal, knows very little about the subject, after all! We have many round about us who can talk of Heaven and Hell, and sin and salvation, and Christ and the Holy Spirit who, nevertheless, have never had one true perception of the meaning of any of these words. They see, but perceive not. They hear, but do not understand—they are unbelievers and the god of this world has blinded their minds.

Now, I am going to say, tonight, first, that *this blindness is very common*. Secondly, that it *is worked by the Evil One upon men in different ways*. And, thirdly, I shall speak upon *the kind of treatment that this blindness requires*.

I. First, then, THIS BLINDNESS IS VERY COMMON.

It is manifested in some by *occupation with this world*. Here is a man who has lived in this world for a good many years and, all that while he has been thinking, working, proposing, projecting, but what about? Why, about this world! He has generally been concerned with a trinity of questions—“What shall I eat? What shall I drink? With what shall I be clothed?” This man believes that he is to live forever in another world, that this present life is only like the porch of a house—that the state to come is the house, itself. All these years, 30, 40, 50, 60, seventy—may I say 80 years?—this man has never thought about the eternal world, but only about the temporary world! He has never thought about where he is to dwell forever, but has spent all his power and strength upon the passage to it. This is so unreasonable that I am sure he must be blind! I cannot account for his folly anyway else. Surely, the soul is more important than the body! We think more of the body than we do of the garment it wears, but the body, after all, is only the *garment of the soul*! The true ego, the I, myself, is my soul! Am I never to think of that, but only to be thinking of my earthly house, my food, my garments, my daily work? That is the kind of thing that a brute would think of—oxen and asses think of what they shall eat, and what they shall drink, and where they shall lie down—if they think at all! And is this all of which you and I think? Surely, that occupation of the mind upon what must be of secondary consideration is a proof that the god of this world has blinded the mind!

I will give you another example, from a different quarter, and that is, *the extreme easiness of conscience* which we see in many men and women. They can commit a great sin, wash their hands and then have done with it, as if the very washing of the hands or the wiping of the mouth was quite enough to put away all thought of the wrong. Many will sit here, tonight, who have, through a long life, committed a hundred sins of which they would be ashamed to be reminded, and yet they are not ashamed of them! They would only be ashamed to be found out—they are not ashamed of the sin, itself. A man truly awakened by the Spirit of God feels the remembrance of his sin to sting him as with scorpions! He cannot bear it. But the great mass of people do a thousand wrong things and yet they are not troubled, but feel quite at their ease.

Some of you are probably within a very short time of death and judgment, and yet you can make sport of sin! How often does it happen that people come to the place of worship and go their way, having rejected sol-

emn appeals—and they will never hear any more! They have had their last warning. Oh, if they could but know that, during the week, they will fall down dead, or be laid aside by sickness, never to leave the bed, again! Yet they trifle, on the brink of fate, on the very verge of everlasting woe! If you saw a man going straight on to the very brink of some dreadful precipice, and you saw him about to take another step, you would say, “That man is blind. I am sure that he is, or else he would not act like that.” People do not go into terrible danger with their eyes open—yet there are many of our fellow men, perhaps many of ourselves, going right on, carelessly and heedlessly—to the very brink of the awful abyss without a thought of danger! They must be blind! This horrible peace of conscience, this quenching of the Spirit whenever conscience stirs itself, this playing and trifling with death and judgment prove that they are blind!

To give you another example, there are many who have *presumptuous hopes about the future*. At any rate, they do not trouble themselves. I do not know why they are so easy, but there are different forms of presumption which enable them to look into the future without fear. One says, “Well, you see, I was christened when I was a child, and I was confirmed as a youth.” Another says, “I have always attended the Meeting House. I am never absent from any of the services. I have subscribed my guinea to the hospital. I am kind to everybody. I think that most people would give me a good name.” Their dependence is on that sort of thing and they have never looked at what is really lacking. They will not stay to hear that Word of God, “You must be born again.” They will not listen to Christ when He says, “He that believes not shall be damned”—whatever his profession or moral character may be! No, but they go on dancing to destruction with a light and merry heart. Surely these people are blinded by Satan!

Then see another sort of people, and note *their readiness to sin*. They yield to the tempter, they yield at the first request! There is no need for Satan to importune them to evil. They seem always ready for it, especially if they think that they can escape from trouble by doing wrong. Why, are there not many persons who would tell a lie to save a sixpence? Ah, to save a *penny*? The shop was open this morning—the profit made did not amount to two pence—but, still, the Sabbath was broken for that paltry sum! How many are selling their souls, not to gain the whole world, no, not to gain a four penny piece! They think so little of their souls and their eternal destiny, that, for the sake of a drop of beer, for the sake of an evening’s amusement, for the sake of pleasing a foolish companion they will fling their souls away as if they were only pebble stones not worth the keeping!

Ah, Sirs, such people must be blind! People who have had their eyes opened spiritually have been known to die sooner than do the least thing that was wrong. Remember the man who was told that if he would give one farthing to be spent on incense to the heathen gods, his life should be spared? But the man knew the Lord and, therefore, he would sooner die than give a single mite towards the worship of idols! Men of God have cheerfully laid down their lives to defend even a slight point of God’s eter-

nal Truth. But these men who think nothing of such holy heroism and are willing to lose their souls for a paltry pleasure, why, they must be blind!

I need not stay to say more except this one thing. This blindness shows itself in *trifling with eternal things*. There is a person here who, not long ago, was very greatly awakened, even resolved to seek the Savior then and there. But when in the Enquiry Room he put off the final decision. There was no reason why he should put it off except the reluctance of his mind to accept Christ. That was not the first time that he had procrastinated and postponed. And yet he is still putting off his reception of Christ. He is not sure that he will live to get home, tonight. He is not certain that, should he fall asleep, tonight, on his bed, he will wake up in this world in the morning! Yet he leaves his soul in jeopardy, as if it were a matter of very small concern.

A person came here, not long ago, who had taken off a diamond ring when he washed his hands. And all the while he was sitting here, he kept wondering what would become of that ring, whether, when they emptied the water out of the basin, it would be thrown away. He was so anxious about his ring that he hurried home as quickly as ever he could after the service. He did not wait a week to see about it, yet there are men, here, who have waited weeks, months, years, ah, *many years*, procrastinating and procrastinating! They would not leave their worldly business like that, but they leave the eternal business of salvation or damnation as though it were but as a sere leaf that might be blown whichever way the wind might please! Such people must be blind! I am sure they must be blind. Oh, that they were wise enough to cry, in the language of Charles Wesley's hymn—

**“O God, my inmost soul convert,
And deeply on my thoughtful heart
Eternal things impress!
Give me to feel their solemn weight,
And trembling on the brink of fate,
Wake me to righteousness!”**

I could heap up many proofs that this blindness is very common, but I have not the time to do so, for we must pass on to consider the next point.

II. Secondly, I want to prove to you, very earnestly and very pointedly, that THIS BLINDNESS IS WORKED BY THE EVIL ONE IN DIFFERENT WAYS.

In some, it comes by *utter worldliness*. There are some people who say, “We cannot attend to that matter, we have enough to do to earn our living.” Others say, “Well, thank God, we have not to earn our living by the sweat of our brow, but really, we have plenty of other things to think of besides turning our attention to that Methodistic stuff.” One says, “I—, I—,” yes, you may speak it out if you like—you think that God and Heaven and eternal things are trifles unworthy of your thoughts! Your house, your horse, your wife, your money—these, of course, are not trifles—these must come first. The world, the world, the world—this is in your heart and occupies it all. Said the captain of a whaler, one day, to a man of God, who spoke to him about his soul, “Mr. Bertram, it is of no use for you to speak to me about my soul, or ask me to come to the service, tonight. You see, I am out here after whales, and all the while that I was sitting, and

you were talking, I should be thinking about whales. And when you gave out a hymn, I should just be thinking of whether there was a whale anywhere about. If I were to pray, I should be praying about whales. I have whales in my heart, Sir, and there is no room for anything else.” It is so with many, many people. They have their business, they have set up a loom, they have an invention, they have all the materials of a building inside their hearts—and there is no room for God. Their hearts are blinded by utter worldliness.

Some, again, are blinded by the devil in a very desperate way, *by love of some favorite sin*. I do not hesitate to say it is a general fact that when men kick against true religion and when they get offended by being spoken to about it, if you could track them home, you would find in their conduct some very good reason for their opposition. I recollect that in preaching, on one occasion, I happened to allude to the pleasure it gave me to see the gleaners picking up the wheat in the harvest time, as Ruth did, and I said, “I verily believe that there are some farmers who would rake their fields with a small tooth comb, if they could, to get every grain of the wheat up.” I noticed a respectable-looking gentleman, in the front of the gallery, get up and go out. Somebody at the door said, “Why are you going out, Mr. ___?” He replied, “I won’t stop to listen to such a fellow as that. I always rake my fields three times.”

Yes, you see, it was the truth that made him angry. It is usually so. There is a reason for men being angry with the Gospel and turning away from it, when it strikes at some of their favorite sins. Such and such a man says that he does not believe in Jesus Christ. It is not likely that he should! I will not tell you why, but his wife knows. There is another man who keeps a shop. He says that he does not need to be converted. No, if he were, he could not keep that shop! Or if he did, he would have to alter the line of business in which he is engaged. Ah, the god of this world blinds men’s eyes with sin! I cannot go into all the particulars, but if there is any man here who has a pet sin that he cherishes, do not let him wonder that he cannot see the beauties of Christ, or the glories of salvation! And let him not think that we would do anything to win his approbation while he remains in love with that sin! It is with us very much as it was with Martin Luther when he said, “I could be proud to think how badly some people speak of me! For them to speak badly of me is the highest honor that such as they are can confer upon me.” When you who are living in unchastity and dishonesty speak badly of Christ and of Christians, you only speak after your own manner—and we cannot wish you to alter your tone till God has changed your heart!

Many are blinded as to the things of God by *following a party*. “Well,” you say, “I could not begin to study these matters of religion, because I am linked in with such a set. I know how they would treat me. They would laugh at me, first, and they would give me the cold shoulder, next. No, really, my dear Sir, if you know how I am connected, you would not expect me to ever give any consideration to these doctrines that are preached, whether they are true or not.” It is a pity, it is a solemn pity, that a man should ruin his soul to keep in with his party! I rejoiced to read of the

praise that was passed in the House of Commons, the other night, upon John Bright who deserved much more than was said, especially upon this one point, that, whenever his conscience came in conflict with his party, he followed his conscience and let his party go where it might. Public approbation and applause were nothing to him so long as he could keep clear in the sight of God by doing what he believed to be right. Now, when he dies, every party has a word of honor for him. There is nothing lost, after all, by sticking to what you believe to be right—and if it is so in *politics*, how much more should it be so in the matter of religion!

Cut your sinful connections, quit your evil companions! It were better to do that than to go with them, applauded and approved, and find yourself wrong at the last. Oh, that men had but a grain of grit in them, so that they would never make the things of God, Heaven and eternal realities to hang upon the breath of men's nostrils, or the smiles or frowns of their fellow men! But I am afraid that a great many will never come to know Christ because they will continue to follow their party, or the prejudice of their early education still clings to them.

A fourth way in which Satan blinds a great many, and he does it very commonly, is *by raising objections to the Truth of God*. There is nothing in this world to which you cannot object. I venture to say that there is no fact, however palpable to all the senses, but what you can, if you like, find reasons for not believing it to be a fact. If somebody were to assert that I am not here and that I am not speaking, I have no doubt that, with proper pay, a lawyer could be found to prove it—and what a lawyer could do, a great many, who are not learned in the law—could do as well. To answer objections is an endless task—it is like trying to empty a flowing fountain with bottomless buckets. Men do not object to the *religion* of Jesus Christ really and truly. It is not this to which they object, but they invent objections, they go abroad searching after objections that they may then have an excuse for rejecting *Christ*. In this way many prove that they are blind—they have a difficulty they cannot get over, and do not mean to get over, either—and so they see not Christ.

With others, blindness is worked *by wrong inferences*. It is astonishing how many eyes are blinded by wrong inferences drawn from the Truth of God. We have known one say, "Well, the mercy of God is very great—it is universal—therefore I am sure that God will not cast us into Hell." This is a wicked lie derived from a great Truth! Another says, "I read that God has an elect people." That is most surely true, but not the inference that is drawn from it—"Therefore, if I am to be saved, I shall be saved. And if I am to be lost, I shall be lost, so that I need not trouble my head about the subject." That is another false inference deduced from a great Truth of God. When a man means to commit suicide, any rope will do, and when a sinner is resolved to perish, he can always find an argument, fetched even from the Truth of God, itself, as the means of his own destruction! I am not going to answer any of these lies, but only to say that, by these false inferences, many a man has been blinded to his own eternal ruin.

Then there is another way of being blinded, and a very common one, too. That is, *by general conceit of knowledge*. I know a man stone blind of

it. When I met him last, he looked at me, condescended to ask how I was and he as much as intimated that he was occasionally prepared for a little conversation with an inferior person and, therefore, he did not mind speaking about religion with me, he, himself, being a very superior person, indeed, knowing everything and, if possible, a few things besides! This man called himself an agnostic—and when a man says that he is an agnostic, he is an ignoramus—that is, a person who knows nothing. Yet, such a man usually talks as if he knew everything and the appendix at the end of that. He mentions Calvinism and he says in a tone of contempt, that his grandmother was a Calvinist! He says that he remembers the Evangelical School, but that they have nearly died out now. You have not talked long with him before you discover that the Lord Jesus Christ and he could never get on together because the Savior has said, “Except you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven,” and this man will never become a little child, not he!

If you need the *opposite* of a little child, there you have the gentleman—and he wishes you, “Good afternoon,” when you begin to quote Scripture. He is not at all the person to receive any instruction of that sort. The “superior” person will always be lost, take my word for it! The more superior he is, the more sure he is to be lost—I mean not that he is *really* superior, but that he *thinks* himself so—superior to all teaching. He is not prepared to be a learner. He is ready to set up as a *teacher* and a *master* of anything you like. He is not the kind of man to enter the gates of Heaven—he carries his head too high for that. He is a man of broad thought and, of course, he goes the broad way. Narrow-minded people go in the narrow way—but then it leads unto life eternal and, therefore, I commend it unto you—

**“Broad is the road that leads to death,
And thousands walk together there.
But wisdom shows a narrower path,
With here and there a traveler.”**

We have another set of people who are blinded *by some special conceit of false grace*. Here is a man who has attended to many duties. Some, of course, he does not care about, but he compounds for duties he does not like by attending to others that are to his taste. He does not pray, but then he sings in the choir! Communion with God—he does not know anything about *that*—but he takes the sacrament! He has never repented of sin, but then he has found fault with other people for *their* sins, and he regards that almost as good! He does not help the poor and needy, but then he has a capital plan for lowering the poor rates! He is always doing some good thing or other, of a sort, but not of the sort that Scripture proscribes. As to believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, that is, by a living faith *trusting* Him, that is beyond his range. As to seeking a new heart and a right spirit—and being converted and turned from darkness to Light—he does not know anything about *that*, either, but there has been, after all, a very great improvement in him. He has given up some very questionable practices and, on the whole, he has done a good deal which ought to be

spoken of with considerable commendation. This is the kind of gentleman who is blinded by the god of this world!

But it is idle for me to talk about people being blinded except to those who can see, for the blindest man is the man who says that he is not blind, who will not have it that he does not see everything aright, even though he has never had his eyes opened by the Lord! He says that he could always see—it is an insult to suppose that he is blind. He is like the Pharisees who said to Jesus, “Are we blind, also?” to whom Jesus answered, “If you were blind, you should have no sin but now you say, We see, therefore your sin remains.” This is sinning against the Light of God! This is sinning with a vengeance! May God preserve all of us from such a sin!

III. Now I come to the most practical point, that is, THE KIND OF TREATMENT THAT THIS BLINDNESS REQUIRES. I pray God to bless to you what I have to say upon this matter.

I should say, first, dear Friends, *beware lest this blindness be sent as a punishment.* Although our blind friends have our loving sympathy and God blesses them, yet it must be a great calamity to be without their eyesight. Now, blindness of *heart* is not only a sin, but it is the *punishment of sin*, and it comes to many as the result of violating conscience, resisting the Holy Spirit, trifling with solemn things and being desperately set on mischief. Oh, you who have a tender conscience, mind that you do not lose it! You who have the power to sit and hear a sermon and to feel it, do not trifle with that holy sensitiveness. Once lost, so that you can read the Book of books and hear the most earnest talk, and yet feel nothing, you have lost one of the greatest privileges that you ever had. May God help the man who is going on towards this fatal blindness—and stop him before he gets any further!

I would say, also, to you who are in any way blind, *beware lest that blindness becomes the herald of your doom.* Before Haman was hanged, the first thing that the servants did was to cover his face. And when a man is about to be lost forever, the first thing that the devil does is to blind his eyes so that he cannot see. Now the poor blind Samson will make sport for the Philistines! Now they hope that they can kill him whenever they please. Beware of a blinded conscience—it is the prelude of eternal destruction! God save you from it!

Next, *if you have even a little Light, value it greatly.* If any one of us should be gradually losing his eyesight, I know that he would greatly prize the little sight that he had. How often have I spoken to a friend who has said, “This eye is quite gone, Sir, there is just a little light left in this one, and the doctor says that I must wear a shade and be very careful, or I may lose that.” Oh, take care of the little Light of God you have! If you can feel a little, be very tender of that feeling. If you can see a little of the beauty of Christ, be very jealous over that sight. Have I not often said that he who has starlight, if he thanks God for starlight, and uses it, will get moonlight, and he who has moonlight, and thanks God for it, and uses it, will get sunlight—and he who has the sunlight shall yet come to that Light

which is as of seven days in the glorious Presence of God? Take care, then, of any Light that you have.

And then, the next thing is, if you are at all conscious of your blindness, but do not see the full evil of sin, do not see the glory of Christ, and do not perceive the way of salvation, *confess your blindness*. Go home, tonight, and, in your chamber, alone, acknowledge that you do not see what you ought to see, and do not feel what you ought to feel. Show your sightless eyeballs to the Savior who gives sight to the blind. Do not cloak your sin, confess it. "He that covers his sins shall not prosper: but whoever confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy." Say with David, "I acknowledged my sin unto You, and my iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord." So shall you also be able to say with him, "and You forgave the iniquity of my sin."

When you have confessed your blindness, do one more thing, *trust to the Lord Jesus to open your blind eyes*. Put yourself consciously into the Presence of the Divine Savior and say to Him, "I believe that You are able to work this miracle of mercy. I believe that You can make me see Your Truth and feel Your Truth. I believe that You can make me see Yourself, and trust You. Here are my eyes, Lord, I would receive my sight! I believe that You can give it! Give it to me now!" Ah, perhaps while I speak these words, the flash of the Divine Light is coming into some dark heart! Salvation does not take hours—it is in one single instant that we pass from death unto life! The moment that we believe in Jesus, we are saved! The moment that we look to Him hanging on the Cross, our iniquity is pardoned! God grant us that blessed look of faith tonight, each one, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

It may help some to look to Christ if we sing a verse of that well-known hymn—

***"There is life for a look at the Crucified One!
There is life at this moment for thee!
Then look, Sinner—look unto Him, and be saved—
Unto Him who was nailed to the tree."***

**EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON.
ISAIAH 6; MATTHEW 13:10-17; LUKE 18:35-43.**

Isaiah 6:1-4. *In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the LORD sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the Temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of Hosts: the whole earth is full of His Glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.* Isaiah was awe-stricken by this vision of the Glory of the Lord. It was a sight such as few eyes have ever seen. Isaiah was never actually in the Holy Place, for he was no priest and, therefore, he could not stand there. It was in vision that he saw all this Glory and it was a vision that must have remained

upon his memory through the rest of his life. The holiness and the Glory of God struck him at once.

5. *Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of Hosts.* There was, indeed, enough to make him say, “Woe is me!” A sinful preacher, an imperfect preacher, among a sinful and imperfect people, he felt as if the society in which he moved was the reverse of the society in which God dwells. Pure seraphim cry, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts,” but as for us, our very talk is unholy—“a people of unclean lips.”

6, 7. *Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged.* The live coal from off the altar does not represent the holy flame which burns in the Prophet’s heart, but it represents purgation, cleansing, participation in the sacrifice, and the putting away of sin. With a blister on his lips, Isaiah stood silent before God.

8. *Also I heard the voice of the LORD, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?* Here we have the Divine Trinity in Unity. “Whom shall I send?” There is Unity. “Who will go for Us?” There is the Trinity. God is seeking a messenger to deliver His message to men.

8. *Then said I—*Stammering it out with the blistered lip—

8. *Here am I; send me.* Isaiah did not know the errand; perhaps, if he had known it, he would not have been quite so ready to go. Who can tell? But God’s servants are ready for anything, ready for everything, when once the living coal has touched their lips. I thank God that I was never called to such a work as Isaiah had to undertake.

9, 10. *And He said, Go, and tell this people, Hear you indeed, but understand not; and see you indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.* That was no Gospel ministry! It was a ministry of condemnation. The house of Israel had rejected the Prophets and had rejected God and, in the fullness of time would reject God’s own dear Son! When Isaiah in vision looked forward to all this, he was not sent to soften, but to harden—his word was to be a savor of death unto death, and not of life unto life.

11, 12. *Then said I, Lord, how long? And He answered, Until the cities are wasted without inhabitants and the houses without man, and the land is utterly desolate, and the LORD has removed men far away, and there is a great forsaking in the midst of the land.* This was a heavy task for the Prophet—he had no tidings of God’s relenting, no tokens of Divine Mercy.

13. *But yet.*—You never get this deep bass note of Divine Justice without having a, “but yet,” to accompany it!

13. *In it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten: as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves: so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.* When the oak

sheds all its leaves, it is not dead—there is living sap that will again cause the tree to be verdant. Though the nation was to be brought very low, there was still to be left a remnant according to the Election of Grace. Sin never reaches such a point in God's people but what Divine Grace triumphs! Still, where sin abounded, Grace did much more abound. This is a terrible chapter! It shows the Sovereignty of God in a lurid light and reveals how, when sin comes to a certain point, the Lord gives men up and leaves them to the blindness of their heart, so that even the means of Grace, the prophetic message, becomes a means of condemnation to them.

Now we are going to read in one of the many places in the New Testament in which this passage is quoted.

Matthew 13:10-12. *And the disciples came, and said unto Him, Why do You speak unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, but to them it is not given. For whoever has, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whoever has not, from him shall be taken away even that he has.* You can understand this Truth of God if you go into certain museums. I will suppose that you know nothing whatever of comparative anatomy and you go into the Museum of Comparative Anatomy at Paris. If you understand a little of the science, you will learn a great deal more—"for whoever has, to him shall be given." If you do not know anything about the subject, you will say, "Well, this is the most uninteresting exhibition I ever saw," and you will come out with the feeling that you do not know anything. What you did know will have vanished in the sight of all that mass of bones arranged in those extraordinary shapes. You will only feel your own lack of knowledge in that department—you will show your ignorance, and nothing else. So it is in the things of God. If you understand the fundamental principles of true godliness, you will soon understand more. But if you do not comprehend as much as that, even the reading of the Scriptures will be but slightly instructive to you.

13-15. *Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which says, By hearing you shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing you shall see, and shall not perceive: for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.* Now the Savior turned to His disciples and spoke especially to them.

16. *But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.* It is no use having eyes that do not see, or ears that do not hear, and yet I fear that there are many eyes of that kind, and many ears of that sort, in this congregation to-night.

17. *For verily I say unto you, That many Prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which you see, and have not seen them: and to hear those things which you hear, and have not heard them.*

Now let us read one other passage to show how the Lord heals the blind and makes them see.

Luke 18:35, 36. *And it came to pass, that as He was come near, unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the wayside begging: and hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant. If he could not see, he could hear and he could speak. Use all the ability that you have and God will give you more!*

37-39. *And they told him that Jesus of Nazareth passes by. And he cried, saying, Jesus, You son of David, have mercy on me. And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace. They told him that he was spoiling the Preacher's sermon. They had lost his last sentence. They could not catch the Savior's meaning, so they cried out to the blind man, "Hold your tongue, Sir."*

39, 40. *But he cried so much the more, You son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood. I can see Him stop. He had been walking on, before, and talking as He went, but prayer can cause the Savior to be spell-bound. Here Jesus stood.*

40, 41. *And commanded him to be brought unto Him: and when he was come near, He asked him, saying, What will you that I shall do unto you? Our Lord likes us to know what it is that we need. He would have us feel our need, that we may have a distinct perception of the blessing when it comes and know just what it is.*

41. *And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight. He needed nothing else, but oh, how badly he needed that gift!*

42. *And Jesus said unto him, Receive your sight. Notice the echo. The blind man said, "Lord, that I may receive my sight." Jesus said, "Receive your sight." With a little turn in the expression, Christ's answer is the echo of our prayer!*

42. *Your faith has saved you. No, surely it was Christ who saved him. Yes, but Christ delights to put His crown on Faith's head, for Faith always puts the crown back on Christ's head—"Your faith has saved you."*

43. *And immediately he received his sight, and followed Him. What should we do when our eyes are opened by Christ but follow him? The moment that we can see Him, we should begin to follow Him!*

43. *Glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God. May we have cause to praise the Lord, tonight, for many blind eyes opened!*

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THE GLORY OF GOD IN THE FACE OF JESUS CHRIST NO. 1493

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 7, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness,
has shined in our hearts, to give the light
of the knowledge of the Glory of God
in the face of Jesus Christ.”
2 Corinthians 4:6.*

THE Apostle is explaining the reason for his preaching Christ with so much earnestness—he had received Divine light and he felt bound to spread it. One great motive power of a true ministry is trusteeship. The Lord has put us in trust with the Gospel; He has filled us with a treasure with which we are to enrich the world. The text explains in full what it is with which the Lord has entrusted us—He has bestowed upon us the light of the knowledge of the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ and it is ours to reflect the light, to impart the knowledge, to manifest the Glory, to point to the Savior's face and to proclaim the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Having such a work before us, we faint not, but press onward with our whole heart.

I. With no other preface than this we shall ask your attention this morning, first, TO THE SUBJECT OF THAT KNOWLEDGE in which Paul delighted so much. What was this knowledge which, to his mind, was the chief of all and the most worthy to be spread? It was the knowledge of *God*—truly a most necessary and proper knowledge for all God's creatures! For a man not to know his Maker and Ruler is deplorable ignorance, indeed! The proper study of mankind is God. Paul not only knew that there is a God, for he had known that before his conversion—none could have more surely believed in the Godhead than did Paul as a Jew.

Nor does he merely intend that he had learned somewhat of the Character of God, for that, also, he had known from the Old Testament Scriptures before he was met with on the way to Damascus. Now he had come to know God in a closer, clearer and surer way, for he had *seen* Him, Incarnate, in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle had also received the knowledge of *“the Glory of God.”* Never had the God of Abraham appeared so glorious as now! God in Christ Jesus had won the adoring wonder of the Apostle's instructed mind. He had known Jehovah's Glory as the One and only God. He had seen that Glory in creation, declared by the heavens and displayed upon the earth. He had beheld that Glory in the Law which blazed from Sinai and shed its insufferable light upon the face of Moses.

But now, beyond all else, he had come to perceive *the Glory of God in the face, or Person, of Jesus Christ* and *this* had won his soul! This special knowledge had been communicated to him at his conversion when Jesus

spoke to him out of Heaven. In this knowledge he had made great advances by experience and by new Revelations—but he had not yet learned it to the fullest, for he was still seeking to know it *perfectly* by the teaching of the Divine Spirit and we find him saying, “That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death.”

Paul knew not merely God, but God in Christ Jesus! Not merely “the Glory of God,” but “the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” The knowledge dealt with God, but it was Christward knowledge! He pined not for a Christless Theism, but for God in Christ! This, Beloved, is the one thing which you and I should aim to know. There are parts of the Divine Glory which will never be seen by us in this life, speculate as we may. Mysticism would desire to pry into the unknowable—you and I may leave dreamers and their dreams—and follow the clear light which shines from the face of Jesus. What of God it is necessary and beneficial for us to know, He has revealed in Christ! And whatever is not there, we may rest assured it is unfit and unnecessary for us to know.

Truly the Revelation is by no means scant, for there is vastly more revealed in the Person of Christ than we shall be likely to learn in this mortal life—and even eternity will not be too long for the discovery of all the Glory of God which shines forth in the Person of the Word made flesh. Those who would supplement Christianity had better first add to the brilliance of the sun or the fullness of the sea! As for us, we are more than satisfied with the Revelation of God in the Person of our Lord Jesus and we are persuaded of the truth of His Words, “he that has seen Me has seen the Father.” Hope not, my Brothers and Sisters, that the preacher can grapple with such a subject! I am overcome by it!

In my meditations I have felt lost in its lengths and breadths. My joy is great in my theme and yet I am conscious of a pressure upon brain and heart, for I am as a little child wandering among the mountains, or as a lone spirit which has lost its way among the stars. I stumble among sublimities. I sink with amazement. I can only point with my finger to that which I see, but cannot describe it. May the Holy Spirit, Himself, take of the things of Christ and show them to you! We will, for a minute or two, consider this glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ *historically*.

In every incident of the life of Jesus of Nazareth, the Lord’s Anointed, there is much of God to be seen. What volumes upon volumes might be written to show God as revealed in every act of Christ from His birth to His death! I see Him as a Baby at Bethlehem lying in a manger and there I perceive a choice Glory in the mind of God, for He evidently despises the pomp and glory of the world which little minds esteem so highly. He might have been born in marble halls and wrapped in imperial purple, but He scorns these things and, in the manger among the oxen, we see a Glory which is independent of the trifles of luxury and parade.

The Glory of God in the Person of Jesus asks no aid from the splendor of courts and palaces. Yet even as a Baby, He reigns and rules! Mark how the shepherds hasten to salute the new-born King, while the magi from the far-off East bring gold, frankincense and myrrh and bow at His feet. When the Lord condescends to show Himself in little things, He is still

right royal and commands the homage of mankind. He is as majestic in the minute as in the magnificent; as royal in the Baby at Bethlehem as in later days in the Man who rode through Jerusalem with hosannas! See the holy Child Jesus in the Temple when He is but 12 years old, sitting in the midst of the doctors, astonishing them with His questions! What wisdom there was in that Child!

Do you not see there an exhibition of the Truth of God that “the foolishness of God is wiser than men”? Even when God reserves His wisdom and gives forth utterances fit for a child, He baffles the wisdom of age and thought. Watch that youth in the carpenter’s shop. See Him planing and sawing, cutting and squaring, working according to His parent’s commands, till he is 30 years of age. What do we learn here when we see the Incarnate God tarrying at the workman’s bench? See we not how God can wait? Is not this a masterly display of the leisure of the Eternal? The Infinite is never driven out of His restful pace of conscious strength.

Had it been you and I, we would have hastened to begin our lifework long before! We could not have refrained from preaching and teaching for so long a period! But God can wait and, in Christ, we see how prudence tempered zeal and made Him share in that eternal leisure which arises out of confidence that His end is sure. The Godhead was concealed at Bethlehem and Nazareth from the eyes of carnal men, but it is revealed to those who have spiritual sight with which to behold the Lord. Even in those early days of our Lord, while He was yet preparing for His great mission, we behold the Glory of God in His youthful face and we adore.

As for His public ministry, how clearly the Godhead is there! Behold Him, Brothers and Sisters, while He feeds 5,000 with a few loaves and fishes and you cannot fail to perceive therein the Glory of God in the commissariat of the universe, for the Lord God opens His hands and supplies the need of every living thing! See Him cast out devils and you learn of the Divine power over evil! Hear Him raise the dead and you must reverence the Divine prerogative to kill and to make alive! See Him cure the sick and you think you hear Jehovah say, “I wound, I heal.” Hear how He speaks and Infallibly reveals the Truth of God and you will perceive the God of knowledge to whom the wise-hearted owe their instruction!

Set over against each other are these two sentences—“Behold, God exalts by His power; who teaches like He?” and “Never man spoke like this Man.” It is always the Lord’s way to make His Truth known to those of humble and truthful hearts and so did Jesus teach the sincere and lowly among men. Observe how Jesus dwelt among men, wearing the common smock-frock of the peasant, entering their cottages and sharing their poverty! Mark how He even washed His disciples’ feet! Herein we see the condescension of God who must stoop to view the skies and bow to see what angels do—and yet He does not disdain to visit the sons of men!

In wondrous Grace He thinks of us and has pity upon our low estate. See, too, the Christ of God, my Brothers and Sisters, bearing every day with the taunts of the ungodly—enduring “such contradiction of sinners against Himself”—and you have a fair picture of the infinite patience and the marvelous longsuffering of God! And this is no small part of His Glory. Note well how Jesus loved His own which were in the world, yes, loved

them to the end! And with what tenderness and gentleness He bore with them, as a nurse with her child, for here you see the tenderness and gentleness of God and the love of the great Father towards His erring children.

You read of Jesus receiving sinners and eating with them and what is this but the Lord God, merciful and gracious, passing by transgression, iniquity and sin? You see Jesus living as a physician among those diseased by sin, with the one aim of healing their sicknesses—and here you see the pardoning mercy of our God, His delight in salvation and the joy which He has in mercy. Beloved, I cannot go through the whole life of Jesus Christ—it is impossible, for time would fail us—but if you will, yourselves, select any single incident in which Jesus appears, whether in the chamber of sickness or at the grave, whether in weakness or in power, you shall, in each case, behold the Glory of God!

Throughout His ministry, which was mainly a period of humiliation, there gleams forth in the Character, acts and Person of Jesus, the Glory of the everlasting Father. His acts compel us not only to admire but to adore! He is not merely a Man whom God favors, He is God Himself! What shall I say of His death? Oh never did the love of God reveal itself so clearly as when He laid down His life for His sheep, nor did the justice of God ever flame forth so conspicuously as when He would suffer in Himself the curse for sin rather than sin should go unpunished and the Law should be dishonored! Every attribute of God was focused at the Cross and he that has eyes to look through his tears and see the wounds of Jesus shall behold more of God there than a whole eternity of Providence or an infinity of creation shall ever be able to reveal to Him. Well might the trembling centurion, as he watched the Cross, exclaim, “Truly, this was the Son of God.”

Do I need to remind you, too, of the Glory of God in the Person of Christ Jesus in His Resurrection, when He spoiled principalities and powers, led Death captive and rifled the tomb? That is, indeed, a godlike speech, “I am He that lives and was dead, and behold I am alive forevermore and have the keys of Hell and of death.” His power, His immortality, His eternal majesty all shone forth as He left the shades of death!

I will not linger over His Ascension when He returned to His own again. Then His Godhead was conspicuous, for He again put on the Glory which He had with the Father before the world was. There, amid the acclamations of angels and redeemed spirits, the Glory of the conquering Lord was seen. By His descent He had destroyed the powers of darkness and then He ascended that He might fill all things as only God can do. I would only hint at His session at the right hand of God, for there you know how—

***“Adoring saints around Him stand,
And thrones and powers before Him fall.
The God shines gracious through the Man,
And sheds sweet glories on them all.”***

In Heaven they never conceive of Jesus apart from the Divine Glory which perpetually surrounds Him. No one in Heaven doubts His Deity, for all fall prostrate before Him, or now and then all seize their harps and wake their strings to the praise of God and the Lamb!

The Glory of God will most abundantly be seen in the second advent of our Lord. Whatever of splendor we may expect at the advent, whatever of Glory shall surround that reign of a thousand years, or the end when He shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father—in every transaction which prophecy leads us to expect—God in Christ Jesus will be conspicuous and angelic eyes shall look on with adoring admiration as they see the eternal Father glorious in the Person of His Son!

These are great themes—we do but mention them and leave them to your quiet thought. It is enough to point to a table if men have appetites for food. But now I will ask you to think of the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, in the same line of thought, only putting it in another fashion. Treat it *by way of* observation. When you look upon the material universe you can see, if your eyes are opened, somewhat of the Glory of God. The reverent mind perceives enough to constrain the heart to worship and yet, after awhile, it pines for more.

I have often heard the earth spoken of as the mirror of God's image. But when I was traveling among the Alps and saw many of the grandest phenomena of creation such as glaciers, avalanches and tempests, I was so impressed with the narrowness of visible things in comparison with God that I wrote such lines as these—

***“The mirror of the creatures lacks space
To bear the image of the Infinite.
'Tis true the Lord has fairly writ His name,
And set His seal upon creation's brow,
But as the skillful potter much excels
The vessel which he fashions on the wheel,
E'en so, but in proportion greater far,
Jehovah's self transcends His noblest works.
Earth's ponderous wheels would break, her axles snap,
If freighted with the load of Deity.
Space is too narrow for the Eternal's rest,
And time too short a footstool for His Throne.”***

If your mind has ever entered into communion with God, you will become conscious of the dwarfing of all visible things in His Presence. Even when your thought sweeps round the stars and circumnavigates space, you feel that Heaven, even the Heaven of heavens, cannot contain Him. Everything conceivable falls short of the inconceivable Glory of God!

When you come, however, to gaze upon the face of Christ Jesus, how different is the feeling! Now you have a mirror equal to the reflection of the eternal Face, for, “In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” His name is “Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God.” He is the Image of God, “the brightness of His Glory and the express Image of His Person.” If your conception of Christ is truthful, it will coincide with the true idea of God and you will exclaim, “This is the true God and eternal life.” Like Thomas, you will salute the wounded Savior with the cry, “My Lord and my God.”

Truly, “God was manifest in the flesh”—not a part of Him, but God in *perfection*. In the visible creation we see God's works, but in Christ Jesus we have God Himself, Emmanuel, “God with us.” The Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is most sweetly conspicuous because you are conscious that not only are God's attributes there, but God Himself is there!

In the Person of Jesus we see the Glory of God in *the veiling of His splendor*. The Lord is not eager to display Himself—"Verily You are a God that hides Yourself," said the Prophet of old. The world seems to be created rather to hide God than to manifest Him, at least it is certain that even in the grandest displays of His power we may say with Job, "There was the hiding of His power."

Though His light is brightness itself, yet it is only the robe which conceals Him. "Who covers Yourself with light as with a garment." If thus God's Glory is seen in the field of creation as a light veiled and shaded to suit the human eye, we certainly see the same in the face of Jesus Christ. Where everything is mild and gentle—full of Grace as well as Truth. How softly breaks the Divine Glory through the human life of Jesus—a babe in Grace may gaze upon this brightness without fear! When Moses' face shone, the people could not look at him, but when Jesus came from His transfiguration the people ran to Him and saluted Him! Everything is attractive in God in Christ Jesus! In Him we see God to the fullest, but the Deity so mildly beams through the medium of human flesh that mortal man may draw near and look and live.

This Glory in the face of Jesus Christ is assuredly the Glory of God, even though veiled, for thus in every other instance does God, in measure, shine forth. In Providence and in Nature such a thing as an unveiled God is not to be seen and the revelation of God in Christ is after the same Divine manner. In our Lord Jesus we see the Glory of God *in the wondrous blending of the attributes*. Behold His mercy, for He dies for sinners! But see His justice, for He sits as Judge of the quick and the dead. Observe His Immutability, for He is the same yesterday, today, and forever! And see His power, for His voice shakes not only earth but also Heaven. See how infinite is His love, for He espouses His chosen, but how terrible His wrath, for He consumes His adversaries. All the attributes of Deity are in Him—power that can lull the tempest—and tenderness that can embrace little children. The Character of Christ is a wonderful combination of all perfection's making up one perfection and so we see the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, for this is God's Glory, that in Him nothing is excessive and nothing is deficient. He is all that is good and great—in Him is light and no darkness at all.

Say, is it not so seen in Jesus our Lord? When I think of God I am led to see His Glory *in the outgoing of His great heart*, for He is altogether unselfish and unsparingly communicative. We may conceive a period when the Eternal dwelt alone and had not begun to create. He must have been inconceivably blessed, but He was not content to be enwrapped within Himself and to enjoy perfect bliss alone. He began to create and probably formed innumerable beings long before this world came into existence—and He did this that He might multiply beings capable of happiness. He delighted to indulge His heart by deeds of beneficence, manifesting the inherent goodness of His Nature. In whatever God is doing, He is consulting the happiness of His creatures, being in Himself independent of all, He loves to bless others.

He is living—we speak with awe in His Presence—He is living, even He, not unto Himself, but living in the lives of others, rejoicing in the joy of

His creatures! This is His Glory and is it not to be seen most evidently in Christ Jesus, who “saved others, Himself He could not save”? Do you not see the great unselfish Glory of God in Christ Jesus? When did He ever live unto Himself? What single act of His had a selfish purpose? What word ever sought His own honor? In what deed did He consult His own aggrandizement? Neither in life nor in death did Christ live within Himself—He lived for His people and died for them! See the Glory of God in this!

There are two things I have noticed in the Glory of God whenever my soul has been saturated with it and these I have seen in Jesus. I have sat upon a lofty hill and looked abroad upon the landscape and seen hill, dale, woods, fields and I have felt as if God had gone forth and spread His Presence over all. I have felt *the outflow of Deity*. There was not a pleasant tree, nor a silvery stream, nor a cornfield ripening for the harvest, nor mountain shaggy with pines, nor heath purple with heather but seemed aglow with God! Even as the sun pours himself over all things, so does God—and in the hum of an insect, as well as in the crash of a thunderbolt, we hear a voice saying—“God is here.” God has gone forth out of Himself into the creation and filled all things! Is not this the feeling of the heart in the Presence of Christ?

When we come near Him, He is the all-pervading Spirit. In any of the scenes in which Jesus appears, He is Omnipresent. Who but He is at Bethlehem, or at Nazareth, or at Jerusalem? Who but He is in the world? Is not He to us the everybody, the one only Person of His age? I cannot think of Caesar or Rome, or all the myriads that dwell on the face of the earth as being anything more than small figures in the background of the picture when Jesus is before me! He is to my mind most clearly the fullness, filling all in all—all the accessories of any scene in which He appears are submerged in the flood of Glory which flows from His all-subduing Presence. Truly the outgoing Glory of God was in Christ.

But you must have had another thought when you have felt the Glory of God in Nature—you must have felt *the indrawing of all things towards God*. You have felt created things rising unto God as steps to His Throne. As you have gazed with rapture on the landscape, every tree and hill has seemed to drift towards God, to tend towards Him, to return, in fact, to Him from whom it came! Is it not just so in the life of Christ? He seems to be drawing all things to Himself, gathering together all things in one in His own personality. Some of these things will not move, but yet His attraction has fallen on them, while others fly with alacrity to Him, according to His Word, “I, if I am lifted up, will draw all men unto Me.”

Thus those observations of the Glory of God, which have been suggested to us by Nature are also abundantly verified in Christ and we are sure that the Glory is the same. I cannot express my own thoughts to you so clearly and vividly as I would, but this I know, if you ever get a vision of the Glory of God in Nature and if you then turn your thoughts toward the Lord’s Christ, you will see that the same God is in Him as in the visible universe and that the same Glory shines in Him, only more clearly. There is one God and that one God is gloriously manifested in Christ Jesus. “No

man has seen God at any time; the Only-Begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.”

Let us now treat this thought of the Glory of God in the Person of Christ by way of experience. Have you ever heard Christ's doctrine in your soul? If so, you have felt it to be Divine, for your heart has perceived its moral and spiritual glory and you have concluded that God is in it for sure. Has your heart heard the voice of Christ speaking peace and pardon through the blood? If so, you have known Him to be Lord of all! Did you ever see the fullness of His Atonement? Then you have felt that God, Himself, was there reconciling the world unto Himself.

You have understood the union of the two titles, “God, our Savior.” Beloved, you have often felt your Lord's Presence and you have been admitted into intimate communion with Him. Then I know that a profound awe has crept over you which has made you fall at His feet and in the lowliest reverence of your spirit you have acknowledged Him to be Lord and God. But when He has bent over you in love and said, “Fear not.” When He has opened His heart to you and shown you how dear you are to Him, then the rapture you have felt has been so Divine that you have, beyond all question, known Him to be God!

There are times when the elevating influence of the Presence of Christ has put His Godhead beyond the possibility of question—when we have felt that all the Truths of God we ever heard before had no effect upon us compared with the Truth that is in Him—that all the spirits in the world were ineffectual to stir us till His Spirit came into contact with our spirit! In this manner His Omnipotent, all-subduing, elevating love has proved Him to be none other than “very God of very God.” Thus have we spoken of the supremely precious object of Christian knowledge.

II. Secondly, let us say a few words in noticing THE NATURE OF THIS KNOWLEDGE. How, and in what respects do we know the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ? Briefly, first. We know it *by faith*. Upon the testimony of the Infallible Word we believe and are sure that God is in Christ Jesus. The Lord has spoken and said, “This is My beloved Son, hear you Him.” We accept as a settled fact the Godhead of the Lord Jesus and our soul never permits a question upon it. We know that the Son of God has come. We know that He has given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true and that we are in Him that is true, even in His Son, Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

Knowing our Lord's divinity by faith, we next have used our perceptive faculty and, *by consideration and meditation we perceive* that His life furnishes abundant evidence that He was God, for God's Glory shines in that life. The more carefully we pay attention to the details given us by the four Evangelists, the more is our understanding persuaded that no mere man stands before us. If, my Brothers and Sisters, your spiritual nature was set at the task to try and describe how God would act if He were here, what God would be if He became Incarnate and dwelt among men—I am sure you would not have been able to imagine the life of Christ. But if someone had brought to you the description given by the Evangelists, you would have said, “My task is done! This is, indeed, a noble conception of God manifest in the flesh.”

I do not say that the wise men of this world would suppose God to have thus behaved, for their suppositions are sure to be the reverse of the simple, unaffected, open-hearted conduct of Jesus! But this I do say, that the pure in heart will at once see that the acts of Christ are like the doings of God! He has done exactly what a pure intelligence might suppose God would have done! The more we have studied the more we have seen the Glory of God in Christ. And now we have come further than this, for we feel an inward consciousness that the Deity is in Christ Jesus. It is not merely that we have believed it and that we somewhat perceive it by observation, but we have come into contact with Christ and have known, therefore, that He is God.

We love Him and we also love God. And we perceive that these two are One and the more we love truth and holiness, and love, which are great traits in the Character of God, the more we see of these in Christ Jesus. It is by the *heart* that we know God and Christ—and as our affections are purified, we become sensible of God's Presence in Christ. Oftentimes when our soul is in rapt fellowship with Jesus, we laugh to scorn the very thought that our Beloved can be less than Divine! Moreover, there is one other thing that has happened to us while we have been looking at our Lord. Blessed be His name, we begin to grow like He! Our beholding Him has purified the eyes which has gazed on His purity. His brightness has helped our eyesight so that we see much already and shall yet see more.

The light of the sun blinds us, but the light of Jesus Christ strengthens the eyes. We expect that as we grow in Grace we shall behold more and more of God's Glory—but we shall see it best in the Well-Beloved, even in Christ Jesus our Lord! What a sight of God we shall enjoy in Heaven! We are heading that way and, as we get nearer and nearer, our sight and vision of the Glory of God in Christ is every day increased! We know it, then! We know it! We believe it! We are conscious of it! We are affected by it! We are transformed by it! And thus at this day we have “the light of the knowledge of the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ!

III. Thirdly, let us gratefully review THE MEANS OF THIS KNOWLEDGE. How have we come at it? That brings us to read the text again—“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” Why did not *everybody* see the Glory of God in Jesus Christ when He was here? It was conspicuous enough. Answer—it matters not how brightly the sun shines among *blind men*.

Now, the human heart is blind—it refuses to see God in Creation except after a dim fashion—and it utterly refuses to discern God in Christ. Therefore He is the despised and rejected of men. Moreover, there is a god of this world, the Prince of Darkness, and since he hates the Light he deepens and confirms the natural darkness of the human mind, lest the Light should reach the heart. He blinds men's minds with error and falsehood and foul imaginations, blocking up the windows of the soul either with unclean desires, or with dense ignorance. We, at one time, did not perceive the Glory of God in Christ because we were blind, by nature, and were darkened by the Evil One. As only the pure in heart can see God, we, being impure in heart, could not see God in Christ.

What, then, has happened to us? To eternal Grace be endless praise! God Himself has shined into our hearts—that same God who said, “Light be,” and light was, has shined into our hearts! You know creation’s story, how all things lay in black darkness? God might have gone on to make a world in darkness if he had pleased, but if he had done so, it would have been to us as though it had never been, for we could not have perceived it. Therefore He early said, “Let there be light.” Now, God’s Glory in the face of Jesus Christ might have been all there and we should never have discerned it—and as far as we are concerned it would have been as though it had never been if the Lord had not entered into us and the thick darkness and said, “Let there be light.”

Then burst in the everlasting morning, the light shined in the darkness and the darkness fled before it. Do you recollect the incoming of that illumination? If you do, then I know the first sight you saw by the new light was the Glory of God in Jesus Christ! In fact, that light had come on purpose that you might see it—and at this present moment that is the main delight of your soul, the choice subject of your thoughts! In the light of God you have seen the light of the Glory of God, as it is written, “In Your light we shall see light.” One thing I want to say to comfort all who believe. Beloved, do you see the glory of God in Christ Jesus? Then let that sight be an evidence to you of your salvation.

When our Lord asked His disciples, “Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Now note the reply of the Lord Jesus to that confession—“Blessed are you, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you, but My Father which is in Heaven.” If you can delight in God in Christ Jesus, then remember, “no man can say that Jesus is the Christ but by the Holy Spirit,” and you have said it! And this morning you are saying it! And, therefore, the Holy Spirit has come upon you.

“Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.” You believe this and, therefore, you are born of the Father. “Whoever denies the Son, the same has not the Father: but he that acknowledges the Son has the Father also.” You love God and you are His—the Spirit of God has opened your eyes and you are saved. While I have been preaching, this morning, a number of my hearers have been saying, “We care nothing about Jesus Christ. His name is a most respectable one in our religion. We call ourselves Christians, but as to seeing the Glory of God in Him when He was a Baby and when He was despised and rejected of men, we know nothing of it. No doubt He is exalted now in Heaven and we worship Him, though we hardly know why. But we see no special Glory in Him.”

Others of you have been saying, “Yes, God was in Christ Jesus reconciling the world unto Himself and He has reconciled me to Himself. I never loved God till I saw Him in Christ. I could never have any familiarity with God till I saw His familiarity with me in the Person of His Son. I never understood how I could be God’s son till I understood how God’s Son became a Man. I never saw how I could be a partaker of the Divine Nature till I saw how His Son became a partaker of the *human* nature and took me up unto Himself that He might take me up unto His Father.”

Oh, Beloved, do you delight in Jesus Christ? Is He all your salvation and all your desire? Do you adore Him? Do you consecrate yourself to His honor? Do you wish to live for Him and to die for Him? Then be sure that you belong to Him, for it is the mark of the children of God that they love God in Christ Jesus!

IV. So I finish by mentioning, in the fourth place, THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THIS KNOWLEDGE. There have been considerable debates among the interpreters as to the precise meaning of this text and some of them think it means that Paul is giving a reason why he preached the Gospel. This makes the verse run thus—"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, that we might give out, again, the light of the knowledge of the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." God gave light to the Apostles that they might show forth the light of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ to the nations.

I do not know whether this is the exact run of the text, but I know it is true. Never is a gleam of light given to any man to hide away—and to spiritual men the great object of their lives, after they have received light—is to reflect that light in all its purity. You must not hoard up the light within yourself—it will not be light to you if you do. Only think of a person when his room is full of sunlight saying to his servant, "Quick, now! Close the shutters and let us keep this precious light to ourselves." Your room will be in the dark, my Friend! So, when a child of God gets the light from Christ's face, he must not say, "I shall keep this to myself," for that very desire would shut it out. No, let the light shine through you! Let it shine everywhere!

You have the light that you may reflect it. An object which absorbs light is dark and we call it black. But hang up a reflector in its place when the sun is shining and it will not appear black—it will be so bright that you will hardly be able to look at it! An object is, itself, bright in proportion as it sends back the light which it receives. So you shall find, as a Christian, that if you absorb light into yourself, you will be black, but if you scatter it abroad you shall be brilliant—you shall be changed into the very image of the light which you have received—you shall become a second sun!

I noticed last Sabbath evening, when I came into this pulpit, that, at the angle of the building before me, on the left hand the sun seemed to be setting. And I saw the brightness of his round face and yet I knew it to be the wrong quarter of the heavens for the sun to be setting there. Perhaps you will observe that there is a peculiar window on the other side of the street and it was reflecting the sun so well that I thought it was the sun himself and I could hardly bear the light! It was not the sun, it was only a window, and yet the radiance was dazzling. And so a man of God, when he receives the light of Christ, can become so perfect a reflector that to common eyes, at any rate, he is brightness itself! He has become transformed from glory to glory as by the image of the Lord!

Brothers and Sisters, if you have learned the Truth of God, manifest it and make it plain to others! Proclaim *the Gospel*, not your own thoughts, for it is *Christ* that you are to make manifest! Teach not your own judgments, conclusions and opinions, but the Glory of God in the face of Je-

Jesus Christ! Let Jesus manifest Himself in His own light. Do not cast a light on Him, or attempt to show the sun with a candle. Do not aim at converting men to your views, but let the light shine for itself and work its own way. Do not color it by being like a painted window to it, but let the clear white light shine through you that others may behold your Lord.

Scatter your light in all unselfishness. Wish to shine, not that others may say, "How bright he is," but that they, getting the light, may rejoice in the Source from which it came to you and to them. Be willing to make every sacrifice to spread this light which you have received! Consecrate your entire being to the making known among the sons of men the Glory of Christ. Oh, I wish we had swift messengers to run the world over to tell the story that God has come down among us! I wish we had fluent tongues to tell in every language the story that, coming down among us, God was arrayed in flesh like our own and that He took our sins and carried our sorrows.

Oh, that we had trumpet tongues to make the message peal through Heaven and earth that God has come among men, and cries, "Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"! Oh for a voice of thunder to speak it, or a lightning pen to write it across the heavens—that God has reconciled the world unto Himself by the death of His Son, not imputing their trespasses unto them—and that whoever believes in Christ Jesus has everlasting life! I cannot command thunder or lightning, but here are your tongues, go and tell it this afternoon! Here is my tongue and I have tried to tell it, and may it be silent in the dust of death before it ceases to declare that one blessed message—that God in Christ Jesus receives the sons of men in boundless love!

Tell it, Brothers, with broken accents, if you cannot speak it more powerfully. Whisper it, Sisters, gently whisper, if to none other, yet to your little children and make the name of, "Emmanuel, God with us," to be sweet in your infant's ears. You are growing in strength and talent, young man—come, consecrate yourself to this. And you, gray-beard, before you lie down on your last bed to breathe out your spirit, tell the love of Jesus to your sons that they may tell it to *their* sons and hand it down to coming generations, that mankind may never forget that the "Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His Glory, the Glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of Grace and truth." God bless you. Amen.

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“OUR LIGHT AFFLICTION”

NO. 3244

**A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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“Our light affliction.”
2 Corinthians 4:17.

PERHAPS someone here thoughtlessly says, “Well, whoever calls affliction, ‘light,’ must have been a person who knew very little about what affliction really is! If he had suffered as I have done, he would not have written about ‘our light affliction.’ He must have been in robust health and known nothing of sickness and pain.” “Just so,” says another, “and if he had been as poor as I am and had to work as hard as I do to maintain a sickly wife, and a large family, he would not have written about ‘our light affliction.’ I expect the gentleman who used that expression lived very much at his ease and had all that his heart could wish.” “Yes,” says another, “and if he had stood by an open grave and had to lament the loss of loved ones, as I have done. And if he had known what it was to be desolate and forsaken, as I have known it, he would not have written about ‘our light affliction.’”

Now, if you talk like that, you are, all of you, mistaken, for the man who wrote these words was probably afflicted more than any of us have ever been! The list of his afflictions that he gives us is perfectly appalling—“in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths often. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeying often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by my own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watching often, in hunger and thirst, in fasting often, in cold and nakedness.” Is there anyone here who could truthfully make out such a catalog of personal afflictions as the Apostle Paul endured?

“Well then,” says one, “he must have been so hardened that he took no notice of it, like the Red Indian who will endure terrible torture without a groan, or like the Stoic philosopher who conceals his inward feelings beneath an unmoved countenance.” No, you are also mistaken. If you read Paul’s letters to his private friends and to the Churches, you will see that they bear abundant evidences that he was a man of great

tenderness of spirit and of intense emotion—one who could suffer and who did suffer most acutely. His education and training had fitted him for a life among the most learned and refined of his countrymen, yet he had to support himself by laboring as a tent-maker and to journey here and there in peril and privation. And though he endured all this in absolute submission to the will of God, yet there was nothing stoical about his resignation!

“Well then,” says another, “he must have been one of those careless, lighthearted people who never trouble about anything that happens and whose motto is, ‘Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.’” Oh, no! The Apostle Paul was not at all that kind of man! He was the most thoughtful, logical, careful, considerate man of whom I have ever read. He knew what it was to be joyful, yet there was never any sign of levity about him. He had a grandly buoyant spirit which lifted him above waves of sorrow in which most men would have sunk, yet he was never frivolous! He wrote of “our light affliction” even when he was heavily afflicted and while he acutely felt that affliction! The sailor forgets the storm when he is again safely on shore, and we are all apt to think less of our sickness when we have been restored from it—but Paul was in the midst of affliction when he called it “light.” He felt the weight of it, and was fully conscious of the pressure of it upon his spirit, but the elastic spring of faith within his skull was so vigorously in action that he was enabled at that very time to call it, “our light affliction.”

We must not forget that Paul had afflictions which were peculiarly his own. There are afflictions which Christians have because they are Christians and which those who are not Christians do not have. And Paul, as an Apostle of Jesus Christ, had sufferings which were peculiarly his because he was an Apostle. Because he was specially called to be the Apostle of the Gentiles. Because he was chosen to carry the Gospel to many nations. Because he was called to stand even before the cruel Emperor Nero—for that very reason—he who was peculiarly gifted and especially chosen above all others to do most arduous and onerous work was also called to endure unusual trial. He had spelt out the word, “AFFLICTION” as perhaps no other mere man had done—he had seen it written in capital letters across his whole life—so he could speak, not as a novice, but as one who had graduated in the school of affliction, and yet he wrote concerning “our light affliction.” Before I have finished my discourse, I hope that most, if not all here will agree with the Apostle and say, “We also call our affliction light.”

I. I am going to speak, first, especially TO CHRISTIAN WORKERS. And to them I would say—Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, *our affliction is light compared with the objectives we have in view.*

Much of the affliction that the Apostle Paul had to endure came upon him because he was seeking the conversion of the heathen and the inga-

thering of the elect into the Kingdom of Christ. If this is the objective you also have in view, my dear Friend, and you are made to suffer through your sedulous and faithful pursuit of it, I think you may truly call anything you have to endure a light affliction. If you have ever seen a mother sit up night after night with her sick child, you must have sometimes wondered that her eyes did not close in slumber. You were amazed that she did not permit someone else to share her task, but she seemed to think nothing of the cost to herself if she might only be the means of saving her little one's life. True love made her labor light. And he who truly loves the souls of sinners will willingly bear any affliction for their sakes if he may but bring them to the Savior! Yes, and he will also patiently endure affliction from them as he remembers how, in his own willfulness and waywardness, he caused his Savior to suffer on his behalf. If a man could know that all through his life he would have to wear a threadbare garment and exist upon very scanty fare—if he were sure that throughout his life he would meet with but little kindness from Christians, and with nothing but persecution from worldlings—and if, at the close of his career, he could only expect to be devoured by dogs or his body to be cast to the carrion crows, yet might he think all this to be but a light affliction if he might but win *one soul* from the unquenchable flame! Such trials as these are, happily, not necessary—but if they were, we might count them as nothing in comparison with the bliss of bringing up from the depths of sin the precious pearls that are forever to adorn the crown of the Redeemer!

Still speaking to Christian workers, I have next to say that *our affliction is light compared with our great motive.*

What should be the great motive of all who seek to spread the Gospel and to win sinners for Christ? Surely there is no motive comparable to that of seeking to bring Glory to God by gathering into the Kingdom of Christ those for whom He shed His precious blood! Always keep in memory, Beloved, what Jesus has done for us. He left His radiant Throne in Glory and condescended to take upon Himself our nature, and also our sin—

**“Bearing, that we might never bear,
His Father's righteous ire.”**

Saved by His almighty Grace, cleansed by His ever-precious blood, living because we have been made partners of His life, how can we help loving Him who has made us what we are? When that sacred passion burns vehemently within our hearts, we feel that any affliction that we have to endure in order to glorify Christ is too light to be even worth mentioning! O you devoted lovers of the Savior, have you not known hours when you have envied the martyrs and wished that you, too, might be allowed to wear the ruby crown? When you have read about how they had to lie for years in cold, damp dungeons, and then at last were dragged forth to die

at the block, the stake, or the scaffold, have you not felt that your lives were poor and mean compared with theirs and that you would gladly sacrifice all the comfort you now enjoy if you might be permitted to die for Christ as they did? I hope that many of you could truthfully say to your dear Lord and Savior—

**“Would not my ardent spirit vie
With angels round the Throne,
To execute Your sacred will,
And make Your Glory known?
Would not my heart pour forth its blood
In honor of Your name,
And challenge the old hand of death
To dampen the immortal flame?”**

It was such a spirit as this that must have possessed the Apostle Paul when he wrote concerning “our light affliction.” Let us, also, as workers for Christ, reckon as light affliction anything we have to endure by which we may glorify Him who bore such a terrible weight of suffering and sorrow for us!

II. Now, secondly, I am going to speak TO THOSE WHO COMPLAIN OF THE WEIGHT OF THEIR AFFLICTION.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, let me remind you that *your affliction is light compared with that of many others*. Think of the horrors of a battlefield and of the armies of the poor wounded men who have to lie there so long untended. Living in peace in our happy island home, it is difficult for us to realize the misery and wretchedness that are being endured in Paris even while I am preaching to you. [It will be seen, from the date at the head of the Sermon, that it was preached during the Franco-Prussian War.] Some of you complain of shortness of breath, but you have not to suffer the pangs of hunger as so many of the inhabitants of the French capital are at this moment suffering. There are some who are vulnerable as soon as any little ache or pain seizes them, yet their affliction is very light compared with that of many who never know what it is to be well and strong. Even if we are called to suffer pain, let us thank God that we have not been deprived of our reason. If we could go through the wards of Bethlehem Hospital, not far from us, and see the many forms of madness represented, I think each one of us would be moved to say, “My God, I thank You that, however poor or sick I am, You have preserved me from such mental affliction as many have to bear.” How thankful we all ought to be that we are not in prison! Does it seem improbable that such good people as we are could ever be numbered among the law-breakers of the land? You know how Hazael said to Elisha, “Is your servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?” Yet he did all that the Prophet foretold—and but for the restraining Grace of God, you and I, dear Friends, might have been suffering the agony and remorse that many are tonight enduring in the prisons of this and other lands! I need not go on multip-

lying instances of those who are suffering in various ways in mind or body or estate, but I think I have said enough to convince you that our affliction, whatever form it may assume, is light compared with that of many others.

Next, *our affliction is light compared with our deserts*. We can truly say with the Psalmist. “He has not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.” If the Lord had not dealt with us in mercy and in His Grace, we might have been at this moment beyond the reach of hope, like that rich man who in vain begged, “Father Abraham” to send Lazarus to dip his finger in water to cool his parched tongue! Yes, ungodly one, you might have been in Hell tonight—in that outer darkness where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth! Let the goodness of God in preserving you alive until now lead you to repent of your sin and to trust in the Savior! Thank God you are still out of the Pit—the iron gate has not yet been opened to admit you—and then been closed upon you forever! Yet remember that you are, as it were, standing upon a narrow neck of land between two unbounded seas and that the waves are every moment washing away the sand from beneath your feet! Rest no longer upon such an unsafe footing, lest it should give way altogether and you should sink down into the fathomless abyss! As for any affliction that you ever can have to endure on earth, it is not merely light, it is absolutely unworthy of mention in comparison with the eternal woe that is the portion of the lost! Be thankful that, up to the present moment, this has not been your portion—and lest it should be—flee at once for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before you in the Gospel!

Then next, *our affliction is very light compared with that of our Lord*. Do you, dear Friend, murmur at the bitterness of the draft in the cup which is put into your hand? But what heart can conceive of the bitterness of that cup of which Jesus drank? Yet He said, “The cup which My Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?” Is the disciple to be above his Master, and the servant above his Lord? Did Christ have to swim through stormy seas and—

**“Must you be carried to the skies
On flowery beds of ease?”**

I think there is no consolation for an afflicted child of God so rich as that which arises from the contemplation of the sufferings of Jesus. The remembrance of the agony and bloody sweat of Gethsemane has often dried up the sweat of terror upon the anguished brow of the Believer. The stripes of Jesus have often brought healing to his wounded followers. The thirst, the desertion and the death on Golgotha—all the incidents of our Savior’s suffering and the terrible climax of it all—have been most helpful in comforting the sorrows of stricken saints! Brothers and Sisters in Christ, your sufferings are not worth a moment’s thought when compared with the immeasurable agonies of Jesus, your Redeemer! My soul would

prostrate herself at His dear pierced feet, and say, “I have never seen any other affliction like Your affliction. I have beheld and seen, but I have never seen any sorrow like Your sorrow. You are, indeed, the incomparable Monarch of Misery, the unapproachable King of the whole realm of grief! Of old, You were the ‘Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief,’ and no man has ever been able to rob You of Your peculiar title.” I think that such reflections as these will help us to realize that however heavy our affliction appears to be to us, it is very light compared with that of our dear Lord and Master—

**“Sons of God, in tribulation,
Let your eyes the Savior view,
He’s the Rock of our salvation,
He was tried and tempted, too—
All to succor
Every tempted, burdened son.”**

And further, Beloved, *our affliction is very light compared with the blessing which we enjoy.* Many of us have had our sins forgiven for Christ’s sake—and the blessing of full and free forgiveness must far outweigh any affliction that we ever have to endure! When we were lying in the gloomy dungeon of conviction and had not a single ray of hope to lighten the darkness, we thought that even though we had to be kept in prison all our days and to be fed only upon bread and water, we could be quite joyous if we could but be assured that God’s righteous anger was turned away from us and that our sins and iniquities He would remember against us no more forever! Well, that is just what many of us have experienced—our transgressions have been forgiven and our sin has been covered by the great atoning Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior! Then let us rejoice and be glad all our days! But this is not all the blessing that we have received, for we have been clothed in the righteousness of Christ and adopted into the family of God! Now we are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. We even now share in all the privileges of the children of God and there are still greater favors and honors reserved for us in the future, as the Apostle John says, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is.” We already have a foretaste of the bliss that is laid up in store for us, for—

**“The men of Grace have found
Glory begun below!
Celestial fruits on earthly ground
From faith and hope do grow!”**

So it is quite true that in comparison with our blessings and privileges, our affliction is, indeed, light.

And, dear Friends, we specially realize that *our affliction is light as we prove the power of the Lord’s sustaining Grace.* Some of you have never personally proved its power, but many of you know by practical expe-

rience what I mean. There are times when through acute physical pain or great mental anguish, the soul is at first utterly prostrate. But at last it falls back in sheer helplessness upon the bosom of Jesus, gives up struggling and resigns itself absolutely to His will. And then—I speak what I know and testify what I have felt—there comes into the soul a great calm, a quiet joy so deep and so pure as never is experienced at any other time! I have sometimes looked back upon nights of pain—pain so excruciating that it has forced the tears from my eyes—and I have almost asked to have such suffering repeated if I might but have a repetition of the seraphic bliss that I have often enjoyed under such circumstances! I made a mistake when I said, “seraphic” bliss, for seraphs have not the capacity for suffering that we have and, therefore, they can never experience that deep, intense, indescribable bliss that is our portion when, by Grace, we are enabled to glorify God even in the furnace of affliction!—

***“Let me but hear my Savior say,
‘Strength shall be equal to your day!’
Then I rejoice in deep distress,
Leaning on all-sufficient Grace.
I can do all things, or can bear
All sufferings, if my Lord is there—
Sweet pleasures mingle with the pains,
While His left hand my head sustains.”***

We may well say that no affliction weighs more than a gnat resting upon an elephant when the Lord’s upholding Grace is sweetly manifested to our soul in times of perplexity, anxiety and pain. It is just then that Jesus often so graciously reveals Himself to us that we even come to love the cross that brings Him specially near to us. I can understand that strange speech of Rutherford, as some have regarded it when he said that he sometimes feared lest he should make his cross into an idol by loving affliction too much because of the blessed results that flowed from it! The bark of the tree of affliction may be bitter as gall, but if you get to the pith of it, you will find that it is as sweet as honey!

Once more, affliction—*sanctified affliction*—becomes very light when we see to what it leads. Sin is our great curse and anything that can help to deliver us from the dominion of sin is a blessing to us. It seems that in the constitution of our nature and in the Divine discipline under which we are being trained, our growth in Grace is greatly assisted by affliction and trial. There are certain propensities to evil that can only be removed in the furnace—as the dross is burnt away from the pure metal—and surely, Brothers and Sisters, you who know the exceeding sinfulness of sin would not think any affliction too severe that should humble your pride, or subdue your passions, or slay your sloth, or overcome any other sin that so easily besets you! You will not merely acquiesce in the Lord’s dealings with you, but you will devoutly thank Him for using the sharp

knife of affliction to separate you from your sin! A wise patient will gratefully thank the surgeon who cuts his flesh and makes it bleed—and who will not allow it to heal up too quickly. And when God, by His gracious Spirit’s operation, uses the stern surgery of trial to eradicate the propensity to sin, we do well to kiss the hand that holds the knife and to say with cheerfulness as well as with resignation, “The will of the Lord be done.”—

***“It needs our hearts be weaned from earth.
It needs that we be driven
By loss of every earthly stay,
To seek our joys in Heaven.”***

Now, lastly, *our affliction is light compared with the Glory which is so soon to be revealed to us and in us.* Some of us are much nearer to our heavenly Home than we have ever imaged. Possibly we are reckoning upon another 20 or even 40 years service, yet the shallows of our life’s day are already lengthening although we are unaware that it is so. Perhaps we are anticipating long periods of fighting without and fears within, but those anticipations will never be realized, for the day of our final victory is close at hand and there doubts and fears shall never again be able to assail our spirits. In this House, tonight, there may be some who are sitting on the very banks of the Jordan—and just across the river lies the land that flows with milk and honey—the land which is reserved as the inheritance of the true children of God! Their eyes are so dimmed with tears that they cannot see—

***“Canaan’s fair and happy land,
Where their possessions lie.”***

They even imagine that they are captives by the waters of Babylon and they hang their harps upon the willows, for they fear there are many years of banishment still before them. Yet the King’s messenger is already on the way with the summons to bid them to appear before Him very soon! Even if the call does not come to some of us at once—if the Master has need of us in this world a little longer—how soon our mortal life must end! What is our life? “It is even a vapor, that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.” “As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.” But does the brevity of life cause us any anxiety? Oh, no! “For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens”! And when once we reach that blest abode of all the saints and look back upon our earthly experiences, we shall feel that any affliction we had to endure was light, indeed, compared with the unutterable bliss that shall then be our eternal portion! We are pilgrims bound to Zion’s city and we necessarily have certain privations and difficulties—but when our journey is at an end—

“One hour with our God

Will make up for it all.”

If we have not this good hope through Divine Grace, we may well say that our affliction is *not* light. I cannot imagine how any of you, my Hearers, can go on living without a Savior—you poor people, you hard-working people, you sickly, consumptive people—how can you live without a Savior? I wonder how those who are rich and who have an abundance of earthly comforts can live on, year after year, without any hope (except a false one) of comfort and blessing in the life that is to come? But as for you who have so few earthly comforts, you whose life is one long struggle for bare existence, you who scarcely know what it is to have a day without pain, *how can you live without a Savior?* Remember that “godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” So, “seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” May the Lord give you the Grace to come to Him this very moment! And to Him shall be all the Glory forever, for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 CORINTHIANS 4.**

Verse 1. *Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not*—We are sometimes ready to faint, but we cast our fainting spirits into the arms of God and our strength is again renewed. At times the very importance of an errand first weighs down the spirit of the messenger, yet afterwards it seems to impel him to more than ordinary exertion. So is it here—having been Divinely entrusted with this ministry and being ready to faint under the tremendous responsibility that it involves, we are yet awakened to action by the very pressure which seems to deprive us of the power to act! And, therefore, “we faint not”—

2. *But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.* Far be it from the teacher of the Truth of God to ever use words in an unnatural sense, or to dissemble or equivocate, saying to the ear what he means not in the sense in which the hearer understands it. Far be it from us to mix with the Word of God anything of our own as vintners mix various kinds of wine, for such is the import of the word that the Apostle here uses. Let none of us ever handle the Word of God deceitfully. There is no deceit in it—it is all pure unmixed Truth of God. An honest mind is needed for the understanding of it, and then a truthful

tongue for the telling of it to others. If we preach undiluted, unadulterated Truths of God, we must not expect that the natural heart of man will commend our honesty. We are to commend ourselves to every man’s conscience, not by cutting and trimming the Word so as to make it palatable to our hearers—leaving one Truth out to please this man, and dwelling too long upon another Truth so as to please some other hearer—but by bringing out the whole teaching of the Scripture in clear truthfulness that shall command the approval of the conscience even of those who may not accept the Truth that we proclaim!

3. *But if our Gospel is hid, it is hid to them that are lost.* [See Sermon #1663, Volume 28—THE TRUE GOSPEL IS NO HIDDEN GOSPEL—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] It is not hidden under the flowers of our oratory, not hidden under the darkness of our speech, not hidden through the fog of our philosophies—if it is hidden at all, it is hidden “to them that are lost.” If they had any spiritual perception or apprehension at all. If they were not utterly lost to everything that is spiritual, they would be able to receive the Gospel that we are bid to preach and which, therefore, becomes “our Gospel.”

4, 5. *In whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not,* [See Sermon #2304, Volume 39—BLINDED BY SATAN—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] *lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ,* [See Sermon #2077, Volume 35—THE GOSPEL OF THE GLORY OF CHRIST—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] *who is the Image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves*—What a miserable topic we would have if we preached ourselves! But we do not set up ourselves as “priests” having authority to administer “sacraments” to a lower order of beings who do not possess priestly sanctity! We do not claim to belong to a ministerial caste—we regard ourselves as simply equally with the rest of the Christian brotherhood and, therefore, “we preach not ourselves”—

5, 6. *But Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts*—We cannot, therefore, darken the Gospel, or cover it up, “for God has shined in our hearts”—

6, 7. *To give the light of the knowledge of the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels*—The most earnest and faithful minister of the Gospel must always remember that humbling Truth of God. He has this precious treasure of the Gospel entrusted to his charge. He knows he has it and he means to keep it safely, but still, he is nothing but an earthen vessel, easily broken, soon marred—a poor depository for such priceless Truths of God! Yet God has a good reason for putting this treasure into earthen vessels—

7. *That the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.* If angels had been commissioned to preach the Gospel, we might have attributed some of its power to their superior intelligence. And if only those

had been called to preach the Gospel were men of great intellect and of profound learning, we might have considered that the talent of man was the essential qualification for a preacher! But when God selects—as He often does, no, as He *always* does—earthen vessels and some that seem more manifestly earthen than others, then the excellency of the power is unquestionably seen to be of God and not of us! In Paul’s case, the earthenness of the vessel appeared in the trouble which he had to bear.

8. *We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed*—He is not so far gone as that. He sees the stormy billows raging around outside the ship everywhere, and the ship is tossed here and there upon the waves, yet she does not leak, there is no water in the hold and the waves will not sink the ship as long as she can keep them outside—and trouble will not distress us as long as we can obey our Lord’s injunction, “Let not your heart be troubled.” “We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed”—

8. *We are perplexed, but not in despair*—We scarcely know what to do, but, by His Grace we have not given way to despair. We are perplexed, but hope has not gone from us. *Dum spiro spero*, was the old Latin proverb—“While I live, I hope.” But the Christian proverb is a still better one, *Dum expiro spero*—“Even while I die I still have hope,” for “the righteous has hope in his death.”

9. *Persecuted, but not forsaken.* For there is One who, when we are persecuted, is persecuted with us and persecuted in us, who has promised that we shall not be left desolate! He has said, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you.”—

**“Should persecution rage and flame,
Still trust in your Redeemer’s name!
In fiery trials you shall see
That, ‘as your day, your strength shall be.’”**

9. *Cast down, but not destroyed*—Even if the adversary is able to cast us down, he is not able to destroy us, for “underneath are the everlasting arms.” “Cast down, but not destroyed”—

10. *Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life, also, of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.* Thus did these Apostolic saints in a very high sense die daily, and so must we, when called to suffer for the Truth’s sake, bear about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus.

11, 12. *For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life, also, of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then, death works in us, but life in you.* The disinterestedness of Christian affection is here seen in that Paul was willing even to be delivered unto death if only the Church in Corinth and other Christians might receive more of the Divine Life. This is the motive that actuated our blessed Lord, Himself. He saved others, but in order to do so, He could not save Himself—and he who would be a blessing to others must

expect that just in proportion to the good that he is able to impart to them, must be the cost to himself.

13-16. *We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe and, therefore speak; knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you. For all things are for your sake, that the abundant Grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the Glory of God. For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perishes—As, in the case of most of the Apostles—it did absolutely and literally perish by martyrdom.*

16. *Yet the inward man is renewed day by day.* As our body, through pain and disease, is constantly sinking towards the grave, here is our continual consolation—that our inner man is renewed day by day!

17. *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* This is one of the most remarkable verses in all Scripture! The contrast here drawn is perfect and the language is in the highest degree pertinent to the subject. When the Apostle speaks of affliction, he contrasts it with glory! The affliction he calls a lightness of affliction, but the glory he calls a weight of glory—and while he describes the affliction as momentary, he rightly says that the glory is eternal. And then, as though he would make the contrast still more vivid, he says that this momentary, light affliction, “works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” He can scarcely find words big enough to express the contrast between what Believers now have to endure and what they shall forever enjoy!

18. *While we look not at the things which are seen but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

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

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

VANITIES AND VERITIES

NO. 1380

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

“We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”
2 Corinthians 4:18.

THE Apostle Paul was by no means a stoic. He had not conquered all human feeling and rendered himself a stone man. On the contrary, he was exceedingly sensitive. You can see abundant evidence, not only in the Acts of the Apostles, but also in the tone of all his Epistles, that he has a very tender spirit. He feels acutely any unkindness. If a friend forsakes him, he mourns it. Or if friends help him, there is genuine emotion in his gratitude. He is sensitive, too, to poverty, sensitive to shame—sensitive to all those griefs which he has to bear for Christ’s sake. He *feels* them—you can see that he does. He is not an invulnerable man in armor—he is a man of flesh and blood whom the arrows pierce and pain.

Yet how bravely he sticks to his work! He faces every danger and never dreams of flinching. Never for a single moment does he seem to take into consideration what he may have, personally, to suffer for the testimony of Christ and the triumph of the Gospel. He remembers the pangs when they are past! He looks on the scars when they are healed and he sometimes gives a long list of the perils and privations he has had to endure, thus showing that he was keenly sensitive, but he never tries to shelter himself from any sort of suffering if it is necessary to accomplish his lifework. Thus he pressed steadily on through evil report and good report, through honor and through dishonor, enjoying the love of the Churches at one time and at another time smarting under a cruel suspicion of his Apostleship even among his own converts!

He is now the hero of unbounded popularity, when the people crowd to do him honor, and at another time the victim of public hatred and frenzied riot when he is dragged out of the city to be stoned to death! “But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto me,” he could well say. He seemed as if God had thrown him forth from His hands even as He hurls a thunderbolt, and he stopped not until he reached the end towards which the power of God was hurling him! He cried, “The love of Christ constrains us.” He reckoned himself, therefore, dead to all but Christ. Well may we be curious to know what supported so noble a man under his trials and developed such a hero under such a succession of oppositions.

What kept him so calm? What made him so self-possessed and intrepid? How was it that when cast down he was not destroyed—that when troubled he was not distressed? What sustained him? He gives us the key to this fortitude by telling us that he counted his afflictions light

because they were, in his estimation, but for a moment, and they were working out for him a far more exceedingly and eternal weight of glory. He was calm and happy midst rage and tumult, violent prejudice, adverse and even disastrous circumstances, because, in the language of the text, he looked not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are unseen, reckoning that the things which are seen are not worth looking at, they are so transient—while the things unseen are of priceless worth because they are eternal!

That is our subject at this time. First, things not to be looked at. And, second, things to be looked at. The text wears the shape of a double paradox. Things that can be seen are, naturally, the things to be looked at. What should a man look at but what he can see? And yet the Apostle tells us not to look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen! How can things invisible be looked at? That again is a paradox. How can you look at what you cannot see? This is only one paradox of the Christian life which is *all* paradox—and the riddle lies rather in the words than in the sense. We shall soon discover that there is no contradiction or incongruity, no difficulty whatever.

I. First, then, let us LOOK AT WHAT CAN BE SEEN and ask what we are to understand by this declaration—“We look not at the things which are seen.” The word for, “look,” is used, I think, six times in the New Testament and is translated in four or five different ways. I do not intend to keep to those translations, but to work them into the explanation of what is meant by not looking at the things which are seen. It means, first, lightly esteeming both present joy and present sorrow, as if they were not worth looking at. The present is so soon to be over that Paul does not care to look at it. There is so little of it and it lasts such a brief time that he does not even care to give it a glance—he looks not at it.

Here he is persecuted, despised, forsaken. “It will not last long,” he says. “It is but a pin’s prick. It will soon be over and I shall be with the goodly fellowship above and behold my Master’s face.” He will not look at it. He ignores it! Thus it behooves us to do if surrounded with trials, troubles, present sorrows—we should not think so much of them as to fix our attention or rivet our gaze on them. Rather, let us treat them with indifference and say, “It is really a very small matter whether I am in wealth or in poverty, in health or in sickness—whether I am enjoying comforts or whether I am robbed of them. The present will so soon be gone that I do not care to look at it. I am like a man who stays at an inn for a night while he is on a journey.”

Is the room uncomfortable? When the morning breaks, it is of no use making a complaint and so he merely chronicles the fact and hastens on. He says to himself, “Never mind, I am up and away at once. It is of no use fretting about trifles.” If a person is going a long distance in a railway carriage, he may be a little particular as to where he shall sit to see the country and as to which way he likes to ride. But if it is only a short stage between, say, the Borough Road and the Elephant and Castle—he does not think about it. He does not care in whose company he may be, it is

only for a few minutes. He is hardly in before he is out again. It is a matter not worth thinking about.

That is how the Apostle regarded it. He reckoned that his present joys and present sorrows were so soon to be over that they were, to him, a matter of indifference, not even worth casting his eyes to see what they were. "Does Jesus bid me go to Rome?" asks the Apostle. "Then I do not look to see whether I shall be housed in Nero's palace or caged in Nero's dungeon. It is for so short a while that if I can serve my Master better in the dungeon than I can in the palace, so let it be. My casual lot shall be my well-contented choice. It shall be a matter, if not of cool indifference, yet still of calm serenity, for it will soon be over and gone into history. A whole eternity lies beyond and, therefore, a short temporal delay dwindles into an insignificant trifle." What a blessed philosophy this is which teaches us to not even look at passing, transient troubles, but to fix our gaze on eternal triumphs!

He meant more than that, however. He meant that he had learned not to regard the things of the present as if they were at all real. He did not look upon them as substantial or enduring. Like as clouds when they float overhead assume different shapes but change their form while we are gazing at them, so events, as they seemed to be transpiring, were to him no more than apparitions. When a man looks on a dissolving view, knowing that it is going to dissolve, he does not regard it as being other than an illusion. It is a shadow cast upon a sheet—there is nothing substantial in it. It may please his eyes, but he will say, "The subject upon the sheet is not the real thing. The view before me is not the scene, itself, and if I turn my eyes away from it, it will have melted away into nothingness in a little while. So for all its charms or its terrors I will not fret myself."

You know how Paul explains his own words in another passage when he says, "Brethren, the time is short: it remains that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passes away." That is so with the earthly joy of the best of men! He should say to himself, "This is a dying joy. This will pass away. I look at it as a shadow." Is a child born into your house? Read across its brow the word, "Mortal," and when it dies you will not be disappointed or be so sad as if you dreamed that you were a parent of an immortal! Such a thought must be a dream, since your little one may be taken from you as well as the child of another.

When you have riches, do you say to yourself, "This is a solid treasure. This is golden gain"? Ah, then it will be your god and if you lose it, the loss will eat like a canker into your spirit. But if you say, "These are fleeting things. They may take to themselves wings and fly away. I will not consider money to be treasure, but only look upon it as a shadow and hold it as such—as a thing not to be reckoned with substances—because it is seen and temporal." That is the way to do with every one of our joys. Do not look upon them as though they were substantial, for they are not.

They are a part of this life-dream, this empty show—they are nothing more at their very best. Oh, how often do they prove to us, painfully, that they are unsubstantial!

Look in the same way upon your circumstances. Say, “Well, I am in poverty, but this is not *real* poverty, because it is not *lasting* poverty. In a short time I shall be among the angels and walk the streets of gold and be as beautifully clad as any prince among them! Therefore will I not fret and worry, since my poverty will soon be over.” Anything of loss or suffering that you are called upon to endure, always look upon it in the light of time and see what a fleeting thing it is. And bear it bravely like a man—no, like a *Christian*—because you have in Heaven a better and an enduring substance! These transient things are not worthy to be considered. Look upon them as if they were just nothing at all. So the Apostle did.

Again, I find the word sometimes translated, “mark.” “Brethren,” says the Apostle, “mark them that are unruly.” The word is the same as that which is here rendered, “look.” Dear Friends, we are not to mark the things which are seen as if they were worth notice! You know that little children, if you give them a new toy, or a new frock, clap their hands and otherwise express their delight. That is because they are children. Be not children in knowledge, but as men—and as to the things of this life, look on them as toys. Do not act towards them as children do, but as men! “Oh,” says the young man, “I have taken my degree at the university today.” How he exults! What high importance he attaches to it! He wishes to get a newspaper to see if it is recorded there. It is to him an event as great as anything in history!

We, perhaps, are rather amused at his excitement, for we do not consider anything of this sort much worthy of marking down. Another man finds that he has made some considerable gain and he, too, reckons it as a red letter day the day in which he seized these accessions to his fortune. If you are doing so, you are making sorrow for yourself, for as surely as joy becomes too sweet, sorrow will become too bitter. If I care nothing whatever for man’s approbation, I reckon little of man’s disapprobation—one gets to be brave in that way!

It is not good to be much elated or much depressed by the joys and sorrows of life. If you are overjoyed, if you mark down certain matters as the very essence of happiness and begin to exult and revel in the things which are seen, then, mark you, when the untoward things come to you and blight your hopes, you will find that you have rendered yourself too sensitive and you will feel the smart far more keenly than you would have done if you had exercised wisdom enough to forbear reveling in the sweets.

Look at the wasps and flies in summer. They will see placed for them, by your kindness, sweet liquid in which to catch them—sugar or honey is employed to hold their wings. The wise fly sips a little and away! The unwise insect enjoys the sweet and wades in farther and farther till he clogs his wings and he it is who will suffer when you come to destroy your prey! It is a blessed thing to be able to *sip* of this world and no more—for to plunge into it is death. Avoid the sweets of this world when they begin

to tempt you. Say of them, as Solomon did of wine—"Look not upon it when it is red, when it gives its color in the cup, when it moves itself aright—for who has woe, who has sorrow, who has contention, who has babbling, who has wounds without cause, who has redness of eyes?"

Surely the men who make this world to be their highest joy find, at the last, it bites like a serpent and stings as an adder. They indulge their passions to the destruction of their souls! Do not, therefore, mark carnal joy as to be desired. But are we never to have anything special to mark? Oh yes! Carefully mark down the eternal things. Did the Lord appear to you? Mark that down. Did you win a soul to Christ? Mark that down. Did you have sweet answers to prayer? Mark that down. Those are things of special note, as I am quite sure Paul thought. Though he would not say much about the discomforts of the dungeon of the Praetorian, he marked down its consolations. When Onesimus came to hear him, he made a note of it. It did not matter to him whether he was surrounded with stones or surrounded with applause! Whether he lodged in a palace or slept in a prison was to him no more than the incident of the hour—he made no account of such trivialities. He never marked those things down—the *eternal* was what he marked, not the transient.

Another meaning is, take heed. You must put all the translations together to get the meaning. In the Gospel according to Luke this word is translated, "Take heed." The Apostle meant, no doubt, that he did not take heed of the things which were seen. He did not exercise care, thought and anxiety about them—his care, thought and anxiety were about the things which are not seen. "After all these things," says Christ, "do the Gentiles seek." So they do. They are always seeking after the world—from early morning till late at night it is the world they are after! Well, let the Gentiles follow their pursuits, but the child of God should not, for our Lord says unto us, "Take no thought for your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, or with what you shall be clothed."

He bids us cast our care upon Him and cease from all anxiety! "Seek you," He says, "first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." So the Apostle Paul tells us not to care, not to worry or trouble ourselves about things which are seen, whether good or bad, prosperous or adverse—never suffering them to eat like a corrosive acid into our spirit. We are to spend *all* our heed upon our walk with God, our obedience to His commands, our fulfilling His will, our spreading His Kingdom, our getting ready for the coming of Christ, our being prepared for Judgment, our being prepared to dwell eternally with God at His right hand! About *these* we ought to take heed.

This is our business, but, alas, our thoughts naturally drift the other way. These temporals are more apt to absorb us. There are some who not only apologize for themselves, but justify their worldly-mindedness. Fitly, therefore, does the Lord Jesus Christ, by the mouth of His Apostle, direct our thoughts away from groveling themes and bids us take heed of the eternal and let the secular sit lightly on our minds. Paul, in the Epistle to the Galatians, uses the word in the sense of considering, "considering yourself lest you, also, are tempted." We shall dive still more deeply into

the meaning if we understand how, in certain conditions, the present, the transient, the things most palpable to the senses are properly left out of all consideration and not taken into the reckoning.

For instance, if the Apostle knew that he should glorify God by preaching the Gospel, what would it matter to him if friend or foe should say to him, "Paul, you will risk your life by attempting to do so"? Live or die, he would be bold to preach! He never took their warnings into consideration. And if they had said, "If you state such-and-such a Truth of God, or administer such-and-such a reproof in a certain Church, you will be sure to lose their respect. You will lose face among them." Again, he would have smiled. It would have had no more influence upon him than it would have upon a merchant should you say to him, "If you go into such a district you will have to encounter clouds of dust." He would reply, "Why, if I can net a thousand pounds, what do I care about dust or no dust?"

If it is my objective to ascend a mountain, am I to be deterred by a few cobwebs across my path? What are tiny obstacles to a strong man? So Paul did not consider the things which are seen to be worth a thought, though there are puny folk who value nothing else! The cost to him seemed so little that he would let it go into the scale or not, as men pleased. "I reckon that these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, are not worthy to be compared with the Glory which shall be revealed in us." Are you not sometimes placed in this position? You know you ought to do right, but you fear that if you do, you will lose your situation.

Well, now, if God's cause is uppermost in your estimation you will not consider your loss as the first matter. You will rather say, "I can lose *anything* sooner than lose peace of mind and miss pleasing God." Or there is some duty which you know you ought to perform and you are told, "Well, if you do that, you will lose your old uncle's love. He will strike you out of his will. You must think about it." What is the use of thinking about it? It is only an earthly, transient thing! What are these transient things, be they what they may, compared with the eternal weight of Glory? O Brothers and Sisters, if men lived in the light of eternity and judged their position accordingly, how differently would they act! But instead of so doing we begin weighing those trifles which we may have to endure for Christ's sake and making much of them.

This is playing the traitor to Christ and forsaking Him when we ought to be most firm. Shame upon us if we thus treat our Lord! Eternal contempt awaits such cowards! From this time forth may we never look upon the things which are seen as substantial, but put them down as vanity and let the things which are *not seen* rise before us in all their supremacy of value! Perhaps you may get a still clearer perception of the meaning of the text if I tell you its full interpretation. By, "not looking at the things which are seen," we may understand *not making them our scope*. That is the nearest English word I can find to interpret the Greek. Let not these visible objects be the *scope* of your life, for, alas, there are many whose whole scope of life is that they may prosper in this world. The next world may go as it wills—their scope ends here. To win the esteem of

God seems a trifle to them. That they may live at ease, enjoy the comforts and, if possible, the luxuries of this life, is their sole aim and object. As for the eternal things of Heaven they seem dim and unsubstantial.

Now, it must not be so with us. We should say, "The things *eternal* I pursue. I am no more a citizen of this world, but a pilgrim bound for the Celestial City. When I passed through Vanity Fair, they asked me to buy this and that and I said, 'I buy the Truth.' I must go through the Enchanted Ground, but I will not sleep there, for that is not my rest. Whatever I see which is enchanting to others shall have no power over me, for the scope of my soul's desire and lifework is eternity." Would God we all had *invisible joys* for our objective! To sum up the whole, my dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, look not at the things which are seen. Do not look upon your comforts as if they were enduring. Do not dote upon them. Do not think of them as if you had them otherwise than on loan, or as if you had any right to them.

Be thankful to God for them, but, because they will so soon pass away, do not set much store by them. Build not your nest on any of these trees, for they are all marked for the axe and before long they will all come down. Say not of any mortal man, or woman, or dear child, or worldly possession, or knowledge, or pursuit, or honor, "This is much to me." Let it be *little* to you. Put the *gifts* of God far down in the scale compared with Himself! Try, when you have your comforts, to find God in them and, when you *lose* your comforts, just change the words and try to find all in God, for, remember, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God shall man live." You have not to live on the creature comforts—you are commanded to live on the living Word of the living God—and you will never be fully happy until you do this.

A man who goes to a town and chooses a house that is dilapidated—the foundations gone and the beams decayed—may say, "This is a very comfortable house," but you would not think so highly of its charms. "No," you would be ready to say, "I cannot be comfortable in it. The rich hangings and costly furniture do not hide the serious defects. It may come down at any time about the heads of the sleepers. This is not a house for me." You know this is the case in daily life and common experience. Well, it is just the same with regard to the things eternal. Say, therefore, to yourself, "I must repose my soul upon that which is true, real, well-founded and imperishable. Earthly things are too transient to afford me any solace or security. I dare not set my soul upon them. I cannot drink water out of these broken cisterns. I must go to the Fountain from where all satisfying, trustworthy supplies flow."

You must do the same with regard to your sorrows. Although it looks rather hard, yet it is the wiser way to take them cheerfully rather than to exaggerate their weight by murmuring of them. If a man has Grace to live above his joys, that same Grace will enable him to live above his sorrows. As I said just now, when earthly joys enchant you too much, then, should earthly sorrows overtake you, they will make you sorely despondent. Your wisdom is to live above them both—above the glee of prosperity and the gloom of adversity. Dear Brother, what ails you? Have you lost a child?

Lost? Why, you will be where that dear one is within so incredibly short a time that you need not worry and fret! Coming down from such a domestic grief as that, to a commercial anxiety—you have had a sad loss in the City, have you? Some of your comforts will be curtailed.

But if you get nearer to the heart of your Lord and love Him better and walk in the light of His Countenance more than you did, you will never know you had a loss! You will be so much richer in the fine gold of His comfort that you will scarcely miss the silver of this poor world. And so, too, if you lose credit, or are discountenanced by old friends, or are deprived of anything which men are apt to make great account of here below—if you do but remember that it was only a bubble and it has burst—you will not be broken-hearted. Say, “It never was more than a bubble and I ought to have known that it would soon be gone. The comfort I had was never anything but a temporary loan and I ought to have remembered that it was borrowed.” If you get into that mindset, you will live above the cares of this life! May God help you to do so.

II. Now, for a few minutes let us address ourselves to the second point—LOOKING AT THE THINGS WHICH ARE NOT SEEN. How can we do that? Well, first, realize them by *faith*. We believe in the resurrection of the dead and in the judgment and in life everlasting according to the teaching of the Word of God. Try to look at these things to look at them as present facts. Some will never do so. They will tell you that they could not see them if they tried. But that is just what we, who have been taught of God to look at the things which are not seen, can palpably discern. Oh, to look beyond death to “the Home over there,” beyond the swelling flood where souls that were loved of God from before the foundation of the world are safe with Jesus! I invite you to do so, especially if you have some dear ones there.

Do you see them? Do you hear their music? Do you behold their joys? Are you going to be troubled about them any longer, after having realized their certain happiness? By-and-by there comes the Resurrection—the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised. The very body over which you wept because it was to be given to the worms shall rise in matchless beauty in the likeness of its Lord! Will you not wipe your eyes dry, now, and submit to the Divine will, for surely the hope of the blessed Resurrection makes amends for the loss by death?

Then there is to come the Judgment and you and I will be there. A soldier, some time ago, was in the valley of Jehoshaphat, where, according to tradition, the feet of the Messiah will rest on the Day of Judgment. He sat on a stone and said, “And shall we all be present? I will sit here in that day.” And there, absorbed with the thought, he looked up to the sky and so distinctly did he realize the majestic vision of the Day of Judgment, that he fell to the ground in amazement, oblivious of everything that was transpiring around him! Ah, if all of us were living in the light of the Day of the Lord, what trifles these ebbs and flows—these ups and downs of passing circumstances would seem! How lightly we would bear sorrow and how little we would think of earthly fortunes and misfortunes if we could actually forecast the tremendous day when, with angels for witnesses, and

Christ for our Judge, we shall have to stand and be judged according to the things done in the body!

Realize Heaven, Brothers and Sisters—the Heaven of the perfected manhood after the Resurrection—the Heaven where we shall see the Beloved's face and day and night extol Him forever! Oh, what is it to be poor? What is it to be sick? What would it be to go through a thousand deaths if we may but at last behold His Glory, world without end? And think of Hell, you that forget God and revel in vanities! As your trembling spirit best may, think what it must be to be driven from His Presence—to hear Him say, "Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire in Hell." Ah, gilded world, how you lose your luster when once I see the lurid glare of Tophet! O painted harlot, how I see your haggard ugliness when I hear the weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth of those who chose the broad road and let the Lord, the Savior go! How I despise you!

As the vision opens before the eyes of faith, what zeal it kindles in my breast! Would to God I could induce some careless person here who, nevertheless, does believe the Scriptures, to sit down, if it were but for a half-hour and try, believingly, to picture these things to his mind's eye! This sacred volume is full of pictures—pictures of things that shall shortly come to pass. Oh that you had the discernment to see them! Not as weird fancies, but as veritable facts! The true sayings of God! The real thing is what you do not see to be real! The fiction is that which you account a solid fact! We are going down, each one of us, to the grave, but God lives forever and ever! As for that body of yours in which you are sitting in this house—it is not a substance which shall abide—it is a shadow which shall dissolve, dissolving into dust and exhaling into water.

Yet there lives within you what you cannot see—the real and true self—and that true self of yours will pass into another state! And through it into yet another which shall be everlasting! And, oh, may God grant that your lot may not be everlasting sorrow, but endless joy! In either case the things which are not seen are eternal. Gird up your loins and look at them like a man who will have, before long, to dispel the illusions of sense and confront the verities of eternity, whether he wants to or not! The Christian learns to look on these things with the eye of delight. Is it not to you, my dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, a delight to see God? I should not like to go to any place where I could not see my God. Yet He is not seen!

Is it not a wonderful thing to look forward to the Heaven that is above—to the City of the blessed? When the Lord indulges our faith with a view of that eternal joy—and some of us have known what it is—it has been too much for our weak capacity. We can laugh in our sleep when we dream of Heaven! And we can sit down in the midst of pain and sorrow and feel as if we could not feel more joy than we possess because our souls have looked on the pinnacles of our Father's palace and seen the gleaming radiance of the 12 jeweled foundations of the Eternal City where there is a house and a crown and a harp for every Believer among us! The poor girl who goes home from this joyous place of worship to her own little cheerless room would feel miserable, indeed, if she looked at the shady

side of her condition. But she says, "My Lord is in this room," and the place glows as if it were made of slabs of gold!

She settles down and begins to think of the Heaven that is hers and she sees herself to be a King's daughter, a true Princess, for she possesses in Glory a crown that no head can wear but hers, and there is a mansion provided for her which none can live in but herself! Happy, therefore, she well may be! O beloved Friends, learn to look at these things with intense delight, because they are ours in belief, now, and are soon to be ours in possession! On the other hand, if you are not converted, I would urge you to look upon the eternal future—for it is all eternal—with an intense *dread*, for without Christ what is there for you among the things which are not seen and are eternal, but that which will make you wring your hands for poignant grief and gnash your teeth for bitter self-reproach if you are resolved to live and to die as you now are?

You see not yet the future state of woe, but like all the unseen things, it is eternal. There can be no termination to the misery of an immortal soul when once banished from God. I see no "larger hope" revealed in Scripture. Let my philosophical Brothers conjecture what they will, where God speaks not, I am silent. But I *do* see the dread forebodings of a death that never dies and a fire that is never quenched! I would have every man who will not have Christ, or who dilly-dallies with salvation and runs risks with his soul, to look at what he risks! Face your future, O you who choose your own destruction! That was a solemn morning's work for Abraham when he went to the place where he was known to meet with God. As he looked toward Sodom he saw the smoke of it going up as the smoke of a furnace. O Christians, you do well, sometimes, to look that way! Such a contemplation is not pleasant to flesh and blood. No, but it will do you good and make you feel fervent emotions of *gratitude* for your own redemption and intense desires for the salvation of others.

But come here, Sinner! Come here! I must have you here! Look, do you see it? Do you see it—the smoke of the flame which burns forever and ever? That flame is for *your* burning if you repent not! Do you see it as it reddens the heavens? That fire burns for *you* if you believe not in the Lord Jesus Christ! Will you not look? If you will not, you will have to *feel* it! You can not mitigate those woes by refusing to believe in their existence. It is the silly trick of the ostrich, so they say, when the hunter pursues it, to burrow its head in the sand and fancy itself safe—and this is what you are doing with more than equal folly! I would gladly bring you back to reason. Look at the things which are not seen, for they are eternal!

I met with a remark the other day which struck me forcibly—If a man had no worse pain than a toothache, if he knew that it would last forever, he would desire to die that he might escape from it. When we have to endure any acute pain for a little while, we begin to cry out for relief and find it hard to be quiet. But were any pang to last *eternally*, the horror of such an expectation would even, now, be overwhelming! By the dread thought of eternity I implore you see to it that your salvation is secured at once! Escape for your life, my Friends, and look not behind you, for unless you escape in time, your fate will be sealed forever and ever! Those things

which are not seen are eternal and Hell is one of them! Unless you escape, now, by faith in Jesus Christ, you will never escape!

There is no reprieve nor respite in the world to come—pardon, therefore, should be sought at once. By looking into the things which are not seen, Paul doubtless meant that he looked to them with *hope*. To his view, the harvest was ripe and he was eager to reap it. I invite all Believers to be looking with ardent hope for the things that are eternal. Long for the bright appearing of the Lord! Long for your translation into the city of Glory! Expect it! Watch for it! It is on the way. You may be much nearer than you think. You may be in Heaven before next year—indeed, you may be there before tomorrow morning!

Light is fading from the earth. Dear Friend, look towards Heaven. Look towards eternal things! Make it a point to look unto your future home. Should there be any young man here who is not 21 and he knows that when he comes of age he is to be squire of a village, own a park and enjoy a rich heritage—I will be bound to say he has often forestalled the time because he is sure of his title. If any one of you had a legacy left him of a large estate, he would be off this week to have a look at it. One likes to look at one's own—Christian, be sure to survey your own possession in the skies! Read much the Book of God which tells you of your future inheritance. Say to yourself, "This is all mine. Why should I not begin to enjoy it? Did not the Israelites fetch bunches of the grapes of Eshcol before they entered Canaan? And why should not I?" I hope you will full often enjoy foretastes of bliss till you can sing with John Berridge—

***"Too long, alas, I vainly sought
For happiness below!
But earthly comforts, dearly bought,
No solid good bestow.
At length, through Jesus' Grace, I found
The good and promised land
Where milk and honey much abound
And grapes in clusters stand.
My soul has tasted of the grapes,
And now it longs to go
Where my dear Lord His vineyard keeps,
And all the clusters grow.
Upon the true and living Vine
My famished soul would feast,
And banquet on the fruit Divine,
An everlasting guest."***

What a sanctifying influence such anticipations would have upon you! "Everyone that has this hope in him purifies himself." Pursue eternal things with concentrated mind. You must look right on to the end of the race for the prize. The runner does not cast a glance to the right or to the left, or to the flowers which adorn the pathway, but he keeps his eyes on the prize and that helps him run. He stretches every nerve to reach the end and win the prize! Brothers and Sisters, make eternal things the *scope* of your life at all times! This I have told you is the literal sense of the original Greek. Make them that for which you plot and plan—that for

which you think and consider—that for which you live and act! Throw your whole being into eternal things!

“Are we, therefore, to neglect business?” you may ask. God forbid! Serve God in business! To leave business, or to do business as if it were not a part of your religion would be a departure from your Master’s will and not a fulfillment of it! Sanctify your most common actions to the glory of God. “Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” Have an eye always to eternity! Keep your thoughts upon that. Eat and drink as for eternity, remembering that what you eat and drink perishes and he that eats will perish, too. It is “earth to earth” whenever we eat—therefore let us not make gods of our bellies. When you enjoy any earthly thing, do it as in the light of eternity and say, “I am plucking a flower that must fade. This is not a diamond that will remain with me, always glistening. It is only a bright daisy. It looks very pretty at the moment, but it will soon fade. The children gather it, but soon let it fall and so do I!

At your peril, put not your soul into that which is sensual. See that you pursue, with all your might, things spiritual! As for things transient, commit them to God’s Providence. Do your best to honor God in the use of this world’s currency, but make it not your wealth. Look at Jonah sitting under his gourd which screened him from the scorching sun with its broad leaves. Think of Jonah as he said to himself, “How happy I am under this arbor. How cool it makes me.” He was content and comfortable, but God prepared a worm! The worm destroyed the wretched gourd! Though it seemed so beautiful before, it soon became only fit to be pulled down and cast upon the dunghill. It may soon be the same with your earthly comforts. If you make your gourd your god, it will do you no good. Gourds are well enough, but they are not good when you put them in the place of eternal comforts.

I finish with this. Treat the things present as if they were not and live like an heir of Heaven’s invisible but substantial joys. Higher and better things are in store for you! God bless you by His blessed Spirit with blessed foretastes of the blessed hereafter. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—2 Corinthians 4.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—783, 656, 657.**

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THE TENT DISSOLVED AND THE MANSION ENTERED NO. 1719

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 6, 1883,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved,
we have a building of God, a house not made with hands,
eternal in the heavens.”
2 Corinthians 5:1.*

PAUL ranks among the bravest of the brave. We note, also, with admiration, how the hero of so many dangers and conflicts, who could glow and burn with fervor, was yet among the calmest and quietest of spirits. He had learned to live beyond those present circumstances which worry and disturb. He had stolen a march upon the shadows of time and entered into possession of the realities of eternity! He looked not on the things which are seen, but he set his whole regard on the things which are not seen—and by this means he entered into a deep and joyful peace which made him strong, resolute, steadfast, immovable. I would to God that we had all acquired Paul's art of being “always confident”—his habit of having the inward man renewed day by day!

The most of us are far too like the insect of the summer hour which sports away its life of moments among the flowers and lo, all is over! Are we not too apt to live in the immediate present which is revealed by the senses? The ox projects no thought upward or beyond—to stand in the cool brook or lie down in the fat pasture is its all in all—even thus is it with the mass of men, their souls are tethered to their bodies, imprisoned within the circumstances of the day! If we could be completely delivered from the thralldom of things seen and felt, and could feel the full influence of the invisible and the eternal, how much of Heaven we might enjoy before the celestial shores are reached!

Paul's life was rough and stormy, yet who might not desire it? Had there been no life to come, he would have been, of all men, the most miserable, for he was one of the poorest, most persecuted, most despised, most slandered, most wearied and most suffering of mortals! And yet, if I had to put my finger upon happy lives, I should not hesitate to select among the foremost, the life of the Apostle Paul, for whom to live was Christ! It is also to be especially noted, as to his happiness, that he had a reason for it. My text begins with the word, “For.” Paul is always argumentative—the leaning of his mind is in that direction. Therefore, if he is cast down, he has a reason for it and if he is calm, he can show just cause for his peace.

Some religionists are deliriously happy, but they cannot tell you why. They can sing and shout, and dance, but they can give no reason for their excitement. They see an enthusiastic crowd and they catch the infection—

their religion is purely emotional! I am not going to condemn it, yet I will show you a more excellent way. The joy which is not created by substantial causes is mere froth and foam and soon vanishes away. Unless you can tell why you are happy, you will not long be happy. If you have no principle at the back of your passion, your passion will burn down to a black ash and you will look in vain for a living spark. Some professors have not enough emotion—their hearts are too small. Though I cannot say that their heads are too large, there are others whose hearts are their main force, who are soon on fire, blazing away like shavings and brushwood when first the flame lights upon them. But their brains are an uncertain quantity, never sufficient to manage the furnace of their emotions.

It was not so with Paul—he was a well-balanced man. If able to defy the present and rejoice in prospect of the future, he had a solid reason for doing so. I like a man who is fervent and enthusiastic and yet in his fervor is as reasonable as if he were some cool logician. Let the heart be like a fiery, high-mettled steed, but take care that it is curbed and managed by discretion. An instructed Christian man is rational even in his ecstasies—ready to give a reason for the hope that is in him—and that hope seems to rise above all reason. He is glad, most glad of the glad, but he knows the why of his gladness. And so he can bear the cruel tests to which the world exposes spiritual joy. The true Believer's peace can answer the quibbles of time or devils. It can justify itself in its opposition to all appearances. This is a house built upon a foundation, a tree which has a firmly settled root, a star fixed in its sphere—and thus it is infinitely superior to the house upon the sand, the tree plucked up, the fleeting vapor of mere emotion.

May God, the Holy Spirit instruct us so that we may know the Truth of God out of which solid happiness is sure to grow! I see in the text before us, first of all, a catastrophe which Paul saw to be very possible—"If our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved." Secondly, the provision which he surely knew to be made should that catastrophe occur—"We have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." And thirdly, I shall dwell for a minute or two upon the value of this knowledge to Paul and to the rest of us in our present trying condition.

I. First, then, consider THE CATASTROPHE WHICH PAUL SAW TO BE VERY POSSIBLE—"If our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved." He did not fear that he, himself, would be dissolved! He had not the slightest fear about that. The catastrophe which he looked forward to is known among us by the name of "death," but he calls it the dissolving of the earthly house of his tabernacle—the taking down of his tent-house body. He does not say, "If I were to be destroyed," or, "If I were to be annihilated." He knows no supposition of that character. He feels assured that he, himself, is perfectly safe.

There is latent within the text an element of deep quiet as to his real self. "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God." The "we" is all unharmed and unmoved. If our house were dissolved we should *not* be undone. If we were to lose this earthly tent we have "a building of God, eternal in the heavens." The real

man, the essential self, is out of harm's way and all that he talks about is the falling to pieces of a certain tabernacle, or tent, in which, for the present, he is lodging! Many people are in a great fright about the future, yet here is Paul viewing the worst thing that could happen to him with such complacency that he likens it to nothing worse than the pulling down of a tent in which he were making ready to reside in for a little season. He was afraid of nothing beyond that—and if that happened he had expectations which reconciled him to the event—and even helped him to anticipate it with joy!

Paul was not absolutely sure that his body would be dissolved. He hoped that he might be alive and remain at the coming of the Lord—and then he would be changed and be forever with the Lord, without passing through death. Still, he was willing to leave this in the Lord's hands. And when he saw it to be possible that he should be numbered among the blessed dead who die in the Lord, he did not shrink from the prospect, but bravely found a metaphor which set forth the little fear which he entertained concerning it. The Apostle perceived that the body in which he lived was frail in itself. Paul was accustomed to make tents. I do not suppose he ever manufactured any very large or sumptuous ones—probably he did not have enough capital for that—but he was a tent worker and mender.

The use of tents was common enough among the Roman people in Paul's day. The gentry delighted in bright pavilions which they could set up at pleasure—and the common folk found pleasure in spending a part of their time under canvas. While he was sitting writing this letter, it is most likely that Paul had a tent or two to repair lying near, and this suggested to him the language of the verse before us. When a tent is newly placed, it is but a frail structure, very far removed from the permanence of a house—in that respect it is exactly like this feeble corporeal frame of ours which is crushed before the moth! Paul felt that his body would not need any great force to overthrow it—it was like the tent which the Midianite saw in his dream—it only needed to be struck by a barley cake, and lo, it was down!

A house of solid masonry may need a crowbar and a pick to remove its stones from their places, but feebler tools will soon overturn a tent and make a ruin of it. The body is liable to dissolution from causes so minute as to be imperceptible—a breath of foul air, an atom of poisonous matter, a trifle, a mere nothing may end this mortal life! I hope that you and I duly remember the frailty of our bodies. We are not so foolish as to think that because we are in robust health, today, we must necessarily live to old age! We have lately had among ourselves abundant evidence that those who appear to be the healthiest are often the first to be taken away—while feeble persons linger on among us, whose lives are a continued wonder and a perpetual struggle! When we think of the brittle ware of which our bodies are made, it is not strange that they should soon be broken.

Is it not a wonderful thing that we continue to live? Much more wonderful than that we should die? Dr. Watts has wisely said—

***“Our life contains a thousand springs,
And dies if one is gone.*”**

***Strange that a harp of thousand strings
Should keep in tune so long!***

Some small affair interferes with a minute valve or organ of secretion, mischief is engendered by it, the whole current of life is hindered and, by-and-by, death ensues. It is a very delicate process by which dust remains animated! A thousand things can stop the process and then our body is dissolved! Paul, therefore, because he saw his body to be frail as a bubble, looked forward to the time when the earthly house of his soul would be dissolved. When he was writing this Epistle, he had many signs about him that his body *would* be dissolved. His many labors were telling upon him. He was worn down with fatigue. He was spent in his Master's service.

He was so full of the heavenly fire that he could never rest! After he had evangelized one city, he was forced to hasten to another. If he were driven out of one village, he hurried to the next, for he was eager to deliver the message of salvation. He wore himself out with labor and he felt, therefore, that the day would come when his body would give way under the intense excitement of his life-agony. In addition to this, he endured cold and hunger, nakedness and sickness brought upon him by his missionary sacrifices. He had a hard time of it as to physical endurance and I should think there was scarcely a limb of the man that did not suffer in consequence of the imprisonments, scourging, stoning and other hardships which he had suffered. He felt that one of these days, in all probability, the house of his tent would come down through the violence of his persecutors.

Once he most touchingly spoke of himself as, "such an one as Paul the Aged"—and aged men cannot get away from the consciousness that their body is failing. Certain crumbling portions warn the old man that the house is dilapidated; the thatch which has grown thin or blanched tells its tale. There are signs about the aged which warn them that their earthly house was not built to stand forever—it is a tabernacle or tent set up for a temporary purposes—and it shows signs of waxing old and being ready to pass away. Therefore Paul was led to feel that both from the natural frailty of the body and, also, from the injuries which it had already sustained, there was before him the evident probability that the earthly house of his tabernacle would be dissolved.

Besides, Paul's frail body had been subject to exceedingly great perils. I saw, the other day, an encampment of gypsies out upon the common. Many of this wandering race were sitting under a coarse covering sustained by sticks. I should exaggerate if I called them poles—and I could not help feeling that such an abode was all very well on a warm day, but not at all desirable when the east wind was blowing, or a shower of sleet was driving along, or a deluge of rain descending. The Apostle's body was a tent which was subjected to great stress of weather. God had not screened him, though one of the most precious men that even lived! He was exposed to more danger than almost any other of the Lord's servants.

Here is his own account of the matter—"Thrice was I beaten with rods; once was I stoned; thrice I suffered shipwreck. A night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeying often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by my own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils

in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watching often, in hunger and thirst, in fasting often, in cold and nakedness.” Well might he reason that before long his poor shepherd’s shanty would give way under such rude blasts! Besides, Paul knew that so many others whom he had known and loved had already died, and he gathered from this that he would, himself, die.

There used to sit in this house a Brother who has often assured me that he would not die, and that if any Christian man *did* die it was because he grieved the Lord. I am sorry to say that I have missed that Brother for many months. I hope he has not yet disproved his own theory, but I am sure that he will do so, sooner or later, unless our Lord should hasten His advent. Whenever I meet with an enthusiast who boasts that he shall never die, I find it best to let him wait and see. One fine old Irish clergyman has frequently sought to instruct me in the art of being immortal! And he has been grieved and angry because I never set much store by the long life which he offered me. Though an old man, he assured me that he would never die—he expected, in a short time, to throw out all the infirmities of his years in the form of a rash—and then to be as vigorous as ever!

Alas, the good rector is buried and his crazy brain is at rest. It is appointed unto men once to die. I should have thought that since so many of the excellent of the earth have fallen asleep, *nobody* would ever have been so mad as to raise a question about its being the common lot. Our crowded cemetery supply 10,000 arguments why each one of us may expect to die in due time. This earthly house of our tabernacle will be dissolved—all things unite to warrant the belief.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, this was all that Paul expected on the sad side and, truly, it is not much, is it? Certain Swiss peasants not very long ago were feeding their flocks on one of the lofty upland valleys. On one side of the pasture stood a number of chalets, or wooden huts, in which they were accustomed to live during the summer. They were poor shelters which they left as soon as the winter set in. One day they heard a strange rumbling up in the lofty Alps and they understood what it meant—it meant that a mass of rock or snow or ice had fallen and would soon come crushing down in the form of an avalanche. In a brief space, their fears were realized, for they saw a tremendous mass come rushing from above, bearing destruction in its course. What did it destroy? Only the old, crazy chalets—that was all. Every man of the shepherds was safe and untouched—the event was, to them, a matter which caused a *Te Deum* to be sung in the village Church below rather than a subject for mourning and sorrow. They said, “The avalanche is terrible, but it has not slain the aged mother, nor crushed the babe in its cradle. It has injured none of us, but only buried a few hovels which we can soon rebuild.”

Their case is a picture of ours. The avalanche of death will fall, but O you saints, when it comes, this is all it will do for you—your earthly house will be dissolved! Will you fret over so small a loss? No evil will come near to you! The poor hut of the body will be buried beneath the earth, but as

for *yourself*, what will you have to do but to sing an everlasting Te Deum unto Him who delivered you from death and danger—and raised you to His own right hand? It would not long affect a man if his tent should be overthrown—he would shake himself clear of it and come forth—it would not otherwise disturb him. So death shall not affect us for the worse, but for the better! The dissolution of this hampering frame shall give us liberty! Today we are like birds in the egg—so long as the shell is whole, we are not free—death breaks the shell!

Does the fledgling lament the dissolution of the shell? I never heard of a bird in its nest pining over its broken shell! No, its thought runs otherwise—to wings and flight and sunny skies! So let it be with us. This body will be dissolved. Let it be so—it is good it should be! We have been glad of it while we have needed it and we thank God for the wondrous skill displayed in it—but when we no longer require it, we shall escape from it as from imprisonment and never wish to return to its narrow bounds! Death, as it pulls away our sackcloth canopy, will reveal to our wondering eyes the palace of the King in which we shall dwell forever and, therefore, what cause have we to be alarmed at it? I have set out the whole catastrophe before you—and surely no Believer trembles in view of it!

II. So now we pass on to the second head—THE PROVISION OF WHICH THE APOSTLE PAUL MOST SURELY KNEW. He knew that if his tent dwelling was overthrown, he would not be without a home! He knew that he would not have to open his eyes in a naked condition and cry, “Woe’s me, where am I to fly? I have no dwelling place!” No, he knew that if this tent-house were gone, he had “a building of God.” Paul was not afraid of going to “purgatory”—though of late, some, even among Protestants, have, in a modified form, revived that grim lie and have told us that even Believers will have much to bear before they will be fit for eternal happiness! The Apostle held no such opinion! On the contrary, he wrote—“We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God.”

He did not expect to be roasted alive for the next thousand years and then to leap from “purgatory” to Paradise. But he did expect to go, as soon as ever his earthly house was dissolved, into his eternal house which is in the heavens! He had not even the thought of lying in a state of unconsciousness till the Resurrection. He says, “We know that if the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have [we have *already*] a building of God.” He says not, “we *shall* have it,” but, “we *have* it”—“we know that we have it.” The picture seems to me to be as though one of you should dwell in his garden, in a tent, for a while. Somebody inquires what would happen if a gale of wind should blow your tent away in the night. “Oh,” you say, “I have a house over yonder. I would go within doors and live there.”

What a comfort to know that whatever occurs to our temporary gear, we have a fixed and settled abode to which we can at once repair! This makes us feel independent of all dangers and helps us joyfully to welcome the inevitable, come when it may! What did the Apostle mean, however? For this text is said to be a very difficult one. He meant, first—the *moment*

his soul left its body, it would *at once* enter into that house of which Jesus said, "In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you." Do you want to know about that house? Read the Book of the Revelation and learn of its gates of pearl, its streets of gold, its walls of rarest gems! Read of the river which winds through it and of the trees which bear their fruit every month! If, after that, you desire to know more concerning this house, I can but give you the advice which was given by John Bunyan in a similar case.

One asked of Honest John a question which he could not answer, for the matter was not opened in God's Word and, therefore, Honest John bade his friend live a godly life and go to Heaven and see for himself. Believe no dreams, but bide your time, believing in the Lord Jesus, and you shall shortly know all about the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens! Paul, however, meant that in the fullness of time he would again be clothed with a body. He regarded the waiting time as so short that he almost overlooked it, as men forget a moment's pause in a grand march. Ultimately, I say, he expected to be housed in a body—the tent-house which was blown down and dissolved would be developed into a building so rich and rare as to be fitly called, "a building of God, a house not made with hands."

This, also, is our prospect. At this present time, in this mortal body, we groan being burdened, for our spirit is liberated from bondage, but our body is not yet emancipated, although it has been bought with a price. We are "waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" and so, "the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness." Our soul has been regenerated, but the body waits for the process, which, in its case, is analogous to regeneration, namely, the resurrection from the dead. Disembodied saints may have to wait a few thousand years, more or less, dwelling in the Father's house above—but there shall come, eventually, the sounding of the trumpet and the raising of the dead—and then the perfected spirit shall dwell in a body adapted to its glory. The certainty of the resurrection raises us above the dread which would otherwise surround the dissolution of our body.

A child sees a man throwing precious metal into a melting pot and he is sad because fair silver is being destroyed. But he that knows the business of the refiner understands that no loss will come of the process—only the dross of that silver will be taken away—and the pure molten mass poured out into a comely mold will yet adorn a royal table! Well, my Brothers and Sisters, are we assured that to lose this vile body is clear gain since it will be fashioned according to the glorious Body of the Lord Jesus? Let us pass on to consider how Paul could say he knew this. This wonderfully enlightened 19th Century has produced an order of wise men who glory in their ignorance! They call themselves "Agnostics," or know-nothings! When I was a boy, it would have seemed odd to me to meet with a man who gloried in being an ignoramus and yet that is the Latin for that Greek word, "Agnostic."

Is it not singular to hear a man boastfully say, "I am an ignoramus"? How different is our Apostle! He says, "We know." Where did this confi-

dence come from? How did he know? First, Paul knew that he had a Father in Heaven, for he felt the spirit of sonship. He knew, also, that his Father had a house and he was certain that if ever he lost the tent in which he lived, he would be sure to be welcomed into his own Father's house above! How do our children know that if ever they are in need of a house they can come home to us? Did they learn that from their tutors at school? No, their childhood instincts teach them that our house is their home, just as chickens run under the mother hen without needing to be trained. Because they are our children, they feel that as long as we have a house, they have a house, too. Paul, therefore, unhesitatingly said, "We know."

And Brethren, we know the same through like confidence in our Father's love. In the house of the many mansions we feel quite sure of a hearty welcome in due time! We cannot be shut out from our Father's home! We cannot be houseless wanderers while our royal Father dwells in His palace! We are not merely hopeful on this matter, but certain! And, therefore we say, "I know." Paul knew, again, that he had an elder Brother and that this Brother had gone before to see to the lodging of the younger brothers and sisters. Paul remembered that Jesus had said, "I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am you may be also." So Paul had no question whatever! If the Lord had gone to prepare a place, there would be a place for him, for he never knew his Divine Lord to set about anything and fail therein!

Can we not all trust our Forerunner? Have we any doubts of Him who has entered within the veil as our Representative? No! As we are sure that Jesus has passed into the heavens on our behalf, so are we sure that when this tent-house body is dissolved, there remains a rest and home for our souls! Doubtless, Paul also thought of the Holy Spirit, that blessed One who deigns to live with us in this frail house of clay which is, in many ways, an uncomfortable and unsuitable abode for Him by reason of the sin which has defiled it. He condescends to dwell in these mortal bodies and, therefore, when we leave our earthly house, He will leave it, too! And we are persuaded that a place will be found where we may still abide in fellowship. As our bodies have been honored to entertain the Holy Spirit, we may be sure that in our hour of need He will find an abode for us. He has been our guest and, in His time, He will be our Host!

This we know, for we know the love of the Spirit. He who has made our body His temple will find a rest for our souls. Thus, from the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, we gather assurance that we shall not wander to and fro unhoused, even though this mortal frame should be dissolved! Besides, let me tell you something. Paul knew that when he died there was a Paradise prepared, for he had already been there! You remember how he locked up that story till he could keep it no longer and, then, 15 years after its occurrence, he let out the blessed secret? Let me read his words, "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knows). Such an one caught up to the third Heaven. And I knew such a man,

(whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knows), how that he was caught up into Paradise and heard unspeakable words, which is not lawful for a man to utter.”

He says he was taken up to the third Heaven! It was, therefore, idle to tell Paul that there was no home for him hereafter, for he had seen the place! “Well” you say, “I have not seen it.” No, but you fully believe the witness of Paul, do you not? For my own part, I am sure that Paul would not say that which is false and, inasmuch as he went into the third Heaven or Paradise, and saw it, I believe that there is such a place! Remember that this is the place to which the Lord Jesus admitted the dying thief, “Today shall you be with Me in Paradise.” This is the place where Jesus is and where we shall be with Him forever, when the earthly house of this tabernacle shall be dissolved! Yet, again, dear Brothers and Sisters, you and I know that when this earthly tabernacle is dissolved, there will be a new body for us, because our Lord Jesus Christ has risen from the dead. In my mind the ultimate answer to my deepest unbelief is the fact of the rising of Jesus from the dead!

No matter of history is anything like so well attested as the fact that our Lord was crucified, dead and buried—and that He did, on the third day—rise again from the dead. This I unhesitatingly accept as a fact and this becomes my anchorage. Inasmuch as Jesus is the Representative of all who are in Him, it is as certain that the Believer will rise since Jesus has risen. The Apostle says, “We know,” and remembering these grand Truths of God, I am sure that his words are not a bit too strong! No, if I knew any word in the English language which would express more assurance than the words, “to know,” I would use it this morning for myself! Much more, then, might the Apostle use it for himself. This we are also sure of, namely, that if our Lord Jesus is alive and in a place of rest, He will never leave His chosen and redeemed ones without house or home! Where He has found a Throne, His people shall find a dwelling!

Delightful is our old-fashioned ditty—

***“And when I shall die, Receive me, I’ll cry,
For Jesus has loved me, I cannot tell why.
But this I do find, we two are so joined,
He won’t be in Glory and leave me behind.”***

There is such an attachment between Christ and the Believer—yes, more—such a vital, essential, indissoluble, tender marriage union that separation is impossible! As no man among us would ever be content to see his wife in prison if he could set her free, or to leave her outside in the cold when he could bring her to his fireside in comfort, so Christ, to whom our soul is espoused in eternal wedlock, will never rest until He has brought every one of His own beloved to be with Him where He is—that they may behold His Glory—the Glory which the Father has given Him. No Believer in Jesus has any doubts about that! I am sure you can all say, as Paul did, “We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands.”

“Ah,” asks one, “but how is a man to know that he has an interest in all this? Suppose I know that the children of God are thus favored, how am I to know that I am one of them?” I invite you to self-examination on this

point. Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart? Then it is written, "He that believes in Me though he were dead, yet shall he live. He that lives and believes in Me shall never die." Having believed in Christ, the Apostle knew that he was safe, for the promises are to Believers, and if any man is a Believer, every promise of the Covenant belongs to him. We obtain further assurance of this by our possessing the new life. Dear Friend, have you entered into a new world? Do you feel within you a new heart and a right spirit? Have old things passed away and have all things become new? Are you a new creature in Christ Jesus? Then it is all right with you! That new life cannot die, your new-born nature must inherit everlasting bliss. "Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

In addition to this, do you commune with God? Do you speak with Christ? None perish who commune with the Father and the Son. Jesus cannot say, at the last, "I never knew you; depart from Me," for He *does* know you, and you know Him. "Oh," you say, "He knows enough of me, for I am always begging." Just so, go on with that trade! Be always a spiritual mendicant. The Lord of Love will never cast away a pleading suppliant! He who frequents the Throne of Grace shall infallibly reach the throne of Glory! Beside, does not the Spirit, Himself, also bear witness with our spirit that we are the children of God? And if children and heirs, are we afraid of being left naked in the world to come? I hope that many of us have now reached the full assurance of faith so that we believe and are sure. Can you not say, each one for himself—"I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him until that day"?

These are the ways in which Believers know that they are Believers! And then, by the Word of God they know that all things are theirs, so that if their earthly house should fail they would be received into everlasting habitations.

III. Lastly, as to THE VALUE OF THIS KNOWLEDGE TO US. To be sure that when this body dies, all is well—is not that worth knowing? Secularists accuse us of taking men's minds away from the practical present that they may dream over a fancied future. We answer that the best help to live for the present is to live in prospect of the eternal future. Paul's confident belief that if his body should be dissolved, he would be no loser, kept him from fainting. He knew what the worst would be and he was prepared for it. Great storms were out, but the Apostle knew the limit of his possible loss and so was ready. All we can lose is the frail tent of this poor body. By no possibility can we lose more. When a man knows the limit of his risk, it greatly tends to calm his mind. The undiscoverable and the unmeasured are the worst ingredients of dread and terror—but when you can gauge your fears, you have removed them.

Our Apostle felt that he had been sent into the world with the great design of glorifying God by winning souls and building up saints—and he was fully resolved to keep to the ministry which he had received. He argues with himself that his most dangerous course would be to faint in his life-service, for perseverance in his calling could bring with it no greater

risk than death—and that he summed up as losing a tent and gaining a mansion! The Roman emperor might strike off his head, or a mob might stone him to death, or he might be crucified like his Master—but he made light of such a fate! It was to him only the coming down of the old tent—it did not affect his undying spirit—he smiled and sang, “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

The prospect of his heavenly house made his present trials seem very light, for he felt like a man who sojourns for a night at a poor inn, but puts up with it gladly because he hopes to be home on the morrow. If we were trying tent life for a season we should probably cry out, “A fearful draft comes in at that corner! How damp it is under foot! How cramped one feels!” Yet we should smile over it all and say, “It will not be for long. We shall soon be in our house at home.” Ah, Brothers and Sisters, an hour with our God will make up for all the trials of the way! Be of good courage and press on. This changed, for Paul, the very idea of death—death was transformed from a demon into an angel! It was but the removal of a tottering tent that he might enter into a permanent palace!

Some of God’s own children are much troubled through fear of death because they do not know what it is. If they were better taught, they would soon discover, in their present source of sorrow, a subject for song! I would like, here, to say that I have known some of my Master’s doubting and fearing servants die splendidly! Do you remember how Mr. Feeble-Mind, when he crossed the river, went over dry-shod? Poor soul, he thought he should surely be drowned, and yet he scarcely wet the soles of his feet! I have known men of God go like Jacob all day long, weary and faint, feeling banished from their Father’s house—and yet when they have laid their head down for their final sleep, they have had visions of angels and of God! The end of their journey has made amends for the rough places of the way.

It shall be so with you, Brother and Sister Believer. There is usually a dark place in every Christian’s experience. I have seen some travel in sunlight almost the whole of the way and then depart in gloom. And I have thought none the worse of them for it. And I have seen others struggle forward through a fog for the first part of their pilgrimage and then come out into cloudless day. At one period or another beneath these lowering skies the shadow falls across our way, but surely, “light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.” As I have thought of some of my dear Brothers and Sisters that I have seen die very sweetly, and I have remembered that they were, in life, lowly and self-distrustful, I have compared them to persons who, when they drink their tea, forget to stir the sugar at the bottom of the cup. How doubly sweet the drink becomes as they near the bottom—they have more sweetness than they can well bear!

Would it not be wise to stir the tea at once and enjoy the sweetness from the brim to the bottom? This is the benefit of faith as to the future, for it flavors the present with delight. But what if saints should miss immediate comfort for a while—how richly will they be compensated! What

will it be to open your eyes in Heaven! What a joy to fall asleep on the bed of languishing and to wake amid the celestial choir of Hallelujahs! “Where am I? Ah, my God! My Christ! My Heaven! My all! I am HOME!” Sorrow and sighing shall flee away! Does not this view of things give a transfiguration to death? O you poor unbelievers, how I pity you, since you have no such glorious hopes! O that you would believe in the Lord Jesus and enter into eternal life!

Faith had such an effect upon Paul that it made him always calm and brave. Why should he be afraid of a man that could not do him harm? Even if his persecutor killed him, he would do him a service! What had he to fear? This made Paul wise and prudent. He could use his judgment, for he was not fluttered. He was not like some of you that are only a little ill and straightway you are filled with fright—and you make yourselves worse than you otherwise would be, so that the doctor has to contend with a frightened mind as well as a diseased body! He who is calm, restful and happy is already on the road to a cure. He is quiet because he is in his Father’s hands, and whether he lives or dies, all is well—and this conviction helps the physician to remove his bodily malady. I say again, there is no way to live like learning to die! And he who can afford to be careless whether he lives or dies is the man who will so live as to die triumphantly. Oh, that all of you felt the quiet which comes of trusting in the Lord Jesus!

How sad to know that you may die at any moment and to be unprepared for the change! I do not wonder that you are unhappy! You have good reason for being so. Oh that you were wise and would make the future sure by faith in the risen Lord! In Martin Luther’s time and before his era, men who had lived evil lives were often in great fear when they came to die—and in their terror they would send to a monastery and procure a monk’s robe in which to be buried. What a foolish fancy! Yet so it was that they hoped to fare better in the day of judgment for being wrapped in brown cloth and covered with a hood! Be ours a better garment! Here is a wish of holy Rutherford—“His believed love shall be my winding sheet and all my grave-clothes. I shall roll up my soul and sew it up in the web of His sweet and free love.”

Is not that your idea? It is surely mine! If we are laid to sleep in such a cloth, there will be no fear of our waking! It will happen to us as to the man who was laid in Elisha’s grave and at once arose as soon as he touched the Prophet’s bones. No man can lie dead if wrapped up in the love of Christ, for His love is life! He that has touched the love of Christ has touched the heart of the life of God and he must live! So let us give ourselves up to that Divine love and, trusting in our Lord, let us go onward to eternal bliss till the day breaks and the shadows flee away! Let us triumph and rejoice that there is prepared for us a “building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

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PREPARATION FOR HEAVEN

NO. 3538

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

*“Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God,
who has also given us the earnest of the Spirit.”*
2 Corinthians 5:5.

HOW very confidently Paul contemplates the prospect of death! He betrays no trembling apprehensions. With the calmness and serenity, not merely of resignation and submission, but of assurance and courage, he appears joyous and gladsome, and even charmed with the hope of having his body dissolved and being girt about with the new body which God has prepared for His saints! He that can talk of the grave and of the hereafter with such intelligence, thoughtfulness, faith and strong desire as Paul did, is a man to be envied. Princes might well part with their crown for such a sure and certain hope of immortality! Could emperors exchange their treasures, their honors and their dominions, to stand side by side with the humble tent-maker in his poverty, they would be great gainers. Were they but able to say with him, “We are always confident, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord,” they might well barter earthly rank for such a requital! This side of Heaven, what can be more heavenly than to be thoroughly prepared to pass through the River of Death? On the other hand, what a dreary and dreadful state of mind must they be in who, with nothing before them but to die, have no hope and see no outlet—the pall and the shroud their last adorning—the grave and the sod their destination! Without hope of rising again in a better future, or realizing a better heritage than that which should know us no more before long—no prospects of seeing God face to face with rejoicing—well may men dislike any reference to death! So they shrink from the thought of it. Far less can they tolerate its being talked of in common conversation. No marvel that they recoil from the shade of mortality when they are so ill prepared to face the reality of the soul’s departure! But, dear Friends, since it is so desirable to be ready to depart, it cannot be inexpedient sometimes to talk about it—and on my part the more so, because there is a proneness in all our minds to start

aside from that grave topic which, as God shall help us, shall be our subject this evening—preparation for the great hereafter! “For,” says the Apostle, “God has worked us for this same thing”—He has prepared us for the dropping of the present body and the putting on of the next! And “He has given us the earnest of His Spirit.”

Our three departments of meditation will be—*the work of preparation itself. The Author of it. And the seal which He sets to it*—the possession of which may resolve all scruples as to whether we are prepared or not.

I. THE WORK OF PREPARATION stands first. Is it not almost universally admitted that some preparation is absolutely essential? Whenever the death of a friend or comrade is announced, you will hear the worst-instructed say, “I hope, poor man, he was prepared.” It may be but a passing reflection or a common saying. Yet everybody will give expression to it, “I hope he was ready.” Whether the words are well understood or not, I do not know, but the currency given to them proves a unanimous conviction that some preparation is necessary for the next world. And, in truth, this thought is in accordance with the most elementary facts of our holy religion. Men by nature need something to be done for them before they can enter Heaven—and something to be *done in them*. Something to be done with them, for by nature they are enemies to God. Dispute it as you will, God knows best. He declares that we are enemies to Him, and alienated in our hearts. We need, therefore, that some Ambassador should come to us with terms of peace and reconcile us to God. We are debtors as well as enemies to our Creator—debtors to His Law. We owe Him what we cannot pay and what He cannot pardon. He must exact obedience and we cannot render it! He must, as God, demand perfection of us, and we, as men, cannot bring Him that perfection. Some Mediator, then, must come in to pay the debt for us, for we cannot pay it. Neither can we be exempted from it. There must be a Substitute who shall stand between us and God—One who shall undertake all our liabilities and discharge them—and so set us free, so that the mercy of God may be extended to us!

In addition to this, we are all criminals. Having violated the Law of God, we are already condemned. We are not, as some vainly pretend, introduced to this world on probation. Our probation is over—we have forfeited all hope! We have broken the Law of God and the sentence is gone out against us—and we stand by nature as condemned criminals, tenants of this world during the reprieve of God’s mercy, in fear of a certain and terrible execution—unless Someone comes in between us and that punishment—unless some gracious hand brings us a free pardon! Unless some Divine Voice pleads and prevails for us that we may be acquitted! If

this is not done for us, it is impossible that we should entertain any well-grounded hope of entering Heaven. Say, then, Brothers and Sisters, has this been done for you? I know that many of you can answer, "Blessed be God, I have been reconciled to Him through the death of His Son! God is no enemy of mine, nor I of Him—there is no distance, now, between me and God—I am brought near to Him and made to feel that He is near to me and that I am dear to Him." Full many here present can add, "My debts to God are paid! I have looked to Christ, my Substitute. I have seen Him enter into Suretyship engagements for me and I am persuaded that He has discharged all my liabilities! I am clean before God's bar! Faith tells me I am clean." And, Brothers and Sisters, you know that you are no longer condemned! You have looked to Him who bore your condemnation and you have drunk in the spirit of that verse, "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Surely this is a preparation for Heaven! How could we enter there if our debts were not discharged? How could we eternally obtain the Divine Favor if we were still condemned criminals? How could we dwell forever in the Presence of God if we were still His enemies? Come, let us rejoice in this—that He has worked us for this same thing—having championed our cause from the cradle to the grave!

Preparation for Heaven consists still further *in something that must be worked in us*, for observe, Brothers and Sisters, that if the Lord were to blot out all our sins, we would still be quite incapable of entering Heaven unless there was a change worked in our *natures*. According to this Book, we are dead by nature in trespasses and sins—not some of us, but all of us—the best as well as the worst! We are all dead in trespasses and sins. Shall dead men sit at the feasts of the Eternal God? Shall there be corpses at the celestial banquets? Shall the pure air of the New Jerusalem be defiled with the putrefaction of iniquity? It must not, it cannot be! We must be quickened—we must be taken from the corruption of our old nature into the incorruption of the new nature, receiving the incorruptible Seed which lives and abides forever. Only the living children can inherit the promises of the living God, for He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. We must be made living creatures by the new-creating power of Grace, or else we cannot be made meet for Glory. By nature we are all worldly. Our thoughts go after earthly things. We "mind earthly things," as the Apostle says. We seek after the world's joys. The world's maxims govern us. The world's fears alarm us, the world's hopes and ambitions excite us. We are of the earth, earthy, for we bear the image of the first Adam. But, Brothers and Sisters, we cannot go to Heaven as worldly men, for there would be nothing there to gratify us. The gold of

Heaven is not for barter to use, nor for covetousness to hoard. The rivers of Heaven are not for commerce, neither are they to be defiled by men. The joys and glories of Heaven are all spiritual, all celestial—

***“Pure are the joys above the skies
And all the region peace.”***

Such peace is of a heavenly kind, and for heavenly minds. Carnal spirits, greedy, envious spirits—what would they do in Heaven? If they were in the place called Heaven, they could not be in the state called Heaven, and Heaven is more a state than a place! Though it is probably both, yet it is mainly the former, a state of happiness, a state of holiness, a state of spirituality which it would not be possible for the worldly to reach! Therefore, you see, Brothers and Sisters, the Holy Spirit must come and give us new affections. We must have a fresh objective set before us. In fact, instead of minding the things that are seen, we must come to love and to aspire to the things that are not seen! Our affections, instead of going downwards to things of earth, must be allured by things that are above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God!

In addition to our spiritual death and worldliness, we are all unholy by nature. Not one of us is pure in the sight of God. We are all defiled and all defiling, but in Heaven they are “without fault before the Throne of God.” No sin is tolerated there—no sin of thought, or word, or deed! Angels and glorified spirits delight to do God’s will without hesitation, without demur, without omission. And we, like they, must be holy, or we cannot enter into their sacred fellowship—

***“Those holy gates forever bar
Pollution, sin, and shame!
None shall obtain admission there
But followers of the Lamb.”***

So what a change must come over the carnal man to make him holy! Through what washings he must pass! What can wash him white, indeed, but that far-famed blood of the Son of God? Through purification he must pass! What, indeed, can purify him at all but the refining energy of God the Holy Spirit? He alone can make us what God would have us to be, renewed in His image in holiness and righteousness!

That a great change must be worked in us, even ungodly men will confess, since the idea of the Heaven of the Scriptures has always been repulsive, never agreeable, to unconverted men and women. When Mohammed would charm the world into the belief that he was the Prophet of God, the Heaven he pictured was not at all the Heaven of holiness and spirituality. His was a Heaven of unbridled sensualism, where all the passions were to be enjoyed without let or hindrance for endless years! Such a Heaven that sinful men would like—therefore, such the Heaven

that Mohammed painted for them, and promised to them! Men in general, be they courtly, or be they coarse in their habits, when they read of Heaven in the Scriptures with any understanding of what they read, curl their lips and ask contemptuously, Who wants to be everlastingly singing Psalms? Who could wish to be always sitting down with these saints talking about the mighty acts of the Lord and the glorious majesty of His Kingdom? Such people cannot go to Heaven, it is clear—they have not character or capacity to enter into its enjoyment! I think Whitefield was right. Could a wicked man be admitted into Heaven, he would be wretched there—being unholy, he must be unhappy. From sheer distaste for the society of Heaven, he might fly to Hell for shelter! With the tumult of evil passions in his breast, he could not brook the triumph of righteousness in the city of the blest. There is no Heaven for him who has not been prepared for it by a work of Grace in his soul. So necessary is this preparation—a preparation *for* us, and a preparation *in* us. And if we ever have such a preparation, beyond all question we *must have it on this side of our death*. It can only be obtained in this world. The moment one breathes his last, it is all fixed and settled. As the tree falls, so it must lie. While the nature is soft and supple it is susceptible to impression, stamp what seal you may upon it. Once let it grow cold and hard, fixed and frigid, you can do so no more, it is proof against any change. While the iron is flowing into the mold you can fashion it into what implement you please. Let it grow cold, in vain you strive to alter its form! With pen of liquid ink in your hand you write what you will on the paper, but the ink dries, the impress remains, and where is the treachery that shall tamper with it? Such is this life of yours. It is over, all over with you for eternity, beyond alteration or amending when the breath has gone from the body. Your everlasting state is fixed then—

***“There are no acts of pardon passed
In the cold grave to which we hasten,
But darkness, death, and long despair
Reign in eternal silence there.”***

We have no intimation in the Word of God that any soul dying in unbelief will afterwards be converted to the faith. Nor have we the slightest reason to believe that our prayers in this world can at all affect those who have departed this life. The masses of priests are fictions, without the shadow of Divine Authority. “Purgatory,” or “Pick-Purse,” as old Lattimer used to call it, is an invention for making fat larders for priests and monks! The Scriptures of the Truth of God give it no countenance. The Word of God says, “He that is holy, let him be holy still; he that is filthy, let him be filthy still.” Such as you are when death comes to you, such will judgment find you, and such will the eternal reward or the eternal

punishment leave you, world without end! Preparation is needed—and the preparation must be found before we die.

Moreover, we ought to know—for it is possible for a man to know whether he is thoroughly prepared. Some have said not, but they have usually been persons very little acquainted with the matter. The writings of those grand old divines of the Puritan period abundantly prove how thoroughly they enjoyed the assurance of faith! They did not hesitate to express themselves in such language as the Apostle used—“We know that if this earthly house of our tabernacle is dissolved, we have a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” They were known to speak as Job did when he said, “I know that my Redeemer lives.” And indeed, many of the children of God among us at this present time are favored with a confident, unstaggering confidence that, let their last hour come when it may, or let the Lord, Himself, descend from Heaven with a shout—there will be nothing but joy and peace for them—no cause for trembling, nothing that can give them dismay! Why, some of us live from year to year in constant assurance of our preparation for the bliss that awaits and the rest that remains for God’s people!

Beloved, God has not so left us in such a dubious case that we always need to be enquiring, “Am I His, or am I not?” He has given us good substantial grounds to go upon to make sure work of it. He tells us that, “he that believes and is baptized shall be saved”—if we have been obedient to these two commands, we shall be saved, for our God keeps His word! He tells us that such Believers, patiently continuing in well-doing, inherit eternal life. If we are kept by His Grace, walking in His fear, we may rest assured that we shall come to the ultimate end of such a life, namely, the Glory which abides for the faithful! We need not harbor endless questions. What miserable work it is to stand in any doubt on this matter! Let us not be satisfied till we are sure and confident that Heaven will be ours! Alas, how many put off all thoughts of being prepared to die! They are prepared for almost anything except the one thing for which it is most necessary to be ready. If the summons should come to some of you at this moment, how dread it would be! Were we to see an angel hovering in the air, and should we have intelligence by a message from the clouds that one of us must, on a sudden, leave his body behind him and appear before God, what cowering down, what trembling, what muttering of forgotten prayers there would be with some of you! You are not ready! You never will be ready, I fear. The carelessness in which you have lived so long has become habitual. One would think you had resolved to die in your sins! Have you ever heard the story of Archæus, the Grecian despot, who was going to a feast, and on the way a messenger brought him a

letter and seriously importuned him to read it? It contained tidings of a conspiracy that had been formed against him, that he would be killed at the feast. He took the letter and put it in his pocket. In vain the messenger urged that it was concerning serious matters. "Serious matters, tomorrow," said Archaeus, "feasting, tonight!" That night the dagger reached his heart while he had about him the warning which, had he heeded it, would have averted the peril!

Alas, too many men say, "Serious things tomorrow!" They have no misgiving that when their sport is over, they will have alike the leisure and the leanings for these weighty matters. Were it not wiser, Sirs, to let these grave affairs come first? Might you not, then, find some better sport of nobler character than all the froth and frivolity to which fashion leads on—a holy merriment and a sacred feasting that well become immortal spirits? How vain and groveling the mirth which reduces men to children, pleased with a rattle, tickled with a straw—then brings them down to driveling fools and often degrades them till they become worse than brutes! I wish I could imprint a solemn thought on the mind of some careless individuals. Reckon you not that time is short, that life is precarious, that opportunities cross your path at lightning speed, that hope flatters those on whom the fangs of death are fixed, that there is no vestibule in which to fit your frame of mind, that the shock will always come suddenly at last? What sentence more trite? What sentiment more prevalent? Yet what solemnity more neglected than *this*—"Prepare to meet your God"? Propound it, profess it, preach it as we may, the most of men are unprepared! They know the inevitable plight. They see the necessity of preparation, but they postpone and procrastinate, instead of preparing! God grant you may not trifle, any of you, until your trembling souls are launched into that unknown sphere, but not unfeared, and read your doom in Hell. Now—

II. AS TO THE AUTHOR OF THIS PREPARATION FOR DEATH, the text says, "He that has worked us for the same thing is God." It is God, alone, then, who makes men fit for Heaven! He works them to the same purpose. Who made Adam fit for Paradise but God? And who must make us fit for the better Paradise above but God? That we cannot do it ourselves is evident. According to the Scriptures, we are dead in trespasses and sins. Can the dead start from the grave of their own accord? Do you think to see coffins opened and gravestones uplifted by the natural energy of corpses? Such things were never dreamed of! The dead shall surely rise, but they shall rise because God raises them. They cannot vitalize their inert frames, neither can the dead in sin quicken themselves and make themselves fit for the Presence of God! Conversion, which prepares

us for Heaven, is a new creation. That word, “creation,” puts all the counsel, the conceit and the contrivance of man into the background. If anyone says that he can make a new heart, let him first go and make a fly. Not until he has created such a winged insect, let him presume to tell us that he can make a man a new creature in Christ Jesus! And yet to make a fly would not demonstrate that a fly could make itself—and it would offer but a feeble pretext for that wonderful creation which is supposed in a man’s making himself a new heart! The original Creation was the work of God, and the New Creation must likewise be of God! To take away a heart of stone and give a heart of flesh is a miracle. Man cannot do it—if he attempts it—it shall be to his own shame and confusion. The Lord must make us anew! Have not we who know something of the Lord’s working in us, this same thing, been made to feel that it is all of His Grace? What first made us think about eternal things? Did we, the stray sheep, come back to the fold of our own accord? No! Far from it—

***“Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wandering from the fold of God.”***

And ever since we have been living men in Christ Jesus. To whom must we ascribe our preservation and our progress? Must we not attribute every victory over sin and every advance in the spiritual life, to the operation of God, and nothing at all to ourselves? A poor simpleton once said, “’Twas God and I did the work.” “Well, but, Charlie, what part did you take in it?” “Surely, then,” he said, “I did all I could to stop the Lord, and He beat me.” I suppose, did we tell the simple truth, we could say much the same. In the matter of our salvation, we do all we can to oppose it—our old nature does—and He overcomes our evil propensities. From first to last, Jesus Christ has to be the Author and the Finisher of our salvation, or it never would have been begun, and it never would have been completed!

Think, Beloved, of what fitness for Heaven is. To be fit for Heaven a man must be perfect! Go, you who think you can prepare yourselves—be perfect for a day! The vanity of your own mind, the provocation of this treacherous world and the subtle temptation of the devil would make short work of your empty pretensions! You would be blown about like chaff. Creature perfection, indeed! Was ever anything so absurd? Men have boasted of attaining it, but their very boasts have proved that they possessed it not! He that gets nearest to perfection is the very man who sighs and cries over the abiding infirmities of his flesh. No, if perfection is to be reached—and it must be, or we shall not be fit for Heaven—it must be worked by the operation of God! Man’s work is never perfect—it is always marred on the wheel. His best machinery may still be improved

upon! His finest productions of art might still be excelled. God alone is Perfect and He alone is the Perfecter. Blessed be God, we can heartily subscribe to this Truth, "He that has worked us for the same thing is God."

But what shall I say to those of you, my Friends, who have no acquaintance with God? You certainly cannot be fitted for Heaven! Your cause is not committed to Him. He is doing nothing for you. He has not begun the good work in you. You live in this world as if there were no God. The thought, the stupendous thought of his "Being" does not affect you. You would not act any differently if there were 20 Gods or if there were no God. You utterly ignore His claims on your allegiance and your responsibility to His Law. Virtually in thought and deed you are without God in the world. Poor forlorn creature, you have forgotten your Creator! Poor wandering Soul, you have fallen out of gear with the universe! You have become alienated from the great Father who is in Heaven! I tremble at the thought. To be on the wide sea without rudder or compass—to be lost in the wilderness where there is no way! Cheerless as your condition is, remember this—though you see not God, God sees you. God sees you now! He hears you now. If you breathe but a desire towards Him, that desire shall be accepted and fulfilled! He will yet begin to work in you that gracious preparation which shall make you meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light! And now, thirdly—

III. LET THE SEAL OF THIS PREPARATION be briefly, but attentively considered.

The Apostle says, "He that has worked us for the same thing is God, who also has given unto us *the earnest of the Spirit*." Employers frequently pay during the week, a part of the wages which will be due on Saturday night. God gives His Holy Spirit, as it were, to be a part of the reward which He intends to give to His people, when, like hirelings, they have fulfilled their day. Our country friends just before harvest go out into the fields and they pick half a dozen ears that are ripe, braid the ends and hang them up over the mantle shelf as a kind of earnest of the harvest. So God gives us His Holy Spirit to be in our hearts as an earnest of Heaven—and as the ears of corn are of the same quality and character as the harvest, so the gift of the Holy Spirit is the foretaste of Heaven. When you have Him, you have a plain indication to your soul of what Heaven will be! You have a part of Heaven—"a young Heaven," as Dr. Watts somewhere calls it, within you!

Ask yourself, then, dear Hearer, this question, "Have I received the earnest of the Spirit?" If so, you have the preparation for Heaven! If not, you are still a stranger to Divine things and you have no reason to be-

lieve that the Heaven of the saints will be your heritage. Come, now, have you received the Holy Spirit? Do, you reply, "How may I know?" Wherever the Holy Spirit is, He works certain Graces in the soul—repentance, to wit. Have you ever repented of sin? I mean, do you hate it? Do you shun it? Do you grieve to think you should once have loved it? Is your mind altogether changed with regard to sin, so that what once seemed pleasure is now pain, and all the sweetness of sin is poison to your taste? Where the Holy Spirit is, repentance is followed by the whole train of Graces, all in a measure, not any in perfection, for there is always room to grow in Grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ! Such is patience, which submits to the Lord's will. Such, too, the gracious disposition of forgiveness, which enables us to bear injuries and to forgive those that vex us. Such, likewise, that holy courage which is not ashamed to acknowledge our Lord, or to defend His cause. In fact, where the Holy Spirit is bestowed, all the Graces of the Spirit will be communicated in some degree. Though they will all need to grow, still there will be the seeds of them all. Where the Holy Spirit is, there will be the joy! No delight can be more animating or more elevating than that which springs from the indwelling of God in the soul! Think of God coming to abide in this poor bosom! Why, were a cross of diamonds or pearls glittering on your breast, some might envy you the possession of such a treasure—but to have God within your breast is infinitely better! God dwells in us and we in Him. Oh, sacred mystery! Oh, birth of unspeakable joy! Oh, well of Divine bliss that makes earth like Heaven! Have you ever had this joy—the joy of knowing that you are pardoned? The joy of being sure that you are a child of God? The joy of being certain that all things work together for your good? The joy of expecting that before long, and the sooner the better, you shall be forever beyond gunshot of fear, and care, and pain, and need? Where the Spirit of God is, there is more or less of this joy, which is the earnest of Heaven!

This gift, moreover, will be conspicuously evidenced by a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is not in you if you rely on anything but Jesus—but if, as a poor guilty sinner, you have come to Him, partaken of His gracious pardon, kissed His blessed feet, and are now depending upon Him, alone—you have received the Holy Spirit and you have got a foretaste of Heaven!

Brothers and Sisters, it is intensely desirable that we should seek more to be consciously filled with the Holy Spirit. We get easily contented with a little spiritual blessedness. Let us grow more covetous of the best gifts. Let us crave to be endued with the Holy Spirit and to be baptized in the Holy Spirit and in fire. The more we get of Him, the more assurance

we shall have of Heaven for our peace, the more foretastes of Heaven for our happiness and the more preparation for Heaven in lively hope!

Thus have I shown you the need of preparation, the Author of preparation and the great Seal which proves the truth of that preparation. If your honest conscience allows your humble claim to have received this sacred token of salvation, how happy you would be! Do not be afraid to be happy! Some Christians seem to court the gloom of despondency as if they dared not bask in the sunshine of Heaven. I have sometimes heard people say that *they have not enjoyed themselves*. No, dear Friends, pity, I think, if any of us ever should! It would be a poor kind of enjoyment if we merely enjoyed ourselves. But, oh, it is delightful when you can enjoy *your God* and when you can enjoy the mercies that are in Him, the promises that are in Him and the blessings which, through Him, come to you! When you gather round the Table of the Lord's Love, do not be afraid to partake of the feast! There is nothing put there to be looked at. There is no confectionery spread out for show. If you dare conclude that you are living in Christ, and living on Christ, do not be afraid to sing as you go home—

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

It will be a blessing to your family for you to be happy. You may find that something has gone wrong while you have been away. Go home as happy as you can be and you will be better able to bear the cares and vexations that must and will befall you. Keep your spirit well worked up to the fear of the Lord and the enjoyment of His Presence. Then, if some little matter should come to disquiet you, you can say, “Who am I that I should be vexed and chafed, or lose my temper, or be cast down about such a matter as this? This is not my sphere of well-being. This is not my Heaven. This is not my God.”—

***“If you should take them all away,
Yet should I not repine—***

***Before they were possessed by me
They were entirely Thine.
Nor would I speak a murmuring word,
Though the whole world were gone,
But seek enduring happiness
In You, and You alone.”***

But, oh, suppose you feel persuaded and honestly admit that you are not prepared to die, not made meet for Heaven? Do not utterly despair, but be grateful that you live where the Gospel is preached! “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” Be much in hearing the Word and be much in earnest prayer that the hearing may be blessed to your soul. Above all, give diligence to that Divine Command which bids you trust in Jesus Christ, whom He has sent. Eternal Life lies in the nutshell of that one sentence, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” All that is asked of you—and even that Grace gives you—is simply to trust in Him who, as Son of God, died for the sins of men! God give you that faith, and then may you meet death with joy, or look forward to the coming of the Lord with peace, whichever may be your lot. Amen.

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

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

THE GLORIOUS HEREAFTER AND OURSELVES NO. 912

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 23, 1870,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Now He that has worked us for the same thing is God, who also has given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.”
2 Corinthians 5:5.*

IT is a very comforting thing to be able to see the work of God in our own hearts. We can clearly enough perceive the effects of the Fall—the workings of our inward corruption are always sufficiently perceptible. We have not to search long for the foul handiwork of Satan within us, for his temptations vex us day by day, and too often wound us to our dismay. The evil influences of the world are also exceedingly apparent to the eyes of self-examination. It is, therefore, consoling to the highest degree when, amidst all this disfiguring of the vessel by the hands of evil, we can see growing traces of the Great Artist's hand still fashioning the clay upon the wheel and undoing the mischief of His enemies.

It is a sweet thing to be able to say with the Apostle that God has worked us to the most grand of all designs. When the Creator of the world puts His all-wise hands to the work of our new creation, we are favored in the highest degree, and ought to be filled with gratitude.

It appears from the text that the Apostle found the indications of the Divine work in a groan. Observe, “We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened.” In that groan of his burdened soul he saw the working of the eternal God, and he exclaimed, “He that has worked us for the same thing is God.” Believers may trace the finger of God in their holy joys when the soul, like the lark, mounts up towards Heaven and carols her song of gratitude. But, just as surely is the Holy Spirit present in their sorrows for sin, their inward conflicts, their hungering and thirsting after righteousness, their deep-fetched sighs, and their groans which cannot be uttered.

My Brethren, so long as it is the work of God it is comparatively a small matter to us whether our hearts' utterance is song or sigh. Let us be assured that it is worked by the Spirit, and either the one or the other is a token for good. If it is but proven that “the Lord is there,” we hear a voice which says, “It is I, be not afraid.”

Our text brings before us a great work of God with a distinct object—our being “clothed upon with our house which is from Heaven.” And looking at the words minutely, we see that the one design is accomplished by three great processes. The Lord has worked in us desires after the heavenly Glory. “He that has worked us for the same thing is God.” The Apos-

tle had twice over spoken of groaning after the heavenly House, and we understand him here to affirm that this groaning was worked in him by God.

Secondly, the Lord has worked in us a fullness for the eternal world, for so the text may be understood. “He that has fitted us for” the heavenly inheritance of which the Spirit is the earnest. Then thirdly, God has given to Believers, in addition to desires after and fitness for an earnest of the Glory to be revealed, which earnest is the Holy Spirit. Let us speak of these three things as the Holy Spirit may instruct us.

I. God’s work is seen in our souls in causing us exciting, vehement DESIRES AFTER being “clothed upon with our house which is from Heaven.”

This earnest desire, of which the Apostle has been speaking in the preceding verses, is made up of two things—a painful groaning and sense of being burdened while we are in this present life, and a supreme longing after our promised portion in the world to come. Dissatisfaction with the very idea of finding a continuing city here, amounting even to groaning, is the condition of the Christian’s mind. “We look not at the things which are seen,” they are not worth a glance. They are temporal and therefore quite unfit to be the joy of an immortal spirit.

The Christian is the most contented man *in* the world, but he is the least contented *with* the world. He is like a traveler in an inn, perfectly satisfied with the inn and its accommodation, considering it as an inn, but putting quite out of all consideration the idea of making it his home. He waits by the way, and is thankful, but his desires lead him ever onward towards that better country where the many mansions are prepared. The Believer is like a man in a sailing vessel, well content with the good ship for what it is, and hopeful that it may bear him safely across the sea, willing to put up with all its inconveniences without complaint.

But if you ask him whether he would choose to live on board in that narrow cabin, he will tell you that he longs for the time when the harbor shall be in view, and the green fields, and the happy homesteads of his native land. We, my Brethren, thank God for all the appointments of Providence—whether our portion is large or scant we are content because God has appointed it—yet our portion is not *here*, nor would we have it here if we might!—

**“We’ve no abiding city here,
Sad truth were this to be our home.”**

No thought would be more dreadful to us than the idea of having our portion in this life, in this dark world which refused the love of Jesus, and cast Him out of its vineyard. We have desires which the whole world could not fulfill. We have insatiable yearnings which a thousand empires could not satisfy. The Creator has made us to pant and long after Himself, and all the creatures put together could not delight our souls without His Presence—

“Hopeless of joy in anything below,

***We only long to soar,
The fullness of His love to feel,
And lose His smile no more.”***

In addition to this dissatisfaction, there reigns within the regenerate heart a supreme longing after the heavenly state. When Believers are in their right minds, their aspirations after Heaven are so forcible that they despise death itself. When faith is weak, then the pains and the groans of dying make a black cloud of forebodings which darken the spirit, and we shrink from the thought of departing.

But when we know that our Redeemer lives, and look forward to the Resurrection and to the Glory to be revealed, we cry—

***“Oh, if my Lord would come and meet,
My soul should stretch her wings in haste,
Fly fearless through death’s iron gate,
Nor fear the terrors as she passed.”***

Whatever the separation of the soul from the body may involve of pain or mystery, the Believer feels that he could dare it all to enter at once into the unfading joys of Heaven. Sometimes the heir of Heaven grows impatient of his bondage. Like a captive looking out of the narrow window of his prison beholds the green fields of the unfettered earth, and marks the flashing waves of the ocean, ever free—and hears the songs of the free tenants of the air—he weeps as he views his narrow cell and hears the clanking of his chains.

There are times when the most patient of the Lord’s banished ones feel the home sickness strong upon them. Like those beasts which we have sometimes seen in our menageries, which pace to and fro in their dens, and chafe themselves against the bars—uneasy, unhappy, bursting out every now and then into fierce roars—as though they yearned for the forest or the jungle. Even so we also chafe and fret in this, our prison, longing to be free. As by the waters of Babylon the sons of Zion sat down and wept, even so do we. Dwelling in Kedar’s tents and sojourning with Me-sech, we long for the wings of a dove that we might fly away and be at rest—

***“O my sweet home, Jerusalem,
Would God I were in you!
Would God my woes were at an end,
Your joys that I might see.”***

Having thus seen that the groaning worked in us by God is made up of dissatisfaction with this world and anxious desire for the world to come, we may profitably consider it yet a little further. What is it that makes the Christian long for Heaven? What is that within him which makes him restless till he reaches the better land? It is, first, a desire for the unseen. The carnal mind is satisfied with what the eyes can see, the hands can handle, and the taste enjoy. But the Christian has a spirit within him which has passions and appetites which the senses cannot gratify.

This spirit has been created, developed, enlightened, and instructed by the Holy Spirit, and it lives in a world of unseen realities of which unre-

generate men have no knowledge. While in this sinful world and earthly body, the spirit feels like a citizen exiled from his native land. It stands upon the outmost borders of its own region and longs to penetrate into the center of spiritual things. Hampered with this body of clay, the spirit, which is akin to angels, cries after liberty. It longs to see the Great Father of Spirits, to commune with the bands of the pure spirits forever surrounding the Throne of God, both angels and glorified men.

It longs, in fact, to dwell in its true element. A spiritual creature, begotten from above can never rest till it is present with the Lord. Oh, to see the things which we have heard of in metaphor and simile, to enjoy them really with our spirits! The harps, the crowns, the palms—what must it be to possess such joys? The streets of transparent gold, the river of the water of life, the glassy sea, the Throne of the Great King—what must all these be? Until these joys and glories be all our own, our souls will always cry and sigh.

Moreover, the Christian spirit pants after holiness. He who is born again of incorruptible seed finds his worst trouble to be sin. While he was in his natural state he *loved* sin, and sought pleasure in it. But now, being born of God and made liken to God, he hates sin. The mention of it vexes his ears. The sight of it in others causes him deep sorrow—the presence of it in his own heart is his daily plague and burden. If he could be rid of sin, this mortal body might not be to him a load. But because the tendencies of the animal passions are always towards evil, he longs to be rid of this vile body so that he may be clothed with his House which is in Heaven—from which all these passions will be expelled.

Oh, to be without the tendency to sin, without the possibility to sin! What bliss the prospect affords! My Brethren, if we could be placed in the meanest and most destitute condition, and yet could be perfect, we would prefer it to being sinful, even though we should reign in the palaces of kings. Our spirit, therefore, cries after the immortal state, because sin will be forever banished from it.

In the Christian's spirit there is also a sighing after rest. "There remains a rest for the people of God," as though God had put in us the longing for what He has prepared. We labor daily to enter into that rest. Brethren, we long for rest, but we cannot find it here. "This is not our rest." We cannot find rest even within ourselves. Wars and fights are continuous within the regenerate spirit. The flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit wars against the flesh. As long as we are here it must be so. We are in the camp of war, not in the chamber of ease. The trumpet must sound, and the clash of arms must be heard. We must go to our watchtower and continue there both night and day, for we are militant as yet, and not triumphant.

Our soul pines to be at rest. When shall the rowers of our spirit indulge themselves to the full without the fear of falling into sin? When shall my memory remember nothing but what will glorify God? When shall my judgment always rightly balance all events? When shall my desires be af-

ter nothing but my Lord? When shall my affections cling to nothing but Him? O when shall I possess the rest of the sinless, the rest of the satiated, the rest of the secure, the rest of the victorious? This longing for rest helps to inflame the Christian's desires for the House not made with hands.

This Divinely-worked desire is made up of another element, namely, a thirst for communion with God. Here, at the nearest, our state is described as being "absent from the Lord." We do enjoy fellowship with God, for, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ," but it is remote and dark. "We see through a glass darkly," and not as yet face to face. We have the smell of His garments from afar, and they are perfumed with myrrh, and aloes, and cassia—but as yet the King is in His ivory palaces—and the gate of pearl is between us and Him.

O that we could come to Him! O that He would even now embrace us, and kiss us with the kisses of His mouth! The more the heart loves Christ, the more it longs for the greatest possible nearness to Him. Separation is very painful to a bride whose heart is burning for the bridegroom's presence. And such are we—longing to hear the most sweet voice of our Spouse and to see the countenance which is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars. For a saved soul to long to be where its Savior is, is no unnatural desire! To be with Him is far better than earth's best, and it would be strange if we did not long for it.

God, then, has worked in us this in all its forms. He has made us to dread the thought of having our portion in this life. He has created in us a supreme longing for our heavenly Home, has taught us to value unseen and eternal things, to pant after holiness, to sigh after sinless rest, and to yearn after closer fellowship with God in Christ Jesus. My Brethren, if you have felt a desire such as I have described, give the glory of it to God! Bless and love the Holy Spirit who has worked this same thing in you, and ask Him to make the desires yet more vehement, for they are to His glory.

Bear with a word in praise of this God-worked groaning. This desire after the world to come is above ordinary nature. All flesh is grass, and the grass loves to strike its root deep into the earth. It has no tendrils with which to clasp the stars. Man by nature would be content to abide on earth forever. If you long for a holy and spiritual state, your desire is not of nature's creation. God has worked it in you. Yes, I will venture to say that the desire for Heaven is contrary to nature. For as there is an inertia in matter which makes it indisposed to move, so is there in human nature an indisposition to leave the present for the future.

Like the snail, we stick to the rock on which we crawl. We cling to earth like the ivy to the wall. We are afraid to set sail upon that unknown sea of eternity, and therefore shiver on the shore. We dread to leave "the warm precincts of this house of clay," and hovel as this body is, we count it dear. It is the Lord who forbids our lying among the pots and gives us the

wings of a dove to mount aloft. As soon would a clod seek the sun as a soul seek its God, if a miracle of Grace were not worked upon it.

While they are contrary to the old nature, such aspirations prove the existence of the new nature. You may be quite sure that you have the nature of God in you if you are pining after God. And if your longings are of a spiritual kind, depend upon it—you are a spiritual man. It is not in the animal to sigh after mental enjoyments, neither is it in the mere carnal man to sigh after heavenly things. What your desires are, that your soul is. If you are really insatiably hungering after holiness and after God, there is within you that which is liken to God, that which is essentially holy. There is, indeed, a work of the Holy Spirit within your hearts.

I shall detain you awhile to notice the means by which the Holy Spirit quickens these desires within our spirits. This desire after a portion in the unseen world is first infused in us by regeneration. Regeneration begets in us a spiritual nature, and the spiritual nature brings with it its own longings and desires. These longings and desires are after perfection and God. Imagine an angel imprisoned in a stable—it is perfectly certain that it would be discontent with the place where the horned oxen lay. If it felt that the Divine will commanded it to tarry there for awhile, I doubt not that the bright visitant would contentedly put up with the confinement.

But if it had liberty to leave the society of beasts, how gladly would the bright spirit ascend to its native place! Yes, Heaven is the place for angels, the true abode of holy spirits and we, too, since our spiritual nature is born from above, long to be there—nor shall we be content until we are. These desires are further assisted by instruction. The more the Holy Spirit teaches us of the world to come the more we long for it. If a child had lived in a mine it might be content with the glimmer of candle light. But if it should hear of the sun, the green fields and the stars, you may depend upon it—the child would not be happy until it could ascend the shaft and behold for itself the brightness of which it had heard. And as the Holy Spirit reveals to us the world to come we feel longings within us, mysterious but mighty, and we sigh and cry to be where Jesus is.

These desires are further increased by sanctified afflictions. Thorns in our nest make us take to our wings. The embittering of this cup makes us earnestly desire to drink of the new wine of the kingdom. We are very much like our poor who would stay at home in England and put up with their lot, hard though it is. But when at last there comes a worse distress than usual, then straightway they talk of emigrating to those fair and boundless fields across the Atlantic where a kindred nation will welcome them with joy.

So here we are in our poverty, and we make the best of it we can. But a sharp distress wounds our spirit and then we say we will run away to Canaan, to the land that flows with milk and honey. For there, we think, we shall suffer no distress, neither shall our spirits hunger any more. Heavenly desires are still farther inflamed by communion with Christ. The

sweets as well as the bitters may be made to increase our longings after the world to come. When a man has once known what fellowship with Jesus is, he then pines to enjoy it forever. Like the Gauls on this side the Alps, who, when they had once drunk the Italian wines, said one to another, "It must be a fair land where they grow such wine as this. Come, Brethren, let us draw our swords and cross the Alps and take the vineyards for ourselves."

Thus does the love of Jesus set us longing to be with Him—

***"Since I have tasted of the grapes,
I oftentimes long to go
Where my dear Lord the vineyard keeps,
And all the clusters grow."***

Communion with Christ sharpens the edge of our desire for Heaven. And so, to close this vein of thought, does elevation of soul. The more we are sanctified and lifted above the grossness of earthliness into conformity with Jesus, the more we long for the world to come.

A peasant at the plow is quite content to mix with his fellow laborers—but suppose he forms a passion for the study of the stars, feels a poet's frenzy, develops mathematical powers, learns the science of flowers—or in any way discovers the treasure hidden in the field of learning? He will be sure to be uneasy in ignorance, and will pine for books and education. He dreams of schools, and colleges, and libraries. His fellow plowmen laugh at him and count him but a fool. If they have enough to eat and drink and clothe themselves, they are content—but he has wants for which the village has neither sympathy nor supply.

His elevation of mind has brought with it groans—desires to which, had he no more ambition than his fellows—he would have been a stranger. So is it with the regenerated man—in proportion as he is elevated by the Holy Spirit by growth in Divine Grace, the higher he rises—the more he longs to rise. To him that has, it is given, and he desires to have in abundance. With a sacred covetousness he pants after yet higher degrees of Grace, and after Glory itself. Thus have I opened up to you the desire which the Holy Spirit works in us. "He that has worked us for the same thing is God."

II. Our second subject of discourse is THE FITNESS FOR HEAVEN which is worked in us. Calvin's interpretation of the text is, "He that has fitted us for the same thing is God." Ah, how true this is! There is no fitness whatever in man by nature for communion with his God. It must be a *Divine* work within him. The Father works in us fitness for Heaven by separating us in the everlasting decree to be His own. Heaven is the place of God's own abode—we must be God's own people to be fit to be there. He fits us by adopting us into His family, by justifying us through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, by preserving us by His power.

The Son of God has an equal share in the working of this fitness. He fits us by blotting out our iniquities and by transferring to us His righteousness—by taking us into marriage union with Himself. The Holy Spirit,

forever to be blessed, has His share in this work. It is He who first infuses the new nature. He who gives us spiritual food for the new nature, giving us to feed upon the flesh and blood of Christ. It is He who instructs and develops that new nature, and through the blood of Jesus makes the man meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. Glory be unto the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, who thus in blessed union “has worked us for the same thing.”

Now, let me describe with great brevity the work of the Holy Spirit in preparing us for Glory. As we have already hinted—and we must necessarily traverse much the same ground—fitness for Heaven, as worked in us by the Spirit, consists, first, in the possession of a spiritual nature. Heaven is pre-eminently a spiritual region and those who have no nature begotten from above would not by any possibility be able to enjoy the bliss of Heaven. They would be quite out of their element. It could not be a Heaven to them. A garden bee in the midst of the flowers is at home and gathers honey from all their cups and bells.

But open the gate and admit a swine, and it sees no beauty in lilies, roses, or other flowers. Therefore it proceeds to root, and tear, and spoil in all directions. Such would an unregenerate man be in Heaven. While holy saints shall find bliss in everything in the Paradise of God, an ungodly sinner would be at war with everything in that holy region. Fitness for Heaven lies much in a holy *nature*—a love of Heaven is as contrary to fallen humanity as light to darkness. Do you not feel it so? Left to yourselves, O saints of God, do you not know that you would go back to Egypt? Do you not feel that the old nature lusts after evil?

Well, then, as you cannot possibly inherit Heaven unless you delight in *holiness*, you owe this fitness for the perfect state to the Holy Spirit. Fitness for Heaven lies in a capacity to delight in God. I have always loved that first question and answer in the Assembly’s Catechism, “What is the chief end of man? The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.” Not to enjoy *yourself* forever, not even to enjoy the harps of gold, the angelic society and the feasts of the beatified—but to enjoy *God* forever. If a man has as yet no delight in God and takes no solace in thoughts of Him, he has no fitness for Heaven, and cannot get there. But if you delight in God, it is God that has “worked you to the same thing.”

Fitness for Heaven will lie very much in love to the saints. Those who do not love the people of God on earth would find their company very irksome forever. Here the unrighteous can manage to endure the company of the godly because it can be diluted with an admixture of graceless men. But up there the people shall be all righteous and their conversation shall be all of Christ and of things Divine—such society and such conversation would be weariness, itself, to godless hearts. My Hearer, if you delight in the company of the Believers—and if the more spiritual their conversation the more you enjoy it—then you have been worked to this same thing by the work of the Holy Spirit in your soul, and you may bless the Lord for it.

Joy in service is another sweet preparation for Heaven. Heaven is sinless service. They serve God day and night in His Temple—service without weariness, service without imperfection, service without cessation. Now do you delight to serve God? If so, you evidently have a fitness for Heaven. But as you once abhorred that service, and were the bond-slave of the Prince of Darkness—if you now long and wish to glorify your God—you have been worked thereto by the Holy Spirit's power.

Conformity to Christ Jesus, again, is another preparation for Heaven. Much of Heaven consists in being like Christ. It is the very object of Divine Grace that we should be conformed to His image, that He should be the first-born among many Brethren. Now, if you are growing, by His Grace, somewhat like Christ—if you desire to be like He is, imitating His tender, loving, brave, prayerful, obedient, self-sacrificing spirit—you have some fitness for the skies. But that fitness was not there by *nature*. You were once as unlike Christ as possible. God has worked all this in you.

I am afraid that I go from one point to another rather too rapidly, but the gist of it all is this—Heaven is the world of *spirits*, the land of *holiness*, the House of *God*—and if we have any capacity for the enjoyment of Heaven, it has been worked in us *by God*. The unfitness of unrenowned souls for Heaven may be illustrated by the incapacity of certain uneducated and coarse-minded persons for elevated thoughts and intellectual pursuits.

When a little child, I lived some years in my grandfather's house. In his garden there was a fine old hedge of yew of considerable length which was clipped and trimmed till it made quite a wall of verdure. Behind it was a wide grass walk which looked upon the fields. The grass was kept mown, so as to make pleasant walking. Here, ever since the old Puritan Chapel was built, godly divines had walked and prayed and meditated. My grandfather was likely to use it as his study. Up and down it he would walk when preparing his sermons, and always on Sundays when it was fair, he had half an hour there before preaching.

To me it seemed to be a perfect Paradise, and being forbidden to stay there when Grandfather was meditating, I viewed it with no small degree of awe. I love to think of the green and quiet walk at this moment. But I was once shocked, and even horrified, by hearing a farming man remark concerning this sanctum sanctorum, "It' ud grow a many 'tatures if it wor ploughed up." What cared he for holy memories? What were meditation and contemplation to him? Is it the chief end of man to grow potatoes and eat them? Such, on a larger scale, would be an unconverted man's estimate of joys so elevated and refined as those of Heaven.

Alphonse Karr tells a story of a man servant who asked his master to be allowed to leave his cottage and sleep over the stable. What was the matter with his cottage? "Why, Sir, the nightingales all around the cottage make such a 'jug, jug, jug' at night, that I cannot bear them." A man with a musical ear would be charmed with the nightingales' song—but here

was a man without a musical soul who found the sweetest notes a nuisance. This is a feeble image of the incapacity of unregenerate man for the enjoyments of the world to come—as he is incapable of enjoying them, so is he incapable of longing for them.

But if you and I have grown out of all taste for the things of sin and time. If we are sighing for holy, godly joys, we have therein an evidence that God has worked in us, by His Grace, and will continue to do so till we are made perfect and immortal.

III. The text informs us that in addition to working in us desires and fitness for Glory, the Lord has graciously given to us an **EARNEST OF GLORY**. An earnest, as you all know, is unlike a pledge, in some respects. A pledge has to be returned when the matter which it ensures is obtained—but an earnest is a part of the thing itself. A man has so much wage to take on Saturday night, he receives a part of it in the middle of the week, it is an earnest of the full payment—a part of the payment itself.

So the Holy Spirit is a part of Heaven itself. The work of the Holy Spirit in the soul is the bud of Heaven. Divine Grace is not a thing which will be taken away from us when we enter Heaven, but which will develop into Glory. Grace will not be withdrawn as though it had answered its purpose, but will be matured into Glory. What is meant by the *Holy Spirit* being given to us as an earnest? I believe it signifies, first, that the very dwelling of the Holy Spirit within our soul is the earnest of Heaven.

My Brothers and Sisters, if God Himself condescends to make these bodies His temples, is not this akin to Heaven's honors? Only put away sin, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit would make even this earthly state to be heavenly to us. O my Brethren, you little know what a weight of Glory is contained in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit! If you did but know it and believe in it always, the sorrows of this life would become trivial, and as for the frowns of men you would deride them. *God dwells in you*. You walk among the sons of men unknown and despised, yet as angels see you, you are the objects of their wonder! Rejoice that in this, then, you have an earnest of Heaven.

But everything the Holy Spirit works in us is an earnest of Heaven. When the Holy Spirit brings to us the joys of hope, this is an earnest. While singing some glowing hymn touching the New Jerusalem, our spirit shakes off all her doubts and fears and anticipates her everlasting heritage. When we enjoy the full assurance of faith and read our title clear to mansions in the skies—when faith, looking simply to the finished work of Christ, knows whom she has believed, and is persuaded that he is able to keep that which she has committed to Him—this is an earnest of Heaven. Is not Heaven security, confidence, peace?

The security, confidence, peace which spring from faith in Jesus Christ are part and parcel of the Heaven of the blessed. Heaven is the place of victory, and, my dear Friends, when we are victorious over sin, when the Holy Spirit enables us to overcome some propensity, to put down our an-

ger, to crush our pride, to mortify the flesh with its affections and lusts—then in that conscious victory over sin we enjoy an earnest of the triumph of Heaven. And once more, when the Holy Spirit gives us to enjoy fellowship with Jesus Christ, and with one another—when in the breaking of bread we feel the union which exists between Christ and His members—we have a foretaste of the fellowship of Heaven.

Do not say, then, that you know nothing of what Heaven is. “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him.” But, “He has revealed them unto us by His Spirit.” Spiritual natures *do* know what Heaven is—in the sense of knowing from the *drop* what the *river* must be like—of understanding from the *beam* what the *sun* must be. Its fullness you cannot measure, its depth you cannot fathom, its unutterable bliss you cannot tell.

But still you know of what character the Glory will be—you know that pure are the joys of the blessed, and all their dwellings peace. You know that fellowship with Christ and with holy spirits makes up much of Heaven, and you know this because the earnest of the Spirit is a part and parcel of the thing itself.

I conclude with a practical remark or two. If these things are so, what emotions are most fitting for us? Answer—first, O Believers in Jesus, be thankful! Overflow with thankfulness. Remember these things are not your own productions. They are not flowers of your own garden—they have been planted in your soul by another Hand—and watered by a superior Power. Give all the glory to His holy name, for to Him all the glory belongs. Not a good desire in you was self-originated, no part of your fitness for Paradise was self-formed. Grace has done it, Divine Grace has done it all!

Adore and bless the Holy Spirit who has worked all your works in you, for you are “His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.” Be thankful! As the birds created sing to pour out their song. As the flowers, the handiwork of God, load the air with their perfume—so sing—and let your lives be all-fragrant with gratitude to Him who has worked you to the same thing.

Another emotion we ought all to feel who have this worked in us is that of reverence. When a scholar knows that all he has learned has been taught him by his master, he looks up from his master’s feet into his master’s face with respectful reverence and esteem. O reverence the Holy Spirit! Let us, in our public ministry, and in our private meditations always stand in awe of Him. I am afraid we too much forget Him—let us, instead, reverence Him especially by obedience to His faintest monitions. As the leaves of the aspen tremble to the faintest breath of the wind, so may we tremble to the faintest breath of God’s Holy Spirit.

Let us prize the Word of God because He wrote it. Let us love the ordinances because He puts life and power into them. Let us love His indwelling, and never grieve Him lest He hide His face from us. “He that has worked us for the same thing is God.” Vex not His Spirit, but anxiously ask that He would continue His work, and complete it in righteousness.

Lastly, our heart ought to feel great confidence this morning. If the good thing had been worked by ourselves, we might be sure that it would fail before long. Nothing of mortal man was ever perfect. But if He that has begun the good work is God, there is no fear that He will forsake or leave His work undone. They shall never say of Him, “He began to build and was not able to finish.” No war of His was ever undertaken and then given up because He had not counted the cost. God has begun, God will complete. His promise is “Yes and amen,” and never was forfeited yet. Therefore let us be well assured, and let our hearts be glad.

Dear Hearers, the unhappy thing about this is that there are so many who have no desires for the blessed hereafter, no fitness for it, no earnest of it. Ah, then, the prophecies that are within you—what do they foretell? No yearning for Heaven—does not that foretell that there is no Heaven for you? No fitness for the Presence of God. What does that say? Why, that in the Presence of God you shall not rest. Earnest of the Spirit? Why, you almost laugh at the idea. Ah, then, no earnest is a proof that there is no reward for you.

But what then? Will you be annihilated? Will you pass out of this existence and cease to be? Dark as were that prospect—yes, dark as midnight—yet were it brighter than the fate which the Word of God allots you. There will be darkness, but you shall *live* in it. There will be death, but in it you must ceaselessly exist. For if the righteous are promised “life eternal,” it is also written, “these shall go away into *everlasting punishment*.” God save you from such woe by leading you to trust the Savior. Then you will confess with us, “He that has worked us for the same thing is God,” and unto God be the glory. Amen.

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THE BELIEVER IN THE BODY AND OUT OF THE BODY

NO. 1303

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 2, 1876,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“Now He that has prepared us for the same thing is God, who also has given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord, (for we walk by faith, not by sight). We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Therefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him. For we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he has done, whether it is good or bad.”
2 Corinthians 5:5-10.

IT is quite clear that the Apostle did not consider his body to be himself. He speaks of it as being the frail tent or tabernacle in which he dwelt and, again, as the garment with which, for a while, he was clothed. That tent or tabernacle he expected to see dissolved. And that garment he expected to put off. He distinguished between the outward man which would perish and the inward man, which was his true self, which he speaks of as, “renewed day by day.” The Apostle reckoned upon rising here in the body, according to the Divine will, till he had finished the work which was given him to do. And then he expected to put off his mortal flesh and to be an unclothed and disembodied spirit.

Such is the condition, at the present time, of all the saints who have departed. They are well described as “the spirits of just men made perfect.” With the exception of Enoch and Elijah, who carried their bodies with them into the celestial world, all departed Believers are now spirits unclothed of their bodies and wearing only such array as befits spiritual existences. Is it difficult to conceive of them in that condition? I do not think it should be. Spirits *without* bodies are not such marvelous things as spirits *in* bodies!

You meet, everyday, as you walk the streets, spirits in bodies, spirits that quicken flesh and bone and muscle and move a mass of material from place to place. If we had never seen such a thing as a body kept in life and filled with power by an immaterial, invisible and spiritual substance, it would be a very hard thing to realize. No man among us knows how it is that this inner spirit of ours is connected with the body. Where is the point of union? What is the link between soul and sinew? Where does spirit begin and where does matter end? We know that if we will to move our arm it is moved, but how does the mind that wills, manage to grasp the materialism which obeys its bidding? How is spirit capable of acting upon matter at all?

How is it that a spirit can dwell within an abode of flesh, look out of these eyes, listen through these ears, speak by these lips and perform its

will by these hands? Eyes and ears and hands are but earth—they are made of such matter as we meet with in other parts of the solid world, mere dust of the earth, materialism wisely molded—but yet corruptible materialism. And yet the soul somehow manages to indwell and inhabit its house of clay—a far more wonderful thing, it seems to me, than for a spirit to exist without a body! We shall find it easy to conceive of a spirit disentangled of materialism in proportion as we have learned to meditate upon *spiritual* things and to feel the powers of the world to come.

Multitudes around us know nothing of anything which does not appeal to their senses. But the man who has been renewed by the Spirit of God is, himself, made spiritually minded and, therefore, the idea of disembodied spirits is not strange to him. Let us, according to Scripture, look forward to a condition in which our perfected spirits shall abide with Christ, “waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (Rom. 8:23). Yet Paul did not expect that the disembodied state would last forever, for he was assured of the resurrection of the body.

He did not despise the body so as to hope never to see it again, but he reckoned that after it had been put off, it would undergo a change and thus would be so renovated that at the coming of the Lord he would put it on afresh—and so his spirit would again be clothed! He expected that mortality would be swallowed up by life. And we, also, confidently indulge the same hope. The fabric which was put into the ground when the Believer was buried was sown in corruption. We expect to see it raised in perfection.

That which we laid in the tomb the other day was a poor dishonored corpse on which decay was working its fierce will. But we shall see it raised in glory, radiant with the light which made Moses’ face shine! That which we committed to Mother Earth, we lowered into the grave in weakness, but it shall as surely rise in power! That which was buried was a soulish body, only fit for the natural soul. It was not adapted for the movements and aspirations of the regenerated spirit. But we know that when it shall rise, it will be a spiritual body adapted to our highest nature, fitted to be the palace of that gracious life which makes us sons of God! The Apostle’s great expectation was the perfection of his entire manhood—spirit, soul and body in Christ Jesus!

He was confident in the expectation that though his body would be houseless for awhile, by the dissolving of his earthly tabernacle, he would soon enter into a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens, and stand before the Presence of God both as to his body and his soul made perfect in Christ Jesus! This was confident expectation. From the text it is clear that this belief had a powerful influence over the Apostle. It had especially two effects upon him—one was to make him “always confident” and the other was to create in him a high ambition.

“Therefore,” he says, “we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him.” He felt that wherever he might be and in whatever condition he might exist, the only thing he had to care for was that he might be pleasing to Him who had redeemed him with His precious blood. And so, whether in the body or out of the body, it mattered little to him so long as he could be accepted of the Lord in Jesus Christ. Of the

Apostle's *confidence* and *ambition* we are going to speak this morning, as the Spirit of God may graciously help us.

I. And first, dear Friends, THE BELIEVER HAS REASON FOR CONSTANT CONFIDENCE. The Apostle tells us, "Therefore we are always confident." And then, again, lest we should lose the sense by the interjected sentence in the seventh verse, he says, again, "We are confident, I say." The condition, then, of the Christian, when he is living in faith of resurrection and eternal life, is a condition of continual confidence. It is a confidence which regards both the life which now is and the state in which we expect to live before we reach the fullness of the promised Glory. It is a confidence which concerns the present state—for while we are at home in the body, we are always confident—a confidence which equally concerns, and rather more so, the state which is to come. "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."

First, let me speak with you upon *the confidence which the Believer has in reference to his present condition while he is at home in the body*. Our translators have been somewhat unfortunate in their choice of terms in this instance, for they have lost part of the interest of the passage. We should have seen more beauty in these words if they had given us their literal meaning a little more closely. Let me read them to you as they may be read—"We are always confident, knowing that, while we are at home in the body, we are from home as to the Lord. We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be from home as to the body and to be at home with the Lord. Why we labor, that, whether from home, or at home, we may be accepted of Him."

You see the point lies in *at home* and *from home*. These words are as near an approach to the original as could readily be found, though they do not exhaust the sense of the Greek terms. Here, then, in the present state, we are said to be *at home* in the body. But we are at home in a very modified sense, for it is a home which is not a home, but only a frail lodging, a temporary tenement to accommodate us till we reach our true and *real* home in the New Jerusalem. It is such a home as a soldier has in the camp at a bivouac, or as a passenger has when he is crossing from continent to continent. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had each a home, but it was in a strange country and they were daily looking for a city which has foundations whose builder and maker is God.

While we are in this present state we are at a disadvantage, for we are dwelling in a house which is not, as yet, in our home country, and by it we are kept from our real home in the fatherland above. In a sense, however, this body *is* a home, for here dwells the living, thinking, active mind—somewhere in the brain—from where it spreads itself and rules all the members of the body. We know that within the walls of this earthly fabric, our spirit is ordained to live for awhile, a lamp burning within a pitcher, a precious jewel set in a ring of clay. It is a house for which we have no little affection, and we are loath to quit it—

***"For who to dumb forgetfulness a prey,
This pleasing, anxious being ever resigned,
Left the warm precincts of this house of clay,
Nor cast one longing, lingering look behind?"***

We complain of the infirmities of our bodies, but we are in no hurry to leave them! They threaten to fall upon us as in their decay, but we linger in them, still, till death serves a writ of ejection and, at the same time, pulls down the tenement. We have, some of us, lived in our body for 40 years. Some of you for 60 or 70 years and it is natural that we should have made a home of it, such as it is. And it is small marvel that we are in no haste to emigrate—even the temptation of that brighter home and the “many mansions”—is not always enough to make us wish to be gone! But yet this body is not a fitting home for us and we often discover, by experience, how inconvenient it is.

It is a poor old tent, easily overturned, constantly getting torn. And the older it gets, the more trouble it takes to patch it up and to keep it in habitable repair. In the course of years it has become soiled, creased and worn-out, like the tents of Kedar. With the wear and tear of many years, it becomes more and more evident that it is not a worthy dwelling place for the child of a King, nor a fit abode for an immortal Spirit born from on high! We have suffered many inconveniences from this crumbling tabernacle in many ways, but especially in *spiritual* things. We have been willing to watch, but the body has been inclined to sleep. The spirit has been willing, but the flesh has been very weak. We have been numbered with weariness, pain, care and bodily appetite when we have desired to be altogether engrossed with heavenly things.

Sometimes, when we would sing, a throbbing headache makes us sigh. When we would rejoice with unspeakable joy, a palpitating heart depresses us. And when we would go about our Master’s business, a lame foot or a decaying constitution hinders us so that we dwell in a house which is beneath the quality of so noble a creature as a spirit. We have to put up with flesh and blood, but we are outgrowing them—we feel we are—there is a something within us which warns us that, like certain of the sea creatures which have to break their shells up as they grow, so we are growingly in need of another and better abode.

We are like the young chick within the eggshell—it has been a home for us until now, but it is becoming too tight for us—we begin to chip it and we sometimes wish it would break altogether, that we might enjoy fuller liberty. “We that are in this body do groan, being burdened,” and groan, we shall, till the day of our full redemption and the deliverance of the body from the bondage of corruption!—

***“Welcome, sweet hour of full discharge,
That sets my longing soul at large,
Unbinds my chains, breaks up my cell,
And lets me with my God to dwell.”***

According to the expression of the Greek, ours is a home in a foreign country. We are not dwelling among our own people at present, but we are exiles in a far-off land. We are not alone, for a numerous band of our Brothers and Sisters are with us, even as the Jews found company of their own race in Babylon, in whose songs and sighs they could unite. But this is exile to us, we have no inheritance here. “A possession of a burying place” is all that we need ask for and all that we shall soon have, for this world is not our rest.

The Lord has not been pleased to give us our portion in this life—our inheritance lies on the other side of the Jordan. We are at home in the

body, but, as I have already said, it is but a lodging place in the midst of a strange country in which we are pilgrims and sojourners as all our fathers were. We are wayfaring men hastening away and passing through a foreign land among people who speak not our tongue, know not our customs, understand nothing of the place to which we are going and, therefore, cannot understand us. They even think us mad when we talk about another country, of which they have no idea, and for which they have no longing. We are at home only in a narrow sense, as a man may be said to be at home when, being in banishment, he takes up his abode, for awhile, in a foreign town. It can never be more than this.

It is a home, too, which keeps us from our true home. We are not yet where we can see our Lord and hear His voice. We are not yet in the “rest which remains for the people of God.” Today we are at school, like children whose great holiday joy is to go home. We are laborers and this is the work field. When we have done our day’s work we shall go home, but this is the workshop, not the home. It is a very sweet thing, after a week of hard work, to reach home at last, to take off one’s dusty clothes and throw them aside and feel that toil is over for the present and rest has come. In this world we cannot find a total rest so as to be completely at ease and at home. We shall only reach that happy condition when we are out of this foreign world.

No sense of perfect home rest ever comes over the soul while we are here, except as faith anticipates the joys prepared above. There remains a rest for the people of God, but in this body and in this world it is not to be had. Home is the place where one feels secure—our house is our castle. Outside, in the world, men watch your words and, if they can, they misrepresent or misinterpret them. You have to fight a battle of life, outside, but it is a very blessed thing if the battle is over when you cross your own threshold. Then you are no longer misunderstood, but are appreciated and loved around your own fireside. Beneath our own dear roof-tree there is nobody to catch us up, nobody to quibble at us! Only wife and children and friends who love us and delight in us.

Well, Brothers and Sisters, we find no such home *spiritually* in this world, for this is the place of conflict and watchfulness. Here we dwell among enemies and we have to sorrowfully cry—“My soul is among lions, among those that are set on fire of Hell.” We sing—

***“Woe’s me that I in Mesech am
A sojourner so long!
That I in tabernacles dwell
To Kedar that belong.
My soul with him that hates peace
Has long a dweller been:
I am for peace; but when I speak,
For battle they are keen.
My heart mourns and pines
To reach that peaceful shore,
Where all the weary are at rest,
And troublers vex no more.”***

In Heaven there will be no foes to watch against, nor men of our own household to be our worst enemies. Home, sweet home is to be found *above*—and from that home our present home in the body is keeping us. Home, too, is the place of the closest and sweetest familiarities. There all

unbend. The judge takes off his gown and the soldier his sword—and both play with their children. He who wears his belt out of doors, finds himself stripped of it when he comes among his own kin. There is the kiss of affection, there are the blandishments of love. Here, alas, our spirits cannot take their fill of heavenly familiarities, for distance comes between. We long for the vision of love, but it comes not as yet.

But up *there* what indulgence shall be accorded to us! What discoveries of the love of God in Christ Jesus! Then shall the cry of the spouse in the song be fulfilled forever and ever—“Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth: for Your love is better than wine.” Then shall the inmost heart of Christ be known to us and we shall dwell in Him forever and ever in closest communion! This home of ours in the body keeps us away from such communion with God as the glorified ones above enjoy without ceasing! Said I not, truly, that our present state has its drawbacks—such as make a man sigh and cry to be gone?

But, dear Friends, the main point in which the present state is at a disadvantage compared with the future one is that here we have to live entirely by faith. We walk here by faith, not by sight. You believe in God, but you have not beheld His Glory as the blessed dead have done. You believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, but it is in One “whom having not seen, you love.” You believe in the Holy Spirit and you have been conscious of His Presence, by faith, but there is a something better yet—a clearer sight is yet to be had which we cannot enjoy while we tarry here. At present we take everything on the testimony of God’s Word and the witness of His Spirit, but we have not yet seen the Celestial City, nor heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps, nor eaten at the banquets of the glorified!

We enjoy a foretaste of all these and anticipate them by faith, but actual enjoyments are not for this world. What a man *sees*, why does he yet hope for? This place is the realm of hope we cannot expect to see. But we are *going* to the place where we shall not so much believe as *behold*, where we shall not so much expect as enjoy! We are nearing the country where we shall—

**“See and hear, and know,
All we desired or wished below.”**

And faith shall be exchanged for the clearest sight. Here we gaze through the telescope at heavenly things, but we cannot get into contact with them as we wish to do. But when we have shaken you off, O flesh, then shall we actually come into sight and fruition—and shall behold the Savior, as He is—face to face!

These are the inconveniences, then, of this present state, but Paul, despite all these disadvantages was confident. “We are always confident,” says he. He was contented, he was happy, he was courageous, he was steadfast! And why? Why, Brothers and Sisters, because he had a hope of the immortality to be revealed! He knew that as soon as ever he shook off this body, his soul would be with Christ! He knew that in some future day, when Christ should come, his body and his soul, remarried, should be forever beatified with the Lord and, therefore, he counted all the disadvantages of this life to be as nothing—“these light afflictions which are but for a moment.”

He laughed to scorn anything that he had to suffer here below, because of the “exceeding weight of Glory” which his faith realized, as soon, to be revealed! Observe, also, that his confidence came from God’s work in his soul. “He that has prepared us to the same thing is God.” He was sure he should one day be perfect and immortal because God had begun to work in him to that very end! When the statuary takes the block of stone and begins to carve it into a statue, we get the promise of that which is to be. I no sooner see the master workman take the first stroke, than I feel sure of a work of art, because I see that he has begun to work towards that end. From that work the mason may turn aside, or he may die and, therefore, I cannot be sure that from the chosen stone there will leap out, by-and-by, the statue.

But God never undertakes what He does not finish! He never fails for lack of power, or because of a change of mind. And so, if today I am the quarried block of marble—if He has begun to make the first chippings in me of genuine repentance and simple faith towards Himself—I have the sure prophecy that He intends to work upon me till He has worked me up into the perfect image of Christ, to be immortal and immaculate like my Lord! Paul, by faith, knew that by a Divine decree, before all worlds were created, he was predestinated to be made a perfect and immortal being! He saw that God had created him for that very purpose and newly created him to that end.

He felt the working of God preparing him—he could feel the Spirit of God operating in him, giving him newness of life, causing him to hate sin and to receive, more and more fully, the likeness of Christ, his Master. “He has prepared me for the same thing,” said the Apostle and, therefore, he felt confident that to this end he should be brought. Again, there was another ground of confidence—“who also has given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.” You know what an “earnest” is. It is not a mere pledge, for a pledge is *returned* when that which it certifies is given. An earnest is a *part* of the promise itself.

A man is to receive a wage at the end of the week. In the middle of the week he obtains a part of the money. This is more than a pledge of the rest—it is an earnest of the whole—a most sure and positive pledge of that which remains unpaid. The man who has received the Spirit of God in his soul has obtained the Immortal Seed which will expand into perfection! He is forgiven and accepted! And the Spirit helps his infirmities in prayer, fills him with faith, perfumes him with love, adorns him with holiness and makes him commune with God—all this is the earnest of his perfected condition—and the beginning of the joys to come! The beginning of the infallible assurance of all those joys which the Lord has prepared for them that love Him!

No man ever had the Spirit of God dwelling in him, molding him to the Divine will, but what he ultimately obtained the heavenly state, for the Spirit of God does not leave His work undone. Neither does He bestow Divine gifts to take them away again. “Therefore,” says Paul, “we are always confident.” We have a hope which enters into that which is within the veil. We know what image the Lord is working in us and we have received the Holy Spirit as the earnest of eternal blessedness! Therefore, come what

may, we are filled with a sacred courage and a sublime peace which make us await the future with calmest confidence.

Now we shall pass on to the next point, which is that *Paul was equally confident about the next state into which he expected, soon, to pass*, namely, the condition of a disembodied spirit. Nature, when it acts apart from Grace, shrinks from the thought of dying. But death can have no terrors for the man whom it lands in a condition which he prefers. By turning to the text, we see that Paul *preferred* the state into which death would cast him. "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." That is, we have a preference for being away from this home in the body, that we may be at home with the Lord! He looked at the state into which he would soon come by the dissolution of his body as a more desirable one than even his life of confidence here below!

Yet let us observe that it was not because Paul thought it would be better to be without a body than with one that he thus spoke. He has told us already, "not for that we would be unclothed." He did not desire to be a disembodied spirit for its own sake. There are certain mystics who look upon the body as a wretched encumbrance. The thought of resurrection has no pleasure to them and, therefore, they spiritualize the doctrine and make it to be no resurrection at all. The Apostle was not of their mind. He called the body the temple of God and desired its perfection, not its destruction.

The Lord has constituted man to be a wonderful continuation of many forms of existence—a link between the angel and the animal, a mixture of the Divine and the material—a comprehensive being taking up into himself the Heaven which is above him and the earth on which he treads. Our great Creator does not mean us to be maimed creatures forever. He intends us to dwell with Him eternally in the perfection of our humanity. When our Lord Jesus died, He did not redeem one half of man, but the whole man—and He means not to leave any part of the purchased possession in the enemy's hands.

We ought not to think that to be half a man would be more desirable than to be a whole man, for our Lord Jesus does not think so. We should be waiting, expectantly, for the Second Advent of our Lord, who will call His saints from their tombs and redeem them altogether from the power of the grave. We should, even now, rejoice that this corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality. It will be evident to you all, dear Friends, that if Paul preferred the disembodied state to this, as the text tells us he did, then the spirits of those saints who have left their bodies in the grave are not annihilated—they live on!

Paul could not have counted it better to be annihilated than to lead a life of holy confidence. The saints are not dead! Our Lord gave a conclusive answer to that error when He said, "Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he calls the Lord, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For He is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto Him." Those who have departed this life are still alive! We are sure of that, or else Paul would not have preferred that state. Neither are they unconscious, as some say, for who would prefer torpor to active confidence? Whatever trials there may be in

the Christian life here below, the man of faith really does enjoy life and could not prefer unconsciousness.

Neither are the saints in purgatorial fires, as the Babylonian harlot says! Nobody would desire to be tormented and we may be sure that the Apostle Paul would not have been willing to be in purgatory more than to live here and serve his Lord! Brothers and Sisters, the saints live! They live in consciousness and in happiness! Moses came and talked with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration, though he had no body, just as readily as Elijah did, though that mighty Prophet carried his body with him when he ascended in a chariot of fire. The *body* is not necessary to consciousness or to happiness. The best of all is that the spirits of the departed are with Christ. "To be with Christ, which is far better," said the Apostle. "Forever with the Lord," their portion is allotted them.

It is the Lord's own prayer—"I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My Glory." And the prayer is fulfilled in them! "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from now on, yes, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them." This made the Apostle something more than confident and courageous in the prospect of death. He was willing to depart into the disembodied state because he knew he would be at home with the Lord in it!

I wish you to dwell a minute on that thought of being at home with the Lord. We rejoice that we have Christ with us here, spiritually, for His Presence brings us spiritual blessings of a very high order, and joys prophetic of the joys of Heaven, but still we have not His *bodily* Presence. We have, now, a sight of our Lord through a telescope, as it were. But we do not see Him near at hand. We speak to Him as through a trumpet across the sea—we do not talk to Him face to face. Ah, what will it be to be at home with Christ! When we reach His own palace gate and sit at His own table, we shall know Him far better than we do now! And He will look more lovely in our eyes than ever, because we shall see Him more clearly.

The sound of His voice will be much sweeter than anything we have heard in the Gospel here below, for we shall actually hear Him speak! Will we not take our fill of Him when we once behold Him? I think I shall never want to take my eyes off Him, but find a Heaven, an eternity, an infinity of bliss in drinking Him in with all my eyes and all my heart! To be at home with Him will be to understand infinitely more of Him than we have ever dreamed of as yet. Ah, you do not know His Glory! You could not bear to behold it as yet. You would fall at His feet as dead, in a swoon of delight, if you could but gaze upon Him while you are yet in this frail body! When disembodied you shall not have the flesh to throw a mist over your eyes, but you shall behold the King in His beauty and be able to bear the joy.

In that condition to which we are speeding, we shall also be beyond all doubt as to the truth of our holy faith. There will be no more mistrust of our Lord or of His promises. And we shall no more doubt the power of His blood or our share in His atoning Sacrifice. Sometimes the dark atheistic thought will come, "Is it not all a dream?" You shall never have such a thought, there, for you will be at home with Jesus! Now there arises the troublesome question, Were you a real Believer? Has Jesus really washed

you in His blood? You will be beyond all such enquiries when you are absent from the body and present with the Lord!

Now you have to walk by faith and you must not try to get beyond faith, for that is the mode of spiritual life for this present state. But after death you will no more walk by faith—you will have sight and fruition—and these will banish all the doubts which try your faith while in the body. How pleasant and desirable does the prospect of actual fruition cause Heaven to become, even though we know that, for awhile, we shall be away from the body. In the future state we shall communicate with Christ more sensibly than we do now. Here we speak with Him, but it is by faith through the Spirit of God. In Heaven we shall actually speak to Him in His immediate Presence and hear His voice while He personally speaks to us.

Ah, what we shall have to tell Him! What will He have to tell us! Truly, I dare not venture into these great deeps of expectation lest I drown myself in the delights of hope! Oh, the joy which awaits us! It is almost too much for me to think of! When we are at home with Him, without the body, and also, I suppose, even more when we are at home in the resurrection body, we shall have greater capacity for taking in the Glory of our Lord than we have now. Sometimes He fills us with His love which passes knowledge and then we think we know very much of Him. But oh, my Brothers and Sisters, our knowledge is but that of little babes as yet! We are such small and shallow vessels that a few drops of Christ's love soon fill us up and we begin running over! But He will enlarge us till we hold great measures of Him and, then, He will fill us with all the fullness of God!

You have, sometimes, tried to imagine what Heaven must be like. Well, you shall have many such heavens! No, ten thousand times as much delight in God as you have ever dreamed of! If even here He does for us exceedingly abundantly above what we ask or think, what will He do for us *there*? As for His Person and His sweetness—and His excellence and His Glory—you have only touched the hem of His garment! You have only, like Jonathan, dipped the end of your rod in that flood of honey and it has enlightened your eyes! But oh, when you shall be at home with Him, you shall feast to your heart's content! Here we sip, but there we shall drink full bowls! Here we eat our daily morsel, but there the heavenly feast will never break up!

Now, putting these two things together, the present state and the next, we have great reason, like the Apostle, to go on, from day to day, with holy courage and confidence. If the way is rough, it leads to an unspeakably joyful end—so let us trip over it cheerfully! And if the way should grow rougher, still, let us show still greater confidence, for one hour with our God will make up for it all and infinitely more!

II. The last point I can only spend a few minutes upon. It is this—THE BELIEVER HAS REASONS FOR AN ABSORBING AMBITION. According to the text, we are to live alone for Jesus—“Why we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him.” From now on, my Brothers and Sisters, the one great thing we have to care about is to please our Lord. You are saved and Heaven is your portion. Now, from this time on, concentrate all your thoughts, your faculties and your energies upon this one design—to be acceptable with Jesus Christ. Live for Him as He has died for you. Live for Him alone.

Believer, it ought to be your ambition to please Christ in every act you do. Do not say, "How will this please myself or please my neighbor?" But ask, "How will this please my Lord?" And, remember, it is not by the action, alone, that He will be pleased, but the *motive* must be right or you will fail. Oh, cry to Him to keep your motives clean, pure, elevated, heavenly—for groveling aims will be a sour leaven and will render the whole loaf unfit to offer. Nor is it merely the motive—it is the spirit in which the whole thing is done. Labor, Brothers and Sisters, with a Divine ambition to please Jesus Christ in your thoughts, in your wishes, in your desires, in everything that is about you.

I know you will have to lament many shortcomings and errors. There will be much about you that will be displeasing to Him. Take care that it is also displeasing to you and never be pleased with that which does not please Him. Never accept anything in yourself which He would not accept. With all your ardent spirit watch every movement of your soul that no power or passion so moves as to vex His Holy Spirit. Seek to please Him every moment while you are upon the earth. You know what sort of things Jesus did and what He would like you to do—follow His every step—obey His every word.

He has bid you walk in holiness as He did, O sin not against Him! He bids you clothe the naked, feed the hungry, teach the ignorant, visit the sick, look after the fatherless and widows—all these things He speaks of as peculiarly pleasing to Himself and as mentionable to the honor of His saints in the day of His appearing. Let these things be in you and abound in you! Be fruitful in those Graces which were most conspicuous in Him. Do not let a day pass without doing something with the one objective of pleasing Christ.

We do a great deal because it is customary, or because Church opinion expects it. But to do holy acts directly for Christ, simply and alone for love of Him—this should be our constant habit. Have we not some alabaster box to break to anoint His head? Have we not some tears with which to wash *His* feet? Need I urge that something, however humble, should frequently be done, even at the cost of self-denial, for His dear sake? Yes, let *everything* be done as unto Him. For then, mark this last, we shall please Him in the next state, for, "we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ." The child of God is *glad* of this!

The text might be translated, "we shall all be *manifested* before the Judgment Seat of Christ." Today men do not understand us, but they will know us in that day! I will guarantee you this one thing—if you will live the most devoted and disinterested life possible—you will find people sneering at you and imputing your actions to selfish motives. They will put a cruel construction on all you do or say. Well, it does not matter, for we shall all be manifested at the Judgment Seat of Christ, before God and men and angels! Let us live to please Him, for our integrity of motive will be known at the last, and put beyond all dispute!

The world said of one man that he preached from selfish motives, while all the time he had no thought but for God's Glory. The Lord will make it clear how false was the judgment of men. They said of another man that he was very earnest, but that he wanted to win popularity. Yet all the while he cared not one straw for human praise. Such a man need not

trouble himself—the smoke will clear away in that Great Day and he will be seen in his uprightness! If you have lived only to please Christ, you need not be afraid of His coming, for in that day He shall clear away all slander and misrepresentation—and you shall stand out vindicated and justified before an assembled universe!

In that day, when God shall publicly justify His saints, He will make all men, angels and devils know that they are truly just. The solemn verdict of God will be one to which the whole universe of intelligent spirits will give in their assent. They will say, “YES,” to the sentence passed by the Lord Jesus! They, themselves, would bring in a verdict in favor of Believers in that last testing day if it were left to them! As for the ungodly, the condemning sentence shall be not only just, but such as the whole universe shall assent to! The punishment which God will lay upon sinners for the evil deeds done in the body, will not then be caviled at, as too severe! It will be such a sentence as every intelligent spirit shall be compelled to own to be right.

But, my Brothers and Sisters, let us so live that while our lives shall challenge no judgment on the score of merit—for that thought we utterly abhor—yet there shall be in our lives evidences of our having received Grace from God and evidences of our being acceptable with Christ. For if we do not so live, we may talk what we like about faith and boast what we please about experience—without holiness no man shall see the Lord. If our life has never had in it that which pleases Christ, then the evidence will be taken against us that we were not pleasing to Him, that we had no spiritual life, that we had no Grace in the heart and that we were not saved. Then there will remain nothing for us but to be condemned with the ungodly.

Come, then, Brothers and Sisters, do not let us care whether we live or die! Let us not suffer ourselves to be alarmed about the passage out of this world into the next state, but let us be “steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.” I have been twice to the grave this week, with two of our aged friends—a Sister and a Brother—who have passed into Glory. And the lesson which they have left behind for our edification is—let us not be concerned whether we are at home in the body or whether we are at home with Christ, but, living or dying, let us be careful to please Jesus!

I wish I knew how to enforce this lesson and send it home to every Believer’s heart, but I must rather pray the Holy Spirit to do so. May He write it on my soul and on yours! And may we all be found practicing it from this time forth, even forever. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
2 Corinthians 4:14-18; 5.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—865, 858, 850.**

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FAITH VERSUS SIGHT

NO. 677

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

**“For we walk by faith, not by sight.”
2 Corinthians 5:7.**

I THINK the Apostle is explaining here how it was he could say that while he was at home in the body, he was absent from the Lord—and through what means he felt that this was not the state in which he wished to be forever. Having been possessed, and actuated, and moved by the principle of faith, he was not content to tabernacle in a body which could only be dwelt in satisfactorily through the influence of the faculty of sight. The Apostle, however, mentions here a great general principle—“We walk by *faith*, not by sight.” In talking upon this text this evening, we shall—without pretending to go into it fully—speak, first of all, upon the posture mentioned. Then upon the two principles contrasted, and finally upon a certain caution which is here implied.

I. First, a word or two about THE POSTURE MENTIONED. Paul, speaking of Believers, says: “We walk by faith, not by sight.” Walking is, of course, a posture which implies the possession of life. You can make a dead man sit in a certain position, or even stand in a chosen attitude—but to *walk* necessitates the possession of inward *life*. It becomes with us, therefore, a question, in the first place, whether we have the life of God within us.

In the sense in which the term “walk” is here used, the ungodly man does not walk at all. He hastens after his own lusts and he treads in the way of the flesh. But in a spiritual sense he is, and always must be a stranger to “walking” until God has quickened him. When we see corpses walking along our roads and pass them at eventide in our streets, then shall we expect to see Christian feelings, Christian emotions, and Christian character exhibited by unconverted men—but not till then! There must first be an *inward life* before there can be the *outward sign* of it.

Walking is a position which also signifies activity. You would suppose, from the way in which some Christians deport themselves, that their whole life was spent in meditation. It is a blessed thing to *sit*—

“With Mary at the Master’s feet,”

but we walk as well as sit. We do not merely learn, but we practice what we know. We are not simply scholars, but, having been taught as scholars, we go on to show our scholarship by working in the vineyard or wherever else the Master may be pleased to place us. The quietists and mystics are a class of people who have a peculiar attraction for my mind, and I suppose the mention of such a name as that of Madame Guyon, who, among females, stands at the very head of the school, will awaken in many of you many sweet remembrances of times enjoyed in reading her blessed hymns and of her sweet and admirable life.

But, after all, it is not the highest style of Christian living to be a mystic or a quietist. "We walk." Some Christians seem as if they always sit, but, "we walk." You would gather, indeed, from what others say, that the whole life of a Christian is to be spent in prayer. Prayer, it is true, is the vitality of the secret parts of Christian life, but we are not always on our knees! We are not constantly engaged in seeking blessings from Heaven. We do, "continue in prayer," but we are also engaged in showing forth to others the blessings which we have received, and in exhibiting in our daily actions the fruits which we have gathered on the mountaintop of communion with God. "We walk," and this implies activity.

Oh, I would that some Christians would pay a little attention to their legs instead of paying it all to their heads! When children's heads grow too fast it is a sign of disease and they get the rickets or water on the brain. And there are some very sound Brethren who seem to me to have got some kind of disease—and when they try to walk, they straightway make a tumble of it—because they have paid so much attention to perplexing doctrinal views instead of looking, as they ought to have done, to the practical part of Christianity.

By all means let us have doctrine! But by all means let us have precepts, too. By all means let us have inward experience, but by all means let us also have outward "holiness, without which no man can see the Lord." "We walk." This is more than some can say. They can affirm—"We talk. We think. We experience. We feel"—but true Christians can say, with the Apostle Paul, "We walk." Oh that we may ever be able to say it, too! Here, then, is the activity of the Christian life.

In the posture of walking there is also implied *progress*. A man does not walk unless he makes some headway. We are not always practicing the goose-step. We are not always lifting our foot and then putting it down in the same place. This may do very well for the beginners in the awkward squad at drill, and I am afraid that a great many of us are still in that squad—but the Christian who has got through his childhood, and has grown somewhat, makes *progress*. There are some who will tell you that they do not know that they have made any progress, or, if they do not say this, you can see that they have made none.

They are as bad-tempered as when they first joined the Church. They are as changing, as narrow-minded, as critical, as easily "carried about with every wind of doctrine" as they were at first. Such persons give some cause for suspicion as to whether they know much about the Divine life at all—because they who have the Divine life truly in them can say—"We walk." They go from strength to strength. Every one of them appears in Zion before God. They are not satisfied with being in the Way—they desire also to *walk* in the Way. God does not say to us—"This is the Way," and then stop—He says, "This is the Way, *walk* in it."

We are always to be making advances. We are to be going from faith in its beginnings to faith in its perfections—from faith to assurance—from assurance to full assurance. And from there we are to go to the full assurance of hope to the full assurance of understanding—always forward, waxing stronger and stronger. There is a progress to be made in every Christian Grace and he who carefully marks the terms used about Chris-

tian Graces will discover that there are degrees in all of them, while each of them are degrees one above the other. Walking implies progress and the genuine Christian, when he is in a healthy state, may truthfully say—"We walk."

Walking also implies perseverance. When a man goes along a step or two and then stops, or returns, we do not call that walking. The motion of the planets, as seen by the eye have been described by the poet as "progressive, retrograde, and standing still." I am afraid there are many people of whom this would be a true description, but the true Christian keeps on. And though there may often appear to be times when he stops, and seasons when he goes back, yet the Scripture is not broken where it says that, "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shines more and more unto the perfect day."

The Christian's motto is, "Upward and onward." Not as though he had already attained, either was already perfect—he presses forward to the mark for the prize of his high calling in Christ Jesus. We are not true Christians if we stop, or start, or turn aside. As an arrow from a bow that is drawn by some mighty archer speeds straightway towards its goal, such is the Christian life as it is and such is it as it always should be. We make progress, and we persevere in so doing.

I think, however, that by the term "walk" the Apostle meant to signify that, in the ordinary and customary actions of life we are actuated by faith. You know walking is the common way of moving. You do not often talk of a child's walking. You do speak of it, of course, but you generally say, "There are the little ones running about the house." You do not say that they are "walking about the house," because the way of moving with the young is generally running, inasmuch as they have a great deal of extra energy and have not yet got into the wear and tear of life.

You do not find lambs walking at all in the ordinary way in which sheep do. Now, it is very easy, in the beginning of the Christian life, to run in the ways of the Lord with rejoicing—but running, after all, is not the most manly form of progress—it is not that which can be kept up for long! Running fatigues and tires you—*walking* is that kind of progress in which a man continues hour after hour. And after his night's rest he rises again to walk on as before until he reaches his goal.

In Scripture we often read of men who, by faith, did great exploits. "By my God I have broken through a troop. By my God I will leap over a wall." Now this is a very great thing to do, and some Christians are always fixing their eyes upon exploits of faith. The Apostle Paul cut through troops and did leap over walls, but in this place he speaks of the common actions of life. It is as if he said—"I not only leap walls by faith, but I walk by faith! I not only break through troops by faith, but I go and do my business by faith."

That man has not yet learned the true spirit of Christianity who is always saying, "I can preach a sermon by faith." Yes, Sir, but can you make a coat by faith? "I can distribute tracts, and visit the district by faith." Can you cook a dinner by faith? I mean, can you perform the common actions of the household, and the daily duties which fall to your lot in the spirit of faith? This is what the Apostle means. He does not speak about running,

or jumping or fighting, but about walking—and he means to tell you that the ordinary life of a Christian is different from the life of another man—that he has learned to introduce faith into *everything* he does. It was not a bad saying of one who said that he, “did eat and drink, and sleep eternal life.” We want not a home-spun religion, but a religion that was spun in Heaven and that will do to wear at home and about the house. “We walk by faith.”

The Mohammedan worships his god at the “holy hour.” The true Christian calls all hours “holy,” and worships always. Some set apart the seventh day of the week, and therein do well, but in setting apart *all* the seven days, and *living* to God, and entering into rest throughout them all, we do better still. Our souls should not keep our religion for the Tabernacle and the pew, and the closet, and the open Bible, and the bended knee. Our religion must become the *atmosphere* in which we live, the element in which our soul breathes! Our God must dwell in us, and we dwell in Him. We must feed upon Christ, not as a special dainty, but as “the bread of Heaven,” and drink of Him, not as a luxury, but as “the water of life.”

We must wear our piety, not as some holiday garment, but as our everyday dress and then it is that we get into the spirit of true religion.

Summing up all, then, the whole of the Christian life which is implied in the term, “walk,” is here spoken of, and it is influenced by the principle of faith which we are now about to speak.

II. And now, secondly, in the text we have TWO PRINCIPLES CONTRASTED. There is walking by *faith*, and there is walking by *sight*. The most of men, all men, indeed, naturally walk by sight. They have a proverb that, “Seeing is believing,” and they are wise men, for they trust people as far as they can see them, and no further. The world thinks itself uncommonly knowing in always depending upon its own sight.

The highest degree of worldly wisdom seems to be just this—see everything for yourself and do not be taken in. Do not be led by the nose by anybody, but follow your own understanding. This is the text which the world’s Solomons always preach from—“Self-made Men”—that is the title of their book! Self-reliance—that is the name of their principle, and, according to the world, the best and grandest thing that a man can do is to have faith in himself! Their maxim is, “Know things for yourself. Look after the main chance. Make money—make it honestly if you can, and honorably if possible, but, if not, make it anyhow, by hook or by crook.” “Take care of Number One”—this is the world’s learned dictum.

Now the Christian is the very opposite of this. He says—“I do not care about looking after the things that are seen and are temporal. They are like dissolving views, or the scenes from a child’s magic lantern—there is nothing in them—they are but phantoms and shadows. The things that are not seen influence me because they are *eternal*. They endure, remain, abide, and therefore they affect a creature which has learned that it has, not mortality alone, but *immortality*, and who, expecting to live forever, therefore seeks for things which will be like his own existence.”

Now, since the world thinks itself so very wise for holding everything it can, and thinks the Christian such a great fool for giving up what he can see for what he cannot see, in contradiction to the world’s proverb, “A bird

in the hand is worth two in the bush”—let us see where the wisdom of this matter is, and where it is not. In the first place, we notice that walking by sight is a very childish thing. Any child can walk by sight, and so can any fool, too. We know how a child feels when it looks at a mountain, and we have all felt the same when we have gone to Switzerland and other places.

I had a friend with me, who said of a certain mountain—“I will undertake to be at the top in half-an-hour.” It took us five and a half hours steady toiling, and we did not go slowly either! Of course my friend judged by his *sight*, and not being accustomed to mountains, and not knowing that sight is a very different thing when it comes to deal with different landscapes—not knowing that a judgment which would be pretty accurate in England would be totally wrong in the mountains of Wales, and still more erroneous in Switzerland—not knowing all this, I dare say he would be startled at eventide, expecting to find himself at the top before the sun went down, whereas he would not have reached it till the middle of the night!

A child always judges everything by what he sees. You give him a number of coins. They are all counterfeit, but he is so pleased with them that he does not care about having real sovereigns—he is just as glad to have those he has, for they look quite as good. You offer him sixpence and when he is yet a youngster he will give you your sixpence back for a penny because the penny is the larger of the two. He judges by sight, which, you see, is a childish principle altogether. When a man grows up he no longer judges so much by sight. He has learned a great many things in this world and he has discovered that his eyes may be very greatly mistaken at times.

The child says—“How quickly these stars move! How fast the moon hastens through the clouds!” The man says—“No, no. It is the clouds that are moving.” The child says that the sun rises in the morning and sets in the evening, and admires its motion. But the man knows that the sun does not move at all, and that it is the *earth* that is moving. He believes this, and thus in a certain degree he has faith because he cannot see the world move. Hodge once said he would not believe the world moved at all because he found that his house still stood in the same place, and Hodge proved himself to have been thus only a big child. But it is a very manly thing to believe something which you cannot see. Even in common philosophy it is so.

The children all sat at home in England, and in Spain, and in France and they said—“Oh, this is all the world, this is,” and they had their Mediterranean Sea in the middle of the earth. But there was a man among them who said he did not believe it but thought the world was round, and that there was another half to it. “You are a fool,” they said. “Fool or not,” he replied, “I believe it.” And Columbus stood up, head and shoulders taller than the rest of his fellows and got a few to go with him and started—a company of fools they were called. They could not see anything!

They sailed on, and on, and on, for many weary days, and the unbelievers said they had better go back. There were several pieces of seaweed floating about which looked as if they came from some other shore, or had

been washed down some not far distant river. Columbus did not care much for these seaweeds because he believed, and believed firmly, that there was another half of the globe. And when the land birds came and lighted on his ship, though they gladdened his heart, yet they did not make him believe any the more. And when he saw America, and stood on the strand of the land of gold, he still only had to keep on as he had done. He had walked by faith before, and he could continue in the same course now. When he came back everybody said—"What a wonderful man is Columbus!" Just 50 and all the rest were children—he was the only true man among them.

Now the Christian is a man! I mean to say he is "a man" in the Scriptural sense of the term. He has become a full-grown man in Christ Jesus, and while the worldling says—"This is all the world. Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. Let us make money and spend it and enjoy ourselves, for this is the end of the world"—the Christian says, "No, there must be another half to the world! I am sure there must be another land beyond the sea, so I will loose my anchor and turn my helm, and try to find it. I will leave this world to you children and will seek another and a more heavenly one."

So we sail away and by-and-by we see the bits of seaweed. And when at last the angelic messengers come, like birds of Paradise, and light upon the masts of our vessels, then we thank God that we were ever enabled, with true manly courage, to loose our anchor, to set out upon our voyage and to turn our helm towards the sea! We thank Him that we believed in God and were actuated by a noble principle of faith, compared with which the world's wisdom is but the folly of the child. This, then, is the first thing we have to say about these two principles—that the one is childish while the other is manly.

Again, the one is groveling while the other is noble. I think the world must be pretty well ashamed of itself if it still considers this poor earth to be all that a soul has to live for. I feel as if I could not talk upon the matter. Solomon tried everything there was in this world—riches, power, pleasure—every sort of delicacy and delight he had, beyond the point of satisfaction—and what was his verdict upon it all? "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!" A man earning his bread all day long—what is he? Is he better than the donkey that I saw a little while ago at Carisbrook Castle, pumping up water and always going round? What more is he than that?

"Well, but he makes money and acquires houses and land." Yes, and there is only so much more probate tax to be paid when he dies, and I suppose the worms know no difference between a man who died worth three hundred thousand pounds and a poor wretch who was buried by the parish! It does not come to anything more than that! The children go to the seaside with their little wooden spades and build up a pier of sand, but the tide comes and washes it away—and this is just what men do—they build with heavier stuff, which gives them more care and not half so much merriment in piling up as the youngsters have in digging up their sand. But the end is just the same!

Only the children live to build again, while these big children, these grovelers, are washed out to sea with all their works and perish everlast-

ingly. You have walked upon the beach, I dare say, when the sea has gone down. I do not mean the beach at Ramsgate where everybody goes, but a long way out in some quiet spot. If you have, you will have seen what hundreds of little mounds there are all over the beach, where the worms have come up and made a number of small heaps. That is all we do, and it is all that the world is—just a big place covered all over with little heaps of dirt that we have all piled up.

But where have we gone? If there is not another world to live for, I must say that this life is a most unutterably empty kind of thing! It is not worthy of a man! But oh, to believe what God tells me—that there is a God—that God became flesh to bear me up to Himself! To believe that I am God's *son*—that I have an immortality within myself which will outlast the stars—that I shall one day see His face and sing His praise forever with cherubim and seraphim! Why, there is something *here*! The man who believes this feels as if he begins to grow! He bursts the poor engrossments of his flesh and expands into something worthy of a man who is made in the image of the Most High!

The principle of seeing everything, and of liking only to get what I can see, and touch, and handle is the poor instinct of beasts and birds, but the principle of living upon what I *cannot* see, and upon something that I can believe, is one worthy of a man. As much as man is higher than the beast, so much and yet more a thousand-fold is the life of faith superior to that of mere sight and feeling.

Again—there is something exceedingly ignorant about believing only what I can see. What, then, shall I believe? Even in common life the man who walks by sight must necessarily be a fool—I say *necessarily* because nine out of ten things in the world that are the most wonderful and potent *cannot* be seen—at least not by the eyes. A man who will not believe in electricity—well, what can you make of him in these days? Such a man will believe in the vapor that puffs from the steam engine, but since nobody ever did or could see steam, inasmuch as it is an invisible agent, he cannot ever believe in that!

He lives in the midst of a great world and he cannot account for most things in it because he will not believe in anything beyond what he *sees*. If he carries this principle out—the marvels of other countries, and the wonders of other ages are all shut out from his poor dull mind. And this is most decidedly the case with regard to *spiritual* things. If you only walk by sight, and only believe what you see, what do you believe? You believe that while you are living here it is a good thing to make the best you can of it. And that then you will die and be buried, and that will be the end of you! What a poor, miserable, ignorant belief this is!

But when you believe in what God reveals and come to walk by faith, how your information expands! Now riddles are all solved, and the inexplicable is understood! Now you begin to comprehend things in a way which you never could have done had you walked only by sight. Now you can understand those trials and troubles that come to you! Now you can understand the complexity of your nature and the inward conflicts that you feel within you. You could never have done this on the principle of sight—but believing what God says you have got into a state in which you shall

be educated and taught till you become wise—and able to have fellowship with the only wise God!

Let me say, again, that walking by sight is such a very deceptive way of walking. After all, the eyes do not see anything—it is the *mind* that sees *through* the eyes. The eyes in every man have some sort of defect in them—they need to be educated for a long time before they tell the truth! And even then there are a thousand things about which they do not always speak truly. The man who walks by his eyes will be deceived in many ways. The angler baits his hook and casts his fly upon the water, and the silly fish, which jumps by sight, has the hook in its jaws in a moment. You can evermore, if you will, go from bad to worse in unseen danger if you will judge according to the sight of the eyes.

The world is wise enough to say that, “Honesty is the best policy.” The world was not quite itself when it said that, for mostly it is present gain that Satan sets before us, and present pleasure. “Snatch the hour as it passes,” says Satan. “These things are sure—you do not know what may come afterwards.” And so is the poor soul deceived by judging according to what he *thinks* he sees, whereas the man who has a God to go to, and to believe in, is never deceived. The promise to him always stands fast. The Person of Christ is always his sure refuge, and God Himself is his perpetual inheritance.

Let me add, again, that the principle of sight is a very changeable one. You can see well enough, you know, in the day, but what will you do in the night when you cannot see? It is well enough to talk of walking by sight in the light, but what will you do when the darkness comes on? It is very well to talk about living on time present while you are here, but when you go upstairs and lie on your deathbed, what about the principle of living for the present then? When you cannot stay here any longer—when, notwithstanding all the ties which held you to earth, Death begins to drag you away and you cry to him—“Stop! I cannot leave wife, and children, and business just yet!” And when Death remorselessly tears you away from all that is dear to you—how about the principle of sight then? It is a strange principle to die with, but, let me say, on the other hand, that the principle of faith does best in the dark!

He who walks by faith can walk in the sunlight as well as you can, for he walks with God—he has enlightened eyes, but he can walk in the dark as you cannot, for his light is still shining upon him. He trusts in the unseen and in the invisible—and his soul rejoices when present things are passing away. We will not tarry longer upon this point except to say one thing, namely, that those who walk by sight walk alone. Walking by sight is just this—“I believe in myself.” Whereas walking by faith is—“I believe in God.” If I walk by sight I walk by myself. If I walk by faith then there are two of us, and the second one—ah, how great, how glorious, how mighty is He!

He is the Great All-in-All! He is God All-Sufficient! Sight goes to war at its own charges and becomes bankrupt and is defeated. Faith goes to war at the charges of the King’s Exchequer and there is no fear that Faith’s bank shall ever be broken. Sight builds the house from its own quarry and on its own foundation, but it begins to build and is never able to fin-

ish. And what it does build rests on sand and falls. But Faith builds on the foundation laid in eternity—in the fair colors of the Savior’s blood—in the Covenant of Grace! It goes to God for every stone to be used in the building and brings forth the top-stone with shouts of, “Grace, Divine Grace unto it.”

Beloved, when you say, “I will do so-and-so,” you may be very proud. But when you can say, “God will do so-and-so, and I believe it,” then you will be humble and yet you may glory and boast as much as you will because there are *two* of you together. It is not “the sword of Gideon,” but, “the sword of the Lord and of Gideon,” and Jehovah cannot be defeated. “The life that I live I live not, but Christ hides in me,” and this is the grand advantage. In living by sight you have to get your own wisdom, your own judgment, your own strength to guide you. And when you get into trouble you must be your own deliverer, and your own comforter, and your own helper or else you must run to somebody as weak as yourselves who will only send you deeper down into the mire.

But when you walk by faith, should there seem to be a mistake *you* have not made it. Should anything seem to go wrong, you did not steer the ship. And if the ship should run aground, you are not answerable and will not be blamed. It is yours to be watchful and careful, and to believe that all things work together for the good of those who love God and are the called according to His purpose. But besides this we know that nothing can go wrong while God is in the vessel! Blessed be God, when Christ is on Lake Gennesaret there may come a stormy night, but every vessel gets safely to port and we can always sing—

***“Be gone unbelief, my Savior is near,
And for my relief will surely appear.
By faith let me wrestle, and He will perform,
With Christ in the vessel I smile at the storm.”***

III. And now, having contrasted the two principles, I am about to close by noticing THE CAUTION IMPLIED in the text. The Apostle says positively, “We walk by faith,” and then he adds negatively, “not by sight.” The caution, then, is—NEVER MIX THE TWO PRINCIPLES. Some of you will not know what I am talking about but I will try to make you understand it. Some of you are actuated in what you do by something that you can see. You can see your children, and you will work for them. You can see money—you will strive for that. You can see such-and-such temporal good—you will seek after that.

But the Christian believes in God and he lives to God. He lives as if there were a God, but you live as if there were no God. He believes in a hereafter—you say you do, too—but you live as if there were no hereafter, while the Christian lives as if there was one. He believes in sin, and you say you do, and yet you never weep about it—while the Christian lives as if sin were a real disease and he could not bear it. You say you believe in Christ the Savior, but you live as if you did not believe in Him. The Christian lives upon his belief that there is a Savior. All that he does is affected and acted upon not by what he sees, but by what he does *not* see and yet believes! He walks according to that faith.

Now, the thing that neither you nor I can understand is this—how is it that the man who has once learned to walk by faith can be so stupid as

ever to mix the two principles together? You may go on a journey by land, or you may go by water, but to try to swim and walk at the same time would be rather stupid. A drunken man tries to walk on both sides of the street at once—and there is a sort of intoxication that sometimes seizes upon Christians which makes them also try to walk by two principles. They cannot do it! It is like trying to go due east and due west at the same time. The principles themselves are antagonistic to one another and yet there are some Christians who attempt it.

Shall I show you what I mean by this? You say—“I believe God loves me. I have prospered in business ever since I have been a Christian.” Yes—the first part of that is faith—but the second part of it is sight. Suppose you had not prospered in business, what then? Why, according to your way of reasoning, you would have said—“I do not believe that God loves me, for I have not prospered in business since I have been a Christian.” So, you see, you would really be walking by *sight*.

Genuine Christian reasoning is this—“I have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ. He says that as many as receive Him are the sons of God. I have received Him, and I am therefore a son of God. Now, whether my Father kisses me or flogs me, I know that I am His son. I am not going to be guided by my state and condition, but by my faith as to the promise of the Word. He says that if I have received Christ I have the privilege to be a child of God. Then, whether I am rich or poor—whether I am sick or healthy—all these are matters of sight. I do not bring them into the calculation. I take the naked Word of God as it stands—that I am God’s child. If He slays me I am His child. If He lets me go to prison, if He should suffer me to rot in a dungeon, or to burn at the stake, I am still His child! I do not look upon circumstances as at all affecting my position.”

Oh Beloved, if you once begin calculating your position before God according to your *temporal* circumstances, where will you be? Do not talk any more of believing—you have given it up—and you are really walking by sight. Perhaps many of you do not make precisely this mistake, but there is another way of doing it. “Now,” says one, “I have believed in Jesus Christ, but I am afraid I am not saved, for I feel tonight so depressed in spirits, and so unhappy.” “Oh,” says another, “you need not tell me that I have trusted in Jesus Christ, for I am sure I am saved, because I feel so happy.”

Now you are both wrong, as wrong as wrong can be! When you said you trusted in Christ—so far, so good. But when you said you were afraid you were not saved because you were so *unhappy*, or, on the other hand, that you were sure you were saved because you were so *happy*—that, also, is walking by sight! You see you are mixing up the two principles which will no more go together than fire and water. If I have believed in Jesus Christ, I may at this moment, through disease of body or some other present temporal affliction, be very heavy in spirit—but I am saved notwithstanding. “He that believe on Him is not condemned.”

I may be very troubled. I may see a great deal in myself that may make me distressed—but if I believe, I am not condemned, and cannot be. Or, if I have strong faith and am possessed of great joy, that is no proof of my being saved. It is my *believing* that is the proof of that. I do not hang upon

my feelings—I rely simply upon Christ! I must learn the difference between feeling and believing or else I shall always be blundering and making mistakes. You sometimes get taken by the Lord to the mountaintop and you have such sweet communion with Him! And then you say—“My mountain stands firm, I shall never be moved.”

Ah, poor Simpleton, you do not know what you are saying, for in a short time you may go down into the depths and cry—“All Your waves and Your billows have gone over me.” You think that God has forgotten to be gracious and you begin to write bitter things against yourself—whereas that is the very time to “have faith in God”—

***“When we in darkness walk,
Nor feel the heavenly flame,
Then is the time to trust the Lord,
And wait upon His name.”***

You think that you will use your candle in the daytime, but candles were made for the night! Faith is not meant for sweet frames and feelings only—it is meant for dark frames and horrible feelings. Do you think that the minister has no changes? If he had no changes within he would know himself to be a Moabite and not an Israelite, for it is Moab that is settled on his lees!

What, then, is the way to maintain peace when there are changes within the soul? How can we be peaceful when we are sometimes taken up to Heaven and are another time cast down? Why, the only way is never to be unduly elated by prosperity without or within and never to be unduly depressed by adversity or by doubts and fears! We must learn to live neither upon things without nor upon things within, but upon things *above* which are the true food for a new-born spirit. What is your title for Heaven, Christian? Every evidence will one day be taken from you except that which is comprised in these three words: “It is written.”

The genuine foundation upon which I may rest for salvation is this: “God has said it.” It is not, “I have *experienced* it,” for there will often be times when I shall be afraid that my experience is a delusion. But if “God has said it,” we can never be afraid! On the oath and Covenant of the Most High we must, every one of us, come and build! If we do that, all shall be well with us. But this is a work so far above human nature that human nature does not even understand it, and though I have tried to speak very plainly, I am conscious that I have spoken in riddles to many of you. God Himself must open the eyes to understand what living faith means, and then He must give that living faith and perpetuate it or else, as Israel went back in their hearts to Egypt, so shall we go back to the garlic and onions of the things that are seen and have but little of the manna which comes from an unseen Heaven.

And now, in closing, I would affectionately bid you take heed of one thing. You must be sure if you walk by faith, that you walk by the *right* faith. I mean you must be sure that it is faith in Jesus Christ. If you put faith in your dreams, as some of you still do—or in anything you thought you saw when you were walking, or in a voice you thought you heard from the clouds, or in texts of Scripture coming to your mind—if you put faith in anything else but Christ—I do not care how good it may be or how bad

it may be—you must beware, for such a faith as that will give way. You may have a very strong faith in everything else but Christ and perish!

There was an architect who had a plan for building a lighthouse on the Eddystone Rock. He was quite satisfied, and as he sat by the fire looking at his plans he was quite sure that no storm that ever came could shake the building. He applied for the contract to build the lighthouse and did build it—and a very singular-looking place it was. There were a great many flags about it and ornaments and it looked very promising. Some shook their heads a little, but he was very, very firm and said he should like to be in it himself in the worst wind that ever blew. He was in it at the time he wanted to be—and he was never heard of again—nor was anything more ever seen of his lighthouse. The whole thing was swept away. He was a man of great faith, only it happened to be founded on mistaken principles.

Now sometimes, because there is a way of talking which looks very much like assurance, you may say, “I am not afraid. I never had a doubt or a fear. I know it is all right with my soul. I am not afraid of the test of the Day of Judgment.” Well, whether you wish it or not, that test for the labor of your lighthouse will come. And if it should prove that you built it *yourself*, it will be swept away—and you with it. But if your soul takes God’s Word, and reading that Word, believes it and is willing to be taught its inward meaning—if you take that Word as it stands, and rest upon it, and act upon it with all your heart and soul—the worst storm that ever blew shall never shake your rock and refuge, nor you, either! And you shall be safe when earth’s old columns bow and all her wheels shall go to wreck and confusion.

Rest in the Lord Jehovah! Depend on the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ for all that you need! Rest wholly in Him with the whole weight of your soul and spirit and then there shall be no fear that what you shall see is God’s face with acceptance! May God teach us faith on the right principle, and may we walk by it, and not by sight—and then the Lord shall give us that reward which is given to those who walk by faith in the living God!

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TO DIE OR NOT TO DIE!

NO. 413

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 11, 1861,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Willing rather to be absent from the body and
to be present with the Lord.”
2 Corinthians 5:8.***

I once heard two good men holding a dialogue with one another. I should not like to have the task of saying which I thought the better man of the two. I believe them both to be sincere followers of the Savior and both of them, I think have a good hope through grace. One of them said he should be glad to go to Heaven. He wished that his time was come. He did not see anything here worth living for and he should be only too glad if now the summons should reach him that he should cross the river and arrive in the Promised Land. The other brother said he did not feel so. He thought he had many reasons why he would rather just then live than die.

He thanked God that he had lived to see the Church in prosperity and it made his heart glad. He should like, he said, to be a sharer of the Church's joy for years to come. Besides, he had those he loved on earth and he said perhaps it might be a weakness in him but certainly he could not join in the other brother's aspirations—at least not to the same extent. I stood by. I do not know that I volunteered then any very strong words by way of notice of what either of them said, yet I took notes of their conversation. Thinking the matter over it suggested to me a few thoughts which I shall endeavor to present to you tonight. May the topic be interesting and may you feel your own interest in it.

Now there was one of the Brethren who would *rather not depart but stay*. I will take up that side of the question first and show when such a desire is wrong and when it is right. The other Brother, like Paul, said he would *rather depart* for he thought it far better. I will take up that side of the question afterwards and show when that, too is wrong and when that, too, is right. I think they must both be sifted and to pronounce a judgment upon either prematurely as right or wrong would be to perpetrate an injustice and to commit an error.

Sometimes it is wrong for a Christian man to say, “I do not want to die—I would rather live.” And one of the first cases is *when that Christian man has grown worldly*. I think it was Dr. Johnson who being taken by one of his friends over to his fine house and along the walks of his beauti-

ful garden, observed to him—“Ah, Sir, these are the things that make it hard to die.” To leave the comforts of life. To go from a nest that is well-feathered and to stretch our wings into the air. To leave the house which our industry has built, the objects familiar to our senses, the projects that absorb our interest and above all, the family—I say willingly—to leave these is difficult. All these are so many strings tying us down like ropes which fasten the baboon which would flee if once its cords were cut.

But, Brethren, this is wrong in a Christian man. What is there in this present world that he should love, compared with the world to come? Has Christ taught him to find his solace here? Did Christ come from Heaven that we should find a Heaven below? No, rather has He taught us that the enjoyments of this world are not fit meat for the noble spirits which He has re-created. Men must eat angels' food. They cannot live by bread alone. The world was never meant to fill a believer's soul. He may find some contentment in it—for “every creature of God is good and is to be received with thanksgiving.”

But to set this world in comparison with the next so as to be unwilling to let it go in order to receive the crown of life—this were folly—this were madness, this were wickedness in the godly man. In such a sense as that the thing is wrong.

And again, when the Christian man wishes to stay here, *because he has a secret fear of dying*, it is wrong. Brethren, I would not speak harshly to those who, “by fear of death are all their lifetime subject to bondage.” I would speak encouragingly to them. What did Christ come into the world for? He came to deliver those who are subject to this bondage. And did Christ come in vain? No, Brethren. Then let us shake off these chains. They are unworthy of the men who have a part and lot in Christ Jesus the Redeemer.

Afraid to die? Why, you are afraid of a stingless enemy. Afraid of a shadow—no, you are afraid of Heaven's own portals. You are afraid of your Father's servant whom He sends to bring you to Himself! Be more afraid of living than of dying, for there are more fears in life than in death. In fact, to the Christian there is no fear in death. “Oh, but,” you say, “the pains and groans of death!” “No,” say I, “they are the pains and groans of life.” There are no pains and groans in death. Death occupies but an instant—it is but, as it were, a pin's prick and all is over. It is *life* that gives the pains. The sighs, the groans and the strife are not those of death—but those of life struggling against death—when the strong man will not yield himself.

So says one of our poets—

***“How deep implanted in the breast of man
The dread of death! I sing its sovereign cure.*”**

***Why start at death?—Where is he? Death arrived
Is past. Not come or gone; he's never here.
Before hope, sensation fails; black-boding man
Receives, not suffers, death's tremendous blow.***

Brethren, when Jesus Christ died for our offenses and was raised again for our justification, He “loosed the pains of death.” Our old Divines were accustomed to say—“Then there are only a few loose pains for the believer to suffer.” Death seizes not the Christian with the strong grip of an officer of Justice. Rather does death beckon the soul away to be present with the Lord!

Let those fear to die whose sins lie heavy on their consciences. Let those fear to die who have heaped sin upon sin, who have rejected the atonement, have trampled on the blood of sprinkling, have cast behind their backs the invitations of mercy and live and die in their sins. But you—you fear death? You whose sins are forgiven? You who are clothed in Jesus' righteousness? You to whom death is admission into immortality? You to whom death is but the end of dying and the beginning of life? You fear death? Why Sirs, surely you know not what spirit you are of. Such fear of dying is wrong in the Christian. Let him strive against it and by getting more grace let him overcome his dread.

Then again, if the Christian's fear of dying is *the result of his doubting his interest in Christ*, that is wrong. We have no right to doubt. “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” But some read it as though it said, “He that doubts shall be saved.” In this very verse the Apostle says, “We are always confident.” Now, some divines hate the very word “confidence” and some professors of religion think that a Christian has nothing to do with confidence. And yet, the Apostle says, “We are always confident.” And, indeed, the Apostle knew what was the proper spirit for a believer—that he might not be trembling between death and life, between hope and fear, with “of,” and “but,” and “perhaps”—for his only rocks.

No, that is not the spirit of a child of God. One would think, to hear some men talk, that the atonement of Christ was a quagmire, a bog, or bending ice which might give way under our feet. But, Brethren, it is not so. It is a rock more lasting than the rocks on which the earth is piled and more enduring than the solid columns which support Heaven's starry roof. Why fear, then? Why doubt? Why tremble? Such pining after life, such fears of death because we doubt our Savior are disreputable in a Christian man. Let us seek to overcome them—that being always confident, we may be willing to depart—which is far better.

One more point I ought not to pass over here, albeit I do not know in which scale to put it—whether to call it right or wrong. When the Christian had rather stay here *because he has a large family dependent upon*

him and he says, "How can I die?" "Ah," he says, "the Apostle Paul had not a house to maintain and a responsible business to manage for the support of his dependent household. He lived in single blessedness and when he journeyed he took all his stock-in-trade with him. But if I were to die just now, I should leave my widow without provision and my children would be all but penniless orphans."

Well now, that is a right consideration. The religion of Christ does not teach us to deny our natural affections and if any man desire not to provide for his own household, he is worse than a heathen man and a publican. But mark, if that care gets to be earning care—if it is a distrustful care as to God's Providence—then it is wrong, for many a time has a believer closed his eyes in perfect peace, though he knew that he left his dear ones without a heritage, for he has put God's promise between his lips—"Leave your fatherless children and let your widow trust in Me."

I think I may tell a story that might aptly illustrate this. Though some are here whom it concerns, the name not transpiring it can do no hurt. I have heard of a poor laboring man whose children were at that time struggling for their bread and suddenly the pangs of death came on him. As he lay dying, this was the legacy he left his children—children, mark you who are this day, many of them, rich and all of them together with his widow to her dying day—they have been comfortably provided for. He said to his wife, as he was dying—"You will find so many shillings in that box over there"—and you would think he was going to say, "Take care of it, it is the last I have."

But no. He said, "I owe just that sum of money to Mrs. So-and-So down in the village. Take it and pay her. It is all I owe in the world and then I can die content." As a Christian man he died and left to his children a better heritage than many a peer of the realm has bestowed, though he has given estates over the acres of which a bird's wing might flag in the attempt to fly. And I say from that very moment—and there are those here who can bear me witness—from that very moment that man's family rose in circumstances. From that very instant they began to rise in respectability and position in life and they make it their boast that their father left them such a heritage as that.

Oh, Christian man, you may in the strength of an unwavering faith in God close your eyes in peace. Let not your social position too much disturb you, but while you make all the provision you can let not your provision ever stint you in your generosity to Christ's cause, or mar the peace with which you go to your death-pillow. He that has been with you will also be with your seed. I cannot boast many years of observation—I cannot say as David did—"I have been young and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread"—but there be

many gray-headed ones who can say that and set to their seal that God is true.

Having thus brought out what I think the wrong side of the matter, let me now show you when I think it may be right for the believer to say, "I would rather live than die." And that is, first, *when he feels that he has not yet done much for the matter and a field of labors is just opening before his eyes*. "Oh," says he, "I should not like to go to Heaven yet, for I have done so little for Him on earth." As a valiant soldier, with the field of battle in view, he wants to win a victory. The fight is just beginning and he has not had an opportunity of distinguishing himself. He has been in the rear and he says to himself, "I want an opportunity of rushing to the front and thinning my new laurels, so that before the battle be over I may be distinguished for serving my country."

So many a young Christian may, with a noble ambition, say—"I do not want my part in the battle to be over yet. I had rather stay a little longer, till I have fought the good fight and finished my course." Christian! Christian! If you say thus, who can blame you? Your desire to remain is commendable indeed. But perhaps we have been long in the field and we are saying—"I do not want to die yet, because the laborers are few"? Oh, let me stay till I see others raised up to preach the Gospel that I love. Great Commander of our hosts, let my hand hold Your standard till another hand stronger than mine shall grasp it. Let me stand in the fore-front of the battle, till You find someone else to bear the world's opprobrium and tug and toil for souls even in the very fire."

I can quote Carry and Ward and Pierre, who when they were laid down with sickness at Serampore, prayed that they might live a little longer, because every godly man in India was then worth a thousand. They seemed to say, "If any would come and take my place, gladly would I go to find repose. But I have to keep this gap, or guard this bulwark. Oh Captain, call me not away, lest Your name be dishonored and Your enemies get to themselves triumph." If Elisha said, "My Father, my Father, my Father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof"—much more can you conceive the charioteer of God who has long held in the rapid steeds, standing upright in his chariot, as he feels the death-film gathering over his eye and he is about in sheer exhaustion to cast down the reins.

Because he can hold them no longer, you can hear him cry, "Let me just live until I can pass the reins to my successor's hands and transfer, like Moses, the guardianship of Israel to a Joshua who shall lead them into the Promised Land." In those two cases and there may be others—it would be allowable for the believer to say, "To abide in the flesh is more needful for You and therefore I prefer rather to live than die."

I now take the second stage of the controversy and shall try to deal fairly with that. When is it right and when is it wrong for a believer to wish to go to Heaven?

First, it is wrong *when he wants to get there to get away from his work*. Sometimes when we have got a hard task to do for the Lord we wish that the rest would come and we talk almost peevishly of the “rest that remains for the people of God.” There be some lazy spirits who would like an everlasting Sabbath, when they might always sit still and do nothing. That is their notion of Heaven—

***“There on a green and flowery mount,
Our weary souls shall sit.”***

My own constitutional idleness always makes me look forward to Heaven as a place of rest, for in everything I do I am obliged to drive myself to do it for the Master’s sake. And there are many, I dare say, who suffer from a torpid and sluggish liver, to whom the thought of Heaven as a place of rest is generally the paramount one.

Well, now, I do not think that we ought to wish to go to Heaven to have done with work. Suppose you were to employ a laborer and he came to you about ten o’clock in the morning and said, “Master, it is a very hot day, I wish it was six o’clock at night.” You would say, “Let me see, how many hours have you been at work—there is your money, take it and go. I want none of those laggard fellows about my premises that are always looking for six o’clock.” Or suppose you had another man engaged by the week and you met him on Thursday and he said, “I wish it was Saturday, Sir, I wish it was Saturday night.”

“Ah,” you would say, “A man that always looks for Saturday night is never worth his master’s keeping. Just go on with your work till it is finished and then when Saturday night comes it will be all the more welcome to you.” And yet, Brethren you and I have been guilty of that same unworthy listlessness with regard to the things of Christ. We have wanted to get away from the work. It was too hard and too hot for us—so we would even wish to skulk into Heaven that we might repose our wearied souls upon the green and flowery mounts. Now that is wrong. Get up with you, get up with you! “Six days shall you labor and do all that you have to do. But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God.” If you murmur at the six days of labor for Christ Jesus in His vineyard—how shall you hope to enjoy with Him the eternal Sabbatism that remains for the people of God?

Some, too, wish to get away from this world *because there is some little discouragement that they have met with in laboring for Christ*. Jonah thought he would rather go to Tarshish than to Nineveh. There are many spiritual Jonahs who had rather go to Heaven than they would go to their pulpits again, or to the place where they have been taunted, ridiculed and

persecuted. It is the same spirit of disobedience and unbelief. They want to get out of the work and away from the discouragements of it and so they say they would like to go Home. I knew a man a little while ago—and he who tells the tale knows by experience the truth of it—I knew a man who, thinking of his own responsibility and of the solemn work which lay upon him, having met with some rough words and being somewhat cast down, wished to go to Heaven.

And he has been ashamed of himself ever since, for he thought within himself—what business had he the first time he met with an enemy, to say to his Captain, “Please let me go home.” We have read this last week some excellent stories of valiant men. There are a few instances that ought perhaps to be told for our encouragement. There was a certain officer in a certain battle, which we need not mention, but which ought to be called forever, “The Battle of the Spurs.” This gentleman, finding there was no chance, rode as quickly as he could to Washington to say it was a mistake. Yes, of course that is what he went for. He was not at all afraid. Of course he did not return home, because he did not like the look of the campaign, or thought there might be a chance of his being cut down.

Perhaps that was not the reason. Perhaps he was a very brave man and so he showed his back to the enemy, thinking that the back alone of so brave a man would be enough to confound his foes. Perhaps that was it. And perhaps that may be the reason why you and I want to go to Heaven when we get a little uncomfortable. But to tell you the truth, I suspect it was abominable cowardice. And I suspect it is the same with you and with me. We get cowardly and afraid of the world lest its opposition stain our pride—afraid of Satan—whom it is our duty to resist. And tender of the flesh which it is our great duty to mortify and not to pamper. And withal we are distrustful of God as our Helper. It is then we fretfully say, “Let us go to Heaven.”

Fancy Martin Luther talking like that! Melancthon did it once, but Martin Luther said, “No, no, Melancthon, you are not going to Heaven yet. I will not have it,” and down he went and prayed while Melancthon said, “Let me die, Luther.” But Luther said, “No, we want you and you are not to be let off yet, you must stand in the thick of the battle till the fight changes and victory is ours.” Thus, to wish to get away from our appointed place of trial and conflict, because of discouragements, is wrong in the extreme.

And there are some—I would not speak severely but truthfully—some there are who want to go to Heaven, *to get away from the Lord’s will on earth*. They have had so much pain, that they would like to be released from it. We cannot, we will not, blame them. If we had the same sufferings, we should have the same desire. But yet does it not sometimes

amount to this, “Father, I see the cup is there and I know I ought to drink it, but if the cup cannot pass from me, let me pass away from it”? Does it not sometimes amount to this, “This furnace is very hot, Lord, take me out of it to Heaven at once”? Does it not come to this, “Lord, You have tried me so sorely. I do not like these trials. I have an objection to Your will and I should like to be removed from the necessity of enduring it”?

Such people never do die, remember, for years afterwards—because the Lord knows they are not fit to die. When we want to die to get away from our pains, we generally keep on living. But when we are able to say, “Well, let it be as He wills. I would be glad to be rid of pain, but I would be content to bear it if it is God’s will,” then patience has had her perfect work and it often happens that the Lord says, “It is well, My child—your will is My will and now it is My will that you should be with Me where I am.”

And now, bear with me patiently while I try to show when such a desire as this is not only undeserving of censure, but truly praiseworthy, exceedingly commendable and eminently to be desired. Brothers and Sisters, if you long to go to Heaven *because you are conscious of your daily sins and want to be rid of them*—if, seeing your perpetual mistakes, transgressions and iniquities, you are saying—

**“Sin, my worst enemy before,
Shall vex my eyes and ears no more;
My inward foes shall all be slain,
Nor Satan break my peace again”—**

it is a good desire, for to be perfectly holy is an aspiration worthy of the best of men. You may—I am sure you will—in the thought that you shall be without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing say, “Jesus, make no tarrying, but quickly take Your servant to Yourself.”

Suppose, again, that you wish to serve God better than you do and you say, “Oh, my Master, I cannot serve You here as I would. I would like to be removed to Heaven that I might serve You day and night in Your temple, that I might fly on Your errands, sing Your praises without ceasing and adore You before Your face with raptures here unknown.” Then, inasmuch as it is a proper thing for the servant of God to desire to be a better servant and a more faithful and obedient steward, it must be right and proper for him to long to be conformed unto his Master’s image, that he may serve his Master without imperfection.

Oh, methinks, Brethren, this should be one of the strongest reasons to make us long to get from this world and gain the promised home.

Again, when you and I have been at the Lord’s Table, or in some service where we have had great enjoyment, we have gone home singing in our hearts—

“Now I have tasted of the grapes,

***I sometimes long to go
Where my dear Lord the vineyard keeps,
And all the clusters grow.”***

You have had the earnest and you want to have the whole of the redemption money. You have tasted of Eschol’s grapes and you want to go and live in the land that flows with milk and honey. If you did not want to go, it would be as strange as it would be wicked.

Oh Jesus! When we have sipped Your love, we have longed to bathe in it. When we have tasted some of Heaven’s dewdrops, we have longed to drink of the river of God that is full of water. When we have come up some of the lower knolls of the hill, we have panted to climb the mountain’s summit and stand where God dwells in the high places of eternity—

***“Hopeless of joy is anything below,
We only long to soar,
The fullness of His love to feel,
And lose His smile no more.
His hand, with all the gentle power,
The sweet constraint of love,
Has drawn us from this restless world,
And fixed our hearts above.”***

Such earnestness make us pant for Heaven and it cannot be wrong if such is the case.

Again, when you have had near fellowship with Christ—when you have *seen His face and leaned your head upon His bosom*—it would indeed be a strange thing if you did not wish to be with Him where He is. I would not believe that a woman loved her husband if she never cared for his society. The affianced one has seen her betrothed husband but for a moment and she wishes to see him again and longs for the time when they shall never part again. And so the heart that is affianced to Christ longs to be happy, pants for His embrace and to sit with Him at the marriage supper. If I were to compare Christ with wine, I would say He is such wine that the more you drink, the more you long to drink.

If I compare Him to food—though He stops one hunger He gives us another. Oh, I think that was a splendid thought of Rutherford’s, when, having floated upon the river of Christ’s fellowship, he said—“Oh, that my ship would sink and founder in the sea! Oh, that it would go down till forty fathoms of His love should reach over the mast head of my highest thoughts! Oh, to be swallowed up in Christ—to be lost in Him—as the ray is lost in the sun and the drop in the sea!” If you did not long for this it would be a shame indeed! If you did not long to see His face it would seem as though you had no love for Him and would never be conformed in His image.

Brethren, I shall say no more, except to put these few thoughts together. You are a child—he is not a loving child that does not wish to see his father’s face. How some of us used to long for the holidays! We used to make a little almanac and put down the days and mark them off one by one. Six weeks before the time, we would begin to count how many days there were and every morning we would say there was one day less before we went home. Either he is a bad child—or he has got a bad father—that does not want to go home. Now we have got a good and blessed Father and I hope He has made us His true children and we want to see His face.

We long for the time when we shall no longer be under tutors and governors, but shall come home to enjoy the inheritance. Brethren, we are also laborers. It were a strange thing if the laborer did not wish to achieve the end of his toils. It were indeed a strange thing if, industrious though he is, he did not prefer the end of his toils to the beginning. It were contrary to nature and I think contrary to grace, if the farmer did not long for the harvest and if he that toils did not desire to receive the reward. We are not only laborers, Brethren, but mariners—mariners that are often tempest-tossed.

The sails are rent to shreds. The timbers are creaking. The ship drives along before the blast—who does not want to get into port? Which man among you does not desire to say—“See, the harbor is near. Lo, the red lights!” Who among you would not wish to cast anchor now and say, “I have passed the floods and now I am come to my desired havens”? Brethren, we are not only mariners but pilgrims—pilgrims of the weary foot, having here no continuing city. Who does not want to get to his home?—

“Home, home, sweet home!

There’s no place like home!”

Heaven is my home and there is no place like Heaven! No, if you put me in a palace it is not my home. No, though the world were at my feet, it were not my home. Home! Home! Who will not long for home?

And last, what soldier does not long for victory? He would not still the fight, but he wishes it were triumphantly over. He does not turn his back, but breasting the foe he marches on with deadly tramp, with bayonet fixed, keeping the line, till, going over the dead bodies of his enemies, at last he reaches the camp, takes it by storm and puts the banner of his country where once waved the standard of his foe. What Roman soldier did not anticipate the triumph, Brethren? What Roman cohort did not expect to join in the triumphal procession? What commander did not aspire to the vote of thanks at the capitol?

Let us then pant for home. It is the end of the battle. It is the reward of victory. Let us not long for Heaven to escape from the fight, but as a victory that is the result of it. And now what say you? Do you say—

***“To Jesus, the crown of my hope,
My soul is in haste to be gone?”***

Oh, some of you can say it. God grant you your desire. May you find the promised rest when God’s time shall come. And I would say for myself—I would say for you—“Oh, God, in Your own time come quickly—come quickly—come, Lord Jesus!”

How different the feelings of those of you who have no Heaven hereafter! To you Death is a chasm and there is no hope to bridge it! It is dread without a promise. It is despair without an end! Sinner, pray God that you may not die. Think not of dying, Man, for if your troubles are great here they will be greater hereafter. He that commits suicide to get out of trouble leaps into the gulf to escape from the water—drowns himself to prevent himself from getting wet. He leaps into the fire because he is scorched.

Do it not, do it not. He that kills himself goes with his hands red with blood before his Maker and goes there to his own damnation. But, Soul, since you are yet alive may God teach you to confess your sins and to seek for mercy. Remember it is to be had for he that believes on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved. Trust Christ with your soul. He is worthy of your confidence. He will keep you and will “present you faultless before His Father’s presence with exceeding great joy.”

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THE GREAT ASSIZE

NO. 1076

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 25, 1872,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ;
that everyone may receive the things done in his body,
according to that he has done,
whether it is good or bad.”
2 Corinthians 5:10.*

THIS morning we preached [**THE RESURRECION CREDIBLE, #1067**] concerning the resurrection of the dead and it seems consistent with order to carry forward our thoughts, this evening, to that which follows immediately after the resurrection, namely, the general judgment, for the dead rise on purpose that they may be judged in their bodies. The Resurrection is the immediate prelude to the Judgment. There is no need that I try to prove to you from Scripture that there will be a general judgment, for the Word of God abounds with proof-passages. You have them in the Old Testament. You find David anticipating that great assize in the Psalms (especially in such as the 49th, 50th, 96th and the three that follow the 96th), for most assuredly the Lord comes—He comes to judge the earth in righteousness.

Very solemnly and very tenderly does Solomon, in the Ecclesiastes, warn the young man that let him rejoice as he may and cheer his heart in the days of his youth for all these things God will bring him into judgment, for God will judge every secret thing. Daniel in the night visions beholds the Son of Man coming with the clouds of Heaven and drawing near to the Ancient of Days. Then He sits upon the Throne of Judgment and the nations are gathered before Him. It was no new doctrine to the Jews—it was received and accepted by them as a most certain fact that there would be a day in which God would judge the earth in righteousness.

The New Testament is very express. The 25th of Matthew which we read to you just now, contains language which could not possibly be more clear and definite, from the lips of the Savior Himself. He is the faithful Witness and cannot lie. You are told that before Him will be gathered all nations and He shall divide them, the one from the other, as the shepherd divides the sheep from the goats. Other passages there are in abundance, as, for instance, the one that is now before us, which is plain enough. Another

we might quote is in the second Epistle to the Thessalonians, the first chapter, from the 7th to the 10th verse.

Let us read it, “And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the Presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power; when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.”

The book of the Revelation is very graphic in its depicting that last general judgment. Turn to the 20th chapter, at the 11th and 12th verses. The Seer of Patmos says, “And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the Heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the Book of Life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.” Time would fail me to refer you to all the Scriptures. It is asserted over and over again by the Holy Spirit, whose word is Truth, that there will be a judgment of the quick and of the dead.

Beside that direct testimony, it should be remembered there is a cogent argument that so it must be from the very fact that God is just as the Ruler over men. In all human governments there must be an assize held. Government cannot be conducted without its days of session and of trial, and, inasmuch as there is evidently sin and evil in this world, it might be fairly anticipated that there would be a time when God will go on circuit and when He will call the prisoners before Him and the guilty shall receive their condemnation. Judge for yourselves—is this present state the conclusion of all things? If so, what evidence would you cite of Divine justice in the teeth of the fact that the best of men are often in this world the poorest and the most afflicted, while the worst of men acquire wealth, practice oppression, and receive homage from the crowd?

Who are they that ride in the high places of the earth? Are they not those great transgressors who, “wade through slaughter to a throne and shut the gates of mercy on mankind”? Where are the servants of God? They are in obscurity and suffering full often. Do they not sit like Job among the ashes, subjects of little pity, objects of much upbraiding? And where are the enemies of God? Do not many of them wear purple and fine linen and fare sumptuously every day? If there is no hereafter, then Dives has the best of it and the selfish man who fears not God is, after all, the wisest of men and more to be commended than his fellows!

But it cannot be so. Our common sense revolts against the thought! There must be another state in which these anomalies will all be rectified. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most miserable," says the Apostle. The best of men were driven to the worst of straits in those persecuting times for being God's servants. What do you say, then? *Finis coronat opus*, the end crowns the work? That cannot be the final issue of life, or Justice itself were frustrated. There must be a *restitution* for those who suffer unjustly—there must be a punishment for the wicked and the oppressor! Not only may this be affirmed from a general sense of justice, but there is in the conscience of most men, if not of all, an assent to this fact.

As an old Puritan says, "God holds a petty session in every man's conscience which is the earnest of the assize which He will hold by and by, for almost all men judge themselves and their conscience knows this to be wrong and that to be right. I say 'almost all,' for there seems to be in this generation a race of men who have so stultified their conscience that the spark appears to have gone out and they put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. The lie they seem to approve, but the truth they do not recognize. But let conscience alone and do not stupefy her and you shall find her bearing witness that there is a Judge of all the earth who must do right."

Now this is peculiarly the case when conscience is allowed full play. Men who are busy about their work or entertained with their pleasures often keep their consciences quiet. As John Bunyan puts it, they shut up Mr. Conscience; they blind his windows; they barricade his doors—and as for the great bell on the top of the house which the old gentleman was apt to ring, they cut the rope of it so that he cannot get at it—for they do not wish him to disturb the town of Mansoul. But when death comes it often happens that Mr. Conscience escapes from his prison, and then, I assure you, he will make such a din that there is not a sleeping head in all Mansoul! He will cry out and avenge himself for his constrained silence and make the man know that there is a something within him not quite dead which cries out, still, for justice and that sin cannot go unpunished.

There must be a judgment, then. Scripture asserts it—that should be enough—but by way of collateral evidence the natural order of things requires it and conscience attests it. Now we come to consider what our text says about the Judgment. I pray you, Brothers and Sisters, if I should speak coldly tonight on this momentous Truth of God, or fail to excite your attention and stir your deepest emotions, forgive me! And may God forgive me, for I shall have good reason to ask God's forgiveness seeing that if ever a topic should arouse the preacher to a zeal for the honor of his Lord and for the welfare of his fellow creatures—and so make him doubly in earnest—it is this.

But then, permit me to say that if ever there was a theme quite independent of the speaker—which on its *own* account, alone, should command your thoughtfulness—it is that which I now bring before you. I feel no need of oratory or of well-selected speech—the bare mention of the fact that such a judgment is impending and will before long occur might well hold you in breathless silence, still the very throbbing of your pulse and choke the utterance of my lips! The certainty of it, the reality of it, the terrors that accompany it—the impossibility of escaping from it all appeal to us now and demand our vigilance.

I. I ask you now, who IS IT, OR WHO ARE THEY THAT WILL HAVE TO APPEAR BEFORE THE THRONE OF JUDGMENT? The answer is plain, it admits of no exemption—“We must *all* appear before the judgment seat of Christ.” This is very decisive if there were no other text. We must all appear—that is to say, every one of the human race. We must all appear. And that the godly will not be exempted from this appearance is very clear, for the Apostle here is speaking to Christians. He says, “We walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident. We labor,” and so on. And then he puts it, “We must all appear.” So that, beyond all others, it is certain that all *Christians* must appear there.

The text is quite conclusive upon that point. And if we had not that text, we have the passage in Matthew which we have read, in which the sheep are summoned there as certainly as are the goats. And we have the passage in Revelation where all the dead are judged according to the things which are written in the books. They are all there. And if the objection should be raised, “We thought that the sins of the righteous, being pardoned and forever blotted out, they could never come into judgment,” we have only to remind you, Beloved, that if they are so pardoned and blotted out, as they undoubtedly are, the righteous have no reason to *fear* coming into judgment! They are the persons who covet the judgment and will be able to stand there to receive a public acquittal from the mouth of the great Judge.

Who, among us, wishes, as it were, to be smuggled into Heaven unlawfully? Who desires to have it said by the damned in Hell, “You were never tried or else you might have been condemned as we were”? No, Brothers and Sisters, we have a hope that we can stand the trial. The way of righteousness by Christ Jesus enables us to submit ourselves to the most tremendous tests which even that burning day can bring forth! We are not afraid to be put into the balances. We even desire that day when our faith in Jesus Christ is strong and firm, for we say, “Who is he that condemns?” We can challenge the Day of Judgment! Who is he that shall lay anything to our charge in that day, or at any other, since Christ has died and has risen again?

It is necessary that the righteous should be there that there may not be any partiality in the matter whatever—that the thing may be all clear and straight—and that the rewards of the righteous may be seen to be, though of Grace, yet without any violation of the most rigorous justice. Dear Brethren, what a day it will be for the righteous! For some of them were—perhaps some here present are—lying under some very terrible accusation of which they are perfectly guiltless. All will be cleared up, then, and that will be one great blessing of that day. There will be a resurrection of *reputations* as well as of bodies! Men call the righteous fools—then shall they shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father!

They hounded them to death as not being fit to live. In early ages they laid to the Christians charges of the most terrible character which I should count it shame to mention. But then they will all be clear—and those of whom the world was not worthy, who were driven and hunted about and made to dwell in the caves of the earth—they shall come forth as worthy ones and the world shall know her true aristocracy, earth shall own her true nobility! The men whose names she cast out as evil shall, then, be held in great repute, for they shall stand out clear and transparent without spot or blemish! It is well that there should be a trial for the righteous, for the clearing of them, the vindication of them and that it should be public, defying the ridicule and criticism of all mankind. “We must all appear.”

What a vast assembly, what a prodigious gathering, that of the entire human race! It struck me as I was meditating upon this subject, what would be the thoughts of Father Adam as he stood there with Mother Eve and looked upon his offspring? It will be the first time in which he has ever had the opportunity of seeing all his children met together. What a sight will he then behold—far stretching, covering all the globe which they inhabit, enough not only to people all earth’s plains, but crown her hill-tops and cover even the waves of the sea, so numberless must the human race be if all the generations that have ever lived, or shall ever live, shall at once rise from the dead! Oh, what a sight that will be!

Is it too marvelous for our imagination to picture? Yet it is quite certain that the assemblage will be mustered and the spectacle will be beheld. Everyone from before the Flood, from the days of the Patriarchs, from the times of David, from the Babylonian kingdom—all the legions of Assyria, all the hosts of Persia, all the phalanx of the Greeks, all the vast armies and legions of Rome, the barbarian, the Scythian, the bond, the free, men of every color and of every tongue—they shall all stand in that great day before the Judgment Seat of Christ! There come the kings—no greater than the men they call their slaves! There come the princes—but they

have doffed their coronets, for they must stand like common flesh and blood!

Here come the judges to be judged, themselves, and the advocates and barristers needing an advocate on their own account. Here come those that thought themselves too good and kept the street to themselves. There are the Pharisees, hustled by the Publicans on either side and sunk down to the natural level with them! Mark the peasants rising from the soil! See the teeming myriads from outside the great cities streaming in, countless hosts such as no Alexander or Napoleon ever beheld! See how the servant is as great as his master! “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity,” are now proclaimed. No kings, no princes, no nobles can shelter themselves behind their order or assert a privilege or claim an immunity. Alike on one common level they all stand together to be tried before the last tremendous tribunal!

There shall come the wicked of every sort. Proud Pharaoh shall be there! Senacherib the haughty! Herod, who would have slain the young Child. Judas, who betrayed his Master. Demas, that sold Him for gold, and Pilate, who would gladly have washed his hands in innocence. There shall come the long list of infallibles—the whole line of popes—to receive their damnation at the Almighty’s hands! And the priests that trod upon the necks of nations and the tyrants that used the priests as their tools—they shall come to receive the thunderbolts of God which they so richly deserve! Oh, what a scene it will be! These little companies which look to us so large when they are gathered together beneath this roof, how do they shrink into the drop of a bucket as compared with the ocean of life that shall swell around the Throne at the last great Judgment Day! They shall all be there.

Now, the most important thought connected with this, to me, is that *I* shall be there! To you young men, that *you* will be there. To you, you aged of every sort, that *you*, in propria persona—each one shall be there. Are you rich? Your dainty dress shall be put off. Are you poor? Your rags shall not exempt you from attendance at that court. None shall say, “I am too obscure.” You must come up from that hiding place. None shall say, “I am too public.” You must come down from that pedestal. Everyone must be there. Note the word, “We.” “We must all appear.” And still further note the word, “Appear.” “We must all *appear*.” No disguise will be possible. You cannot come there dressed in masquerade of profession or attired in robes of State! We must appear—we must be seen through, must be displayed, must be revealed! Off will come your garments and your spirit will be judged of God, not after appearance, but according to the inward heart.

Oh, what a day that will be when every man shall see himself and every man shall see his fellow, and the eyes of angels and the eyes of devils and

the eyes of God upon the Throne shall see us through and through! Let these thoughts dwell upon your minds while you take this for the answer to our first enquiry, who is to be judged?

II. Our second question is, WHO WILL BE THE JUDGE? “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.” That Christ should be appointed Judge of all mankind is most proper and fitting. Our British law ordains that a man shall be tried by his peers and there is justice in the statute. Now the Lord God will judge men, but at the same time it will be in the Person of Jesus Christ the Man. Men shall be judged by a Man. He that was once judged by men shall judge men.

Jesus knows what man should be—He has been under the Law Himself in deep humility. He can hold the scales of justice evenly for He has stood in man’s place and bore and braved man’s temptations. He therefore is the most fit Judge that could be selected. I have sometimes heard and read sermons in which the preacher said that a Christian ought to rejoice that his Judge is his Friend. There may be no impropriety intended, still, it seems to me rather a questionable suggestion. I should not like to put it in that way, myself, because any judge that was partial to his friends when he sat on the judgment seat would deserve to come off the seat immediately! As a Judge I expect no favoritism from Christ. I expect when He sits there He will deal out even-handed justice to all. I cannot see how it is right for any minister to hold it forth that we should find encouragement in the Judge being our Friend.

Friend or no Friend, we shall go in for a fair trial, every one of us, and Christ will not be a respecter of persons. Of Him whom God has appointed to judge the world, it shall not be said, when the assize is over, that He winked at the crimes of some and extenuated them, while He searched out the faults of others and convicted them. He will be fair and upright throughout. He is our Friend, I grant you, and He will be our Friend and Savior forever! But, as a Judge we must keep to the thought and believe and maintain it that He will be impartial to all the sons of men. You will have a fair trial. He that will judge you will not take sides against you.

We have sometimes thought that men have been shielded from the punishment they deserved because they were of a certain clerical profession or because they occupied a certain official position. A poor laborer who kills his wife shall be hanged, but when another man of superior station does the same deed of violence and stains his hands with the blood of her whom he had vowed to love and cherish, the capital sentence shall not be executed upon him. Everywhere we see in the world that with the best intentions Justice somehow or other does squint a little. Even in this country there is just the slightest possible turning of the scale and God grant that may be cured before long! I do not think it is intentional and I

hope the nation will not long have to complain about it. There ought to be the same justice for the poorest beggar that crawls into a casual ward as for his lordship that owns the broadest acres in all England.

Before the Law, at least, all men ought to stand equal. So shall it be with the Judge of all the earth. *Fiat justitia, ruat caelum*. Christ will by all means hold the scales even. You shall have a fair trial and a full trial, too. There shall be no concealment of anything in your favor and no keeping back of anything against you. No witnesses shall be borne across the sea to keep them out of the way. They shall all be there and all testimony shall be there—and all that is needed to condemn or to acquit shall be produced in full court at that trial—and therefore it will be a final trial. From that court there will be no appeal. If Christ says, “Cursed!” cursed must they be forever. If Christ says, “Blessed!” blessed shall they be forever.

Well, this is what we have to expect, then, to stand before the Throne of the Man, Christ Jesus the Son of God, and there to be judged.

III. Now the third point is, **WHAT WILL BE THE RULE OF JUDGMENT?** The text says, “that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he has done, whether it is good or bad.” Then it would appear that our actions will be taken in evidence at the last. Not our profession, not our boasts, but our *actions* will be taken in evidence at the last, and every man shall receive according to what he has done in the body. That implies that everything done by us in this body will be known. It is all recorded—it will be all brought to light. Therefore, in that day every secret sin will be published.

What was done in the chamber—what was hidden by the darkness shall be published as upon the housetop—every secret thing. With great care you have concealed it—most dexterously you have covered it up—but it shall be brought out to your own astonishment to form a part of your judgment. There, hypocritical actions as well as secret sins will be laid bare. The Pharisee who devoured the widow’s house and made a long prayer will find that widow’s house brought against him and the long prayer, too, for the long prayer will then be understood as having been a long lie against God from beginning to end! Oh, how fine we can make some things look with the aid of paint and varnish and gilt! But at the last day off will come the varnish and veneer, and the true metal, the real substance will then be seen.

When it is said that everything that is done in the body will be brought up as evidence against us or for us, remember this includes every omission as well as every commission—for that which is not done that ought to have been done is as greatly sinful as the doing of that which ought not to be done. Did you not notice, when we were reading that 25th chapter of

Matthew, how those on the left hand were condemned, not for what they did, but for what they did *not* do—"I was hungry and you gave Me no meat: I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink"? Where would some of you stand, according to this rule, who have lived in neglect of holiness, and neglect of faith, and neglect of repentance before all your days?

Think, I pray you! Recollect, too, that all our words will be brought up. For every idle word that man shall speak he will have to give an account. And all our thoughts, too, for these lie at the bottom of our actions and give the true color to them, good or bad. Our motives, our sins of the heart—especially our hatred of Christ, our neglect of the Gospel, our unbelief—all of these shall be read aloud and published unreservedly. "Well," says one, "who, then, can be saved?" Ah, indeed, who then can be saved? Let me tell you who.

There will come forward those who have believed in Jesus, and albeit they have many sins to which they might well plead guilty, they will be able to say, "Great God, You did provide for us a Substitute and You did say that if we would accept Him He should be a Substitute for us and take our sins upon Himself. And by Your Grace we did accept Him and our sins were laid on Him, and we have now no sins—they have been transferred from us to the great Savior, Substitute and Sacrifice."

And in that day there will be none who can put in an objection to that plea. It will hold good, for God has said, "Whoever believes on Christ Jesus shall never be condemned." Then will the actions of the righteous, the gracious actions, be brought forth to prove that they had faith. For that faith which never evidences itself by good works is a dead faith and a faith that will never save a soul. Now, if the dying thief were brought up, he would say, "My sins were laid on Jesus." "Yes, but how about your good works? You must have some evidence of your faith," Satan might reply. Then would the recording angel say, "The dying thief said to his fellow thief who was dying with him, 'Why are you railing?' In his last moments he did what he could—he rebuked the thief that was dying with him and made a good confession of his Lord. *There* was the evidence of the sincerity of his faith."

Dear Hearer, will there be any evidence of the sincerity of *your* faith? If your faith has no evidence before the Lord, what will you do? Suppose you thought you had a faith and went on drinking. Suppose you did as I know some have done here—go straight from this place into the public house? Or suppose you joined the Christian Church and remained a drunk? Yes, and women have done that also as well as men. Suppose you professed to have faith in Christ and yet cheated in your weights and measures and common dealings? Do you think that God will never require these things at your hands? Oh, Sirs, if you are no better than other men in your con-

duct, you are no better than other men in your character—and you will stand no better than other men on the Judgment Day!

If your actions are not superior to theirs, you may profess what you will about your faith but you are deceived, and as deceivers, you will be discovered at the Last Great Day. If grace does not make us differ from other men, it is not the Divine Grace which God gives His elect. We are not perfect, but all God's saints keep their eyes on the great Standard of perfection, and with strong desire, aim to walk worthy of their high calling of God and to bring forth works which prove that they love God. And if we have not these signs following faith, or if they are not put in as evidence for us at the Last Great Day, we shall not be able to prove our faith.

Oh, you who have no faith in Christ, no faith in Jesus the Substitute—that terrible negative, that treacherous unbelief of yours will be a condemning sin against you! It will be proof positive that you hated God, for a man must hate God, indeed, who will spurn His counsels, give no heed to His reproof, scorn His Grace and dare the vengeance of Him who points out the way of escape and the path that leads to life! He that will not be saved by God's mercy proves that he hates the God of Mercy! If God gives His own Son to die and men will not trust in His Son, will not have Him as their Savior—that one sin, if they had no other—would at once prove that they were enemies of God and black at heart.

But if your faith is in Jesus. If you love Jesus. If your heart goes out to Jesus. If your life is influenced by Jesus. If you make Him your Example as well as your Savior, there will be evidence—you cannot see it, but there will be evidence—in your favor. For notice those gracious things, when the evidence was brought, and Christ said, "I was hungry and you gave Me meat—thirsty and you gave Me drink," they said, "O Lord, we never knew this." Should any man stand up here and say, "I have plenty of evidence to prove my faith," I would reply, "Hold your tongue, Sir! Hold your tongue! I am afraid you have no faith at all or you would not be talking about your evidence."

But if you are saying, "Oh, I am afraid I have not the evidence that will stand me in good stead at the last," yet if all the while you have been feeding the hungry and clothing the naked, and doing all you can for Christ, I would tell you not to be afraid. The Master will find witnesses to say, "That man relieved me when I was in poverty. He knew I was one of Christ's and he came and helped me." And another will come and say (perhaps it will be an angel), "I saw him when he was alone in his chamber and heard him pray for his enemies."

And the Lord will say, "I read his heart when I saw how he put up with rebuke, and slander, and persecution, and would not make any answer for My sake. He did it all as evidence that My Grace was in his heart." You

will not have to fetch up the witnesses—the Judge will call them, for He knows all about your case—and as He calls up the witnesses, you will be surprised to find how even the ungodly will be obliged to consent to the just salvation of the righteous. Oh, how the secret deeds and the true heart-sincerity of the righteous, when thus unveiled, will make devils bite their tongues in wrath to think that there was so much of Grace given to the sons of men with which to defeat persecution, to overcome temptation and to follow on in obedience to the Lord!

Oh yes, the deeds, the deeds, the deeds of men—not their prating, not their profession, not their talk, but their *deeds*, (though nobody shall be saved by the *merits* of his deeds)—their deeds shall be the *evidence* of their Grace, or their deeds shall be the evidence of their *unbelief*. And so, by their works shall they stand before the Lord, or by their works shall they be condemned as evidence and nothing more.

IV. Now the last point is this—WHAT IS THE OBJECT OF THIS JUDGMENT? Will sentence of acquittal and condemnation be given and then the whole thing be over? Far from it! The judgment is with a view to the thereafter—“That every man may receive the things done in his body.” The Lord will grant unto His people an abundant reward for all that they have done. Not that they *deserve* any reward since God first *gave* them Divine Grace to *do* good works—then took those good works as evidence of a renewed heart—and then gave them a reward for what they had done!

Oh, what a bliss it will be to hear it said, “Well done, good and faithful servant”—to you that have worked for Christ when nobody knew it to find that Christ took stock of it all—to you that served the Lord under misrepresentation to find that the Lord Jesus cleared the chaff away from the wheat and knew that you were one of His precious ones. For Him, then, to say, “Enter into the joy of your Lord,” oh, what a bliss will it be to you! But to the ungodly, how terrible! They are to receive the things that they have done, that is to say, the punishment due—not every man alike, but the greater sinner the greater doom.

To the man who sinned against light a greater damnation than to the man who had not the same light—Sodom and Gomorrah their place; Tyre and Sidon their place and then to Capernaum and Bethsaida their place of more intolerable torment because they had the Gospel and rejected it—so the Lord Himself tells us. And the punishment will not only be meted out in proportion to the transgression, but it will be a development of the evil actions done in the evil consequences to be endured, as every man shall eat the fruit of his own ways. Sin, after the natural order, ripens into sorrow. This is not a blind fate, but it is the operation of a Divine Law, wise and invariable. Oh, how dreadful it will be for the malicious man to

have to forever gnaw his own envious heart—to find his malice come home to him as birds come home to roost—to hoot forever in his own soul!

How terrible for the lustful man to feel lust burning in every vein which he can never gratify—for the drunk to have a thirst which not even a drop of water can allay—for the glutton who has fared sumptuously every day, to be in perpetual hunger. How excruciating for the soul that has been wrathful to be forever wrathful with the fire of wrath forever burning like a volcano in his soul! And the rebel against God forever a rebel, cursing God whom he cannot touch and finding his curses coming back upon himself! There is no punishment worse than for a man who is sinfully disposed to gratify his lusts, to satiate his bad propensities and to multiply and fatten his vices. Only let men grow into what they would be and then see what they would be like!

Last Saturday, it may be, there were half-a-dozen broken heads and wives and children were in one general skirmish. Keep those people together—let their vigor continue unimpaired by age or decay while they keep on developing their characters. Why, they would be worse than a herd of tigers! Let them give way to their rage and anger, with nothing to check their passions. Let miserly, greedy people forever go on with their greed. It makes them miserable here, but let these things be indulged in forever and what worse Hell do you need? Oh, sin is Hell and holiness is Heaven! Men will receive the things done in their body.

If God has made them love Him, they shall go on to love Him. If God has made them trust Him, they shall go on to trust in Him. If God has made them to be like Christ, they shall go on to be like Christ and they shall receive the things done in their body as a reward. But if a man has lived in sin, “he that is filthy shall be filthy still.” He that has been unbelieving shall be unbelieving still. This, then, shall be the worm that never dies and the fire which never shall be quenched, to which shall be added the wrath of God forever and forever! Oh, that we may have Grace, every one of us, to flee to Christ!

He is our only safety! Simple faith in Jesus is the basis for the character which will evidence at last that you are chosen of God! A simple belief in the merits of the Lord Jesus, worked in us by the Holy Spirit, is the rocky foundation upon which shall be built up, by the same Divine hands, the character which shall evidence that the kingdom was prepared for us from before the foundations of the world! God work in us such a character, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

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

UNDER CONSTRAINT

NO. 1411

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 28, 1878,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“For the love of Christ constrains us; because we thus judge,
that if One died for all, then were all dead.”
2 Corinthians 5:14.*

THE Apostle and his brethren were unselfish in all that they did. He could say of himself and of his brethren that when they varied their modes of action they always had the same objective in view—they lived only to promote the cause of Christ and to bless the souls of men. He says, “Whether we are beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we are sober, it is for your cause.” Some may have said that Paul was too excitable and expressed himself too strongly. “Well,” he said, “if it is so, it is to God.” Others may have noticed the reasoning faculty to be exceedingly strong in Paul and may, perhaps, have thought him to be too coolly argumentative. “But,” said Paul, “if we are sober, it is for your cause.” Viewed from some points the Apostle and his co-laborers must have appeared to be raving fanatics, engaged upon a Quixotic enterprise and almost, if not quite, out of their minds.

One who had heard the Apostle tell the story of his conversion exclaimed, “Paul, you are beside yourself; much learning does make you mad,” and no doubt many who saw the singular change in his conduct and knew what he had given up and what he endured for his new faith had come to the same conclusion. Paul would not be at all offended by this judgment, for he would remember that his Lord and Master had been charged with madness and that even our Lord’s relatives had said, “He is beside Himself.” To Festus he had replied, “I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.”

And to Corinthian objectors he gave a still fuller reply. Blessed are they who are charged with being out of their mind through zeal for the cause of Jesus! They have a more than sufficient answer when they can say, “If we are beside ourselves, it is to God.” It is no unusual thing for madmen to think others mad and no strange thing for a mad world to accuse the only morally sane among men of being fools and lunatics! But Wisdom is justified of her children. If others assailed the Apostle with another charge and insinuated that there was a method in his madness—that his being all things to all men showed an excess of prudence—and was no doubt a means to an end, which end it is possible they hinted at was a desire for power, he could reply most conclusively, “If we are sober, it is for your cause.”

Paul had acted so unselfishly that he could appeal to the Corinthian Church and ask them to bear him witness that he sought not theirs but them. And that if he had judged their disorders with great sobriety it was for their cause. Whatever he did, or felt, or suffered, or spoke, he had but

one design in it—the Glory of God in the perfecting of Believers and the salvation of sinners. Every Christian minister ought to be able to use the Apostle’s words without the slightest reserve. Yes, and every Christian should be able to say the same—“If I am excited, it is in defense of the Truth of God. If I am sober, it is for the maintenance of holiness. If I seem extravagant, it is because the name of Jesus stirs my inmost soul—and if I am moderate in spirit and thoughtful in mood—it is that I may in the wisest manner subserve the interests of my Redeemer’s kingdom.”

God grant that weeping or singing, anxious or hopeful, victorious or defeated, increasing or decreasing, elevated or depressed we may still follow our one design and devote ourselves to the holy cause! May we live to see Churches made up of people who are all set on one thing and may those Churches have ministers who are fit to lead such a people because they, also, are mastered by the same sacred purpose. May the fire which fell of old on Carmel fall on our altar, whereon lies the sacrifice, wetted a second and a third time from the salt sea of the world, until it shall consume the burnt sacrifice and the wood, the stones and the dust—and lick up the water that is in the trench. Then will all the people see it and fall upon their faces, and cry, “The Lord! He is God! The Lord, He is God!”

The Apostle now goes on to tell us why it was that the whole conduct of himself and his co-laborers tended to one end and objective. He says, “The love of Christ constrains us, because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then the all died.” I give you here as exact a translation as I can. Two things I shall note in the text—first, under constraint. Secondly, under constraint which his understanding justified.

I. Our main point will come under the head, “UNDER CONSTRAINT. Here is the Apostle, a man who was born free, a man who beyond all others enjoyed the greatest spiritual liberty—glorying that he is under constraint! He was under constraint because a great force held him under its power. “The love of Christ constrains us.” I suppose, “constrains us,” is about the best rendering of the passage that could be given, but it might be translated, “restrains.” The love of Christ *restrains* true Believers from self-seeking and forbids them to pursue any objective but the highest. Whether they were beside themselves or sober, the early saints yielded to Divine restraint, even as a good ship answers to her helm or as a horse obeys the rein.

They were not without a restraining force to prevent the slightest subjection to impure motives. The love of Christ *controlled* them and held them under its power. But the word, “restrained,” only expresses a *part* of the sense, for it means that he was, “coerced or pressed,” and so impelled forward as one carried along by pressure. All around him the love of Christ pressed upon him as the water in a river presses upon a swimmer and bears him onward with its stream. Bengel, who is a great authority, reads it, “Keeps us employed,” for we are led to diligence, urged to zeal, maintained in perseverance and carried forward and onward by the love of Jesus Christ. The Apostles labored much, but all their labor sprang from the impulse of the love of Jesus Christ.

Just as Jacob toiled for Rachel solely out of love to her, so do true saints serve the Lord Jesus under the Omnipotent constraint of love. One

eminent expositor reads the word, “constrains us,” as though it signified that the Lord’s servants were kept together and held as a band under a banner or standard. And he very appropriately refers to the words of the Church in the Song of Songs, “His banner over me was love.” As soldiers are held together by rallying to the standard, so are the saints kept to the work and service of their Lord by the love of Christ which constrains them to endure all things for the elect’s sake and for the Glory of God—and like an ensign—is lifted high as the center and loadstone of all their energies. In our Lord’s love we have the best motive for loyalty, the best reason for energy and the best argument for perseverance!

The word may also signify, “compressed,” and then it would mean that all their energies were pressed into one channel and made to move by the love of Christ. Can I put restraint and constraint, and all the rest, into one by grouping them in a figure? I think I can. When a flood is spread over an expanse of meadow land and stands in shallow pools, men *restrain* it by damming it up—and they *constrain* it to keep to one channel by banking it in! Thus compressed it becomes a stream and moves with force in one direction. See how it quickens its pace! See what strength it gathers! It turns yonder wheel of the mill, makes a sheep wash, leaps as a waterfall, runs laughing through a village as a brook where the cattle stand in the summer’s sun. Growing all the while, it develops into a river, bearing boats and little ships! And this done, it still increases and stays not till it flows with mighty flood into the great sea.

The love of Christ had pressed Paul’s energies into one force, turned them into one channel and then driven them forward with a wonderful force till he and his fellows had become a mighty power for good—always active and energetic. “The love of Christ,” he says, “constrains us.” All great lives have been under the constraint of some mastering principle. A man who is everything by turns and nothing long, is a nobody! A man who wastes life on whims and fancies, leisure and pleasures, never achieves anything! He flits over the surface of life and leaves no more trace upon his age than a bird upon the sky. But a man, even for mischief, becomes great when he becomes *concentrated*.

What made the young prince of Macedon, Alexander the Great, but the absorption of his whole mind in the desire for conquest? The man was never happy when he was at ease and in peace. His best days were spent on the battlefield or on the march. Let him rush to the front of the battle and make the common soldier grow into a hero by observing the desperate valor of his king—and then you see the greatness of the man! He could never have been the conqueror of the world if the insatiable greed of conquest had not constrained him. From this come your Caesars and your Napoleons—they are whole men in their ambition, subject to the lust of dominion.

When you carry this thought into a better and holier sphere, the same fact is clear. Howard could never have been the great philanthropist if he had not been strangely under the witchery of love to prisoners. He was more happy in a hospital or in a prison than he would have been at Court or on the sofa of the drawing room. The man could not help visiting jails—he was a captive to his sympathy for men in bondage—and so he spent

his life in seeking their good. Look at such a man as Whitfield or his associate, Wesley. Those men had but one thought and that was to win souls for Christ—their whole being ran into the one riverbed of zeal for God and made them full and strong as the rushing Rhone. It was their rest to labor for Christ! It was their honor to be pelted while preaching and to be maligned for the name of Jesus! A bishopric and a seat in the House of Lords would have been the death of them! Even a throne would have been a rack if they must have ceased hunting for souls.

The men were under the dominion of a passion which they could not withstand and did not wish to weaken. They could sing—

***“The love of Christ does me constrain
To seek the wandering souls of men!
With cries, entreaties, tears, to save,
To snatch them from the fiery wave.”***

Their whole life, being, thought, faculty, spirit, soul and body became one and indivisible in purpose. And their sanctified manhood was driven forward irresistibly so that they might be likened to thunderbolts flung from the eternal hand which must go forward till their end is reached. They could no more cease to preach than the sun could cease shining or reverse his course in the heavens!

This kind of constraint implies no compulsion and involves no bondage. It is the highest order of freedom, for when a man does exactly what he likes to do, if he wants to express the enthusiastic joy and delight with which he follows his pursuit, he generally uses language similar to that of my text. “Why,” he says, “I am engrossed by my favorite study. It quite enthralles me. I cannot resist its charms, it holds me beneath its spell.” Is the man any the less free? If a man gives himself up to a science, or to some other pursuit, though he is perfectly free to leave it whenever he likes, he will commonly declare that he cannot leave it—it has such a hold upon him that he addicts himself to it!

You must not think, therefore, that when we speak of being under constraint from the love of Christ we mean, by it, that we have ceased to exercise our wills, or to be voluntary agents in our service. Far from it! In fact, we acknowledge that we are never so free as when we are under bonds to Christ! No, our God does not constrain us by physical force. His cords are those of love and His bands are those of a man. The constraint is that which we are glad to feel—we give a full assent to its pressure—and therein lies its power. We rejoice to admit that, “The love of Christ constrains us!” We only wish the constraint would increase every day.

We have seen that Paul had a great force holding him—we advance a step further and note that the constraining force was the love of Christ. He does not speak of *his* love to Christ—that was a great power, too, though secondary to the first. But he is content to mention the greater, for it includes the less—“The love of Christ constrains us,” that is, Christ’s love to us is the master force! And O, Brothers and Sisters, this is a power to which it is joy to submit! This is a force worthy to command the greatest minds! “The love of Christ.” Who shall measure this Omnipotent force? That love, according to our text, is strongest when seen in His dying for men. Mark the context, “because we thus judge, that if One died for all.”

The peculiar display of the love of Christ which had supreme sway over Paul was the love revealed in His *substitutionary death*!

Think of it a moment. Christ the Ever-Blessed, to whom no pain, nor suffering, nor shame could come, loved men! O singularity of love! He loves guilty men, yes, loves His enemies! Loving poor fallen men, He took their nature and became a Man. Marvelous condescension! The Son of God is also Son of Mary and, being found in fashion as a Man, He humbles Himself and is made of no reputation. See Him taken before human judges and unjustly condemned! Seized by Roman lictors and lashed with the scourge! Gazing a little longer, you see Him nailed to a cross, hung up for a felon, left amid jeer and jibe and cruel glance and malicious speech to bleed away His life till He is actually dead and laid in the grave!

At the back of all this there is the mystery that He was not only dying, but dying in the place of others, bearing almighty wrath, enduring that dread sentence of death which is attached to human sin. Herein is love, indeed, that the infinitely Pure should suffer for the sinful, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God! Love did never climb to so sublime a height as when it brought Jesus to the bloody tree to bear the dread sentence of inexorable Law! Think of this love, Beloved, till you feel its constraining influence!

It was love eternal, for long before the earth was fashioned, the eternal Word had set His eyes upon His people and their names were engraved on His heart. It was love unselfish, for He had nothing to gain from His redeemed—there were harps enough in Heaven and songs enough in the celestial city without their music! It was love most free and spontaneous, for no man sought it or so much as dreamed of it! It was love most persevering, for when man was born into the world and sinned and rejected Christ—and He came to His own and His own received Him not—He loved them still, loved them even to the end. It was love—what shall I say of it? If I were to multiply words I might rather sink your thoughts than raise them!

It was love infinite, immeasurable, inconceivable! It surpasses the love of women, though the love of mothers is strong as death and jealousy is cruel as the grave. It passes the love of martyrs, though that love has triumphed over the fury of the flame. All other lights of love pale in their ineffectual brightness before this blazing sun of love, whose warmth a man may feel but upon whose utmost light no eye can gaze! He loved us like a God! It was nothing less than God's own love which burned within that breast which was bared to the spear that it might redeem us from going down into the Pit! It is this force, then, which has taken possession of the Christian's mind and, as Paul says, "constrains us."

Now we may advance another step and say that the love of Christ operates upon us by begetting in us love to Him. Brothers and Sisters, I know you love our Lord Jesus Christ, for all His people love Him. "We love Him because He first loved us." But what shall I say? There are scarcely any themes upon which I feel less able to speak than these two—the love of Christ to us and our love to Him—because somehow love needs a tongue elsewhere than this which dwells in the mouth. This tongue is in the head and it can therefore tell out our thoughts—but we need a tongue in the

heart to tell out our emotions which have now to borrow utterance from the brain's defective orator.

There is a long space between the cool brain and the blazing heart—and matters cool on the road to the tongue, so that the burning heart grows weary of chill words. But oh, we love Jesus! Brothers and Sisters, we truly love Him! His name is sweet as the honeycomb and His Word is precious as the gold of Ophir. His Person is very dear to us—from His head to His feet He is altogether lovely. When we get near Him and see Him at the last, I think we shall swoon away with excess of joy at the sight of Him and I, for one, ask no Heaven beyond a sight of Him and a sense of His love! I do not doubt that we shall enjoy all the harmonies, all the honors and all the fellowships of Heaven, but if they were all blotted out, I do not know that they would make any considerable difference to us if we may but see our Lord upon His throne, and have His own prayer fulfilled, "Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me be with Me where I am, that they may behold My Glory." He is happiness to us, yes, He is All in All!

Do you not feel that the sweetest sermons you ever hear are those which are fullest of Him? When I can sometimes hear a sermon, it sickens me to listen to fine attempts to philosophize away the Gospel, or to pretty essays which are best described as a jingle of elegant words. But I can hear with rapture the most illiterate and blundering Brother if his heart burns within him and he heartily speaks of my Lord, the Well-Beloved of my soul! We are glad to be in the place of assembly when Jesus is within, for whether on Tabor with two or three, or in the congregation of the faithful—when Jesus is present it is good to be there.

This joyful feeling, when you hear about Jesus, shows that you love Him and your endeavors to spread the Gospel show that you love His cause. The love of Christ to you has moved you to desire the coming of His kingdom and you feel that you could give your *life* to extend the borders of His dominions! He is a glorious King and all the world should know it! Oh that we could see all the nations bowing before His scepter of peace! We love Him so much that till the whole earth smiles in the light of His throne, we can never rest. As to His Truth, a very great part of our love to Christ will show itself by attachment to the pure Gospel. I have not much patience with a certain class of Christians, nowadays, who will hear anybody preach so long as they can say, "He is very clever, a fine preacher, a man of genius, a born orator."

Is cleverness to make false doctrine palatable? Why, Sirs, to me the ability of a man who preaches error is my sorrow rather than my admiration! I cannot endure false doctrine, however neatly it may be put before me. Would you have me eat poisoned meat because the *dish* is of the choicest ware? It makes me indignant when I hear another gospel put before the people with enticing words by men who would gladly make merchandise of souls! And I marvel at those who have soft words for such deceivers.

"That is your bigotry," says one. Call it so if you like, but it is the bigotry of the loving John who wrote—"If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God

speed: for he that bids him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." I would to God we had all more of such decision, for the lack of it is depriving our religious life of its backbone and substituting for honest manliness a mass of the tremulous jelly of mutual flattery. He who does not hate the false does not love the true! And he to whom it is all the same whether it is God's Word or man's, is himself unrenewed at heart! Oh, if some of you were like your fathers, you would not have tolerated in this age the wagon loads of trash under which the Gospel has been of late buried by ministers of your own choosing! You would have hurled out of your pulpits the men who are enemies to the fundamental doctrines of your Churches and yet are crafty enough to become your pastors and undermine the faith of a fickle and superficial generation! These men steal the pulpits of once orthodox Churches because otherwise they would have none at all!

Their powerless theology cannot, of itself, arouse sufficient enthusiasm to enable them to build a mousetrap at the expense of their admirers and, therefore, they profane the houses which your fathers have built for the preaching of the Gospel and turn aside the organizations of once orthodox communities to help their infidelity! I call it by that name in plain English, for "modern thought" is not one whit better—and of the two evils I give infidelity the palm, for it is less deceptive. I beg the Lord to give back to the Churches such a love to His Truth that they may discern the spirits and cast out those which are not of God.

I feel sometimes like John, of whom it is said that though the most loving of all spirits, yet he was the most decided of all men for the Truth of God. Once when he went to the bath and found that the heretic, Cerinthus, was there, he hurried out of the building and would not tarry in the same place with him! There are some with whom we should have no fellowship! No, not so much as to eat bread! And though this conduct looks stern and hard, it is after the mind of Christ, for the Apostle spoke by Inspiration when he said, "If we, or an angel from Heaven preach to you any other Gospel than that which you have received, let him be accursed." According to modern efficiency he ought to have said, "Let him be kindly spoken with in private, but pray make no stir! No doubt the thought was original and we must not question his liberty. Doubtless, he believes the same as we do, only there is some little difference as to terms."

This is treason to Christ, treachery to the Truth of God and cruelty to souls! If we love our Lord we shall keep His Words and stand fast in the faith, coming out from among the false teachers! Nor is this inconsistent with charity, for the truest love to those who err is not to fraternize with them in their error, but to be faithful to Jesus in all things! The love of Jesus Christ creates in men a deep attachment to the Gospel, especially to the doctrines which cluster around the Person of our Lord. And I think more especially to that doctrine which is the cornerstone of all, namely, that Christ died in the place of men. He who touches the doctrine of Substitution, touches the apple of our eye! He who denies it, robs our soul of her only hope, for there we gather all our consolation for the present and our expectation for days to come. A great force, then, held the Apostle—

that force was the love *of* Christ—and it worked in Him love *to* Christ in return!

Now, this force acts proportionately in Believers. It acts in every Christian more or less, but it differs in degree. We are all of us, alive, but the vigor of life differs greatly in the consumptive and the athletic—and so the love of Jesus acts upon all regenerate men, but not to the same extent. When a man is perfectly swayed by the love of Christ, he will be a perfect Christian. When a man is growingly under its influence, he is a growing Christian. When a man is sincerely affected by the love of Christ, he is a sincere Christian. But he in whom the love of Christ has no power whatever is not a Christian at all. “I thought,” says one, “that *believing* was the main point.” True, but faith works by love and if your faith does not work by love it is not the faith which will save the soul.

Love never fails to bloom where faith has taken root. Beloved, you will feel the *power* of the love of Christ in your soul in proportion to the following points. In proportion as you *know* it. Study, then, the love of Christ—search deep and learn its secrets. Angels desire to look into it. Observe its eternity—without beginning. Its immutability—without change. Its infinity—without measure. Its eternity—without end. Think much of the love of Christ, till you comprehend with all saints what are its breadths and lengths. And as you know it, you will begin to feel its power. Its power will also be in proportion to your sense of it. Do you feel the love of God shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit? Knowing is well, but *enjoyment* as the result of believing is better! Does it not sometimes force the tears from your eyes to think that Jesus loved you and gave Himself for you?

On the other hand, does it not at times make you feel as if, like David, you could dance before the ark of the Lord, to think that the love of God should ever have been set on *you*—that Christ should die for *you*? Ah, think and think again—for you the bloody sweat, for you the crown of thorns, for you the nails, the spear, the wounds, the broken heart—all, all for love of *you* who were His enemy! In proportion as your heart is tender and is sensitive to this love, it will become a constraining influence in your whole life. The force of this influence will also depend very much upon the Divine Grace which dwells within you. You may measure your Grace by the power which the love of Christ has over you. Those who dwell near their Lord are so conscious of His power over them that the very glances of His eyes fill them with holy ardor. If you have much Grace you will be greatly moved by the love which gave you that Grace and made you wondrously sensitive to it. But he who has little Grace, as is the case with not a few, can read the story of the Cross without emotion, and can contemplate Jesus’ death without feeling. God deliver us from a cold and hard marble heart!

Character also has much to do with the measure in which we feel the constraint of Jesus’ love. The more Christ-like the more Christ-constrained. You must become, dear Brothers and Sisters, by prayer through the Holy Spirit, to be like Jesus Christ. And when you do, His love will take fuller possession of you than it does at this moment and you will be more manifestly under its constraining power. Our last point upon this head is that wherever its energy is felt it will operate after its kind.

Forces work according to their nature—the force of love creates love—and the love of Christ begets a kindred love. He who feels Christ’s love acts as Christ acted. If you really feel the love of Christ in making a sacrifice of Himself you will make a sacrifice of yourself. “Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”

We shall, for our Lord’s sake, count all things but dross for the excellency of His knowledge. O Soul, you will have no choice left after you have once known and chosen your Lord! If that road leads to wealth, but if it does not glorify Christ, you will at once say, “Farewell wealth.” That road leads to honor—you will be famous if you will take that path. But if it will bring no glory to Christ, if you feel the power of His love in your soul, you will say, “Farewell honor! I will embrace shame for Christ, for my one thought is to sacrifice myself for Him who sacrificed Himself for me.” If the love of Christ constrains you, it will make you love others, for His was love to others, love to those who could do Him no service, who deserved nothing at His hands. If the love of Christ constrains you, you will specially love those who have no apparent claim upon you and cannot justly expect anything from you, but on the contrary deserve your censure. You will say, “I love them because the love of Christ constrains me.”

Dirty little creatures in the gutter. Filthy women polluting the streets. Base men who come out of jail merely to repeat their crimes—these are the fallen humanities whom we learn to love when the love of Christ constrains us! I do not know how else we could care for some poor creatures, if it were not that Jesus teaches us to despise none and despair of none. Those ungrateful creatures, those malicious creatures, those abominably blasphemous and profane creatures whom you sometimes meet with and shrink from—you are to love them because Christ loved the very chief of sinners! His love to you must be reflected in your love to the lowest and vilest. He is your Sun—be you as the moon to the world’s night.

The love of Jesus Christ was a practical love. He did not love in thought, only, and in word, but in deed and in truth—and if the love of Christ constrains us—we shall throw our souls into the work and service of love. We shall be really at work for men, giving alms of our substance, enduring our measure of suffering and making it clear that our Christianity is not mere talk, but downright work! We shall be like the bullock of the burnt offering, laid upon the altar to be wholly consumed. We shall consider nothing but how we can most completely be eaten up with the zeal of God’s House, how without the reserve of one single faculty we may be entirely consumed in the service of our Lord and Master. May the Lord bring us to this!

II. THE CONSTRAINT OF WHICH WE HAVE SPOKEN WAS JUSTIFIED BY THE APOSTLE’S UNDERSTANDING. “The love of Christ constrains us; because we thus judge.” Love is blind. A man may say that in the affairs of love he exercises a calm discretion, but I take leave to doubt it. In love to Christ, however, you may be carried right away and be as blind as you like and yet you shall act according to the most sound judgment. The Apostle says warmly, “The love of Christ constrains us,” and yet he adds with all coolness, “because we thus judge.” When understanding is the

basis of affection, then a man's heart is fixed and his conduct becomes in a high degree exemplary. So it is here.

There is a firm basis of judgment—the man has weighed and judged the matter as much as if the heart were out of the question—but the logical conclusion is one of all-absorbing emotion and mastering affection as much as if the understanding had been left out of the question. His judgment was as the bronze altar, cold and hard, but on it he laid the coals of burning affection, vehement enough in their flame to consume everything. So it ought to be with us. Religion should be with a man a matter of intellect as well as of affection—and his understanding should always be able to justify the strongest possible passion of his soul, as the Apostle says it did in the case of himself and his brethren.

They had reasons for all that they did. For, first, he recognized Substitution—“We thus judge, that if One died for all.” O Brothers and Sisters, this is the very sinew of Christian effort—Christ died in the sinner's place! Christ is the Surety, the Sacrifice, the Substitute for men! If you take the doctrine of vicarious Sacrifice out of the Christian religion I protest that nothing is left worth calling a revelation! It is the heart, the head, the soul, the *essence* of our holy faith—that the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all and with His stripes we are healed! The Apostle firmly believed this to be a matter of fact and then, out of his belief, there grew an intense love to Jesus, as well there might. Did Jesus stand in *my* place? Oh, how I love Him! Did He die for *me*? Then His love has mastered me and will always hold me as its willing captive! O sacred Substitute, I am Yours and all that I have!

In the next place, he recognized union to Christ, for, he said, “If One died for all, then the all died,” for so it runs, that is to say, the all for whom Christ died, died in His death. His dying in their place was their dying! He dies *for* them, they die *in* Him. He rises, they rise in Him. He lives, they live in Him. Now if it is really so, that you and I who have believed in Christ are one with Christ and members of His body, that Truth of God may be stated coolly, but like the flint, it conceals a fire within it! For if we died in Jesus, we are dead to the world, to self—to *everything* but our Lord! O Holy Spirit, work in us this death even to the fullest! The Apostle recognizes the natural consequence of union with the dying Lord and resolves to carry it out.

Brothers and Sisters, when Adam sinned, *we* sinned. And we have felt the result of that fact—we were constituted sinners by the act of our first representative and every day we see it to be so. Every little child that is carried to the grave bears witness that death passes upon all men, for that all have sinned in Adam, even though they have not personally sinned after the similitude of his transgression. Now, just as our sin in Adam effectively operates upon us for evil, so must our death with Christ effectively operate upon our lives for good. It ought to do so. How can I live for myself? I died more than 18 centuries ago! I died and was buried! How can I live to the world? Eighteen hundred years ago and more the world hung me up as a malefactor—yes, and in my heart of hearts I have also crucified the world—and regard it as a dead malefactor. How shall I fall in

love with a crucified world, or follow after its delights? We thus died with Christ.

“Now,” says the Apostle, “the love of Christ constrains us; because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then the all died.” All who were in Christ, for whom He died, died when He died. And what follows from it but that they should not live unto themselves, but unto Him that died for them and rose again? We are one with Christ and what He did *for* us we did *in* Him and, therefore, we are dead because He died! Therefore we ought no longer to live in the old selfish way, but should live only to the Lord. This is the basis upon which the intellect rests and then the affections yield themselves to the sacred force of Jesus’ dying love.

I close with the following reflections, putting them very briefly. The first reflection is—how different is the inference of the Apostle from that of many professors. They say, “If Christ died once for all and so finished the work of my salvation, then I am saved and may sit down in comfort and enjoy myself, for there is no need for effort or thought.” Ah, what a mercy to feel that you are saved and then to go to sleep in the corner of your pew! A converted man and, therefore, curled up upon the bed of sloth! A pretty sight, surely, but a very common one! Such people have but little or no feeling for others who remain unconverted. “The Lord will save His own,” they say and they little care whether He does so or not. They appear to be dreadfully afraid of doing God’s work, though there is not the slightest need for such a fear, since they will not even do their *own* work!

These are presumptuous persons, strangers to the Grace of God, who know not that the main part of salvation lies in our being saved *from* selfishness and hardness of heart! It is the devil’s inference that because Christ did so much for me I am now to do nothing for Him! I must even beg the devil’s pardon, for I scarcely think that even *he* is base enough to draw such an inference from the Grace of God. Assuredly he has never been in a position to attempt so detestable a crime. It is to the last degree unutterably contemptible that a man who is indebted to the Lord Jesus Christ for so much should then make the only consequence of his indebtedness to be a selfish indolence! Never will a true child of God say, “Soul, take your ease. You are all right—nothing else matters!”

Oh no! “The love of Christ constrains us.” How much more ennobling, again, is such conduct as that of the Apostle than that of many professed Christians? I am not about to judge anyone, but I would beg you to judge yourselves. There are some and I would try to hope that they may be Christians—the Lord knows them that are His—who give to the cause of God, who serve God, after a fashion. But still, the main thought of their life is not Christ nor His service, but the gaining of wealth! That is their chief objective and towards it all their faculties are bent. There are other Church members—God forbid we should judge them—whose great thought is success in their profession. I am not condemning their having such a thought, but the chief ambition of the Apostle and of those like he was not this, but something higher! The chief aim of all of us should be nothing of *self*, but serving Christ! We are to be dead to everything but our Lord’s Glory, living with this mark before us—this prize to be strained after—that Christ shall be glorified in our mortal bodies!

In our business, in our studies, in everything, our slogan must be, Christ, Christ, Christ! Is it not a far more noble thing for a man to have lived wholly unto Christ than for mammon, or honor, or for himself in any shape or form? I speak as to wise men—judge what I say! Do you not think, also, that such a pursuit as this is much more peace-giving to the spirit? People will judge our conduct and they are sure to judge as severely as they can. If they see us zealous and self-denying they will say of us, “Why, the man is beside himself.” This will not matter much to us if we can reply, “It is for God.” Or if they say, “Oh, you old sober sides, how grave you are,” we shall not be offended if we can reply, “Ah, but it is for the good of others that I am sober.”

You will be very little distressed by sharp criticisms if you know that your motive is wholly unselfish. If you live for Christ and for Christ, alone, all the carping of men or devils will never cast you down. Do you not think that a life spent for Jesus only is far more worth looking back upon at the last than any other? If you call yourselves Christians, how will you judge a life spent in making money? It cannot be very much longer before you must gather up your feet in the bed and resign your soul to God. Now, suppose yourself sitting in your chamber all alone, making out the final balance-sheet of your stewardship—how will it look if you have to confess, “I have been a Christian professor. My conduct has been outwardly decent and respectable, but my chief purpose was not my Master’s Glory. I have lived with the view of scraping together so many thousands and I have done it.”

Would you like to fall asleep and die with that as the consummation of your life? Or shall it be, “I have lived to hold up my head in society and pay my way and leave a little for my family”? Will that satisfy you as your last reflection? Brothers and Sisters, we are not saved by our works, but I am speaking, now, upon the consolation which a man can derive from looking back upon his life. Suppose he shall have felt the power of my text and shall be able to say, “I have been enabled, by the Grace of God, to which I give all the glory, to consecrate my entire being to the entire glorification of my Lord and Master. And whatever my mistakes, and they are many—and my wanderings and failures, and they are countless—yet the love of Christ has constrained me, for I judged myself to have died in Him, and I have lived to Him. I have fought a good fight. I have kept the faith”?

Why, I think it were worth while so to die! To be constrained by the love of Christ creates an heroic life, exalted, illustrious—no, I must come down from such lofty words—it is such a life as every Christian *ought* to live! It is such a life as every Christian *must* live if he is really constrained by the love of Christ, for the text does not say the love of Christ *ought* to constrain us—it declares that it *does* constrain us. Brothers and Sisters, if it does not constrain you, judge yourselves that you be not judged and found wanting at the last! God grant we may feel the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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IS CONVERSION NECESSARY?

NO. 1183

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 19, 1874,
BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature:
old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”
2 Corinthians 5:17.***

A FEW days ago I was preaching in Lancashire upon the putting away of sin by our Lord Jesus and the consequent peace of conscience enjoyed by the Believer. In the course of the sermon I related my own conversion, with the view of showing that the simple act of looking to Jesus brought peace to the soul. Now, the diocese of Manchester is presided over by a bishop who has a deservedly high place in public esteem for his zeal, industry and force of character. And, feeling that he did not agree with me, he has very properly taken an opportunity to warn the working men, whom he addressed, against drawing improper inferences from my story. And he has done this in a manner so courteous that I only wish all discussions were conducted in the same spirit.

The best return I can make for his courtesy is to enlarge upon the subject and carefully guard his utterances from injurious inferences, even as he has protected mine. The idea of controversy is not upon my mind at all, nor have I any other feeling towards Bishop Fraser than that which is honestly expressed in a hearty prayer that God may bless him. But I am thinking of the many who will read his remarks who, I trust, may afterwards read mine—and as the point is of the utmost conceivable importance and deeply concerns the souls of our hearers—it is well that neither should be misunderstood and that, by all means, a Truth of God so vital should be brought into prominence. The bishop does not doubt for a moment that my own conversion was correctly described by me—and that like cases have occurred at other times—but he fears lest others should suppose that they must be converted in exactly the same manner.

In that fear I fully participate! It has always been a special point with me to show that God's Spirit calls men to Jesus in different ways. Some are drawn so gently that they scarcely know when the drawing began. Others are so suddenly affected that their conversion stands out with noonday clearness. Perhaps no two conversions are precisely alike in detail. The means, the modes, the manifestations all vary greatly. As our minds are not cast in the same mold, it may so happen that the Truth of God which affects one is powerless upon another. The style of address which influences your friend may be offensive to yourself—and that which leads him to decide may only cause you to delay. “The wind blows where it

will.” The Holy Spirit is called, “the free Spirit,” and in the diversity of His operations, that freeness is clearly seen.

Again and again have I warned you against imitating others in the matter of conversion, lest you be found counterfeits, and it is well when another voice unites with me in the warning. Yet in all true conversions there are points of essential agreement—there must be in all a penitent confession of sin and a looking to Jesus for the forgiveness of it—and there must also be a real change of heart such as shall affect the entire life. Where these essential points are not to be found there is no genuine conversion! The bishop goes on to remark upon Bunyan’s “Pilgrim’s Progress” and its description of the burdened pilgrim and his finding rest at the Cross. The bishop mistakes honest John, for he says that, “the pilgrim, having failed to get his wife to take the same gloomy view of fleeing from the wrath to come, and to accompany him in his flight, set out alone. There they had a man who deserted his home and home duties, leaving them to take care of themselves—but if a man stayed at home and his heart was right, he would have been saved in the day of doom.”

Surely allegory is not to be read in this fashion. John Bunyan never meant to teach that any man should forsake his home and neglect his family! No one ever charged him with doing so! In his imprisonment he worked hard at tagging laces to support his family and his affection for his poor blind child is well known. John Bunyan was no monk, but as true a father, citizen and friend as ever lived. The passage is part of an *allegory* and represents an awakened man as resolving to seek the Savior, whether others would do so or not—a man alive to his own condition and responsibility—and therefore determined to pursue the right road, even if the nearest and dearest refused to bear him company. It is not implied that he *left* the company of his family in *temporal* things, for with these the allegory has nothing to do! I feel sure the bishop knows too well the value of decision of mind and of that strong resolve to be right which dares to be singular, to say a word wittingly against one of the bravest of the virtues.

The bishop continues, “The pilgrim went on his journey and at the sight of the Cross, the great bundle, which was the burden of his past sins, fell off his back. Falling down before the Cross, he thought of Him who hung upon it, and of the great doctrine of Atonement, and the burden dropped from his back, and he rose what is called ‘a converted man.’” The bishop is inclined to think that this story of Bunyan’s conversion has given a color to a great part of what is called Protestant Theology in these days. He has noticed that a great number of our theological ideas come, rather, from Milton, and “The Pilgrim’s Progress,” than from the Bible, for he does not find a single case in the Bible at all analogous to or resembling the case of John Bunyan. He then denies that the case of the penitent thief is at all to the point, or even the conversion of the Apostle Paul—and he bids his hearers remember that it is, “better not to dream those dreams of conversion that might happen to one and not to another.”

Now, so far as Milton is concerned, the bishop is right, but I challenge his statement with regard to Bunyan’s, “Pilgrim,” and differ from him alto-

gether in his judgment of Paul's conversion. He fears that some may imagine a particular manner of conversion to be necessary, but my fear is much greater, that from Bishop Fraser's words, far more will infer that *no conversion is necessary at all*. My fear is not so much that they should say, "I must be converted like John Bunyan," but that they will whisper, "It is all an idle tale. The bishop means that we have only to do our duty and be sober and honest, and all will be well, whether we are converted or not."

Our text says that "if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." And my point is just this that any man who is united to Christ has experienced a great change. I do not lay down hard and fast lines about *how* the conversion is to be worked, but the imperative word is, "You must be born again," and the exhortation speaks to all mankind, "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." Even to this hour our Lord says, "Verily I say unto you, except you are converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven."

My line of discourse will be as follows—according to our text and many other Scripture, *a great change is needed in any man who would be saved*. Secondly, *this great change is frequently very marked*. And thirdly, *this change is recognizable by distinct signs*.

I. IN ORDER TO HAVE TRUE SALVATION A RADICAL CHANGE IS NECESSARY. This change is a thorough and sweeping one, and operates upon the nature, heart and life of the convert. Human nature is the same to all men and it will be idle to try to turn the edge of Scriptural quotations by saying that they refer to the Jews or to the heathen, for at that rate we shall have no Bible left us at all! The Bible is meant for *mankind* and our text refers to *any* man, of any country and of any age. "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

We prove this point by reminding you, first, *that everywhere in Scripture men are divided into two* classes, with a very sharp line of distinction between them. Read in the Gospels and you shall find continual mention of sheep lost and sheep found, guests refusing the invitation and guests feasting at the table, the wise virgins and the foolish, the sheep and the goats. In the Epistles we read of those who are "dead in trespasses and sin," and of others to whom it is said, "And you has He quickened," so that some are alive to God and others are in their natural state of spiritual death. We find men spoken of as being either in darkness or in light. And the phrase is used of "being brought out of darkness into marvelous light." Some are spoken of as having been formerly aliens and strangers and having been made fellow citizens and brethren. We read of "children of God," in opposition to "children of wrath."

We read of Believers who are not condemned and of those who are condemned, already, because they have *not believed*. We read of those who have "gone astray," and of those who have "returned to the shepherd and bishop of their souls." We read of those who are "in the flesh and cannot

please God,” and of those who are chosen and called and justified—whom the whole universe is challenged to condemn. The Apostle speaks of “us who are saved,” as if there were some saved while, upon others, “the wrath of God abides.” “Enemies” are continually placed in contrast with those who are “reconciled to God by the death of His Son.” There are those that are “far off from God by wicked works,” and those who are “made near by the blood of Christ.”

I could continue till I wearied you. The distinction between the two classes runs through the whole of the Scriptures, but never do we find a *hint* that there are some who are naturally good and do not need to be removed from the one class into the other, or that there are persons between the two who can afford to remain as they are. No, there must be a Divine work making us *new* creatures and causing all things to become new with us, or we shall die in our sins. *The Word of God, besides so continually describing two classes, very frequently and in forcible expressions speaks of an inward change by which men are brought from one state into the other.* I hope I shall not weary you if I refer to a considerable number of Scriptures, but it is best to go to the Fountainhead at once.

This change is often described as a *birth*. See the third chapter of the Gospel of John, which is wonderfully clear and to the point, “Except a man is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” This birth is not a birth by Baptism, for it is spoken of as accompanied by an intelligent faith which receives the Lord Jesus. Turn to John 1:12, 13, “But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believed on His name: which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” So that Believers are “born again,” and receive Christ through *faith*—a regeneration imparted in infancy and lying dormant in unbelievers is a fiction unknown to Holy Scripture!

In the third of John our Lord associates faith and regeneration in the closest manner, declaring not only that we must be born again, but also that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. We must undergo a change quite as great as if we could return to our native nothingness and could then come forth fresh from the hand of the Great Creator. John tells us, in his first Epistle, 5:4, that, “Whatever is born of God overcomes the world,” and he adds, to show that the new birth and faith go together, “This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.” To the same effect is 1 John 5:1, “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.” Where there is true *faith*, there is the new *birth*, and that term implies a change beyond measure complete and radical.

In other places this change is described as a *quicken*ing. “And you has He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.” (Eph. 2:1). We are said to be raised from the dead together with Christ and this is spoken of as being a very wonderful display of Omnipotence. We read, (Eph. 1:19), of “the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who according to the working of His mighty power, which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly

places.” Regeneration is a very prodigy of Divine strength and by no means a mere figment fabled to accompany a religious ceremony. We find this change frequently described as a *creation*, as, for instance, in our text, “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.”

And this, also, is no mere formality, or an attendant upon a rite, for we read in Galatians 6:15, “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.” No outward rites, though ordained of God, Himself, effect any change upon the *heart* of man—there must be a creating over again of the entire nature by the Divine hand—we must be “created in Christ Jesus unto good works” (Eph. 2:10), and we must have in us “the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph. 4:24). What a wonderful change that must be which is first described as a birth, then as a resurrection from the dead—and then as an absolute creation! Paul, in Colossians 1:13, further speaks of God the Father, and says, “Who has delivered us from the power of darkness, and has translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son.” John calls it a “passing from death unto life” (1 John 3:14), no doubt having in his mind that glorious declaration of his Lord and Master—“Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that hears My word, and believes on Him that sent Me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24).

Once more, as if to go to the extremity of forcible expression, Peter speaks of our conversion and regeneration as our being “begotten again.” Hear the passage (1 Peter 1:3), “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” To the same purport speaks the Apostle James in his first chapter, at the 18th verse—“Of His own will He begat us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of His creatures.” My dear Friends, can you conceive of any language more plainly descriptive of a most solemn change? If it is possible with the human tongue to describe a change which is total, thorough, complete and Divine, these words describe it! And if such a change is *not* intended by the language here used by the Holy Spirit, then I am unable to find any meaning in the Bible—and its words are rather meant to bewilder than to instruct, which God forbid we should think! My appeal is to you who try to be content without regeneration and conversion—I beseech you, do not be satisfied—for you never can be in Christ unless old things are passed away with you and all things become new.

Further, *the Scriptures speak of this great inner work as producing a very wonderful change in the subject of it.* Regeneration and conversion—the one the secret cause and the other the first overt effect—produce a great change in the character. Read Romans 6:17, “But God be thanked, that you were the servants of sin, but you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.” Again at verse 22, “Now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, you have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.” Mark well the description the Apos-

tle gives in Colossians 3:9, when, having described the old nature and its sins, he says, “Lie not one to another, seeing that you have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man.”

The Bible swarms with proof texts. The change of character in the converted man is so great that, “they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Gal. 5:24). And as there is a change in character, so there is a change in feeling. The man had been an enemy to God before, but when this change takes place he begins to love God. Read Colossians 1:21, “And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked worlds, yet now has He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblamable and unreprouvable in His sight.” This change from enmity to friendship with God arises very much from a change of man’s judicial state before God. Before a man is converted he is condemned, but when he receives spiritual life we read, “there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” This altogether changes his condition as to inward happiness. “Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord,” which peace we never had before.

“And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the Atonement.” O Brothers and Sisters, conversion makes a most mighty difference in us, indeed, or else what did Christ mean when He said, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”? Does He, after all, give us no rest? Is the man who comes to Jesus just as restless and as devoid of peace as before? God forbid! Does not Jesus say that when we drink of the water which He gives to us we shall never thirst again? What? And are we to be told that there is never a time when we leave off thirsting, never a time when that Living Water becomes in us a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life? Our own experience refutes the suggestion!

Does not Paul say in Hebrews 4:3, “We which have believed do enter into rest”? Our condition before God, our moral tone, our nature, our state of mind are made, by conversion, totally different from what they were before. “Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” Why, Beloved, instead of supposing that we can do without conversion, the Scriptures represent this as being the grand blessing of the Covenant of Grace! What did the Lord say by His servant Jeremiah? “This shall be the Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after these days, says the Lord, I will put My Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people” (Jer. 31:33). This passage Paul quotes in Hebrews 10:16, not as obsolete, but as *fulfilled* in Believers!

And what has the Lord said by Ezekiel? Listen to the gracious passage, and see what a grand blessing conversion is—“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh; and I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes; and you shall

keep My judgments and do them” (Eze. 36:26, 27). Is not this *the* blessing of the Gospel by which we realize all the rest? Is not this the great work of the Holy Spirit by which we know the Father and the Son? And is not this necessary to make us in accord with future glory? “He that sat upon the Throne said, Behold, I make all things new” (Rev. 21:5).

There is to be a new Heaven and a new earth, for the first Heaven and the first earth shall pass away. And can we believe that the old carnal nature is to enter into the new creation? Is that which is born of the flesh to enter into the *spiritual* kingdom? It can never be! No, a change as wonderful as that which will pass over this world when Christ shall re-create it must pass over each one of us, if it is not so already. In a word, if we are in Christ Jesus we are new creatures, old things are passed away! Behold, all things are become new! Do you know anything about this? I trust that a great number of you have experienced it and are showing it in your lives, but I fear some are ignorant of it. Let those who are unconverted never rest till they have believed in Christ and have a new heart created and a right spirit bestowed. Lay it well to heart that a change *must* come over you which you cannot work in yourselves, but which must be worked by Divine power.

There is this for your comfort, that Jesus Christ has promised this blessing to all who receive Him, for He gives them power to become the sons of God.

II. Secondly, I now remark that THIS CHANGE IS FREQUENTLY VERY MARKED AS TO ITS TIME AND CIRCUMSTANCES. Many souls truly born of God could not lay their finger upon any date and say, “At such a time I passed from death unto life.” There *was* such a time, however, though they may not be able to fix upon it. The act of conversion is often, as to many of its circumstances, so surrounded by preceding works of restraining Grace that it appears to be a very gradual thing. The rising of the Sun of Righteousness in the soul is comparable to the dawning of day, with a gray light, at first, and a gradual increase to a noonday splendor. Yet, as there is a time when the sun rises, so is there a time of new birth. If a dead man were restored to life, he might not be able to say exactly when life began, but there *is* such a moment. There must be a time when a man ceases to be an unbeliever and becomes a believer in Jesus. I do not assert that it is necessary for us to *know* the day, but there is such a time.

In many cases, however, the very day and hour and place are fully known and we might expect this, first, *from many other works of God*. How very particular God is about the time of creation! “The evening and the morning were the first day.” “God said, ‘Let there be light’—and months afterwards there came a little gray dawning and a solitary star.” “Oh no!” you say, “You are quoting from imagination!” Yes, I am. The Scripture has it, “God said, Let there be light: and there was light.” *Immediate* work is God’s method of creating! All through the six days’ work He spoke and it was done. He commanded and it stood fast. There is generally a likeness between one act of God and another—and if in the old creation the fiat did it all—it does seem likely upon the very face of things that in the new

creation the fiat of the eternal Word should be equally quick and powerful in its working.

Look at the acts of God in the Person of Christ when He was here among men. The water turns at *once* to wine, the fig tree immediately withers away, the loaves and fishes are at once multiplied in the hands of the disciples. Miracles of healing were, as a rule, instantaneous. In one instance the Lord puts clay on the blind man's eyes and sends him to wash—but lengthen the operation as much as you like—it is still very briefly summed up in, "I washed and do see." Yonder paralytic man is lying on his bed. Jesus says to him, "Take up your bed and walk," and he does so at once! The leprosy was cured with a touch, devils fled at a word, ears were unstopped instantly and withered limbs restored. He spoke to the waves and the winds and they were calm at once!

And as to the resurrections which Christ worked, which are His acted parables of regeneration, they were all instantaneous. Jesus took the little girl by the hand and said, "*Talitha cumi.*" She opened her eyes and sat up. He bade the bier stand still on which was the young man. He said—"Young man, I say unto you, arise"—and he arose straightway. Even the carcass of Lazarus, which had begun to corrupt, yielded at once to His word. He did but say, "Lazarus, come forth," and there was Lazarus! As the Master worked on men's bodies, so does He constantly work upon men's souls! And it is according to analogy to expect that His works will be instantaneous. Such they constantly are, for are they not daily before us?

We might also look for many instances of vividness if we consider the work itself. If it is worthy to be called a resurrection, there must manifestly be a time in which the dead man ceases to be dead and becomes alive. Take the opposite process of dying—we commonly say that such a man was long in dying. That is a popular description, but strictly speaking, the actual death must be instantaneous. There is a time in which there is breath in the body and another time in which there is none. So must it be in the reception of life! That life may seem to come by slow degrees into the soul, but it cannot really be so—there must be an *instant* up to which there was no life and beyond which life began. Is not that self-evident? Isn't it wonderful that that instant should fix itself on the memory and in many cases be the most prominent fact in a man's whole history? It is called a creation.

Now creation is necessarily a work which happens in an instant, for a thing either is or is not. There is no intervening space between non-existence and existence. There is the sharpest conceivable line between that which is not and that which is. So in the new creation there must be a time when Divine Grace is not received and a time when renewing it is, and we may naturally expect that in so grand a work there would be, in many cases, a marked boundary line at which the work begins. But, Brothers and Sisters, we need not talk of what we might *expect*—let us look at the facts. What are the facts about the conversions mentioned in Scripture? We hear much of educational processes which supersede con-

version, but they are among the many inventions unknown to Apostolic history.

The bishop tells us that he does not find a single case in the Bible at all resembling the case of John Bunyan. It is very curious how very differently we read. I at once turn to Paul, but the bishop says he is not a case in point, for he did not feel the burden of sin fall off his back. I cannot guess how the bishop knows what Paul endured during his three days' blindness, but my own notion, gathered from Paul's, after saying and doing, is very different. The man was one moment an opponent of Christ and the next moment was crying, "Who are You, Lord?" For three days he was blind and fasted. Was he not, then, feeling the power of the Law, and casting away his own righteousness? And when Ananias came to tell him more fully the Gospel and to bid him arise and be baptized, was there no removal of sin? Did he remain as before?

There are two things spoken of—he was to be baptized, and also to receive another and spiritual washing—was the first real and not the second? The Apostle always speaks of the whole thing as if he had cast away his own righteousness and counted it but dung to lay hold on Christ. And he continually glories in having peace with God, though he did not claim perfection in the flesh. He had not attained perfection, but he had attained salvation! He calls himself the chief of sinners, but this was as a retrospect—surely Bishop Fraser does not really mean to insinuate that the great Apostle still remained the chief of sinners? If so, I must say the morality of his teaching is not such as one would expect from him.

Some have said that Paul's case is a special and solitary one. But this is an error, for he says, himself, that Jesus Christ in him showed forth all long-suffering *for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting* (1 Tim. 1:15, 16). That which is a pattern is not a special case. Though the Lord does not always work to a pattern in details, yet the case of Paul suddenly converted is the pattern, rather than the exception. Let us look at other instances. A Samaritan woman comes to the well to draw water. Christ speaks to her. She is converted and goes away to tell the men of the city. Is not that a case of sudden conversion? Zaccheus is in a tree—he is a rich publican, and a sinner. Jesus cries, "Zaccheus, make haste and come down." He comes down, receives Jesus into his house, and proves his salvation by his works. Is not that a sudden conversion?

Matthew sits at the receipt of custom, another publican and sinner. Jesus says, "Follow Me." He rises and follows Jesus. Is not that a sudden conversion? Three thousand persons gather at Pentecost. Peter preaches to them and tells them that Jesus, whom they had murdered, was really the Christ of God. They are pricked in the heart! They believe and are baptized on the same day. Have we not here 3,000 sudden conversions? Sudden enough to prove my point. Further on, the jailer has gone to his bed, having fastened Paul and Silas in the stocks. His prisoners pray and sing praises unto God. There is an earthquake. The jailer in alarm cries, "What must I do to be saved?" He believes in Jesus, then and there, and is bap-

tized with his believing household. Are not these “at all analogous to John Bunyan’s pilgrim” and his losing his load? It really seems to me as if it would be much more difficult to find a *gradual* conversion in Scripture than a sudden one, for here they come, one another, men and women brought to Jesus Christ who knew Him not before, in whom the Scripture is fulfilled—“I am found of them that sought Me not.”

Furthermore, we need not go back to Scripture for this. The matter of the conversion of souls is one about which I feel it a weariness to argue, because these wonders of Divine Grace happen daily before our eyes. It is like trying to prove that the sun rises in the morning. By the space of 20 years there has certainly never occurred to me a single week, and I might with truthfulness say scarcely a solitary day, in which I have not heard of persons being converted by the simple preaching of the Gospel either here or elsewhere when I have borne witness for Christ. And these conversions have been in far the greater majority of instances very clear and well-defined.

Sometimes the children of godly parents who have been long hearing the Word are converted, and in them the inward change is as marked as if they had never heard the Gospel before! Infidels become Believers! Romanists forsake their priests! Harlots become chaste, drunks leave their cups and, what is equally remarkable, Pharisees leave their self-righteous pride and come as sinners to Jesus! Why, if this were the proper time and place, I might say to you now assembled, “Brothers and Sisters, you who have experienced a great change and know that you have experienced it, and can tell how it came about, stand up”—and you would rise in numbers like a host and declare—“Thus and thus, God met with us under the preaching of His Truth, and thus did He turn us from darkness to marvelous light.” I would to God that every man that hears me this day had received such a distinct conversion that it would be so plain to him that he was a new creature that he could no more doubt it than he can doubt his existence!

III. Thirdly, THIS CHANGE IS RECOGNIZABLE BY CERTAIN SIGNS. It has been supposed by some that the moment a man is converted he thinks himself perfect. It is not so among us, for we question the conversion of any man who thinks himself perfect. It is thought by others that a converted man must be henceforth free from all doubts. I wish it were so. Unhappily, although there is faith in us, unbelief is there, also. Some dream that the converted man has nothing more to seek for—but we don’t teach that—a man who is alive unto God has greater needs than ever. Conversion is the beginning of a lifelong *conflict*—it is the first blow in a warfare which will never end till we are in Glory.

In every case of conversion there are these following signs. There is always *a sense of sin*. No man, rest assured, ever found peace with God without first repenting of sin and knowing it to be an evil thing. The horrors which some have felt are not essential, but a full confession of sin before God—and an acknowledgment of our guilt—is absolutely required. “The whole,” says Christ, “have no need of a physician, but they that are

sick; I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.” Christ does not heal those who are not sick! He never clothes those who are not naked, nor enriches those who are not poor. True conversion *always* has in it a humbling sense of the need of Divine Grace.

It is also always attended with simple, true and real *faith* in Jesus Christ. In fact, that is the king’s own mark and without it nothing is of any worth. “Like as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” And that passage is put side by side with, “you must be born again,” in the same address, by the same Savior, to the same inquirer! Therefore we gather that *faith* is the mark of the new birth, and where it is, there the Spirit has changed the heart of man—but where it is not, men are still, “dead in trespasses and sin.”

Conversion may be known, next, by this fact, that it changes the *whole* man. It changes the principle upon which he lives. He lived for self—now he lives for God. He did right because he was afraid of punishment if he did wrong—but now he shuns evil because he *hates* it. He did right because he hoped to merit Heaven, but now no such selfish motive sways him—he knows that he is saved and he does right out of gratitude to God! His objects in life are changed—he lived for gain, or worldly honor—now he lives for the Glory of God! His comforts are changed—the pleasures of the world and sin are nothing to him—he finds his comfort in the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Spirit. His desires are changed—that which he once panted and pined for, he is now content to do without. And that which he once despised, he now longs after as the hart pants after the water brooks.

His fears are different—he no longer fears man, but fears his God. His hopes are also altered. His expectations fly beyond the stars—

**“He looks for a city which hands have not piled.
He pants for a country by sin undefiled.”**

The man has begun a new life. A convert once said, “Either the world is altered or else I am.” Everything seems new! The very faces of our children look different to us, for we regard them under a new aspect, viewing them as heirs of immortality! We view our friends from a different standpoint. Our very business seems altered. Even taking down the shutters in the morning is done by the husband in a different spirit, and the children are put to bed by the mother in another mood. We learn to sanctify the hammer and the plow by serving the Lord with them! We feel that the things which are seen are shadows—and the things which we hear are but voices out of dreamland. But the *unseen* is substantial and that which mortal ears hear not is the Truth of God.

Faith has become to us “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” I may go on to talk about this, but none will understand me except those who have experienced it—so let not those who have *not* experienced it say it is not true. How do they know? How can a man bear witness to what he has *not* seen? What is the value of testimony from a man who begins by saying, “I know nothing about it”? If a

credible witness declares that he knows such a thing to have happened, it would be easy to find 50 persons who can say that they did *not* see it, but their evidence goes for nothing. Here are men of position, quite as keen in business and able to judge between fact and fiction as other men—they tell you solemnly that they have, themselves, experienced a wonderful, thorough and total change of nature. Surely if their honest testimony would be taken in any court of law it ought to be taken in this case! Brethren, I pray that we may know what this change is, and if we do know it, I again pray that we may so live that others may see the result of it upon our characters and inquire what it means. The phenomena of conversion are the standing miracles of the Church.

“Greater things than these shall you do,” said Christ, “because I go to My Father.” And these are some of the greater things which the power of the Holy Spirit still performs. This day the dead are raised, blind eyes are opened and the lame are made to walk. The *spiritual* miracle is greater than the physical one. These spiritual miracles show that Jesus lives and puts life and power into the Gospel. Tell me of a ministry which never reclaims the drunk, never calls back the thief to honesty, never pulls down the self-righteous and makes him confess his sin—that, in a word, never transforms its hearers—and I am sure that such a ministry is not worth the time which men spend in listening to it! Woe unto the man who at the last shall confess to a ministry fruitless in conversions!

If the Gospel does not convert men, do not believe in it! But if it does, it is its own evidence and must be believed. It may be to some of you a stumbling block, and to others foolishness, but unto those who believe, it is the power of God unto salvation, saving them from sin! Beloved Hearers, may we all meet in Heaven! But to meet in Heaven we must all be renewed, for inside yonder gates of pearl none can enter but those who are new creatures in Christ Jesus our Lord. God bless you, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 3.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—175, 448, 603.**

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CHRIST THE MAKER OF ALL THINGS NEW

NO. 1328

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 10, 1876,
 BY C. H. SPURGEON,
 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature:
 old things are passed away;
 behold, all things are become new.”
 2 Corinthians, 5:17.*

WE shall try to preach, this morning, of Christ as the Author of the new creation and may we be enabled by the Holy Spirit to speak to His Glory. To create all things new is one of His most famous achievements! May we not only gaze upon it but be partakers in it. What says Solomon in the Book of Ecclesiastes? Does he not tell us, there, that “the thing that has been shall be, and that which is done is that which shall be done, and there is no new thing under the sun”? No doubt Solomon was correct in this declaration, but he wrote of this world and not of the world to come of which we speak. For, behold, in the world to come, that is to say, in the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, all things are new!

To the wisest mind, if unrenewed, there is *nothing* new, but to the humblest of the regenerated ones, all things have become new. The word, “new,” seems to harmonize sweetly with the name and work of our Lord Jesus, inasmuch as He comes in after the old system had failed and begins anew with us as the Father and Head of a chosen race. He is the Mediator of the New Covenant and has come to place us in a new relationship towards God. As the second Adam, He has delivered us from the old broken Covenant of Works wherein we lay under the curse and He has placed us under the new infallible Covenant of Grace wherein we are established by His merit.

The blood of Jesus Christ is said to be “the blood of the New Covenant”—there is thus a connection with newness even in the most vital point of our dear Redeemer’s Person. The blood is to Him the life, thereof, and apart from that blood He can bestow no remission of sin. Thus there is a newness about that essential life-flood, for when He gives us to drink of His cup of remembrance, He says, “this is My blood of the New Covenant which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” “Now has He obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much, also, He is the Mediator of a better Covenant, which was established upon better promises.”

The old Covenant, the old ceremonial Law, the old spirit of bondage and the whole of the old leaven, Jesus has purged out of the house. He has admitted to a new dispensation wherein Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life. When our Lord Jesus came into the world, His birth of a virgin by the power of the Holy Spirit was a new thing, for thus had the Prophet Jeremiah said of old in the name of the Lord, “How long will you go about, O you backsliding daughter? For the Lord has created a

new thing in the earth, a woman shall compass a man.” Unto us a Child is born who is the virgin’s Son, in whom we do rejoice because He comes into the world without taint of original sin, after a new fashion, as never man was born before!

Coming thus into the old world, He publishes new doctrine, for His doctrine is called Gospel, or Good News. It is the freshest news that an anxious heart can hear! It is the most novel music by which a troubled breast can be soothed! Jesus Christ’s teaching is still the best news of these days, as it was centuries ago. Though the world has had nearly 1900 years of the glad tidings, the Gospel has the dew of its youth upon it and when men hear it they still ask, as the Greeks did of old, “What new doctrine is this?”

Our Lord Jesus has come to set up, by the preaching and teaching of the Gospel, a new kingdom, a kingdom having new laws, new customs, a new charter and new riches. It is a kingdom which is not of this world—a kingdom founded upon better principles and bringing infinitely better results to its subjects than any other dominion that has ever been. Into that kingdom He introduces only new men, who are made new creatures in Christ Jesus, who therefore love His new commandments and serve Him in newness of spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.

Moreover, Christ has opened for us an entrance into the kingdom of Heaven above, for now we come to God “by a new and living way, which He has consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh.” When, in days to come, we shall meet Him again, there will still be novelty, for He has said, “I will not drink from now on of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.” Indeed, concerning our Lord and Master, everything is new and was it not so prophesied? For did not Isaiah say, in the 43rd chapter, 18th verse, “Remember you not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it?”

And to the same effect was his prophecy in the 65th chapter, 17th verse: “For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.” This newness of everything was to be a leading feature in Messiah’s reign and it has already been so, but far more shall this be seen in the latter days. Does not John in Revelation 21:5, say, “He who sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new”? Foretold in former ages as the Creator of new heavens and a new earth, our Lord shall, at last, in the summing up, be plainly seen to be the Maker of all things new.

Do you wonder, Beloved, that if a man is in Christ he is a new creature? If everything that Christ touches is made new, if He refreshes and revives, if He re-establishes and re-edifies and new-creates wherever He goes, are you at all astonished that those who live nearest to His heart—no, are in vital *union* with His blessed Person—should also be made new? It would be very astonishing if it were *not* so! Let us direct our attention,

then, to the teaching of the text, "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature."

I. We shall first consider with brevity THE GROUND OF THE NOVELTY which is here spoken of. It is, "If any man is in *Christ*, he is a new creature," not otherwise. No man comes to be a new creature by any process apart from Christ. "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature," but if any man is *not* in Christ, he is *not* a new creature, nor can he become so except by connection with Him of whom it is written that He is "the beginning of the creation of God." As in the old creation, "without Him was not anything made that was made," so is it in the new! He makes all things new, but the things that are apart from Him have waxed old and are ready to perish—neither can they renew their youth.

As well might the face of the earth hope to be renewed with spring apart from the sun, as for a soul to hope for spiritual renewal apart from Jesus! The wonderful newness produced by regeneration and new creation is the work of the Holy Spirit and His operations are all in union with the Lord Jesus and aimed at His Glory. "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life: and He that believes not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." But how comes it that a man is, indeed, a new creature if he is in Christ?

I answer, first, it comes necessarily from *the representative Character of Christ* towards those who are in Him. If you wanted a man to be made a new creature, and were Omnipotent, what process would suggest itself to you? I think a double one. To make an old creature into a new creature, there must first be the stroke which ends him and then the touch which begins him anew. To put it more plainly, there must be *death* and then *life*. Now, has that taken place upon those who are in Christ? Of course it has, if it has taken place upon Christ, Himself, because He is the Head and represents the members!

As Adam acted for the seed in him, so Christ has acted for the seed in Him. See, then, Beloved, Christ has died. He came before the Judgment Seat with our sins upon Him, the Representative of those of whom He is the Head. And in Him, death, which was the penalty of sin, was fulfilled to the letter—its most bitter dregs being drunk up. Jesus died. We are certain that He died, for the executioners broke not His legs because they saw that He was already dead. So one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear and there came out blood and water. We know that He died, for the jealous eyes of His enemies would not have permitted Him to have been taken down from the Cross unless the life had assuredly departed.

He was laid in the grave, assuredly dead, under the dominion of Death for the time being. And you and I who are in Him, at that time, died in Him. "If one died for all, then all died." Such is the proper translation of that passage. We died, for He died in our name. Our sin was punished in Him by the death which He endured. You see, then, Brothers and Sisters, we are dead—dead by virtue of our Federal Union with Jesus Christ. I mean not all of you, unless you are all in Christ Jesus. Judge whether it is so with you or not. But I mean as many as the Father gave to Christ! As many as Christ, in His intent, did specially redeem by becoming their

Substitute—these were in Him and in Him they died—being crucified with Him.

In Him, also, all His people rose again when He rose! On the third day He burst the bonds of Death and left the grave on our behalf! See how the Holy Spirit, by His servant Paul, identifies us with all this. “Now if we are dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him: knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, dies no more. Death has no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He lives, He lives unto God. Likewise reckon you, also, yourselves, to be dead, indeed, unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

As far as He was our Representative, He was a new man when He rose. The Law had no claims upon Him—He had been dead and so had passed out of its jurisdiction. The Law never had any claim upon the risen Christ—it had a claim upon Him when He came under the Law, but when He had satisfied it to the last jot and tittle, by death—He was completely clear! Has the law of our country any claim upon a man after he is dead? If a dead man can be raised again, all his past offenses are done with—he begins a new life and is not under the old law.

And so with Christ and so with us, for here is the point of union—we are risen with Him by faith of the Resurrection of Christ. We have been dead and buried, and now we are risen, and thus this, which is the very best and surest process for making a person a new creature, has been undergone by all God’s elect, by reason of the representative and sacrificial death of Jesus Christ and His glorious representative Resurrection on their behalf! But, Beloved, there is another meaning. *We are made new creatures by an actual process* as well as by the legal process which I have described, and here, also, the same thing is done.

We are made vitally one with Jesus Christ when we believe in Him—and then do we spiritually die and are made to live again. Our faith apprehends the dying of Christ and we feel, at the same time, the sentence of death in ourselves. We see how we deserve to die for sin and we accept the sentence, confessing our guiltiness before the Most High, and there is proclaimed throughout the powers and passions of the soul, a decree from God that the flesh shall die with all its lusts. We write down sin as from now on dead to us and ourselves as dead to it! We labor to mortify all our evil desires and the lusts of the flesh and all that comes of the flesh!

When we believe in Jesus, a sword goes through the very loins of sin and the arrows of the Lord stick fast in the hearts of the King’s enemies that lurk within our spirit. There also comes a new life into us as we behold Jesus risen from the dead. When we believe in Jesus we receive from God a new vital principle of superior and heavenly character, akin to Deity—there drops into our soul a sacred Seed from the hand of the eternal Spirit, living and incorruptible, which abides forever—and forever brings forth fruit after its kind. As we believe in Christ living, we live in Christ and live after the fashion of Christ—and the Spirit of Him that raised up Christ from the dead dwells in our mortal bodies, making us to live in newness of life!

Now, Beloved, do you know anything about this? Have you been made new creatures by death and resurrection? If you have been baptized, you have professed that so it has been with you. "Know you not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by Baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the Glory of the Father, even so we, also, should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection." In the ordinance of Baptism, by burial in the water and rising up from it, there is a setting forth as in a type and figure of our Lord's burial and Resurrection and, at the same time, it is an emblem of the process by which we become new creatures in Him.

But is it *really* so in your souls? Are you from now on dead to the world, and dead to sin, and quickened into the life of Christ? If you are so, then the text will bear to you a third and practical meaning, for it will not merely be true that your old man is condemned to die and a new nature is bestowed, but *in your common actions you will try to show this by newness of actual conversation*. Evils which tempted you at one time will be unable to beguile you, now, because you are dead to them! The charms of the painted face of the world will no longer attract your attention, for your eyes are blind to such deceitful beauties! You have obtained a new life which can only be satisfied by new delights, which can only be excited by new objects and constrained by new principles suitable to its own nature! This you will continually show.

The life of God within you will make your actions pregnant with holiness and the end, thereof, shall be everlasting life! Your faith in Christ clearly evinces you to be a new creature, for it kills your old confidences and makes you build upon a new basis. Your love to Christ also shows your newness, for it has slain your old actions and captured your heart for Jesus only. And your hope, which is also a gift of the blessed Spirit, is set upon new things altogether, while your old hopes are things of which you are now ashamed. Thus it is that first, by the Headship of Christ, you are legally dead and alive, again.

Next, by your vital union with Christ, you are dead and alive, again, as a matter of experience. And now it is practically proven in your life, from day to day, that you are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God. In all these three ways you are new creatures by the double process of dying and quickening. You are under a new Adam and so start life afresh as new creatures. You are under a new Covenant and commence to act under different principles and so are new creatures. You are quickened by a new Spirit and so in thought and word and deed are seen to be new creatures. But all this is *in Christ*, and if you are *not* in Christ you are still in the old world which must shortly be destroyed. As "by the Word of God were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth," so have you been created by Jesus, the Eternal Word, and quickened by His Spirit or else you still abide in death.

If your faith has never laid her hand upon Christ's Sacrifice for sin, then your soul has never felt the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit!

And all the baptismal regeneration and all else of human invention that may now comfort you is but a vain deceit. You *must* be born again, but it can only be in Christ Jesus, for to “as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.” “He that has the Son has life; and He that has not the Son of God has not life.”

O that we may all believe in Him, and enter into the new life—

**“Author of the new creation,
Come with all Your Spirit’s power!
Make our hearts Your habitation,
On our souls Your Graces shower.”**

II. I shall, in the second place, lead you to consider the ESSENCE OF THIS NOVELTY. “If any man is in Christ, He is *a new creature*.” Read, and the reading will be accurate, “He is a *new creature*.” This is a very sweeping statement. A man in Christ is not the old man *purified*, nor the old man *improved*, nor the old man in a *better humor*, nor the old man with additions and subtractions! Nor is he the old man dressed in gorgeous robes! No, he is a *new creature* altogether! As for the old man, what is to be done with him? Can he not be sobered, reformed and made to do us useful service? No, he is crucified with Christ and bound to die by a lingering but certain death!

The capital sentence is passed upon him, for he cannot be mended and, therefore, must be ended. “The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither, indeed, can be.” You cannot change the old nature! It is immutably bad and the sooner it is put away as a filthy and unclean thing, the better for us! The Believer, so far as he is in Christ, is a new creation! He is not the old stuff put into a new fashion, or the old material worked up into an improved form, but absolutely a new creation! To create is to make out of nothing and that is precisely how the newborn life came into us. It is not a development, or an outgrowth, but a *creation*—a heavenly something called into being by a power from above.

The new man in us is made out of nothing that was in us before, for Nature does not assist Grace but is opposed to it. Christ has not found light stored away in our darkness, nor life amid the corruption of our spiritual death! The new birth is from above and the life produced thereby is a new creation and not the goodness of Nature educated till it becomes Grace! They are getting up a notion, in certain quarters, that the children of pious parents, if not of all mankind, are the children of God by their first birth and only need certain training and influences to be brought to bear upon them and then they will develop into Christians as they grow up into manhood and womanhood.

One Divine says that our children ought not to need conversion! This theory is false throughout, for the best of children are, by nature, heirs of wrath even as others! The Grace of God in the soul is a new creation and not the natural development of a pious education and training working upon the innate goodness of men! Indeed there is no such goodness there at all! It is altogether a dream! The new man in Christ is not the old creature washed and put out to school and elevated by “modern thought and

culture.” No, the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots—do what you will with them—they will still be an Ethiopian and a leopard!

But the new man in Christ is another creature altogether. Mark you, it is not said that the man has something new *about* him, but he, himself, is new! It is not merely that in a *spiritual* sense he has new eyes, new hands and new feet—but he, he, he, he, himself, is a new creation! Mark that! Do you not see, then, that salvation is the work of God? You cannot create yourself and you cannot create anything at all! Try and create a fly, first, and then you may dream of being able to create a new heart and a right spirit in another *person*! But even then it would be quite another matter to new create *yourself*.

Is not the very idea an absurdity? Shall nothing create something? Shall darkness create light? Shall sin create holiness? Shall death create life? Shall the devil create God? None of these questions are more absurd than the idea of the sinner’s being able to new create himself. No, Beloved, regeneration is an extraordinary work, demanding Omnipotence to accomplish it! It is, in fact, a Divine work, for it is the supreme prerogative of God to create—

**“Know that the Lord is God alone,
He can create, and He destroy.”**

If any man is in Christ, it is not only said that he is a creation, but a *new* creation, and the word here translated, “new,” as has been well observed, does not signify *recent*, but something altogether different from that which previously existed! A book may be new and yet it may be only a fresh copy of some old work. But that is not the case in this instance. The creature is not a new specimen of the same kind as the old, but another and different creation!

We might almost read the text as if it said, “If any man is in Christ, he is a fresh creation, a new kind of creature altogether.” The new creation differs essentially from the old, although the first is an instructive emblem of the second. The first creation was the work of physical power, the second a work of *spiritual* power—the first created, for the most part, materialism in its various forms—but the new creation deals with spiritual things and manifests the most sublime attributes of the Divine Character. God, in Nature, is glorious, but in Grace He is all-glorious!

The second is a creation nearer to the heart of God than the first creation was, for when He made the world He simply said it was good. But when He makes the new creation, it is written, “He shall rest in his love; He shall rejoice over you with singing.” So gladdening to His heart is the sight of the new creature which His Grace has made, that He sings a joyful hymn! Furthermore, we must note that if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature and the creation of him bears some resemblance to the creation of the world.

I have at other times gone through that wonderful first chapter of the Book of Genesis, which is a Bible in miniature, and I have shown you how it sets forth the spiritual creation. Behold, by nature we lie like chaos—a mass of disorder, confusion and darkness. As in the old creation, so in the

new. The Spirit of God broods over us and moves upon the face of all things. Then the Word of the Lord comes and says within us, as before in chaos and old night, "Let there be light," and there is light. After light there comes a division of the light from the darkness and we learn to call them by their names. The light is, "day," and the darkness is, "night."

So to us there is a knowing and a naming of things and a discerning of differences in matters which before we were ashamed when we put light for darkness. After a while there comes forth in us the lower forms of spiritual life. As in the earth there came grasses and herbs, so in us there come desire, hope and sorrow for sin. By-and-by there appeared on the globe fowl, fish, beasts and living things—and life beyond all count. So, also, in the new creation, from having life we go on to have it more abundantly. God, by degrees, created all His works till at last He had finished all the host of them. And even so He works on till He completes in us the *new creation* and looks upon us with rejoicing! Then He brings to us a day of rest, blessing us and causing us to enter into His rest because of His finished work. We could draw a very beautiful parallel if we had time, but you can think it out for yourselves.

Now, notice very carefully that if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature, and this certifies that a new creation has taken place upon every man who is in Christ, whether by nature he was a Jew or Gentile, a moralist or a rake, a philosopher or a fool! When a man is converted and brought to Christ, he has invariably become a new creature. If he has believed in Jesus only three minutes, yet he is a new creature! And if he has known the Lord 70 years he can be no more. A new creation is a new creature and in this matter there is no difference between the babe in Grace and the father in Israel!

As this creation is common to all the saints, so is it *immediate and present*. "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature." It is not spoken of as a something that is *to* happen to him in the last article of death, wherein some seem to hope that many wonderful changes will be worked in them! But he who is in Christ is a new creature *now*. "Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creature." And that new creature is now possessed and, I may add, *consciously* possessed, too, for although there may arise occasional doubts upon this question, yet in a man's inmost self he finds cause to know that there has passed upon him a marvelous change which only God, Himself, could have worked.

This change is *universal in the man*. The new man is not full grown in every part, nor, in fact, in *any* part, and yet in all the portions of his regenerated nature he is a new creature. I mean this—if any man is in Christ, it is not merely his mental eye that is a new creation, but he, himself, is a new creation! He has a new heart according to the promise, "A new heart, also, will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." He has new ears, hearing what he refused to hear before. He has a new tongue and can pray with it as he never prayed before! He has new feet and these delight to run in the ways of God's Commandments.

I refer, of course, only to His inner man, that is altogether new, and not any one part of it, only. If a man is merely enlightened in understanding,

what is that? It is good, but it is not salvation! A new brain is not all that is needed to make a new man. A new man is spiritually new-created from head to foot. Though but a babe in Grace and not fully developed in any one part, yet he is new, “created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God has before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10). Thus have I tried to show you the essence of the novelty.

III. Let us next consider THE EXTENT OF THE NOVELTY. “If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: *old things are passed away; behold, all things have become new.*” It seems, then, that not only is the man a new creature, but he has entered into a new creation. He has opened his eyes in a new world! Imagine Adam falling asleep at the gates of Paradise just under the cherubim’s flaming sword, with the thorns and thistles springing up before him, and the serpent’s trail behind him! And then further picture him lying there in a deep sleep till the Lord touches him, makes him open his eyes and causes him to find himself in a better Paradise than the one he had lost!

It was not so in reality, but can you imagine such a thing? If so, it may serve as a symbol of what the Lord has done for us. We are made new and find ourselves in a new world! What about *the old things*? The text says they have passed away. The Greek word gives the idea of their having passed away spontaneously. I cannot liken it to anything that I know of better than the snow which melts in the sun. You wake up one morning and all the trees are festooned with snowy wreaths, while down below upon the ground the snow lies in a white sheet over everything. Lo, the sun has risen, its beams shed a genial warmth and in a few hours, where is the snow? It has passed away!

Had you hired a thousand carts and horses and machines to sweep it away it could not have been more effectually removed. It has passed away. That is what the Lord does in the new creation—His love shines on the soul, His Grace renews us and the old things pass away as a matter of course. Where are your old views about which you used to be so positive? Where are those old opinions for which you could freely have knocked a man down? Where are those old sneers against God’s people? Where are those old pleasures which you took so much delight in? Where are those old engrossing pursuits? Had you a hard tug to get away from these bonds?

Where are those old joys, those old hopes, those old trusts, those old confidences? Was it difficult to shake them off? Ah, no! Beneath the power of the Holy Spirit they have passed away! You hardly know how it is, but they have gone and gone completely. As a dream, when one awakes, you have despised their image and your heart knows them no more. It is marvelous, in this new creation, how the Lord makes confusion and old night to fly! You may call for them and say, “Chaos, where are you?” But no answer comes back, for old things are passed away! Our Lord Jesus Christ causes all this! Where His blessed face beams with Grace and truth, as the sun with warmth and light, He dissolves the bands of sin’s long frost and brings on the spring of Grace with newness of buds and flowers.

But when you remove the old what is to take its place? Do you not observe that *new things have come*? “Behold, all things are become new.” Now the man has new views, new notions, new ambitions, new convictions, new desires, new hopes, new dreads, new aims, new principles and new affections! He is led by a new spirit and follows a new course of life! Everything about him, in fact, is as if he had come fresh from the hand of God! Even as with the cleansed leper, as his flesh came, again, to him as the flesh of a little child and he was clean, so it is with the heart renewed by Grace! Beloved, it is delightful to read in the Book of Revelation and anticipate the things which are to be hereafter. How full that book is of novelties which illustrate our subject, for there you read of a *new name* which the Lord bestows upon those who overcome.

Perhaps some of you used to be known by some nickname or vulgar epithet while you lived in the world and were a lover of it. Now, in all probability, you are called by quite a different name among your Christian friends. Saul the persecutor is called Paul when he becomes an Apostle. Moreover, there is a new name which the mouth of the Lord shall name, which no man knows, saving he that receives it. You have been named with the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and you wear, from now on, that name by which the whole family in Heaven and earth is named. Grace also has taught you a *new song*, “He has put a new song into my mouth and established my goings.” You are rehearsing the music of that glorious band of whom it is written, “They sung a new song, saying, You are worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof.”

Now are you a citizen of a *new city*, the New Jerusalem which comes down out of Heaven from God, which shall be established among the sons of men in the last days as the world’s metropolis, concerning which they shall say, “The temple of God is with men and He does dwell among them.” Beloved, each one of you has now become part of *one new man*. Do you know what I mean by that? There were once the Jews and the Gentiles, but now, said Paul, Christ “has broken down the middle wall of partition; for to make in Himself of two, one new man, so making peace.” The mystical body of Christ is the one new man and we are members of that body! From now on we have communion with all saints and to us “there is neither Greek nor Jew, bound nor free, but Christ is all, and in all.”

Even now we have commenced to live in a new Heaven and walk upon a new earth—and we are anticipating the time when literally, on this very earth where we have struggled, there shall be set up a new condition of things, for the first Heaven and the first earth shall have passed away and there shall be no more sea. Rolled up like a scroll shall yon blue heavens be, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. Nevertheless, we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth to which, in expectation, we are always drawing near and pressing forward with inward yearning, for already in Christ Jesus we are a part of that new creation which is more fully to be revealed.

IV. Fourthly let us consider THE RESULT OF THIS NOVELTY. “If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature.” Well, the result of this novelty is,

first, that the man is already a great wonder to himself. You know the Pythagorean doctrine of the transmigration of souls—the soul passing, first, into one body and then into another—and so existing under different conditions. We do not believe that fiction for a moment, but if it had been true, the memories of such souls must have been stored with varied information, surpassingly strange to hear.

Ours is another transformation. It is death and resurrection—the old passing away and the new being created—and how remarkable are the experiences of the men who have been so transformed! Here is a man who is a new creature and he has a very distinct recollection of the time when he was something far other than he is now! What a change he has undergone! Suppose a swine could suddenly be turned into a man and yet remember what it did when it was one of the herd! What an experience it would have to tell! If you could take a hog from the trough and turn it into an emperor, that would not be half so great a change as is accomplished when an unregenerated sinner becomes a saint!

I guarantee you the emperor would not find much cause for glorifying in his former swinish state! He would be silent and ashamed when others mentioned it. If he alluded to that state, it would always be with the blushes of humiliation and the tears of gratitude. If anybody began to talk about it and he knew that there might be others about him that might be helped by hearing what the Lord had done, he would begin to tell, in a gentle, modest way, how the Lord transformed him from a swine into a monarch. But he would never, never boast—how could he? In such a case the poor swine would have no responsibility and could not be blamed for wallowing in the mire.

But this cannot be said of *us*, for when we acted as swine we knew better and sinned willfully. Still, what a change it is! How I wonder at myself! How I marvel at the goodness of my God! How I adore that sacred power which has made me the child of two births, the subject of two creations! He first made me in the fashion of a man and then made me in the image of the Man, Christ Jesus! I was first born to die and then born to live eternally! Let us bless God and be full of lowly wonder this morning!

The next result of this new creation is, however, that the man does not feel at home in this present evil world, for this is the old creation. The new man, the twice-born man, feels as if he were out of his element and not in a congenial country. He dwells in a body which is nothing better than a frail, uncomfortable, easily removed tent in which he groans, earnestly desiring to enter his own house at home, the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Wherever he goes, things seem out of order with the rule which is set up in his soul. He loves not the world, neither the things in the world. The world's glories do not charm him and its treasures do not enchant him. Earth's music grates upon his refined ears, which are tuned to heavenly harmony! Its dainties do not delight the taste which has learned to enjoy the Bread of Heaven. The new creatures pine to be in the new creation!

And Beloved, while we are pining we are preparing! The Spirit of God is working us to this same thing and filling us with groans and pangs of

strong desires which indicate that we are becoming more and more fit to be partakers with the saints in light—they who see the face of the Beloved without a veil and drink in ever new delights! Mark, once more, while the new creature is thus watching and waiting for the new creation, he is, meanwhile, extending an influence, more or less unconscious, over the old world in which he dwells. Just as our Lord has gone to Heaven to prepare a place for us, so we, His people, are stopping here to prepare a place for Him.

We are, by His Grace, winning men from the world to Christ! We are raising the tone of morals, we are spreading light and truth on all sides by the power of the Spirit and so we are helping to make the world more ready to receive the great King. We are seeking out His jewels. We are bringing His rebellious subjects to His feet. The life that is in us seems out of place in this mortal frame, for the body is dead because of sin and, therefore, we groan, being burdened. As for the world itself, it is not our rest, for it is polluted.

It seems a dreadful thing for the living Spirit to be dwelling in this graveyard of a world, but it is necessary for us to be here. We are linked with a creation made subject to vanity, because it was thus subjected, not willingly, but by reason of Him who has subjected the same in hope that the creation, itself, “shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” We are here as links between the spiritual and the material and we are working out Divine purposes for the fuller display of the Divine Glory!

We comfort one another with these words and as new creatures in Jesus Christ, we look for the new heavens and the new earth and for the coming of your Lord and Savior! Know you not that when He shall appear, then shall *you*, also, appear with Him in glory? Let us, even now, bow before Him and salute Him with the language of our hymn—

***“To You the world its treasure brings!
To You its mighty bow!
To You the Church exulting springs
Her Sovereign, Savior!
Beneath Your touch, beneath Your smile,
New heavens and earth appear,
No sin their beauty to defile,
Nor dim them with a tear.”***

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
2 Corinthians 4:17, 18; 5.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—907, 391, 474.**

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THE BELIEVER A NEW CREATURE

NO. 881

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 18, 1869,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature.”
2 Corinthians 5:17.

THIS text is exceedingly full of matter and might require many treatises, and even multitudes of folios to bring forth all its meaning. Holy Scripture is notably abounding. Human teachers are given to verbiage—we multiply words to express our meaning, but the Lord is wondrously concise—He writes as it were in shorthand and gives us much in little. One single grain of the precious gold of Scripture may be beaten out into acres of human gold leaf and spread far and wide! A few books are precious as silver, fewer, still, are golden—but God’s Bible has a bank note in every syllable, and the worth of its sentences is not possible for mortal intellect to calculate.

We have two great Truths of God here which would serve us for the subject of meditation for many days—the Believer’s position—he is “in Christ.” And the Believer’s character—he is a “new creature.” Upon both of these we shall speak but briefly this morning, but may God grant that we may find instruction in it.

I. First, then, let us consider THE CHRISTIAN’S POSITION—he is said to be “*in Christ*.” There are three stages of the human soul in connection with Christ—the first is *without* Christ—this is the state of nature. The next is *in* Christ—this is the state of Divine Grace. The third is *with* Christ—that is the state of glory. *Without* Christ, this is where we all are born and nurtured and even though we hear the Gospel and the Bible is in all our houses—and even though we use a form of prayer—yet until we are born again we are without God, without Christ and strangers from the commonwealth of Israel.

A man may stand at the banqueting table and may be without food unless he puts out his hand to grasp that which is provided. And a man may have Christ preached in his hearing every Lord’s-Day and be without Christ unless he puts forth the hand of faith to lay hold upon Him. It is a most unhappy condition to be without Christ. It is inconvenient to be without gold. It is miserable to be without health. It is deplorable to be without a friend. It is wretched to be without reputation. But to be without Christ is the worst lack in all the world! O that God would make all of us sensible of it who are now the subjects of it and may we no longer tarry in the position of being without Christ!

The next state is that indicated in the text, “*in Christ*,” of which I will say more, by-and-by. “*In Christ*” leads to the third state, which we can never reach without this second one, namely, to be *with Christ*—to be His companion in the rest which He has attained, all His work and labor done. To be *with Him* in the Glory which He has gained—made to see it and to participate in it world without end! To be *with Christ* is the angels’ joy. It is the Heaven of Heavens! It is the center of bliss, the sun of Paradise! Let us seek after it and in order that we may have it, let us labor with all our heart and mind to be found in Christ *now*, that we may be in Christ in the day of His appearing.

We now turn to the expression itself, “*in Christ*.” I never heard of any persons being in any other man but Christ. We may follow certain leaders, political or religious, but we are never said to be included *in* them. We may take for ourselves eminent examples and high models of humanity, but no man is said, in any respect, to be *in* another. But this is a grand old Scriptural phrase in which the disciple and the follower of Christ becomes something more than an imitator of his Lord and is said to be *in* his Master.

We must interpret this Scriptural phrase by Scriptural symbols. We were, all of us, *in* the first Adam. Adam stood for us. Had Adam kept the command, we had all of us been blessed. He took of the forbidden fruit and fell—and all of us fell in him. Original sin falls upon us because of the transgression of our covenant head and representative, Adam the first. But all Believers are in the same sense in Christ, Adam the second, the only other representative Man before God, the heavenly Man, the Lord from Heaven. Now, as in Adam we all fell, so all who are in Christ are *in Christ* perfectly restored.

The obedience of Christ is the obedience of all His people. The Atonement of Christ is a propitiation for all His people’s sins. In Christ we lived on earth, in Christ we died, in Christ we rose and He “has raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places” in Himself. As the Apostle tells us that Levi was in the loins of Abraham when Melchisedec met him, so were we in the loins of Christ from before the foundation of the world—faith apprehends that blessed Truth of God and thus by faith we are experimentally in Christ Jesus.

Noah’s Ark was a type of Christ. The animals that were preserved from the deluge passed through the door *into* the ark. The Lord shut them in and high above the foaming billows they floated in perfect safety. We are *in Christ* in the same sense. He is the Ark of God provided against the Day of Judgment. We, by faith, believe Him to be capable of saving us—we come and trust Him, we risk our souls with Him, believing that there is no risk. We venture on Him confident that it is no venture—giving up every other hope or shadow of a hope, we trust in what Jesus did, is doing and is in Himself, and thus He becomes to us our Ark and we are *in Him*.

Another similitude may be taken from the old Jewish Law. By God’s commands certain cities were provided throughout all Canaan that an Israelite

who should slay his fellow unintentionally might flee there from the avenger of blood. The City of Refuge no sooner received the manslayer than he was perfectly free from the avenger who pursued him. Once within the suburbs or through the gate, and the manslayer might breathe safely. The executioner would be kept at bay. In the same sense we are in Christ Jesus. He is God's eternal City of Refuge and we, having offended, having slain, as it were, the command of God, flee for our lives and enter within the refuge city where vengeance cannot reach us, but where we shall be safe world without end.

In the New Testament the Lord Jesus explains this phrase of being in Himself in another way. He represents us as being in Him as the branch is in the vine. Now the branch derives all its nourishment—its sap, its vitality, its fruit-bearing power—from the *stem* with which it is united. It would be of no use that the branch should be placed *close* to the trunk. It would be of no service even to strap it side by side with the stem—it must be actually *in* it by a vital union. There must be streams of sap flowing at the proper season into it—life-floods gushing into it from the parent stem. And even so there is a mysterious union between Christ and His people—not to be explained but to be *enjoyed*—not to be defined but to be *experienced*.

This is a union in which the very life of Christ flows into us and we, by the virtue that comes out of Him into us, become like unto Him and bring forth clusters of good fruit unto His honor and unto God's Glory. I trust you know what this means, Beloved, many of you. May you live in the possession of it daily! May you be one with Jesus, knit to Him, united to Him—never to be separated forever! As the limb is in the body, even so may you constantly be one with Jesus. We may be in Christ, also, as the stone is in the building. The stone is built into the wall and is a part of it. In some of the old Roman walls you can scarcely tell which is the firmer, the cement or the stone, for their cement was so exceedingly strong that it held the stones together as though they were one mass of rock. And such is the eternal love which binds the saints to Christ. They become one rock—one palace wall, one temple—to the praise and Glory of the God who built the fabric. Thus you see what it is to be *in* Christ. It is to trust Him for salvation as Noah trusted the ark. It is to derive real life from Him as the branch does from the stem. It is to lean on Him and to be united to Him as the stone leans on the foundation and becomes an integral part of the structure.

The phrase, "in Christ Jesus," then, has a weight of meaning in it. "How do we come to be there?" asks one. To whom we answer—our union to Christ is practically and experimentally worked in us by *faith* when a man gives himself up to Christ—to sink or swim with Christ. It is when he leans his soul wholly on the Beloved. It is when, as for his good works, he abhors them! And as for his self-righteousness, he counts it dross and dung! It is when he clings to the sole hope of the Cross—then is such a man *in* Christ. He is further in Christ

when he loves Jesus, when the heart, having trusted and reposed in the Cross, is moved with deep and warm affection to the Crucified, so that the soul clings to Christ, embracing Him with fervent love.

And then Christ becomes the Bridegroom and the heart becomes his spouse and they are married to one another in a union which no divorce can ever separate. When love and faith come together, then is there a blessedly sweet communion! These two Graces become the double channel through which the Holy Spirit's influence flows forth daily, making the Christian to grow up more fully unto Christ Jesus in all things. The riper the Christian becomes—the nearer to Glory, the closer to the perfection which is promised—the more completely will he think and act and live and move in Christ his Master, being one with Jesus in all things. I shall not detain you longer over that one matter, every *true* Christian is *in* Christ.

II. Now we survey THE BELIEVER'S CHARACTER, for it is said that if any man is in Christ he is a "*new creature*." This is a great utterance. We shall not attempt to dive into it—this were work for a leviathan scholar—but merely like the swallow, we touch the surface of it with our wing and fly away.

What is meant by the Christian being a new creature? Three thoughts seem to me to spring up from the words and the first is the Believer must, then, have been the subject of a radical *change*. He is said to be a *new* creature, which is of all things a most sweeping change. There are many changes which a man may undergo, but they may be far from being radical enough to be worth calling a new *creation*. Saul is among the Prophets—hear how he prophesies. If they speak with sacred rapture the secrets of God, so does he. Is Saul converted? Scripture tells us that God gave him another heart! Yes, *another* heart, but not a *new* heart.

A man may be changed from one sin to another—from reckless profanity to mocking formality—from daring sin to hypocritical pretension to virtue. But such a change as is very far from being *saving* and not at all like the work which is called a new creation. Ahab went and humbled himself after his murder of Naboth and God turned away His vengeance for awhile from him. But that temporary humiliation of Ahab was no sign of a renewal of his *nature*—it was like the changes of the sea which today is smooth, but which soon will be as ravenous after wrecks as ever—being still unchanged in its *nature*, still voracious and cruel, fickle and unstable. Ahab may humble himself, but he is Ahab, still, and as Ahab will he go down into the Pit.

Conversion is sometimes described in Scripture as *healing*. Yet the idea of healing does not rise to the radical character of the text. Naaman went down to the Jordan full of leprosy and he washed himself and came up, after the seventh immersion, with his flesh clean like unto a little child. But it was the same flesh and the same Naaman and he was by no means a new creature. The woman, bowed down with infirmity those sad 18 years, was marvelously

changed when she stood upright, as a daughter of Abraham, loosed at last from her bondage. But she was the same woman, and the description does not answer to a new creature.

No doubt there are great moral changes worked in many which are not saving. I have seen a drunk become sober. I have known persons of debauched habits become regular. And yet their changes have not amounted to regeneration or the new birth. The same sin has been within them, reigning still, though it has assumed a different garb and used another voice. Ah, you may be washed from outward leprosy and you may be made straight from your visible infirmities, but this will not suffice! If you are *in Christ* you must have more than this, for, “if any man is in Christ, he is a *new creature*. Old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new.”

Nor will the most startling changes suffice unless they are total and deep. The Ethiopian might change his skin, the leopard might suddenly lose his spots—these would be strange prodigies, but the leopard would remain a leopard and the Ethiopian would still be black at heart. The improvement would not amount to new *creation*. So may a man give up every outward lust and every crying sin which he ever wished to indulge and yet, unless the change shall go far deeper than the outward life, he is not saved—he is not a new *creature* and, therefore, he is not *in Christ Jesus*. I venture to say that even the metaphor of *resurrection*, which is often applied to conversion, does not go so far as the language of the text.

The young daughter of Jairus is placed upon her bed and she dies. Our Lord comes and says to her, “Tabitha cumi,” and she opens her eyes! She awakes! She lives! She eats! Still she is not a new creature—her mother receives her as the same child. Even Lazarus, who has been dead and is supposed through four days of burial, to have begun to stink—when he is called from the grave by the voice of Jesus, he is the subject of a remarkable miracle—but it scarcely amounts to a new creation. He is the same Lazarus restored, not a new creature, but the same creature vivified from a transient sleep of death. Do you see, then, how very searching the phrase here, “a new creature,” is absolutely a new creation? It is a root and branch change—not an alteration of the walls only, but of the foundation!

It is not a new figuring of the visible tapestry, but a renewal of the fabric itself. Regeneration is a change of the entire nature from top to bottom in all senses and respects. Such is the new birth! Such is it to be *in Christ* and to be renewed by the Holy Spirit. The text says that we are new creatures through being *in Christ*. How does that come about? We have known persons disagree very earnestly against the doctrine that men are saved by a simple faith in Jesus Christ. That is the Gospel and nothing else is the Gospel—and those who do not preach that Truth of God know nothing of God’s Gospel at all—for it is

the very soul and essence of the Gospel—the article, as Luther used to say, by which a Church stands or falls.

We are saved by a simple faith in Jesus, but these people argue against this on the ground that there must be a great *moral change* in man before he can be reconciled to God and made qualified to be with God forever. But, my Brothers and Sisters, if the text is true, that those who are in Christ are new creatures, what greater change than this can be desired? I know no language—I believe there is none—that can express a greater or more thorough and more radical renewal than that which is expressed in the term, “a new creature.” It is as though the former creature were annihilated and put away and a something altogether new were formed from the breath of the eternal God—even as in the day when the world sprang out of nothing and the morning stars sang together over a new-made universe! Such is the fruit of being *in* Christ—to be a new creature.

And what? Do you moralists want *more* than this? What? Do you pretend-ers to perfection, you mystic spiritualists who strive after a strange holiness to which you never attain—you that bind heavy burdens upon men’s shoulders which you do not touch, yourselves, with your fingers. Do you want more than this—for a man to be absolutely made a new creature by being in Christ? How is this done? We reply that the man who is in the first Adam, being translated into the second Adam, becomes legally a new creature. As in the first Adam he is judged and condemned, his punishment is laid upon his Substitute. But as viewed in the second representative Man, he is legally, and before the bar of God’s justice, a new creature.

And this is not all! He who believes in Christ, finding himself completely pardoned as the result of his faith in the precious blood of Jesus, loves Christ and loves the God who gave Christ to be his redemption—and that love becomes a master passion. We have all heard of the expulsive power of a new affection. This new affection of love to God coming into the soul expels love to sin. It enters into the heart of man with such a royal majesty about it that it puts down all his predispositions towards evil and his prejudices against the Most High. And with a real and Divine power it reigns within the soul.

I suppose the mode of this great change is somewhat after this sort—the man, at first, is ignorant of his God. He does not know God to be so loving, so kind, so good as He is. Therefore the Holy Spirit shows the man Christ, lets him see the love of God in the Person of Christ and thus illuminates the understanding. Whereas the sinner thought nothing of God before, or his few stray thoughts were all dark and terrible, now he learns the infinite love of God in the Person of Christ and his understanding gets clearer views of God than it ever had before. Then, in turn, the understanding acts upon the affections. Learning God to be thus good and kind, the heart, which was hard to-

wards God, is softened and the man loves the gracious Father who gave Jesus to redeem him from his sins.

The affections being changed, the whole man is on the way towards a great and radical renewal, for now the emotions find another ruler. The passions, once rabid as vultures at the sight of the carrion of sin, now turn with loathing from iniquity and are only stirred by holy principles. The convert grows vehement against evil, as vehement as he once was against the right. Now he longs and pines after communion with God as once he longed and pined after sin! The affections, like a rudder, have changed the direction of the emotions and meanwhile the will, that most stubborn thing of all, that iron sinew, is led in a blessed captivity, wearing silken fetters. The heart wills to do what God wills. Yes, it wills to be perfect, for to will is present with us though how to perform all that we would we find not.

See then, beloved Friends, how great is the change worked in us by our being in Christ! It is a thorough and entire change, affecting all the parts, powers and passions of our manhood. Grace does not reform us, but *recreates* us! It does not pare away here and there an evil growth, but it implants a holy and Divine principle which goes to instant war with all indwelling sin and continues to fight until corruption is subdued and holiness is enthroned. I shall only pause to ask this one question—do my hearers all know what such a change as this means? Believe me, you must know it *personally* for yourselves, or you can never enter Heaven. Let no man deceive you. That regeneration which is said to be worked in *baptism* is a figment without the shadow of foundation! The sprinkling of an infant makes no change in that child whatever!

Infant baptism is, I believe, a vain ceremony not commanded of God, nor warranted in Scripture! And as the Church of England practices it, it is altogether pernicious and superstitious. If there is any effect following it, it must be an evil effect upon those who wickedly lie unto Almighty God by promising and vowing that the unconscious shall keep God's Commandments and walk in the same all the days of his life! They cannot do for the child, inasmuch as they cannot even do so for themselves! You must have another regeneration than this—not the work of priestly fingers with their hocus-pocus and superstitious genuflections—but the work of the Eternal Spirit, who alone can regenerate the soul! Only the Holy Spirit can give light to the spiritually blinded eye and sensation to the spiritually dead heart. Be not misled by the priests of this age!

You profess to have cast off Rome—cast off her Anglican children! Wear not the rags of her superstition, nor bear her mark on your foreheads. You must be born again in another sense than formality can work in you. It must be an *inward* work, a *spiritual* work and only this can save your souls! If any man is in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature, that is, he has experienced a radical change.

Secondly, another thought starts up from the expression in the text. There is *Divine working* here. “A new creature.” Creation is the work of God alone. It must be so. If any doubt it, let us bid them make the effort to create the smallest object. The potter places his clay upon the wheel and shapes it after his own pleasure. He fashions the vase, but he is not the creator of it. The clay was there beforehand—he does but change its shape. Will any man who thinks he can play the Creator produce a single grain of dust? Call now and see if there are any that will answer you—call unto nothingness and bid a grain of dust appear at your bidding! It cannot be!

Now, inasmuch as Paul declares the Christian man to be a new creature, it is proven that the Christian man is the work of God and the work of God, alone, “Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” The inner life of the Christian is the sole work of the Most High and no one can even *pretend* to lift his finger to help the Creator. In creation, who helped God? Who poised the clouds for Him? Who weighed the hills in scales to aid His skill, or helped Him dig the channels of the sea? Who aided in rolling the stars along? Who took a torch to light up the lamps of Heaven? With whom did the Almighty take counsel and who instructed Him? If there are any that can stand with God in the making of the world, then may some pretend to compare with Him in the conversion of souls. But until that shall be, the new creation is God’s sole domain and in it His attributes, and His attributes, alone, shine resplendent. “It is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy.”

The sovereign will of God creates men heirs of Divine Grace. My Brethren, it were more difficult, if such terms are ever applicable to Omnipotence—it were more difficult to create a Christian than to create a world! What was there to begin with when God made the world? There was nothing! But nothing could not stand in God’s way—it was at least passive. But, my Brothers and Sisters, in *our* hearts, while there was nothing that could help God, there was much that could and *did* oppose Him! Our stubborn wills, our deep prejudices, our ingrained love of iniquity—all these, great God, opposed You and aimed at thwarting Your designs.

There was darkness in the first creation, but that darkness could not obstruct the incoming of light. “Light be!” was the eternal fiat and light was! But, O great God, how often has Your voice spoken to us and our darkness has refused Your light! We loved darkness rather than light because our deeds were evil. And it was only when You put on the garments of your Omnipotence and come forth in the Glory of your strength, that at last our soul yielded to Your light and the abysmal darkness of our natural depravity made way for Your celestial radiance! Yes, great God, it was great to make a world, but greater to create a new creature in Christ Jesus!

There was chaos when God began to fit up this world for man. There was dire confusion, rampant disorder. But the Spirit of God moved on the face of the deep and brought order speedily, for chaos could not resist the Spirit. But, alas, the disorder of our soul was stout in resistance to the order of God. We would not have His ways nor yield to His commands. But even as we could we set our faces like a flint against the will and power and majesty of the Eternal, yet has He subdued us—yet has He made us the creatures of His mercy. Unto Him, then, be Glory and strength! Unto Him be praise, world without end!

In the creation of the old world God first gave light and afterwards He created life—the life that crept, the life that walked, the life that dived, the life that flew in the midst of Heaven. So has He worked in our hearts. He has given us the life that creeps upon the ground in humiliation for sin. The life that walks in service, the life that swims in sacred waters of repentance, the life that flies on the wings of faith in the midst of Heaven. And, as God separated the light from the darkness and the dry land from the sea, so in the new creature he has separated the old depravity from the new life. He has given to us a holy and incorruptible life which is forever separated from and opposed to the old natural death. And at last, when the old creation was all but finished, God brought forth man in His own image as the top stone.

A like work He will do in us as His new creatures. Having given us light and life and order, He will renew in us the image of God. Yes, that image is in every man who is in Christ Jesus at this hour. Though it is not yet complete, the outlines, as it were, are there. The great Sculptor has begun to chisel out the image of Himself in this rough block of human marble. You cannot see all the features—the Divine lines are not yet apparent. Still, because it is in His design, the Master sees what we see not. He sees in our unhewn nature His own perfect likeness as it is to be revealed in the day of the revealing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Thus, dear Brethren, I have tried to show you that the work which is worked in us when we come to be in Christ Jesus is a Divine work, because it is a new creation.

I shall pause here, again, and say to each hearer, Do you know what it is to be under God's hand and to be worked by God's workmanship? Strangers to God must be strangers to Heaven. Beloved, if you have no more religion than you have worked out in yourself and no more Divine Grace than you have found in your nature, you have none at all! A supernatural work of the Holy Spirit *must* be worked in every one of us if we would see the face of God with acceptance. This change is assuredly worked in every man that is in Christ Jesus. If you believe in the Lord Jesus, this work is begun and shall be carried on in you!

But if you have nothing about you but your own works and resolves—your own praying and reforming—you fall short of the Glory of God and you have not that which will be a passport to the skies. God grant you yet to have it. I

pray God His Truth may go right through and through your souls like refining fire and may you not be satisfied unless a true new birth, the work of the living God, is really in your possession even now.

We shall now come to the third point which the singular expression of the text brings up. The expression “a new creature,” indicates *remarkable freshness*. It is very long since this world saw a new creature. If what geologists say is true, there have been several series of creatures in different periods of time. And each race has given place to another race of new creatures fresh from creation’s mint—new from God’s hand. But it is now 6,000 years, at least, and some of us think many thousand years more, since the day when this last set of creatures came into this world and started upon the race of life!

All the creatures we now see are old and antiquated. The flower which springs from the soil is the repetition of its like which bloomed 5,000 years ago. Yonder meadows bedecked with yellow kingcups and fair daisies are the facsimiles of those our sires looked upon three score years ago. As for ourselves, removed by long lines of pedigree from the man whom Jehovah formed in the Garden, we by nature show small signs of the undefiled hand and sacred finger. The world is hackneyed and stale and old! Time wearily drags on to its Saturday night—it draws near to the last of its work days with heavy footsteps. Any new creature coming fresh into the world would startle and amaze us all! What would men give if the Almighty hand would form a novelty in life and send it among us?

And yet, you Athenian wits that are forever seeking after some new thing, the text tells you that there are new creatures upon earth, positive new creations—fruits that have the freshness and bloom of Eden about them—flowers unfaded, life with the dew of its youth upon it! And these new creatures are Christian men! These new creatures fresh from the Divine hand, as though just fashioned between the eternal palms, are the men that weep for sin! The men that confess their iniquity! The men that say, “God be merciful to us, sinners.” The men who rest in the blood of the Atonement. The men who love Christ Jesus and live to the Glory of the Most High—these are new creatures! There is a freshness about them! They have just come from the hand of God! They enjoy nearness to God! They get to the fountainhead of life and drink where the crystal stream is cool and clear and not muddied by distant trickling through earthly channels!

There is a freshness, I say, about them which is to be found nowhere else! I believe this, believe it because I have experienced it. This world’s a dream, an empty show—there is nothing lasting beneath the stars—everything of seeming joy soon palls upon the mind. Take to study and ransack all the learned and your mind will soon be satiated with knowledge. Take to travel and behold the fairest realms, climb the summits of the Alps, or traverse the valleys with all their picturesque beauty and you will soon say, “I have exhausted all. I

know it. I am weary of it." Follow what pursuit you will, like Solomon you may get to yourself gardens and palaces, singing men and singing women. Or you may, if your folly is great enough, give yourself to wine. Or if you will, addict yourself to commerce. But of the whole you will say before long, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." The world is but a mirage. It melts. It disappears as the traveler passes on and mocks his thirst with the deceptive image of the true.

But, Beloved, the spiritual life is not so. There is a freshness, a vivacity, a force, an energy, a power about it that never grows stale. He that prayed yesterday with joy, shall pray in 50 years' time, if he is on earth, with the same delight. He that loves his Maker and feels his heart beat high at the mention of the name of Jesus, shall find as much transport in that name if he lives to the age of Methuselah, as he does now. Year by year its sweets grow sweeter, its lights grow brighter, its novelties grow fresher, its joys more joyous and its exhilarations more intense! We still dance before the ark! While heart and flesh are failing, the spirit gathers new strength, and joy gathers growing force. Let us seek after this new creatureship, this new power, this fresh life, this ever-vigorous youth that laughs at decrepit earth and worn out time!

Let us seek after this new life which counts even sun and moon and stars but dying things—like flickering lamps smoking out their lives for lack of oil, while the Divine life, since it is fed by God, wears within it a secret immortality which death and Hell and time cannot impair. Now I shall appeal to you again. Do you know anything about this freshness? If you do, you will find that the world does not understand you. A new creature put into this world would be in a very strange position from the mere fact of its being a new creature. Believer, you will find that the world does not suit you as it once did. You will be out of your element, pining for another world—for there must necessarily be a new world to suit a new creature. Are you panting after the new world? God will not give you what He has not taught you to long for, but, your craving and longing are the shadows of the coating mercy. Ask yourselves whether you know these mysteries. If you do not, may the Lord teach you. And if you do, praise and bless His name.

To conclude. This subject leads us to two things. It leads us to self-examination. May I press upon everyone to search himself, whether he knows what this being made a new creature means! But I will not detain you on this point, lest I weary you on this sultry morning. Pursue practically the exhortation I fail to enlarge upon verbally. I would lead you to another thought, on which I will dwell for a moment. Our subject excites hope in the Christian. If God has made a new creature of him, which is the greatest work of Divine Grace, will He not do the lesser work of Grace—namely, make the new creature grow up unto perfection? If the Lord has turned you to Himself, never be afraid that He will leave you to perish.

If he had meant to destroy you, He would not have done this for you. God does not make creatures for annihilation. Chemists tell us that though many things are resolved into their primary gases by fire, yet there is not a particle-less matter on the earth today than there was when it was created. No spiritual life that comes from God is ever annihilated. If you have obtained it, it never shall be taken from you—it shall be in you a well of water springing up unto everlasting life. If when you were an enemy, God looked upon you in Grace and changed you and made you what you now are, will He not, now that you are reconciled, continue to preserve and nurture you till He presents you faultless before His Presence with exceedingly great joy? The Lord grant it to you!

One other word of hope and it is this—if salvation is entirely a creation of God—if God alone can work it, what hope this ought to give the most forlorn sinner! Ah, my dear Friend, if your salvation rested on *you*, you might well despair! Chaos, if it remained with you to make order, order could never be! Darkness, if it were yours to create the light, light could never shine! But *God's* command brings forth order and light. Sinner, if it were for you to make yourself a saint and work out your salvation alone, you might well despair! But it is *God's* work and He can do whatever He wills. He can instantly dispel your gloom! He can immediately overcome your unbelief! He can change your heart! He can make you, the greatest of sinners, to become the brightest of saints!

Lift up your heart to Him! He hears prayer! Heaven's gate is open! Seek, for he that seeks finds, and to him that knocks it shall be opened! And God bless you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 John 3.

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“THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION”

NO. 2837

**A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, JUNE 28, 1903.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, JULY 8, 1887.**

***“And has given to us the ministry of reconciliation.”
2 Corinthians 5:18.***

THERE has been a long-standing quarrel between God and man. It commenced in that day when our first parents hearkened to the serpent’s voice and believed the devil rather than their Maker. Yet God is not willing for that quarrel to continue. According to the goodness of His nature, He delights in love. He is the God of Peace and He has, on His part, prepared everything that is necessary for a perfect reconciliation. His glorious wisdom has devised a plan whereby, without violating His Justice as the Judge of all the earth and without tarnishing His perfect holiness, He can meet man upon the ground of mercy and man can again become the Friend of God. That blessed work was done long ago and now all that remains is that man should be reconciled to God, that he should be willing to end the dispute and that his heart should turn towards his Maker again in love, peace and perfect reconciliation. He bids us, His ministers and, indeed, all His servants—each according to his opportunity, experience, knowledge, ability and Grace—to go abroad among the sons of men and exercise “the ministry of reconciliation,” to labor to bring men into harmony with God, that they may be willing to accept what God has done toward the making of an everlasting peace and ending, once and for all, this grievous quarrel.

You notice, dear Friends, that Paul says that God “has given to us the ministry of reconciliation,” that is, to us men. He might have sent angels to you with the Gospel, but, for a thousand reasons, it was preferable that He should send to men by men. You also observe how the Apostle reassures us by this message, for, if there were a war between two countries, as, for instance, suppose our country should unhappily be at war with France, it would be a token that we desired peace if the ambassador whom we sent to France was a Frenchman who had become domiciled among us. It would be a sure sign that the French sought to be at peace with us if they said to an Englishman living in Paris, “Go to London and try to make peace between the two nations.” It would be a token at once that the desire for peace was sincere and you may be sure that God earnestly desires that there should be peace between you and Himself be-

cause He sends men to you with “the word of reconciliation.” This shows His condescension, too, in that He veils His glorious majesty.

A seraph would be far more worthy than I am to stand here to plead with you and, willingly enough would I resign my place to him. I do not know that an archangel could desire a happier or better work than to stand here and speak on behalf of the God of the whole earth and labor to bring back God’s rebellious children to Him—but while his splendor might reveal much of the greatness of God to you, yet you might be terrified and alarmed by the angelic preacher!

But now, the human being who addresses you, being just like yourselves, shows how God lays aside His Glory and holds back the thunder of His power, that He may come and reason with you, face to face, as a man reasons with his friend. He “has committed unto us the word of reconciliation” because we can, in this matter, speak from experience. When we talk about being at peace with God and speak of the joy which this reconciliation brings, we can say, “We know it is so, for we have felt it.” We can enter, with full sympathy, into the case of our friends who are still unreconciled to God. We know the evil of sin and the fear it creates in the conscience, for we have felt it ourselves. We can, therefore, be tender and compassionate to others who are in a similar condition. And we also know something of the sweetness of peace with God through Jesus Christ, for we are living in the enjoyment of it. We know, too, what are the struggles of a poor soul seeking to get that peace, for we struggled into peace through the rich mercy of God! I hope, therefore, that you will see the Wisdom and the Grace of God in choosing one like yourself to plead with you on His behalf and that God will be pleased to bless that instrumentality and make it effectual in your reconciliation unto Himself.

Notice particularly that the ministers of God are not sent to reconcile God *to you*. That great work is already done. As the righteous Judge, He was angry with all sin, but now, seeing that an acceptable Sacrifice has been presented, He is able to meet you with forgiveness in His heart. We are not even sent to find out a way of reconciling you *to God*, for He “has committed unto us the word of reconciliation” as well as “the ministry of reconciliation,” so that all we have to do is, as it were, to translate into today’s language that which God Himself has written in this Book. We have to speak out in simple, earnest, living words, the message which has been dictated to us—not to make up a message, but to act as the mouthpiece of God! Oh, that He might make me that to many a heart here now! Now let us go to this solemn work and may God the Holy Spirit help us in it!

First, then, we wish to *state the objective of true Gospel ministry*. Next, we will *declare the word of reconciliation*. And, then, we will *beseech you to agree with it*. God grant that these points may strike home!

I. First, then, let us enquire—WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE OF TRUE GOSPEL MINISTRY? It is that men should be reconciled to God.

My unconverted Hearer, you are at enmity against God. I know that you do not always believe that. You say, “I have not yielded my heart to Him, but still, I am not at enmity against Him.” Listen. You do that which

displeases Him and you do it without any grief over it, or, whatever compunction you may feel for a time, you do the same thing again and again—and you continue to do it! What does this prove? When a subject constantly rebels against his sovereign, does it not prove that he is disloyal at heart? “By their fruits you shall know them,” is our Lord’s own test. Look, you unconverted ones, see what your fruits are! Do not your wicked works prove that you are at enmity against God? Is it not certain that you do not like to hear much about Him? Am I speaking untruly when I say that you count the Bible very dull reading—that some of you say that Sabbaths spent as Christians ought to spend them are very dreary days? You want something more cheerful. God’s House is too weary a place for you and to think about Him is too much of a task. I put it to your conscience whether it is not so with you. Do you not regard religion as being a very gloomy affair? If you wanted what you call, pleasure, would you think of seeking it in drawing near to God? No, you would be happier if there were no God at all, would you not? And if all the arrangements of Divine Justice, by which God governs the world, should be abolished, would you not be pleased? If you could sin without being checked in it, or threatened with punishment for it, would you not be glad?

All this proves that you do not love God! The real English of it is that you would destroy God, if you could, in order to have liberty to act according to your own devices. You do not find pleasure in Him. You must admit that your pleasure is found elsewhere. When we truly love a person we find pleasure in being in his company, we are glad to receive letters from him—in fact, anything that the hand of the loved one has touched becomes interesting or even sacred to us. Seeing that it is not so with you, but that you have said to God, “Depart from me! I desire not the knowledge of Your ways”—does not this prove that your heart is at enmity against God? Ah, young people, you may scarcely think that this accusation is a just one, but the more you come to search and look, the more you will find that it is true. If it is not true, I am indeed glad that I need not ask you to be reconciled to God, for you are already reconciled! But then, we shall need to see the proofs that it is so and, among the rest, we shall want to see whether you love God’s Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and trust in Him, for, “He that loves Him that begot, loves Him, also, who is begotten of Him.” If you love the Father, you will love the Son and put your soul’s trust in Him. But it is not so with unrenewed men—they are at enmity against God.

Our objective, in all our preaching, is that you should really be reconciled to God—not that you should pretend to be so. “Oh, yes,” you say, “we will attend the regular services. If you wish, we will join the church. We will be baptized, or we will be confirmed—and we will take the sacrament.” That is not sufficient. God wants the love of your heart. He wants you to be at peace with Him. Suppose you were to attend to all these external things and still did not love and trust Him—you would be insulting Him—not honoring Him! I tell you, all your church or chapel attendance, your saying of your prayers and your reading of the Bible are of no value

in His sight unless your heart is right with Him. That is the point we are aiming at. In vain is all your attendance upon outward worship! In vain is your profession of being reconciled to God unless you really are! You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, or else the work of the minister is not even begun, much less completed.

We can never be satisfied with your merely listening to us. It is a great thing to have a large and attentive congregation, but it only makes us mourn if we even imagine that you give your ear to us and not to our Master—if you say, “He speaks pleasantly,” or, “He speaks well,” and yet obey not the message we have tried to convey to you! Oh, forget us! Think nothing of us! Reproach us if you will! There is good reason for it, sometimes, but turn unto the Lord our God! “Be you reconciled unto Him”—that is the burden of all our preaching and, therefore, we cannot be put off with your saying that you will be reconciled to God one of these days. We do not preach with a view to getting you to promise to be reconciled *someday*—we beseech you to be reconciled *now*. “Behold, *now* is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation.” Those are not my words—they are the words of Inspired Scripture itself. *Now*, then—we have nothing to do with tomorrow! It is now, even now, that we beseech you, in Christ’s place, to be reconciled to God! And we want that reconciliation to be worked at once by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Thus I have stated the objective of true Gospel ministry.

II. Now, secondly, I want to make known to you, as plainly as I can, “THE WORD OF RECONCILIATION.” What is that word?

First, I have to tell you that “*all things are of God.*” That is the first sentence of the verse from which our text is taken. If, therefore, you are willing to be at peace with God, there is nothing whatever needed from *you*. God has prepared all things that are needed for this present and perpetual reconciliation! To make the friendship between God and man firm and lasting, all that is needed has been already supplied! There is to be nothing of your will, nothing of your merits, nothing of your doing, nothing of your suffering, but, “all things are of God.” I think I hear one say, “That suits me, then, for I have nothing and I can do nothing.” You need not be anything, Soul. It will be better if you can be nothing and still better if you can be *less than nothing*, “for all things are of God.” That is where “the ministry of reconciliation” begins. Surely, such a message as that ought to help bring men into peace with God!

And, next, I again remind you that *the reconciling work on God’s part is already done*. He “has given to us the ministry of reconciliation,” but He “reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ.” When Jesus hung upon the Cross—when Jesus died—when Jesus rose again, everything was done that was necessary in order that God might be able to forgive the guilty and receive them to His bosom! Nothing can be added to Christ’s completed work, of which He said, “It is finished.” It is as efficacious, today, as it ever was. The work of salvation was done forever and, on God’s part, there is nothing now to be removed in order that all who trust His Son may be at perfect peace with Him.

The Lord, through the Apostle’s words, *graciously deigns to explain how this came about*. Paul says that He “was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” Do you see what that means? You are full of sin, but God will not set that sin down to your account if you trust in His Son’s Sacrifice! You have lived a life of sin, but He will not impute it to you! Perhaps you ask, “How can that be?” I will tell you, directly, but, first, I ask you to believe that it is so. “Not imputing their trespasses unto them.” You are in debt. You owe a great sum that you can never pay, but the person to whom you owe it turns to his account book and he says, “I have nothing down against you—are you not delighted that it is so?” “But I am in your debt.” “I have nothing down against you,” he says again. He knows all about the debt, yet he tells you it is not in his ledger. “But it must be down somewhere,” you say, “that man has set my debt down to the account of somebody else.” That is exactly the case with your sin! Read the last verse of the chapter and you will get the explanation—“For He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” Jesus willingly undertook to stand in the sinner’s place—and if you accept the reconciliation He has made, your debts are put down *beneath His name* and through them all is drawn the red mark of His atoning Sacrifice, canceling them, every one, so that God can say, “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins.”

You see, then, that God meets you on these terms—that whatever your guilt may be, He lays it at the door of Christ and makes *Him to be sin for you* and, then, He puts you into Christ’s place and makes *you to be* “the righteousness of God in Him.” And so He saves you! “That is an extraordinary plan,” you say. It is. It is extraordinary. It wakes the echoes of Heaven every time the angels think of it, but it is God’s plan. Will you have it? What do you say? Will you quibble at it, or will you accept it? Do not let its wonderful character keep you back from it. On the contrary, say, “If God is satisfied with it, I may well be satisfied, too! If God is content with the work of Christ, I am sure I well may be! It is to Him that the debt was due and if He says it is discharged, I believe Him!” If He declares, as He does, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus”—if He teaches His people to say, as He does, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God”—we are glad enough to accept the Truth He reveals!

And I, for one, am glad enough to proclaim it to you! I have known the time when I could almost have leaped out of the pew when I first learned this simple way of salvation—it did something more than electrify me when I came to understand that this was the way in which God was just and yet the Justifier of him that believes in Jesus—and that all that I had to do was simply to accept it, to look to Christ and take Him to be my Substitute! That was what I did and so I obtained peace in believing. Many years have passed since then, but I have never sought for any other confidence, nor do I want any other! Jesus is All in All to my heart at this moment and, therefore, I urge all here present to accept Him. Let

every guilty, burdened, heavy-laden sinner come and take Christ, who is the Power of God, and the Wisdom of God, saying, “If God meets me thus and is willing to blot out all the past and let me begin over again. If He is willing to cast my sins into the depths of the sea and never call me to account for them, and never lay them to my charge—blessed be His holy name, it does not take me two minutes to consider whether I shall accept this reconciliation or not! I will have it and rejoice to have it! May He grant it to me now!”

III. My third point is this. We are not to be satisfied merely to tell you the Gospel. WE ARE TO BESEECH YOU TO ACCEPT IT, “as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ’s place, be you reconciled to God.”

Consider, I pray you, *how unseemly it is for you to be at enmity against your God.* You are a creature whom He has made and you could not exist a single moment longer if it were not for the constant emanation of His power which sustains you in being. You owe everything to Him! You are absolutely in His hands—He can create and He can destroy. A moth beneath your finger would not be one half as easy to crush as you are beneath the finger of God if He becomes angry with you! Is it wise, is it right for the creature to be at war with the Omnipotent Creator?

Remember, too, *what a good God He is!* He makes the sun to rise on the evil as well as on the good. The rain falls upon the lands of the blasphemer as well as upon the fields of the devout. God gives us fruitful seasons—yes, He gives us everything and He is not provoked against us even though we have continued to rebel against Him. For which of these things do you sin against Him? As I have studied God’s Character and known something of Him by fellowship, I have bowed before His matchless goodness. Oh, it is indeed evil to do anything against One who is pure Love, who is “holy, holy, holy,” altogether without fault! It cannot be right—I put it to your conscience—it cannot be right for you to be at enmity against the pure and holy God! Think of this matter, I pray you, and end your enmity.

If you are not at peace with God, *you ought to rejoice at any plan by which you may be at peace.* I say, *any plan.* I would take the Bible, if I had never opened it before, and say, “Whatever I find between the covers of this Book of God, I will gratefully accept. I do not mind what plan He proposes, so long as this sad state of things shall come to an end. Can God forgive me? Can He receive me into amity with Himself? Can I be His accepted child? Whatever He proposes, I will agree to accept it even before I know what it is. “But how much more ought you to accept it when the plan is what I have explained to you, namely, one in which there is nothing but mercy on God’s part, though there is nothing but sin on yours—one in which God, in the Person of His Son, takes all the suffering, and you have all the blessing—one in which Jesus takes all the shame and you take all the joy!

And, mark you, *this is to be had for the asking.* You have but truly to seek it and you shall have it! Forsake your sin. Forsake your evil thoughts. Confess your transgressions to the Lord and come and trust in Him

whom God has set forth to be the Propitiation for human sin! That is all that is required—why do you not accept it? Surely it is because sin has maddened you and so fascinated you as to make you slaves to its accursed self, so that you do not turn unto Him even though the way of salvation is so simple, so easy, so sure, so everlasting. I would that I could put a force into the very tones of my voice that would send home this reasoning to your heart! As God’s creature, you ought to be at peace with Him! Any way in which reconciliation could reach you, you ought to be glad to accept—but such a way as this, in which God’s justice is honored and yet His mercy is revealed—ought to strike you as being full of Divine Wisdom and you should at once accept it. Oh, that you would do so!

Let me further plead with you to be reconciled to God *because the consequences of not being reconciled to Him will be very terrible*. What king is there who, if he were about to go to war and found himself able to raise only a thousand troops, would not stop a while if he found that his adversary were coming to meet him with a million men? “Oh,” says he, “this is too preposterous! My little army could not stand in the field for an hour against my adversary’s vast host. The very first discharge of his dread artillery would sweep both myself and all my little company away.” But the contrast is still greater in your case because you are not, with respect to God, even as strong as a thousand would be against a million! He could devour you as easily and as swiftly as the fire devours the stubble. Let the wax fight with the flame, or the twig contend with the fire before you shall be so foolish as to attempt to contend with God! Throughout your life He proposes terms of peace to you—but there will come a day when He will have no dealings with you through ambassadors—He will deal with you by executioners!

I think that it was Alexander who, when he besieged a town, would hang out a white flag and at night a lamp of white color—and as long as either of them hung out, it was a token that if the besieged surrendered, they should have the best possible terms. But when he hung out the red flag, or the red lamp, the people knew that every man in that city would be put to the sword. Alexander would offer no other terms, then! He had hung out the white signal long enough and now he had changed his tune. So, all through this life, the white flag is held out to you—but the time will come when, instead, there will be the red flag of vengeance—and woe be unto the ungodly in that day! Modern deceivers may tell you what they like, but God’s Word declares, “These shall go away into everlasting punishment.” And side by side with it, as if to confirm it, is the other declaration that the righteous shall go into life eternal or everlasting—indicating, by the same Word which is used concerning the righteous, that they shall reign forever and ever, but the doom of the wicked shall be just as lasting. “The smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever.” If one is to be shortened, the other must be and I cannot, even with all the pity in my heart, shorten the torments of Hell at the expense of the bliss of Heaven! Nor will God do so. Oh, provoke not the wrath of the Most High! But be at peace with Him this very hour!

Think, too, of *the consequences which will follow when you have peace with God*, for the man who is at peace with God, and knows it, is the happiest of men! He is at peace with all things! He is at peace with life, death, time and eternity. The very beasts of the field are in league with him and the stars in their courses fight for him. All things work for his good now that he has become a child of God by faith in Jesus Christ. Oh, the joy that some of us have experienced through entering into peace with God! We could not describe it to you. Sometimes, it has been so exhilarating that we have felt that we could not communicate any adequate sense of it to our fellow men, for we have heard words which it would not be lawful for a man to utter, save in the ears of those who have felt the same supreme delights! That blessed Book of Solomon’s Song is misunderstood by many Believers because they never knew the joy of conjugal love with Christ and the sweetness of His heart when He lays it bare to His Beloved people. “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him” and I can assure you, Beloved, that if you do but become reconciled to God, it will be the best day that you ever spent.

Let me continue pleading with you for a little longer. Do you not know, dear Friends, that *the first person to seek peace in any quarrel should be the offending party*? It is not often that it is so, but it ought to be so. The person who has offended another ought to be the first to seek terms of peace. Now *you* are that person. Come, then, accept the message of love which God sends to you. That I may come very close to you, let me ask, “Have you anything to say against God?” In all earthly quarrels, there are two sides, but it is not so in this case. Is there anything which the Lord has done that you think to be difficult? For instance, is there anything in the terms of peace that He puts before you that you think to be too stern? “Oh,” you say, “His requirements are too strict!” What are those requirements? That you should leave your sin? That is not too much to ask of you. Does not every doctor who wants to heal a sick man who has taken poison, first of all prevent him from taking any more? Sin is poison to you. Would you let your child who has made himself ill by eating some unsuitable thing, keep on eating it? No, you would take it away from him!

That is all that God wishes to do to you—to deny to you that which, if you were wise, you would deny to yourself. This is not a hard thing, surely. “Oh, but what He asks of me is so mysterious! I do not comprehend it.” What is it that you do not comprehend? That you should believe on Jesus Christ? That is as simple as the act of breathing. That you should trust yourself to Christ? “Where is He?” you ask. He is in Heaven, but He is just as able to save you as if He stood here in bodily Presence. Do you not often trust people whom you never see? Some of you have business transactions with people in India—or you trust your money to a banker in Australia, or in America. You never saw the banker and you do not need to see him. You believe that there is such a person and you trust your money to him. Trust your soul to Christ in the same fashion. Though you never saw Him, rely upon Him, for you have read about Him and you believe the story of His birth, life, death and Resurrection.

“Ah,” says one, “but if I were to become religious, I would lose so many pleasures.” I see. But, in order to be reconciled to *God*, I would be willing, if necessary, to lose a thousand pleasures! Do you not feel that if there were some amusement that you loved, that grieved your mother, you would give it up? Husband, if there were something that you did that made the tears stand in your wife’s eyes, even though you liked to do it, would you not give it up for her sake? For those we love, we can readily deny ourselves and count it no denial. But, after all, you know that it is not so. God asks us to give up no pleasure that is real pleasure—and if there is any pleasure at all in it, it is sin. He takes care to give us ten times as much pleasure in His own holy ways. If it were right, I could speak of some here who have known all about the pleasures of the world. They know the pleasures of horseracing. They know the pleasures of the most frivolous company that can be. But I know what their testimony would be, if I asked them. They would say that an hour of peace with God not only recompenses them for the loss of those pleasures, but that they are glad to get rid of all such rubbish, the things of which they are now ashamed!

I do not know how merry a young fellow you may be, but if you are happier than I am, young Man, you must be an uncommonly happy person! I can pick out some, who are much older than I am, and who have more rheumatism in their bones than I have and who also have a good deal of poverty to endure. I could bring you many an old woman who is sitting here, and I could ask her, “Would you change places with that young man who is given up to the guilty pleasures of sin? Come, old Mary, what do you say? This young man says that he would lose pleasure if he were to become a Christian—what do you say? Would you change places with him?” I think I hear her say—

***“I would not change my blest estate
For all the world calls good or great!
And while my faith can keep her hold
I envy not the sinner’s gold.”***

So, young Man, you see that we are as happy as you are! We may not make so much noise over it, sometimes, but “still waters run deep” and the quiet joy of the Christian is joy that is worth having.

“Oh, but,” says another, “this is my difficulty. I am afraid God would not receive me even if I were to come to Him.” Just give me your hand, Brother—let me have a grip of it. Now, if I were to assure you that I would receive you into my house, would you believe me? I believe you would. Well, you may doubt me if you like, but you must not doubt my God, or doubt the bleeding Lamb! And He has said, “Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.” He could not put it stronger than that! For no reason and in no way will He cast out any soul that comes to Him, so He will not cast *you* out. But I hear another say, “I have tried and failed.” What have you tried? Have you accepted Christ as the Propitiation for your sin? Have you trusted yourself with Christ? Do you say, “Yes”? Then you are a saved man! God declares that you are. “But I have prayed,” you say. Yes, but that is not the way of salvation. God forbid that I should say a word against prayer! I would say a thousand words *for* it—it is a

blessed exercise—but the dead cannot pray, nor can you till you are made alive! The first thing that you have to do is to trust Jesus Christ—and that is the only thing which the Gospel demands of you as the grand condition of reconciliation with God! “This is the work of God, that you believe on Jesus Christ whom He has sent.”

“Yes, but I have tried to lead a different life.” I know that you have. But suppose I were a physician and I said to you, “Here is the medicine that will cure you,” and you say, “I will not take it, Sir.” “Why not?” “Because I have tried some other medicine in vain.” Would that be logical? The doctor might say, “You may have tried 50 sorts of medicine, but that has nothing to do with what I am giving you—you have to try this.” It must not be *your* way of being saved, but *God’s* way. Your way is to try and live better. But then you do not live better, for you break down again and again. God’s way of saving you is that you trust Jesus Christ and then He will make you live better! Old things shall pass away and all things shall become new when Jesus Christ has you in His hands. Have done with yourself and let Jesus Christ do the whole work and He will save you. That is God’s way of salvation.

I do not know whether I have mentioned the peculiar quibble or quarrel that any heart has with God, but I hope I have done so. I would willingly lay down my very life if I could bring all in this Tabernacle to the Lord Jesus Christ. We preachers, and you teachers in the Sunday school, and you who try to talk privately with individuals—we ought all to be very earnest with them, for this is very solemn work. They are apt to die at any moment and to die, too, without hope. Let us plead earnestly with them for God’s sake. It does seem so sad that a good God should have so many millions of His creatures as His enemies—that He who keeps the very breath in their nostrils, should get no return from them but ingratitude. “The ox knows his owner and the ass his master’s crib,” says God, “but Israel does not know, My people does not consider.” O God, for Your dear sake we would bring men into reconciliation with You if we could!

We must also be in earnest for Christ’s sake, for Christ died for them—He died to save sinners. He had no subordinate aim. This was the one passion of His soul. “He saved others.” “Himself He could not save.” Oh, by the wounds of Jesus, the scars of which are still visible above, be reconciled to God! Trample not upon His precious blood!

We would be earnest with you, also, for your own sakes. In a short time you will be on a sick bed and you will be on the brink of the grave. We pray you, before the death-sweat stands in great beads upon your brow, seek peace with God. Ere yet they that gather about your bed whisper to one another, “He is going,” oh, be at peace with God through Jesus Christ who is our Peace and who reconciles us to the Most High!

And I would be in earnest, last of all—and have my Brothers and Sisters in earnest, too—for our own sakes. “That sounds like selfishness,” says someone. If so, it is a hallowed selfishness. As surely as I am a living man, I have to give an account of this night’s work before the Judgment Seat of God and every Christian worker and, especially, the Chris-

tian minister, will have to answer for it whether he declared the Truth of God and declared it with an earnest spirit. I think, sometimes, that it will be the greatest mercy that God ever gave to mortal man if I am able to say, at the last, what George Fox, the Quaker, said just as he died, “I am clear. I am clear. I am clear.” Brother-minister, if you and I, at the last, are clear of the blood of all men, we will lift up an everlasting song of gratitude to our Lord and Master who made us faithful to our charge! We dare not think of standing before Christ’s bar if we have not been in earnest with you. It is as much as our souls are worth to trifle with you—to gather you together on a Sabbath evening, to try and tickle you with fine words, or pretty anecdotes, or mere excitement. This will never do.

Souls, you will either be lost or saved! You will be in Hell among the damned or in Heaven among the blessed—and that very shortly! And if the watchman warns you not, your blood will be required at the watchman’s hand. That we may be able to give in our account, with joy, “be you reconciled to God.” That we may be able to say, “Here we are, Lord, and the children You have given us through our ministry,” “be you reconciled to God.” Dear young people and you aged folk who soon must go, and you in middle life, “be you reconciled to God.” “As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ’s place, be you reconciled to God.” God reconcile you to Himself, for His dear Son’s sake!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 CORINTHIANS 5:9-21.**

Verses 9-11. *Therefore we labor, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him. For we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to what he has done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your conscience.* The outside world did not understand the preachers of the Gospel—they thought them dreamy enthusiasts, earnest about nothing at all. But Paul says that God understood him and he hoped, too, that the consciences of those to whom he was writing had also understood him. The truly faithful minister of Jesus Christ may know that there are two approvals that he will be sure to get—the approval of his Master and the approval of men’s consciences. Their prejudice may condemn him, his mode of oratory may not suit their fancy, but their conscience must give quite a different verdict—it must approve the faithful preaching of the Gospel.

12, 13. *For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that you may have an answer for those who glory in appearance, and not in heart. For whether we are beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we are sober, it is for your cause.* Happy Paul who, as a preacher of the Gospel, could write, “If you say that we are beside ourselves, that we are really mad upon religious matters—well, it is to God that we are so! It is not every madman who can say that. “Or if you tell us that we are too serious and sober, it is your case,

your cause that makes us so.” Well may we be sober and solemn when we think of the danger in which men’s souls are.

14, 15. *For the love of Christ constrains us, because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again.* The true-hearted Christian judges himself to have died when Christ died and, therefore, he feels that he must not live for any objective but the Glory of Christ.

16. *Therefore, from now on, know we regard no man after the flesh: yes, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more.* He is gone back to Glory, so our objective is not to win a kingdom for Him anywhere upon earth. Our aim now is *spiritual*—the proclamation of His Truth, the winning of a Kingdom for Him in the hearts of men.

17-19. *Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away: behold, all things have become new. And all things are of God, who has reconciled unto Himself by Jesus Christ, and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not implying their trespasses unto them; and has committed unto us the word of reconciliation.* The work of reconciliation He committed to His Son—the *word* of reconciliation He has committed to us. It is our high privilege to tell the tidings of the wondrous work by which God is reconciled, so that, without any violation of His Justice, He can have mercy upon those who have offended Him.

20. *Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be you reconciled to God.* As if Christ Himself stood here and pleaded with you, He bids His ministers plead on His behalf. In the name of God, He bids us beseech you to be reconciled to God. Ambassadors do not generally beseech men—they stand on their dignity, they make demands for the honor of their sovereign—but Christ’s ambassadors know of no dignity which should keep them from pleading with men.

21. *For He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.*

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

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

HIGH DOCTRINE

NO. 318

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JUNE 3, 1860,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.**

***“And all things are of God.”
2 Corinthians 5:18.***

I WOULD have you look on this text as being a summary of all the things which we have preached to you these years. It has been my endeavor, constantly and continually, to maintain that salvation is of God's good will and not of man's free will. That man is nothing and that Jesus Christ is both Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. And I think I may truly say, “Now of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum”—“all things are of God.” And oh my Brethren, what a large summary it is! It contains words which grasp the compass of everything that your mind can think upon—“all things.” And it proclaims Him to be whom all things owe their being—“God.”

Grasp this total if you are able—“All things”! What is here omitted? Surely whatever the Christian can desire is to be found in those words “All things.” But lest even that should not be comprehensive enough, our summary contains a still greater word—one which is supreme over all inasmuch as all things spring from His loins and yet He remains still the same, as full as ever. “All things are of God.” If we are thirsty, here are streams that never can be exhausted. If we are hungry, surely here is bread enough and to spare. If we are poor, here are treasures and riches that are utterly inexhaustible, for here we have all things and all things in God.

I shall hope this morning to do two things. First, to lay down clearly and distinctly the doctrine of this sentence. And then secondly, to show the excellent practical tendency of the doctrine.

I. To begin with THE DOCTRINE ITSELF—“All things are of God.” In enlarging upon that doctrine, I shall have need to subdivide it, taking it first as to what and then as to how and then as to why.

“All things are of God!” What is meant here by the term, “all things”? The reply is to be found in the context—all things of the new creation are of God. It is not necessary for us to remind you that all the things of the old creation are of God. None but the infidel will ever for a moment affirm that there is anything which exists apart from the Creator. We believe that He has laid the beams of His chambers in the waters. He has spread out the heavens like a tent to dwell in—the isles have been created by His hand and the winds still are, as they ever were, under His guidance and control. Nothing is and nothing shall be, but that which He ordains, determines and supports.

Concerning the matter of the new creation, it is wonderful that there ever should have been any controversy. Do we call that man an infidel who should teach that some things of the old creation were of man? What name shall I give to the being who will dare to say that anything in the new creation of grace is of man? Surely if the first is an heresy, the second must be an heresy equally damnable and perhaps more so. For the one does but touch the external works of God, while the other thrusts its sacrilegious hand into the internal works of His Grace, plucks the brightest jewel from His crown and treads it in the dust. We hold and ever must maintain that all things, without exception, in the new creation, are of God and of God alone.

“What things” do you say again? We answer, *all* things that refer to the new nature—all things that refer to our new privileges and to our new actions—whatever things refer to the new nature are of God. The personal desire after Christ which is found in the sinner’s contrite heart is of God. The first new hope which gilds the darkness of the poor benighted mind is of God. The first glimpse of new faith, when that man turns his eye to the Savior, is of God. The first beginnings of Divine love in the soul are of God.

Leave men to themselves and the corruption of their nature may fester and rot and breed the fungus of a vile imagination. But the life of God never yet sprung naturally from a dead heart. Whatever thing is good in its beginning, as well as in its perfecting, “comes down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” Some seem to teach that *man* is to take the first step in salvation and God will take the rest. No, Sirs—if man can take the first—he can take the last and take the whole. If man, dead in trespasses and sins, can quicken himself, he certainly can maintain the life of which he is himself the author.

If man—corrupt, debased and cast away from God, can say, unawakened by grace, “I will repent, I will change my ways and turn to God,” and if he can carry out that resolution to himself and by his own unaided mind—then there is no room for God in salvation at all. Let man have the whole of it and let him have all the glory. But you know, my Hearers, if you have but one good thought in your heart, it is of God. If there is a something which says to you, “Arise and go to your Father,” that voice is God’s voice. If your heart begins to yearn towards the Father, whom you have angered and grieved—and if your feet desire to leave the mountains of sin and vanity and to tread the right road—it is a Father’s hand that draws you, it is a Savior’s voice that sweetly impels you to seek His face, for “all things are of God.”

Everything, moreover, with regard to the new nature is of God—not merely as to its first implanting, but as to its subsequent outworking and full development. Has the Believer strength—it is of God. Does he stand and is he kept from falling—his standing is of God. Is he preserved in the midst of temptation true to his covenant and does he stand in the day of trial firm to his Master—his integrity is of God. There is nothing in him by nature apart from God, which is not vile and deceitful. “In me (that is, in my flesh,) dwells no good thing.” If there is anything good in my nature, if

I have been transformed by the renewing of my mind, if I am regenerate, if I have passed from death unto life, if I have been taken out of the family of Satan and adopted into the family of God's dear Son and if I am now no more an heir of wrath, but a child of Heaven—then all these things are of God and in no sense and in no degree whatever are they of myself.

Still further—as the new nature is of God, so the new privileges of the new nature are all of God. And what are these? Rich and precious assuredly they are. There is pardon—the washing away of all my sins and who shall say that is not of God? There is justification—the being robed about with a snow white garment, which shall make me meet to be partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light, and is not that of God? There is sanctification, which cuts out the very root of sin and treads the old Adam-nature beneath the feet of the new-born babe in Christ—is not that of God? There is the privilege of adoption, which the Father has given to as many as believe on His only begotten Son, that they may have power to become the sons of God. O Lord, surely this adoption is of You!

There is communion, which, through Christ Jesus, we have access by one Spirit unto the Father. But whoever dared to think of communion apart from the unspeakable grace of the Most High? I am sure, my Brethren, you who have traced the height and depths and lengths and breadths of covenant mercies and covenant privileges, have never yet met with a single privilege which was not of God. You have walked the broad acres of God's rich grace, but you have not seen there a plant or a flower which was not of His sowing and of His rearing.

When you have gone into the treasure house and have taken down those shoes of iron and of brass, that helmet of proof, that sword of steel—when you have laid hold upon that crown of eternal life that fades not away—you have been constrained joyfully to confess that all these things are of God. You cannot imagine such a thing as a single blessing of grace, a single gift of mercy, which is of yourselves and not of God.

Once again—to conclude this summary, all the actions of the new nature are of God. See yonder missionary leaving house and home and all the comforts of his native land to go and do battle for Christ among a people who will scorn him, mistrust his motives and repay his self-denial with persecution? Do you see him with his life in his hand venturing even death? That man, oppressed with fever incidental to the land in which he has come to live, as he lays on his bed, with a melancholy interval for reflection, never repents of the step which he had taken. He recovers strength enough to crawl out beneath a tree and there he stands and instead of recanting the vows he made of dedication to his Master, he confirms them yet afresh, by once again preaching the Word.

He continues to labor until worn out. He commits his body to the earth far from his fatherland and the homestead of his native land—a witness against the unbelievers—that God has sent the Gospel to them. Shall we applaud the man? Shall we with clamorous songs sing his praise? Let us give him his gift of tribute, he has done valiantly. But let us remember that everything in him that was good, was of God. He would have been

idle and indifferent and careless to the souls of men had not God made him what he was.

Does the martyr burn at the stake? Does the confessor lie and rot in the dungeon? Does the heroic child of God do battle against the current of his times and seem to stem the flood with his own strong arm? Are Christians prepared to suffer contumely and scorn and rebuke and reproof, for Jesus' sake? Surely all these things are of God. Is there a Christian munificent, generous, thoughtful of the woes of others? Is there another mighty in prayer and diligent in service? Can you meet with a third who lives so near to Christ that his face seems to shine with the luster of Jesus' love—all these things are of God.

Set down no virtue to man. Good things are exotics in the human heart. They are not like the weeds which spring up naturally in such poor soil as human hearts are made of. They are rare choice flowers brought down of the Spirit's hand from above and then planted in this unkindly soil. Oh, let us ever know that anything we can ever do or feel or think that is *right*, is of God. My Brethren, discard forever with detestation and abhorrence any doctrine which would lead you to think that any work, or grace—anything just, pure, lovely, or of good report in man, is of man himself.

Depend upon it, though it come to you in the garb of earnestness and paint its cheeks and look fair enough to you, it is the harlot of Popery in another dress. Only let such doctrine be pushed to its fair conclusion and you come at once to salvation by works. Ever stand by the good old Calvinistic banner, the banner which Augustine waved of old and which Paul handed down to us direct from our Master Jesus—and hold, believe and affirm, never swerving from it—that all things in the new creation are of God.

2. But the second division of the doctrine was to be the “How.” How and in what respect are all things of God? All things in the new creation are of God in the planning. God from before all worlds planned the new creation with as much exactitude and wisdom as He did the old. There are some men who seem to think that God does His work bit by bit—altering and making additions as He goes on. They cannot believe that God had a plan. They believe that the most ordinary architect on earth has prefigured to himself some idea of what he meant to build, though it were but a mud cottage. But the Most High God, who created the heavens and the earth, when He says, “Behold I make a new Heaven and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness,” has no plan but what is left to the caprice of manhood. He is to have no decrees, no purposes, no determinations, but men are to do as they will and so virtually man is to usurp the place of God and God is to become dependent of man.

No, my Brethren, in all the work of salvation, God is the sole and supreme Designer. He planned the time token and the manner how each of His people should be brought to Himself. He did not leave the number of His saved ones to chance, or to what was worse than chance—to the depraved will of man. He did not leave the choice of the persons to mere ac-

cident, but on the stones of the eternal breastplate of the great High Priest He engraved the names of those He chose. He did not leave so much as one tent pin, one single line or yard of canvas to be afterwards arranged. The whole of the tabernacle was given by pattern in the holy mount. In the building of the Temple of Grace every stone was squared and chiseled in the eternal decree—its place ordained and settled. Nor shall that stone be dug from its quarry till the hour ordained. Nor shall it be placed in any other position than that which God, after the counsel of His own will ordained. Everything in the new creation is of God in the planning.

Alas for us, however, if God had simply planned and left the execution to us! Everything in the new creation is of God in the purchase and of God in the procuring. One price has bought His people—that price—the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Who contributed so much as a mite to that wealth of treasure which bought our souls? Did He not tread the winepress alone? Had His people a part in enduring the load, the intolerable load of guilt that overwhelmed our suffering Lord, when He Himself bare our sins in His body on the tree? What arm helped Him, or what other foot but His did tread the foeman down? No, O Lord! You have redeemed us by Your blood. We have not contributed thereto. You are Alpha and Omega in this and unto You be all the honor.

And as it was of God in the planning and of God in the purchasing, so it is all of God in the applying and bringing of it home to each individual conscience. The Cross of Christ is not put up there merely for man to look at and then left to chance as to whether men will look or not. There stands the Cross free to every soul that lives, but, nevertheless, God has determined that it shall not be neglected. There is a number that no man can number, who shall by all-constraining grace be brought to clasp that Cross as the hope of their souls.

Jesus shall not die in vain and that because God will make men willing in the day of His power. They are hardened, He can break their hearts. They are stubborn, He can bend their knees. They will not come, but He can make them come. He has a key that can wind up the human heart and make it run at His pleasure. Think not that man is an independent being, so free that God cannot control Him—that were to make man God, deify humanity and undeify the Godhead. Man is free to be responsible, but he is not free from a perpetual bias and inclination to evil. Man is subject to the restraint or the constraint of God. If he does right, then it is God's constraint and not his free will. When he does wrong, God has left him to himself. But as sure as ever he does good, it is because a Master hand has got him.

Man by nature is as a wild horse dashing yonder to the precipice. If he IS restrained in his course and turns away from danger, it is because he has a mighty rider—One that knows how to pull the bit and guide him as He pleases. And though he kick and plunge and long to turn away, his rider can pull him up upon his very haunches and turn him round and

make him go as He wills and lead him as He pleases. In this matter is it true that all the bringing home of the Gospel to the soul of man is of God.

Nor is this all. The works of the new creation are of God, not only in the planning, procuring and applying, but in the maintaining of them. Leave the Christian to himself to maintain the grace already begun and he is gone. The candle is lit, but the devil's breath would blow it out. The gas is burning—cut the connection between it and the great gas meter and the light is quenched. The Christian lives, but it is because Christ lives and because he is one with Christ. O Lord, if You should cease to send forth the streams of Your grace, Your glorious Church, with all her beauty, must be as a fading flower. All her strength would be fainting weakness and she herself, though she be as a tower in her glory, must crumble down to the very earth and lie with the base stones of the valley. All is of grace, then, and all of God, in the maintaining.

Still more must it be all of grace in the completing. When you and I shall go up the celestial hills to the gates of Paradise, those last steps shall be of God as much as the first steps. And when we shall stand upon the golden streets and wear the white robe, I am sure we shall not have a word to say about free will, or about self, but our cry will be, "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood"—unto Him be all the glory forever. Men may hold what doctrine they like on earth. They cannot hold any doctrine in Heaven but that of free, rich and Sovereign Grace. The song never was divided yet and it never will be. There shall be no selfishness to mar its melody, but every heart shall send forth the same melodious notes of music and every tongue shall mingle in the same undivided song—"You have done it. O Lord, You have done it—

***'Grace all the work shall crown,
Through everlasting days.
It lays in Heaven the topmost stone,
And well deserves the praise.'*** "

3. My third point of the doctrine was to be the "Why." Why is it that all things are of God? How can we clearly see this? I shall use no arguments but such as would be manifest and palpable to us all.

Everything in grace must be of God because we are quite clear there cannot be anything of man. Man is in such a position that there can be nothing of him. Lazarus was laying a corpse in his tomb. He comes forth quickened, the grave clothes are taken from him. He lives, he breathes—do you tell me that his resurrection was in part owing to himself? Well, Sir, your mind must be strangely deluded, indeed. What could that dead man do towards his own resurrection? Surely it must be a fact in philosophy which might strike every rational man, that that which does not exist, cannot put itself into existence.

And so my new nature which did not exist before God gave it to me, could not bring itself into being. And yet you say a dead man makes himself alive, or at least does something towards it? Oh, Sir, you cannot mean it, you cannot mean it! To reason with you were ridiculous. You must feel that if a man is dead there is nothing he can do, it must be a work of

some superior power that can give him life. So with the sinner dead in sin, what can that sinner do? Unless the Scripture is an exaggeration, unless you are prepared to cast overboard that passage where we are spoken of as being dead in trespasses and sins, I cannot see how you can dream that man is capable of doing anything in the work of grace.

He may work when God sets him working and he will. He may move when God gives him power to move and move he will then with joyful alacrity. But till then—

***“How helpless guilty nature lies,
Unconscious of her load,
The heart unchanged can never rise
To happiness and God.”***

Till the stone shall of itself fly upwards towards the sun, till the sea shall of itself beget fire—and until fire shall by its own nature distil the shower from its own heart—then, and not till then, shall depraved humanity breathe goodness within itself. It must be grace, it must be grace alone.

Let me give you another reason why we are quite sure that all things in the work of grace are of God. It is expressly told us that every good gift and every perfect gift, comes from above. Now, that word “every” is very comprehensive—it does not exclude a single case. Is there any good gift? I am not told that *some* good gifts and some *perfect* gifts are from above, but *every* one. And I am quite sure this rule must apply to any good gift you have—any good gift, in fact, that is in the heart of any man living upon the face of the earth. God were only in part the Father of lights if there were light streaming from somewhere else. God were only in part the world’s benefactor if there were other fountains out of which the world could draw and other helpers who could raise up souls to Heaven.

Yet again—we are quite certain that all things are of God, because all the glory is God’s. Now, if all the glory is God’s, it stands to reason that the work must have been His. For where the work is, there must be the merit. If man has done it, man can claim the honor. If I have been my own Savior, I will claim the honor and the dignity and nothing but superior force can wrest from me the glory which I deserve. But if God has done it and if I must feel that I have been passive in His hands until He made me active, then must I lay all my honors at His feet and crown Him Lord of all. I am quite certain we do not differ here about God’s having all the honor and yet if we should differ about His doing all the work, we might have fair ground on which to dispute His right to take all the glory.

Oh, Brothers and Sisters, if I want argument, your own experience shall bear witness. You as Christians are compelled to feel—“You have worked all our works in us.” You can say, “We are His workmanship, created of God in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.” Set it down, then, for a certainty—I have tried to explain it as best I can—“All things are of God.” Grasp every mercy of the covenant and every blessing of grace, but say that all things in all senses are wholly and entirely of God—the great Giver of all.

II. And now I am proposing, in the second part of my subject, briefly, to show THE EXCELLENT TENDENCIES OF THIS DOCTRINE.

There is one thing about the doctrines of the Gospel which to my mind always commends them—they always enlist the attention of men and rouse them to think. If you hear a sermon in which God's grace is magnified, you are perhaps offended. You are angry because the doctrinal sentiments are not in keeping with your own carnal pride. For you to be angry is one of the healthiest things that can happen to you. Do not imagine that the sermon has been wasted when it has made you vexed! Conceive not that it has been lost upon you when it has made you angry with it.

Perhaps there was but that joint of the harness through which the arrow could reach you, namely, your own anger against the Truth of God. I have known many who have frankly confessed that after they have been to this place, they felt disturbed. They could not sleep. They hated the preacher and they hated the subject. Yet, in about a month's time, they felt they must come again. They disliked it so much they were compelled to hear again of this matter. They could not quite see it, in fact, they *would* not. They would still hold to their own opinion, but they said within themselves, "I never thought so much about religion in all my life." There is a something in these doctrines that drives right into the soul of man. Other forms of doctrine run off like oil down a slab of marble, but this chisels them, cuts into the very quick.

They cannot help feeling there is something here, which if they kick against, it has nevertheless force and they must ask themselves, "Is the thing true or not?" They cannot be content with huffing it and making themselves easy. It takes hold of their thinking powers and wakes them up to enquiry whether these things are so or not. And it is remarkable that the doctrine—that salvation is of God and God alone—has been revived. It has always happened that God has sent a revival of true religion.

To give you a practical illustration—on the Continent I have been informed by many who have had good reason to judge, that the Lutheran Church is, to a very great extent, fallen from its faith and has become Unitarian or Neological and the like. But the Calvinistic Churches never—there they stand just the same. There is a salt in these doctrines which preserves truth. There is savor and a pungency about them which keeps the constitution of men right. It is a great big sheet anchor. It may seem cumbrous and in these modern times it may be said to be rather rusty—but in days of storm, that great big bower anchor will have to be thrown out into the sea again. The more I preach the more am I concerned not to give a double testimony about this matter, but to lay it down clearly and distinctly, that salvation is of God. That all things in fact, in the new creation of grace, are of God and God alone.

And oh, what enthusiasm these Truths of God will stir up in the minds of those who believe them! I have heard them preached by simple, uneducated, unlearned men and the congregations have been bathed in tears. There has been no stolidness upon the countenances of the hearers. They have heard as if they were hearing the very Word of God and felt the

power of it. I have preached during this week, in the simplest manner I could, these Truths of God to somewhere between twenty and thirty thousand Welsh people in one congregation and such a sight I ever saw, when all as one man they kept crying out, "Aha! Amen! Amen—Gogoniant."

The whole sermon through, carried away with enthusiasm because they heard again the good old truths that Christmas Evans used to thunder out to them and which the Welsh still hold intact—even though the English may choose to reject and scorn them. There is something in them that would nerve men on to do mighty deeds. Cromwell's sword was so sharp and his arm so strong, because he knew the Lord of Hosts and trusted in His mighty power and believed in God's overcoming grace. This made the Ironsides invincible—there were never such men as they.

The Calvinist's arm is always strong. He that is of God and knows not man—he who looks to God's purpose and grace and gives Him all the glory—is not a man to bow before a tyrant, or to kick the feet of any being. He knows himself chosen of God and he stands upright. And yet while standing he is full of a fire—of an enthusiasm that makes him work—and compels him to serve the cause of God and Truth.

That, however, perhaps, is but by-the-by. I have other tendencies to mention concerning this doctrine. The fact that conversion and salvation are of God is an humbling Truth of God. It is because of its humbling character that men do not like it. To be told that God must save me if I am saved and that I am in His hands as clay is in the hands of the potter—"I do not like it," says one. Well, I thought you would not. Whoever dreamed you would? If you had liked it, perhaps it had not been true. Your not liking it is an indirect evidence of its truthfulness. To be told that, "He must work all my works in me"—who can bring me so low as that? Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? The law of works? No, but by the law of Grace.

Grace puts its hand on their boasting mouth and shuts it once and for all. And then it takes its hand off from the mouth—that mouth now does not fear to speak to man, though it trembles at the very thought of taking any honor and glory from God. I must say—I am compelled to say—that the doctrine which leaves salvation to the creature and tells him that it depends upon himself, is the exaltation of the flesh and a dishonoring of God. But that which puts in God's hand man, fallen man, and tells man that though he has destroyed himself, yet his salvation must be of God—that doctrine humbles man in the very dust. Only then he is in the right place to receive the grace and mercy of God. It is a humbling doctrine.

Again—this doctrine gives the death-blow to all self-sufficiency. What the Arminian wants to do is to arouse man's activity. What we want to do is to kill it once and for all, to show him that he is lost and ruined—that his activities are not now at all equal to the work of conversion—that he must look *upward*. They seek to make the man stand up. We seek to bring him down and make him feel that there he lies in the hand of God and that his business is to submit himself to God and cry aloud, "Lord, save, or we perish." We hold that man is never so near grace as when he

begins to feel that he can do nothing at all. When he says, "I can pray, I can believe, I can do this and I can do the other," marks of self-sufficiency and arrogance are on his brow. But when he comes to his knees and cries—

***"Oh for this no strength have I,
My strength is at Your feet to lie,"***

then we think that God has blessed him and that the work of grace is in his soul.

O sinner I think not that your own unaided arm can get the victory. Cry unto God and beg Him to take your soul in hand, for you cannot be saved unless He does it for you. Bless Him for the promise which says, "Him that comes unto Me, I will in no wise cast out." Oh, cry to Him, "Lord, draw me by Your grace, that I may run after You. Work all my works in me and bring me to Yourself and save me!" Not to yourself do we bid you look, nor to your prayers, nor to your faith, but to Christ and to His Cross and to that God who is "able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him."

And there is in this doctrine some consolation for the troubled heart. If all things are of God, my Soul, let not your spirit be ruffled and frightened by the tempest. "All things are of God." If there were one thing of me, I were a lost man. If you were about to build a great bridge and would let me have the placing of one stone, you shall build it as you please and it will fall. Let me have the management of the key stone and I will undertake that it shall not stand. So if in the work of salvation there is one thing left dependent upon myself, it must all fall. But if everything be guaranteed and settled by eternal wills and shalls, then it stands fast and rests secure.

Oh, joyous thought to the Christian! His soul is safe, he has given himself up into Christ's hands to be kept and now the keeping rests with Christ. He has surrendered himself to his Lord and Master to be preserved and now he knows that come what may, Christ is his buckler and his shield and nothing will hurt him. Jesus keeps daily watch and ward and will preserve him safely to the end. I do not know where our Arminian Brethren get their consolation from. I know if I believed their doctrine, I should be driven to distraction. But believing as I do, that those whom God begins to save, He will completely save and that there is not a single stone in the entire building that can ever fail or give way, my soul can sing—

***"This Covenant stands secure,
Though earth's old columns bow.
The strong, the feeble and the weak
Are one in Jesus now."***

I have one more thing to say about this doctrine. It encourages the sinner. Sinner, sinner! Come to Jesus. For "all things are of God." You are naked—the robe in which you shall be dressed is of God. You are filthy—the washing is of God. Come and be washed. But you are unworthy—your worthiness must be of God. Come as you are and He will cleanse you. You

are guilty—your pardon is of God. Come to Him and His pardon shall be freely given. But you say, you are hard-hearted. A new heart is of God. Come to him. He will give you the heart of flesh and take away the heart of stone.

But, you say, “I cannot pray as I would.” True prayer is of God. He will pour out upon you the Spirit of supplication. But you say, my very coming must be of God. Yes, blessed be God for that. And, therefore, if now you feel something saying to you, “Let me go and trust in Christ,” that is of God. Oh, come with cheerfulness. For there is nothing wanted of you, everything is of God. Is your heart barren?—fruitfulness is of God. Is your heart stubborn?—obedience is of God. Can you not repent—He is exalted on high to give you repentance. Repentance is of God. Do you say, “I cannot believe”?—faith is of God. It is one of His unspeakable gifts. But do you say, “I am afraid I shall not be able to persevere”? Perseverance is of God. All *you* are bid to do is simply to be a receiver. Come with your empty pitcher and hold it now to the flowing fountain.

Come with your empty lap and receive the golden store. Come with a hungry mouth to feed and with thirsty lips to drink. You are asked to do *nothing*. You are asked to *be* nothing. Cease from yourself, O Man and begin with God. Leave off now to do and feel and be—and come and trust in Him who did and was and felt for you. And then afterwards, being saved, you shall begin to be and to feel and to act—through a new energy—leading to a new life. To live to Christ, you must first die to yourself. Every hope of mortal nurture must be killed before you can receive a Divine hope within you. Come, bruised and mangled, crushed and broken—come and take Christ to be your All in All. And if you can not stretch out your hands yourself, as indeed you cannot—I speak in my Master’s name, in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, by His Spirit’s power—BELIEVE! It is the duty of God’s servants not only to exhort, but with Divine authority to command.

Man with the withered hand! In the name of Jesus, stretch out your hand. You who have never believed or repented! “God commands all men everywhere to repent.” Do you receive the command? The power goes with it. Are you willing to obey it? That will is God’s gift—the power is with the will. Believe Christ. Trust Christ, take him to be everything and you are saved. Your sins are washed away. You are an heir of Paradise and you may rejoice. Clap your wings you angels. Tune your harps anew, you seraphs, you redeemed! Louder, louder, let your strains of music rise toward Heaven! O you cherubim and seraphim, sing loud unto his name, of whom and to whom and by whom are all things, unto whom be glory forever and ever! Amen.

MY DEAR BRETHREN,

I have journeyed happily to the borders of Switzerland and already feel that the removing of the yoke from the shoulder is one of the readiest means of restoring the mental powers. Much of Popish superstition and idolatry has passed under my observation and if nothing else could make

me a Protestant, what I have seen would do so. One thing I have learned anew, which I would have all my Brethren learn—the power of a personal Christ. We Protestants are too apt to make doctrine everything and the Person of Christ is not held in sufficient remembrance. With the Roman Catholic, doctrine is nothing, but the person is ever kept in view. The evil is that the image of Christ before the eye of the Papist is carnal and not spiritual. But could we always keep our Lord before our eyes, His spiritual sense, we should be better men than any set of doctrines can ever make us. The Lord give to us to abide in Him and so to bring forth much fruit.

C. H. SPURGEON.

Baden-Baden, June 15th, 1860.

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GOD BESEECHING SINNERS BY HIS MINISTERS NO. 1124

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 27, 1873,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“And all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and has committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

*Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be you reconciled to God. For He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”
2 Corinthians 5:18-21.*

MAN became God's enemy wantonly, without the slightest offense given on God's part. But man did not make advances towards reconciliation, or express regret because peace was broken. The first overtures for peace are not made by man, the offender, but by our aggrieved and offended God. Therefore our text begins with the declaration, “All things are of God.” Reconciliation of man to his Maker is never achieved by man, but is the work of God from first to last, and to God must be all the glory. The text enforces this Truth by giving us a brief summary. The Lord first finds the messengers of reconciliation by reconciling some men to Himself. He chooses His ministers, having called them into a state of reconciliation.

Read the verse—“All things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation.” The ambassador is sent, not from man to God, but from God to man. Then the matter of the ambassador's message is altogether of God, for it is God who has “reconciled the world unto Himself through Jesus Christ.” He gave His Son to be the atoning Sacrifice by the ordained method of substitution—thus it is He, alone, who has made a way of access between fallen man and Himself. Furthermore, the method by which this Atonement is applied to the reconciling of men is also of God. It is not man who beseeches God, but God who beseeches man to be reconciled.

It is not man who cries to Christ, but Christ prays man, through His ministers whom He places in His stead, to be reconciled to God. So that from the first thought of reconciliation, right on through the provision of the Atonement, to the conclusion of the solemn league and Covenant between the heart and God, all things are of God. I am glad to commence my sermon with such a weighty doctrine. I am glad to have such a theme with which to stir the hearts of the reconciled. You owe it all to God, my Brothers and Sisters, therefore render thanks unto the Most High and never at-

tribute to your own wills or to any natural goodness in yourselves, your present friendship with the Lord. For all this is of God who has reconciled you unto Himself.

In the process of reconciling the sinner to Himself the Lord uses means. He might, if He had pleased, have influenced all human hearts by His Spirit, without a pleading ministry selected from among men, but He has not chosen to do so. God exercises His power over the human mind not miraculously, but in conformity with the laws of the mind. The Spirit of God beseeches and prays men to be reconciled. He deals with us not as with marble or wood, carving and shaping us by mere power. Acting upon the mind of man He does not act according to the laws of matter, but deals with mind after the mode in which minds must be dealt with. And therefore His Divine Grace operates upon human wills by persuasion—"as though God did beseech you by us." And by pleading—"we pray you, in Christ's stead, be you reconciled to God."

But the means used of the Lord are always such as will ensure that all the glory shall be to Him alone—if God beseeches, there can be no honor to man in yielding to the Divine persuasion, but great glory is due to Him who in infinite condescension *prayed* to His own creatures and stooped from the loftiness of His Glory to beseech His own rebellious subjects to have mercy upon themselves.

This morning I shall try to drive at the heart and conscience with all my might, depending upon the Spirit of God to make my appeals effectual. And with that aim, and no other, I shall first of all speak upon the ambassadors of reconciliation. Secondly, upon the matter of their embassy, the message they have to deliver. And, thirdly, upon the manner in which they are to deliver their message.

I. First, then, dear Friends, we will begin with THE AMBASSADORS OF RECONCILIATION. It appears, from the text that they, themselves, were once enemies to God. "All things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself." Yes, Beloved, when we beseech you to be reconciled to God, we give to ourselves no airs as though we were superior to you by nature, or had been superior in our former conduct before conversion. No, rather we are bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh. Are you sinful? Such were we. Are you rebellious against God? Such were we. Are your hearts hard? Such were ours. We do not look down upon you from an elevated platform of affected dignity, for we recognize our own nature in yours. Therefore we come to you as to fellow sinners and, albeit it is a sorrowful thing ever to have sinned, we are glad to think that we can speak to you of an evil which has vexed us, the power of which we have painfully felt and penitently mourned, as you must yet do.

We hope that our former condition as sinners and unbelievers will make us speak to you more tenderly and will enable us to reach your hearts the better. God might have sent angels to you and you would, perhaps, at first have been awed by their glory. But their sermons would have been cold and unsympathetic compared with ours, for they could not know your misery and degradation as we do. They would have felt a hor-

ror of you and would not have cared to come near you—their purity would have made them regard you as a healthy man regards a leper—it must have done so, kind as, no doubt, they would have tried to be.

But we have no such feelings. We have a horror of your sin but not of you. And looking at you as being what we once were, we say to you, Brothers and Sisters by nature, we trust you will yet become Brothers and Sisters by Grace, and that the blood of Christ, which has made peace between us and God, may also reconcile you to the great Father in Heaven! From the text we gather that though those who are now God's ministers were once His enemies, they are now reconciled. They are no strangers to the reconciliation which they have to preach, for they have been reconciled themselves. Yes, we were by Divine Grace made to feel the evil of sin. We were led to know its bitterness in our inmost souls and we were led to the Cross, and led to look to the Savior nailed there for human sin. Our guilt disappeared, our burden rolled from our shoulders and we were free!

And now we feel no enmity towards God, but, on the contrary, a love to Him which we desire you to feel. We have no quarrel, now, with our Maker. We desire that He should always do what seems good to Him, for we are sure that His will is always kindness, wisdom and love towards His people. And now as God's friends we speak to you and tell you that He is a good Friend and a kind Father, that He is willing to forgive and does forgive, most freely, all those who come to Him by Jesus Christ. We have been reconciled and therefore can speak to you, not theoretically, but *experimentally*. We can tell you what we have tasted and handled of the good Word of God and our hope is that, perhaps, you will be influenced by our testimony as that of men like yourselves who have ourselves been saved.

Moreover, it seems that the ambassadors of God were reconciled to God by Jesus Christ in the same way as other sinners. How very different is this confession from the boastings of priests and prelates nowadays! They are not of the same order as the people whom they address, but are reverend and right reverend, and fathers in God. They speak not as sinners saved, called to be servants to their fellow sinners, but as Brahmins, who by the imposition of Episcopal hands have obtained magical powers wherewith to perform potent ceremonies which shall purify men from their sins. These are not such men as we are, but are very far above us, a superior race of beings—a sacred caste! Do you not observe how they fence off wherever they can, one end of the Church for themselves? That pen of theirs is holier than the place where the common people sit.

Do you not observe how they array themselves in white, blue and scarlet, and fine linen, because they are the depositories of mysterious powers which reside in none else? It is not that they are any better in character, nor that they have more zeal for the Truth as it is in Jesus, nor that even the bishops excel in clearness of doctrine, or courage to defend the Truth of God. Brethren, it is preposterous that these men should claim so much when they have so little to show for it! Here are bishops who can bestow the Holy Spirit and yet have not the manliness to speak out while the Church is being Romanized and even the abominable confessional is be-

ing set up! I could show tailors and cobblers who are more earnest for the Gospel than the occupants of the Episcopal bench!

We are taught to believe that these wonderful beings, the bishops and priests, are God's clergy or heritage, and all the rest of us are mere stony laypersons who ought to do them reverence. I suppose the day will come when our fellow countrymen will bow their heads in the dust before a priest and count themselves thrice blessed if they are but spit upon by their reverences. Not thus was it with ministers sent of God in Paul's day! Here is a man who is an Apostle and an Inspired man and all he has to say of himself and other ambassadors is this—"All things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ."

No, dear Hearers, we speak to you as Brothers in one common Fall, hoping that we may also be Brothers in the great salvation. If ever I enter Heaven I shall owe my cleansing to the blood of the Lamb—not one among you will owe more to the rich, free Grace of God than I shall. No, there is not one among you who shall bow in humbler, lower gratitude than I shall before the Throne of Infinite Mercy as he remembers his forgiven sins. Having sinned much and had much forgiven, we feel we cannot love enough and cannot too plainly tell the story of our dear Master's Grace! And we feel that this is better for you than that we should be something superior to you, for we hope you will be won by a Brother's testimony—by the story of one who has received the Grace of God just as you must—and is cleansed just as you must be.

Again, Paul tells us that the ministers of Christ, having been themselves reconciled to God, have a message to deliver which has been given to them—"has *given* to us the ministry of reconciliation." And he repeats it—"has *committed* unto us the word of reconciliation." You see, we have nothing to tell you but what God has told us! We have not to stand in our pulpits and utter original ideas, or to invent a Gospel for you! No, we are simply the bearers of a message which God would have us deliver to you and it is at our peril that we add to it or take from it! In these days there is a great deal said about, "thinkers," and by "thinkers" they mean men who startle their people with a fresh *heresy* every three months! God save us from such thinkers!

I send my servant to the door with a message and if on the way, she, in her wisdom, deliberates and alters my message to suit her own views, I must discharge her, for I need someone who will bear my message and not make one of her own. God would have His ministers be like transparent glass which lets the rays of the sun pass through unchanged—and not like painted windows which color all the rays after their own nature. Through infirmity we all give some amount of coloring to the Gospel, but he is the man according to God's order of ministry who longs to let the Gospel shine right through him and does not send upon the people anything of his own except the earnestness which the Gospel works in him as it streams through him. As some glass adds heat to light by concentrating the rays, so should the minister add heat to the Gospel, but woe unto him if he adds anything beyond! Brothers and Sisters, we have nothing to tell

you which we have invented—so if you are saved by it, it will not be due to our skill! We have nothing to tell you but what God commits to us and therefore God will have all the glory if your souls are saved.

Once more, and we add it with all sincerity. When we plead with sinners, our expectation of their being reconciled to God does not lie in our pleading, but in the work of the Holy Spirit. I never did expect a sinner to be saved because of anything I said or the way in which I said it. I have expected God to bless the Word and I have seen it blessed ten thousand times, glory be to His name! But I never reckoned that there was any force in *my* word, or that there could be any potency in the manner in which I spoke the Truth of God. No, it is God beseeching you *by* us, who performs the work when He speaks through our lips, makes His own mind to rush like a torrent through our mind and bears our mind away by its force. When He gives the utterance and then, by His Spirit, applies it to the conscience and the soul, *then* are men reconciled to God, but by no other means!

Therefore do we feel a trembling when we speak to you lest our Master should leave us to ourselves and so we should fail to bless you. And therefore do we never come to beseech you for God without first beseeching God for you. We know that you will not be saved except the Spirit of God shall bless the Word, therefore do we ask the prayers of our Brothers and Sisters as well as send to Heaven our own, that the Lord will be pleased to take of the things of Christ and by the Holy Spirit apply them to your souls.

So you see, the ambassadors of God are your Brothers. Though I might in some respects magnify our office, for it is no small thing to be an ambassador for God, yet after all we are as nothing in the matter. We cannot stand between you and God to take any share of praise—“we preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus the Lord.” We direct you to the Lord and the Lord alone for, “all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation.”

II. The second point of consideration is THE SUBJECT MATTER OF OUR MESSAGE—And first the faithful minister’s message to the sons of men is this, that reconciliation is only to be obtained towards God on the ground of Substitution. “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.” “For He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” You cannot reconcile yourself to God by weeping and lamenting on account of your past sins. There is no efficacy in *regret* to blot out transgression. You cannot reconcile yourselves to God by any future arduous service. All that you can do is already due to God—you will have done no more than you ought to have done if you should be perfect all the rest of your days.

Neither can you be reconciled to God by any ceremony of man’s invention, or even of God’s ordaining—He has not made rites and outward forms to be the way of Grace. And if you choose them, God will *not* choose you. There were many in the olden times who went about to establish their own righteousness and would not submit themselves to the right-

eousness of Christ. And therefore they failed of all reconciliation with God. But this is the plan of reconciliation—men were all lost and condemned, for there was no difference between the Jew and the Greek. They all lay under condemnation. Jesus came into the world, the eternal Son of God, and He took upon Himself our manhood in all its feebleness, that He might be our Brother. He lived here for 30 years and more in poverty, obscurity, sorrow and persecution, until at last He died.

In His death He bore the whole burden of human sin. God laid upon Him the iniquity of His people and on the Cross Jesus suffered what His people ought to have suffered. What God's justice must have inflicted upon man for sin He inflicted upon Christ. He laid the whole weight of His wrath upon Jesus. And now, this day, whoever will come to God by the way of the Cross may come. Whoever will hide himself in the wounds of Jesus shall be free from the arrows of vengeance. "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." "He that believes in Him is not condemned." "Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth," is the voice from the Cross of Calvary. And a true voice it is. And whoever heeds it shall find eternal life!

Reconciliation by the blood, by the substitutionary Sacrifice of the Infinite Son of God—this is the message of our ministry. If we do not testify this, it were better for us that we had never been born! If we do not preach this constantly and incessantly, we have missed our main topic, we have failed in the great commission which our Master sent us to execute. We do declare it this day, in the name of the Eternal God—O Sinners, there is forgiveness through the blood of Jesus! There is mercy, Grace, pardon, Heaven, for as many as believe in Jesus, the great Substitute for sin! And there is no other mode of reconciliation under Heaven.

Then we are to tell men that this reconciliation, which was made by Christ through His Substitution, was not apart from God, but that God was in Christ. We often tell you that Jesus Christ's sufferings removed the wrath of God from His people, and that saying is true, though sometimes it is stated in inaccurate language. Yet a great Truth is intended by it. But mark this, you must never fall into the idea that God is revengeful and angry and that the death of Jesus Christ, His Son, was *necessary* to *pacify* the Father. Beloved, you know better than this! You know that God was Love before Jesus died—always Love, always full of Grace and Truth towards His people. The act is that the Substitution made on Calvary was a Substitution provided by God's Love, for the Lord, Himself, gave His own Son to die as a manifestation of Love as well as a vindication of Justice.

God was *in* Christ. God came on earth to reconcile men. God made the Atonement for us. God was not made to love us *by* the death of His Son, but *because* He loved us and had mercy on us—therefore He gave His Son Jesus that the dishonor done to His Law might be wiped out—that the difficulty which stood in the way of His mercy might be removed. That so He might be just and yet the Justifier of the ungodly. Look at the Cross in this light, O Sinner, and I trust it may reconcile you to God! It is by that bloody sweat, that crown of thorns, that shame and suffering—it is by

those five dear wounds, those extreme agonies—that God has removed all hindrance to your reconciliation. God Himself has given to you His Son and He suffered in His Son that you might be reconciled to Himself. It is not Jesus, a stranger, who hangs there to gratify the Father's vengeance, God forbid—it is God who, in one of His Divine Persons, bears the penalty which the inflexible laws of right and justice demanded of sinful men. Oh, that you would come to Him and be reconciled to Him by the death of His Son!

And now the third announcement of our message is this, that in consequence of God's having reconciled the world to Himself in Jesus Christ, He is able, now, to deal with sinners as if they had never sinned, for that is the long and the short of the expression, "Not imputing their trespasses unto them." He treats sinners as if their sins were not theirs. They have sinned and they *do* sin, but He does not put their sins down to their account. When He looks upon them in mercy, and they are reconciled to Him, there are the sins—but He lays them upon His Son. "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

We are a mass of sin but He does not account us such, for He has made Him to be sin for us, although He personally knew no sin. Substitution is a plan arranged by Wisdom for the joint display of Justice and Mercy and by its means the Lord comes near to us to commune with us and gives us countless blessings. Having absolved and pardoned us, He blesses us as if we had never sinned. Yes, and there is something more wonderful than that! God treats poor sinners who are reconciled to Him as if they were full of good works, for what does the text say? "He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." What a grand expression! He makes us righteous through the righteousness of Jesus! No, not only makes us righteous, but *righteousness*! No, that is not all—He makes us the righteousness of God!

That is higher than the righteousness of Adam in the garden! It is more divinely perfect than angelic perfection! He makes the guilty sinner, when he believes in Jesus, to be the "righteousness of God in Him." Never did lips have a sweeter message to deliver than mine! And I murmur not if my speech should seem feeble this morning and if I cannot garnish my message with the flowers of oratory. God forbid I should try to do so! To you who are guilty there was never a more important message delivered at any time and, having heard it, I charge it on your conscience that you value it and think it over and accept it! God grant you may.

We are, moreover, bid to tell man that the Atonement of Christ is not confined to the Jew. That God has not reconciled the Jewish nation to Himself, but the, "world." That is to say, Christ has died for all nations, classes, sorts and sizes. The Atonement was not made for a class, but for *all* classes. Not for the old exclusively, but for the young, too. Not for the young only, but for the old as well. This is such an Atonement made by Christ upon the Cross that it presents a warrant for every sinner born of woman to come to God and say, "Lord, forgive me, for Christ has died."

When we preach the Gospel it is in no stinted terms, looking about and thinking that perhaps there might be half a dozen in the building to whom the Gospel might honestly be spoken. But looking every man and woman in the face, we preach reconciliation by Jesus Christ to them and point them to the atoning blood. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him might not perish but have everlasting life."

Let no man, woman, or child here say, concerning himself, that there is a difficulty with God which Christ has not removed. The difficulty is in your own soul and if you are willing to be reconciled, as sure as you live and as sure as God's Book is true, there is a reconciliation provided for you in Jesus Christ, the Son of God! Oh what gladness it is to be allowed to speak thus! And now we are to tell men that there is nothing whatever needed in order to their reconciliation and acceptance with God except what Christ has already worked out, for God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself! Not reconciling it by some other means, but reconciling it by *Christ*, doing the work in *Christ*. You have not to bring Him your good works, or your tears, or your mortifications, or your feelings, or emotions, or anything of the sort—you have only to accept what God has provided!

There is the Propitiation and if you say in your heart, "My God, I take it," you are reconciled to God by the death of His Son. Oh, go not abroad to heap together your vanities, for they cannot appease Him! Bring none of your vain oblations to Him! The incense of your self-righteousness will be an abomination to Him! Come as you are, defiled and filthy, polluted and wretched, and put your trust in what He has done in the Person of His only-begotten Son—and you are reconciled unto God! This, then, is the Gospel message with which we are sent.

III. And now, thirdly, and very earnestly, I would speak to you a little upon THE MANNER IN WHICH THIS MESSAGE IS TO BE DELIVERED. The text tells us very plainly—First, it is to be delivered by beseeching men and praying to men. "As though God did beseech you by us we pray you." Then if I should merely tell you, dear Hearers, the Gospel, though God might bless it, I have not done all my duty. To inform the intellect is not the minister's sole work. We are to proclaim, but we are to do far more—we are to beseech and to pray! We are not merely to convince the intellect, but to beseech the heart. Neither are we only to warn and threaten, though that has its place, yet it is not to be our main work—we are to *beseech*.

You know how a beggar bows his knees and implores you, when he is starving, that you will give him bread? With like earnestness are we bound to beseech you to be saved! You know how you will pray a fellow creature to help you when you are in sore distress? In that same way are we to pray you to be reconciled to God! As I ponder this I feel self-condemned. I have besought you and I have prayed you sometimes, but not as I ought to have done. Oh, to be taught how to beseech men, how to pray them! God forbid we should fall into the error of those who think be-

seeching and praying to be unlawful—it is the Christly principle which leads God’s ministers so to do—it is the main part of a minister’s business and he who neglects it will have to answer for it before God’s great bar!

The text goes on to say that we are to beseech men as though God did beseech them. Now how does God beseech them? Read one of the Lord’s beseechings in the 1st chapter of Isaiah—how imploring it is! He says, “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me.” For several verses the Lord expostulates, and then pleads—“Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Oh the tenderness of that invitation to reason together! There was first a burst of righteous indignation to arouse the mind and then came the voice of most tender pity to allure the heart. What matchless pleading!

If this is how ministers are to beseech, we have a high standard set before us. We are to plead with men with a boundless freedom of invitation and gentleness of expostulation, so I gather from the 55th of Isaiah, where you have another of God’s pleadings—“Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters, and he that has no money; come you, buy, and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” Oh, think of God’s talking like this to His creatures, and arguing with them—“Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? And your labor for that which satisfies not? Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat you that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.” Oh what freeness is there, what concern for their welfare, what regret at their mistakes! What gentle upbraiding, as though it were not for His sake but for theirs! “Why do you spend money for that which is not bread?” Why disappoint yourselves and waste your strength? It is after this fashion that we are to beseech men to be reconciled to God.

Then take another instance of matchless pleading. Turn to Ezekiel 33:11—“As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live.” And then He says to them, “Turn you, turn you from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?” He swears first, to show his deep sincerity that He has no joy in a sinner’s death, and then turns to entreaty—“Turn you, turn you, why will you die?” There is a passage in Jeremiah 44:4 where the Lord is represented as sending His Prophets to say to the people in His name—“Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate.” There is something so appealing, so pathetic about these words that I dare not attempt to open them up to you! Their condescension and tenderness are unspeakable.

Perhaps if there is one passage in Scripture in which the entreaties of God are set in a more tender light than in any other, it is to be found in the book of Hosea, 11:8, where the Lord cries, “How shall I give you up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver you, Israel? How shall I make you as Admah? How shall I set you as Zeboim? My heart is turned within Me, My repentings are kindled together.” Oh, how God beseeches men and He

means His ministers to beseech them in the same way, with weeping tenderness and melting pathos, if perhaps the stony heart may be softened and the iron sinew be bowed!

Do I hear some strong doctrine Brother say, "I do not like this"? My dear Brother, I am not careful to answer you in this matter. If the Lord appoints it, you ought to approve it and if you do not, you are wrong, and the Scripture is not. If God beseeches and bids me beseech as He does, I will do it. And though I am counted vile for it by you, then so must it be. Besides, it is no derogation for God to beseech His creatures. You say we make God beg to His creatures. Assuredly that is how the Lord represents Himself—"All day long have I stretched out My hands to a disobedient and gainsaying generation." It is in the Scripture that He represents Himself as crying like a chapman at a fair, "Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters," and bids the passersby to buy His wine and milk. It is wonderful condescension—if He had not so represented it, we dare not have done so! But as He has said it, we do but follow His footsteps and quote His Words.

Besides, remember these entreaties of God, in which He stoops to our littleness, even when they do not prevail with man, do mysteriously affect the Divine purpose. They are a savor of death unto death wherever they are not a savor of life unto life. But then, blessed be God, in thousands of cases they are the means by which His power works on men's hearts! They do bring men to be reconciled to Him. But I must pass on. Our text, speaking of the manner of ministers, tells us that we are to pray souls in Christ's stead. That is to say, we are to preach as if Christ were preaching. Oh, what a model for the minister! "We pray you in Christ's stead!"

I am to say to you who are not reconciled to God—"Be reconciled to Him," and I am to say it as if Jesus said it. That would not be in a light or trifling manner. That would not be in a cold official style. That would be with melting eyes and burning heart. How was Jesus Christ accustomed to implore men? Why, sometimes He prayed them by setting before them the evil of their ways. "For which of these works do you stone Me?" He asked. And so I am to enquire, "For which of God's works are you His enemy? Are you His enemy because He keeps you in life? Because He has raised you from the bed of sickness? Are you His enemy because He gives you your bread and your water? Are you His enemy because He sends you the Gospel? For which of these works do you hate Him?" Oh, wanton malice, to be at enmity with the infinitely good God!

Sometimes Christ would plead with men on account of the uselessness of their rebellion. "What king," He asked, "will go to make war with another king without first sitting down to see whether he is able, with 10,000 to meet him that comes against him with twenty thousand?" Why will you be God's enemy when you cannot win the battle? The flax may sooner contend with the flame, or the wax with the fire, than you with God! Oh, why, then, are you not reconciled to Him? Sometimes Jesus pleaded with men on account of the result of their sin, as He did when He stood on the brow of the hill and looked down on Jerusalem and said, "O

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill the Prophets, and stone them which are sent unto you, how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.”

Remember that wonderful chapter in Matthew where He speaks of His coming with all the holy angels and dividing the sheep from the goats? Remember the passages where He treats of the virgins who had no oil in their vessels with their lamps? Whoever puts the doctrine of Hell into the background, Jesus never did. It is thought in these days that we had better not say much concerning the terrors of the Law, but so thought not the Christ of Galilee! His ministry was full of the honest warning which proves a tender heart. Oh, Sinners, you will be lost unless you lay hold on Christ! And to be lost is something unutterably terrible! Oh the wrath to come! The wrath to come! Who among you will endure the devouring fires? Who will dwell in everlasting burning?

Thus the Savior invited. Thus He besought men. And so are we to beseech them. And then you know in what style Jesus pleaded the love of God. I do not say He put it into words that I can quote, but remember the parable of the Prodigal Son—“When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.” Was not that an eloquent discourse upon the abounding mercy of the great Father in Heaven and did not Jesus then tell how willingly God receives the penitent, and how gladly He puts away every sin? And, oh, how He implored man to be reconciled in such sweet words as these—“Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” And what a word was that when He said, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” Never such a pleader as Jesus!

His birth among men and dwelling here on earth, was a plea! His actions were pleas! His death was the master plea! Each groan seemed to say, “Man, be reconciled to God!” And His last expiring cry of, “It is finished,” what was it but saying, “I have put away everything that separates a sinner and his God”? Be reconciled to God was the true meaning of that *consummatum est* with which He closed His agony. Once more, it is taught us in the text that the duty of the true minister is to bring this matter home and press it. We pray you in Christ’s stead, be you reconciled to God. It comes to this with you, my Friend—God says to you this morning, “Throw down your weapons. Why do you contend with your Maker? What have I done that you should despise Me? Poor creature that I made, what have I done that you should hate Me?

“I breathed into your nostrils your breath. What have I done that you should spend it in speaking against Me? That throbbing heart of yours, I give it every pulse. What have I done that you should forget Me, that My day should be a weariness and My worship should be an abhorrence to you? I have raised you from the bed of sickness, I have given you many comforts. I spared your child when she was sick. I have prospered your efforts in business. I have done a thousand things for you—do I deserve to be forgotten? Is it right that your heart should be warm to your wife and

your child, and cold to Me?” My God, my soul is in sympathy with You that You should be forgotten of your creatures! There is not one of us that loves to be treated unkindly by those to whom we have been kind. Ingratitude is one of the worst of ills. It bites like an adder’s fang and as an unkind child wounds to the quick—and will you be such to your Maker? Will you be such to your Creator?

Come, be quiet for a moment and let the Lord speak with you, and let your honest conscience answer Him. What has He done that you should be His enemy? What has Christ done—look at His wounds!—that you should not love Him? What has the Holy Spirit done that you should resist Him? What will you gain by it? What will be the benefit in time or in eternity? I have been almost every week to the grave lately with some one or other of my congregation. Soon I may have to be there with you, if I am not carried there myself. Well, and what will be the wisdom, when you are dead, of having lived without God? What will be the profit of having gained the whole world and having neglected your Maker? “Come, O Man, hear you His words, and be reconciled to Him!”

I said throw down your weapons, but I have, now, another message. Accept the Lord Jesus. “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little.” There is life in a look at the Crucified One. Jesus asks no hard thing of you. God your Father does not ask you to do impossibilities, or to prepare yourself by a long round of performances. His command is most simple and plain. Trust in Jesus and you shall be saved. And, being saved, you shall love your God and then all war between you and God will be over. God, the Eternal One, will bend from Heaven to embrace His once erring child and you shall feel the kisses of His love, while in your heart there shall be music, dancing, joy and feasting because you have come back to God.

I do not know how to say more, nor how to plead more strongly. I would God that He would beseech you, and that Jesus Christ would pray you, and that the Spirit of God would sweetly touch the secret springs of your will that you might say—

***“I yield, by Sovereign Grace subdued,
Who can resist its charms?
And throw myself, by love pursued,
Into my Savior’s arms.”***

God be thanked for it. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 1.

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CHRIST'S AMBASSADORS

NO. 3148

A SERMON
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***“Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s place, be you reconciled to God.”
2 Corinthians 5:20.***

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon, on verses 18 to 21, are as follows—Sermons #1123, Volume 19—GOD BESEECHING SINNERS BY HIS MINISTERS and #1910, Volume 32—THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

So, then, there is war between man and God. It seems preposterous that man should be in arms against his God, but it is all too sadly true. Shall the gnat contend with the flame? Shall an insect fight against an angel? Even this would not be as absurd as for man, who is utterly insignificant, to make war with God who is Infinite! Man, who is but as the ephemera of an hour, to enter into the lists against the dread, eternal and Almighty God? Accursed was that hour in which our first mother put forth her hand to take the forbidden fruit! From that moment war began between man and his Maker and from the Garden of Eden right on until now man has been an enemy of God! And although God has constantly returned good for evil, and is still the God of love and condescension, yet has man continued to fight against Him—there still is war between Heaven and earth. Otherwise, there would be no need for ambassadors between God and men. This would be proof enough that a state of war prevails. But, alas, in our own hearts we bear, each one of us, sad proofs of the enmity of man and God. And we see, besides, in our fellow men, ten thousand sorrowful instances which prove that they have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God and are not the friends of the great Friend of man.

Our text tells us that the ministers of Christ, the Apostles and all others who are sent of God to preach the Gospel, are “ambassadors for Christ.” In speaking upon that matter, we must make some references to ourselves and I especially shall have to ask the earnest prayers of the congregation for myself. I feel that I may well do so, for if Apostles said, “Brethren, pray for us,” how much more may we, who are not worthy to be numbered among the least of our Master’s servants, urge the same plea!

In our text, I think I see, first, *a great mercy implied*. Secondly, *a great office mentioned*. And, thirdly, *a great duty involved*.

I. First, here is A GREAT MERCY IMPLIED—"We are ambassadors for Christ."

Well, then, it is clear that *there is some hope of peace*. When an ambassador comes upon the stage of action, it is evident that war is not to be waged to the bitter end. But observe that the ambassador is not an ambassador from man to God, but an ambassador from God to man! "We are ambassadors"—not for *you*, but "for Christ."

I learn from this, then, that *the peace proposed is one quite unsought by man*. Man revolted against his Maker and was determined to continue in revolt. He was evil and would have remained evil if God had not interposed. Men go astray from God by nature, but they only return to God through Grace. Further, and yet further, and yet further, still, will they go away from God! Deeper and yet deeper will they plunge into the abyss of sin! It is easy for humanity to descend into Avernus, but for it to retrace its steps, "this is the work, this is the difficulty." And until God, Himself, comes in, man is as unwilling as he is unable and as unable as he is unwilling to make peace with his God! We might have thought, if we had not known the dread nature of sin, that the first thing Adam and Eve would have done, after they had transgressed their Maker's Law, would have been to cast themselves down at His feet and say, "We have taken of the fruit of the tree of which You have said that we must not eat." But instead of doing so, they ran away to try to hide themselves from His eyes—and when His voice was heard in the Garden and they were obliged to face Him—instead of frankly confessing their sin, the evil juice of that forbidden fruit had so poisoned their nature that they both began to make excuses! The man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." And the woman would not bear the blame, herself, but cast it upon the serpent. There was clear evidence there that man, though he had become a rebel against his God, would not turn unto his God, confess that he had done wrong and beg for mercy. Never did a prodigal say, "I will arise and go to my Father," until the Grace of God had put that resolve into the prodigal's heart! The centripetal force, the force which makes us seek the center, is not in us—ours is centrifugal force which drives us further and yet further away from the great center of all Light, Truth, peace and purity. When God draws us, we shall run after Him—but until He does so—we shall still remain afar off from Him. So the sending of an ambassador from God shows clearly that it is not man who seeks peace.

But then, on the other hand, it shows that *God Himself is desirous of peace*, yet not because it can make any difference to Him whether man is His enemy or not. It may make some difference to the candle if the moth flies into it. The moth will certainly be destroyed by the candle, yet the candle will still shine on, though its light may be in some measure diminished. But what difference can poor creatures such as we are make to God? The blasphemer curses God, yet the sun is just as bright as ever, the dewdrops of the morning are quite as sparkling as ever, the rivers

still run on to the sea and the ocean remains the same as before! And as for God, Himself, His Glory continues undiminished and His holiness is untarnished. And though all men could be leagued together in one great conspiracy and should say concerning Jehovah and Christ, His Anointed, "Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us," what will come of their evil confederacy? "He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision." His Glory will be just as great even if they determine to be damned! If they will go down to Hell, His Justice will be honored, for they richly deserve their doom. There is no reason, except in God's Grace, why He should send man an embassy of peace! Generally in war, it is the less who sends to the greater to entreat for peace. It is seldom that the victorious, while still they bear their banners on high, suddenly pause amid the battle and send an embassy to say to the vanquished, "Let there be peace between us." The conquerors usually wait till the beaten ones know that they are beaten and sue for terms—and they count it gracious on their part to be willing, in the full expectation of yet further victories, to pause awhile to discuss terms of peace. When the commander-in-chief has half won the campaign and sees with absolute certainty that he could utterly destroy his enemy, he does not hurry to put back his sword into its scabbard! But God does—just as though He had been defeated, or as though He was the weaker of the two combatants, or as though it would be to His best interest, He stops in the midst of the battle and sends an ambassador of peace to man! And we, His servants, are sent forth as "ambassadors for Christ" because God desires to be at peace with men!

Why is this? Certainly not because He fears man, nor because He cannot do without man, nor because He cannot crush Him as an adversary—but simply *because He is very tender, and full of pity and compassion*. "As I live, says the Lord God," (and that is His own oath), "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live." He is a God who is terrible in His justice, but, "He delights in mercy." To bless men and make them happy is His continual joy—judgment is "His strange work." It is, as it were, His left-handed work—not that which He delights to do. Even when Justice compels Him to smite and to slay, He says but little about it and He usually does away with the very instruments that He has used for this purpose. Great armies and great nations have been raised up to be the scourges of God, but they have not been heard of afterwards, as though God were so loathe to smite that when He does so, He burns the rod directly—He has done with it, not caring to have it any longer in His sight! But when He comes to men in mercy, God is, as we say, "all there." He puts forth His Omnipotence in His works of love. He brings out His Omniscience, He employs all His attributes when He comes to bless men. Oh, yes! God delights in Grace and mercy, but He loves not wrath! And it is for that reason—because He is a God full of tenderness, compassion and pity—that

He sends an embassy to men and makes His servants to be “ambassadors for Christ.”

And then, mark you, this also shows us that, *as God desires peace, peace is possible*. Sin has made a very great breach between God and man. God has been insulted to His face and that not merely once, nor twice, but thousands and millions of times! The sin of men would, if it could, become a deicide and kill God, Himself! And this, indeed, it did when it slew the Son of God on Calvary! Every sinner is guilty of high treason against the majesty of Heaven, for he does, as far as he can, snatch from God's hand the scepter of Sovereignty and plucks from His brow the crown of universal dominion! Sin is not a thing at which God can wink. We sometimes hear persons talk as though God could forgive sin without Christ's Atonement and without exacting any penalty for it—but that cannot be. Everyone who rules over men, though it is but over a petty nation or a small parish, knows that if the law has no penalties attached to it, it ceases to have any power. It would be a dreadful thing to live in any State where there were no punishments for law-breakers. I read the other day that perhaps it would be better to live where everyone was subject even to tyrannical law than to live where there was no law. It would be truly terrible to live in any place where good and bad would fare precisely alike—where there would be no prison—where the thief and the murderer and the drunkard would be left alone—where all would be regarded as on an equal footing, let them do what they might! Laws must be respected and the breakers of them must be punished.

Now, if it is so in our imperfect civil communities, it must be much more so in God's government of the entire universe! It is not merely men with whom God has to deal, though they are to be counted by thousands of millions, but He has to deal with angels, good and bad. And we know not how many—perhaps innumerable races of beings—possibly very different from ourselves, yet like us in this respect, that they are under law and under God's government! It may be that every starry world teems with myriads of intelligent inhabitants—it is much more likely that it should be so than that it should not be so, seeing that God is not in the habit of creating anything in vain—and we can scarcely imagine that He has made all those mighty orbs to circle around His Throne without suitable inhabitants to render due homage to Him! It becomes incumbent, then, on God—I say this with the utmost reverence for His sacred Majesty, that as He is the Judge of the whole universe, He must do right. If one of our judges should say, “I never can pronounce a sentence of death upon a murderer—my heart is too tender for me to ever order the lash for the thief, or to send the wife-beater to prison.” What would we say to him? Why, we would say, “Then, Sir, if your heart is so tender towards the bad, you are so cruel to the good that you must retire from the bench, for you are unfit to be a judge if you do not punish the guilty.” We remember Abraham's question, “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” We also read that “every transgression and disobedience received

a just recompense of reward.” As long as God is God, He cannot trifle with sin! You may trifle with it if you will, O foolish Sinner, but it will be at your own imminent peril! But God, the Omnipotent King, the Maker and Judge of All, will not trifle with it. He must crush rebellion. He must punish iniquity!

“But,” perhaps you say, “you started by telling us that there was hope of peace. But how can that be if the Law’s sentence must be carried out?” I answer that this is the reason for our embassy—this is the great reason for which we are ambassadors for Christ—to say that, in Christ, God is able, without the violation of any demand of justice, to show the fullest mercy to sinners! Through the atoning Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, God’s justice will suffer no blot, no slur if you—coming to Him and confessing your iniquities and believing in His Son—shall be completely pardoned and accepted. Salvation by Substitution was the grand invention of Omniscience—that Christ should bear—

***“That we might never bear
His Father’s righteous ire”—***

that on His back should fall the stripes that were due to us—that in His heart should be sheathed the fiery sword that ought to have been sheathed in our hearts! It was most just that Christ should stand in our place. If I am asked how His Substitution for us is consistent with justice, I reply—the first sin, by which we were ruined, was not committed by us personally, but it was committed by Adam, our representative. It is therefore perfectly consistent with the highest justice that, as we fell *representatively*, we should be lifted up representatively! We died through Adam’s sin—we live again through Christ’s life and death! And every soul that believes in Jesus may know that Christ was punished in his place. Christ, as his Representative, bore his griefs and carried his sorrows. Christ was wounded for his transgressions and bruised for his iniquities—and now all the sins of every such person are blotted out and forever cease to be because Jesus Christ bore the full penalty for them! The Believer’s debt is paid, so it cannot again be demanded of any soul for whom Jesus died!

These are the terms of peace, then, and this is the blessed Gospel of Peace—“To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and has committed unto us the word of reconciliation.” This is the Gospel that we preach—that whoever believes in Jesus Christ is reconciled to God through the death of His Son. Peace is possible! O blessed news! Blessed are the people that know this joyful sound! Bright should be the eyes of those who see the feet of the messengers that bring the glad tidings of peace possible between man and God!—

***“How beauteous are their feet
Who stand on Zion’s hill!
Who bring salvation on their tongues,
And words of peace reveal!”***

Let me add to this the comforting assurance that *peace has been effectually made already in tens of thousands of instances*. There are many of us, now present, who are enjoying the peace that Christ has made on our behalf. Having looked, by faith, to His Sacrifice on Calvary, our sins have gone forever. Having rested where God has rested, even in Jesus, for Jesus is to God a Sacrifice of rest, we now feel perfect peace toward God! We are no longer His enemies, but love Him and desire to obey Him perfectly. And though we do still err and mourn a thousand imperfections, yet we can truly say that we do love Him and that we long to be like He is! Whatever He commands, we at least desire to do and by His Grace we are helped to do it. And whatever He forbids, we desire to abhor and to flee from it as from a poisonous serpent. Blessed be the name of God, we can speak to Him, now, without being afraid that He will destroy us, but saying, "Our Father, who are in Heaven, the Spirit of adoption in our hearts makes us say unto You, 'Abba, Father, we love You and adore You. Oh, for Grace to love You more!'"

Thus much, then, upon the great mercy that is implied in the Apostle's declaration that we are "ambassadors for Christ."

II. Now, secondly, we have here A GREAT OFFICE MENTIONED—"We are ambassadors for Christ."

Why did God send ambassadors to men? He might have made peace without doing so, but He has chosen to put honor upon instrumentality and He has dealt with us as with reasonable beings. Further, why did God send men as His ambassadors? Would not angels have been better messengers? The probability is that an angel would have been quite unfit for such work as this. When a man, a sinful man who has, himself, been forgiven, talks to other sinners, he talks very tenderly and sympathetically—at least he ought to do so—and when he meets with any distressed souls, he recollects the time when he was in distress. And when he hears about their doubts and fears, he remembers his own. And when he mourns over their rebellions, he recollects what a rebel he used to be. And therefore he is gentle with them, and longs that, if possible, peace may be made between the rebel and his God. But if an angel had been Christ's ambassador, after he had preached most earnestly, you would always be able to make this excuse to him, "Ah, you cannot enter into our feelings, for you have never had our temptations and trials." As you went home, you would say to one another, "That was a grand oration that the angel gave us, but it did not help us much. It was all very well for him to talk as he did, but he has not a wife and children to provide for. He has no poverty to bear. He has not to feel the cold. He has not to suffer through being tempted, as we are, by evil passions and the like." Possibly, if an angel were to take my place here next Lord's-Day, there would be many of you who would be very pleased with the change. But I think by the time two or three Sabbaths had passed, you would want your old friend back again, because you would feel that there was, after all, a warmth of brotherhood within the human being's breast which you

could never expect to find in cherubim or seraphim! When we, who once were enemies to God, tell you, who are still at enmity against Him, about our own rebellion and how it was ended by Divine Love, how the Lord melted us down by His Infinite Pity and abounding condescension—you will say to one another, “Let us also go to Jesus. Perhaps we shall find Him equally kind to us.” You will be thus graciously drawn to the Savior by the example of another who was in a similar case to your own. And if we tell you what a loving Lord we have proved Him to be, how easy His yoke has been and how light His burden, perhaps some who are laboring and heavy laden, will say, “We also will accept His gracious invitation which says, ‘Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden,’ and He will give rest to us even as He has given it to these, His messengers.” It was wise and kind, on God’s part, to send men to be “ambassadors for Christ.”

That word, “ambassadors,” suggests to us a few reflections. First, *every true minister of Christ is engaged upon royal business*. He is doing business for the King of Kings, the great Lord of All! He does not come in his own name, nor in the name of any church nor in the name of any earthly potentate, but he comes in the name of Him who made Heaven and earth and who governs all things by the word of His power! I will, therefore, listen to him, even though he may be an illiterate man, for he is the servant of God. If it was really the Gospel of Jesus Christ that I heard, little would it matter to me whether the lips that uttered it spoke in such tones as the golden-mouthed Chrysostom used of old, or in plain and rugged language like that of Simon Peter. It was his Master who sent him and it was his Master’s business to choose whom He would have as His ambassador! Therefore let me see the Master in the man and hear the Master’s voice in the Gospel which His servant preaches! And let me bless God both for the Gospel and for the man who preaches it. And let me pray that since he has royal business to do, he may have Grace to do it rightly.

For, as it is royal business, *it is important business*. I know there are some who fancy that to some of us who have preached so long, it is easy work to deliver a sermon. Martin Luther used to say that he never went into his pulpit without having his knees knocking together through fear, although he was a man of dauntless courage. And I can assure you that I never address you without feeling that it would be better for me to engage in breaking stones on the road, or in any job, however hard it might be, than to have to preach the Gospel because if I am unfaithful to the many souls committed to my charge, what must be my portion at the last? Whether you think so or not, to me it seems that every sermon involves me in most dire peril unless Divine Grace makes me faithful. I have not, like a banker, to deal with gold and silver, but with immortal souls which are far more precious! Not with the interests of a State, in which my mistake might be rectified by some abler statesman—but I am

concerned about souls which, if once lost, are lost forever! Since God has warned His watchmen against unfaithfulness, He may require the blood of souls at our hands if we warn them not—and He will call us to account if we have kept back any Truth that He has taught us. Sometimes, when we speak faithfully concerning error, people ask, “What need is there of such preaching as that? What have you to do with other people’s religion?” Why, some of us were sent into the world for this very purpose—that we might have to do with other people’s religion! No man under Heaven shall be able to say that we knew that he was believing a lie and yet did not tell him that it was a lie! Not our business to interfere with others when we were sent here on purpose to interfere? If Christ’s ambassador sees others attempting to keep up the war between his King and the rebellious subjects in His Kingdom, it is his business to speak sternly of those enemies of God and man, and to plead with all his soul with the offending subjects to be at peace with his great King and Lord! So, as “ambassadors for Christ,” we have royal business and we have important business—

**“’Tis not a cause of small import
The pastor’s care demands!
But what might fill an angel’s heart,
And filled a Savior’s hands.”**

And next, *all ambassadors have to act in accordance with their commission.* An ambassador must never go beyond his commission. His power comes from his king—he has no power of his own. And if a man who professes to be Christ’s ambassador, puts on the airs of priestcraft and says that he has authority in himself—do not believe him! I have all necessary authority! I speak according to this blessed Book, but I have none at all if I wander from it. Regard not a single syllable that any man, or even an angel from Heaven may say to you if it is not according to Scripture! But when the humblest of us speak according to God’s Word, woe be to those who reject the Truth! The Gospel has such majesty in it that it demands acceptance from all who hear it!

Again, *an ambassador has no power to make terms with men on his own account.* The “ambassadors for Christ” have simply to declare God’s terms of peace. How pleased some people would be if we could alter this Truth of God just a little and take the corners off that one—if this Doctrine were not so strict and if that precept were not so severe! But what have we to do with that? I have often said, when I have preached what I believed to be the Truth and men have found fault with me for doing so, “the fault is none of mine.” If I send my servant to the door with a message and she delivers the message, saying word for word what I told her to say—and if the man at the door should be angry with her because of the terms of the message, it would be most absurd and wrong! Let him be angry with her master who sent her with the message! And if I speak God’s Word and you object to it, your objection should be against my Master, not against me. I have nothing to do and no minister under Hea-

ven has anything to do—but to preach that which is here in this Book and to explain it in the simplest language possible—and to enforce it in the most earnest manner that he can! And as long as he does that, he speaks with authority. But if he gets away from that, his word is of no more account than the songs that men sing in the street—and he deserves to have no respect from any man!

Let it be remembered, too, that *the ambassador will have to give an account of how he does his business* and, therefore, it is that I appeal to my beloved friends, the members of the Church, that we may always have their prayers. We shall have to report to our Master how men treated our message and whether they would have peace or not. Sometimes, while preaching, I have felt as if I could imitate that Roman ambassador who met a certain king and told him that the Romans forbade him to advance further. The king somewhat jested at the stern command of the Roman, but the ambassador stooped down and with his stick drew a ring in the dust round the king and said, “You must give your answer before you come out of that circle, for if you step over that line, the Romans will accept it as a signal of war.” I have sometimes felt, when preaching to this great congregation, as if there were some who had to decide for God or for the world before they stepped out of this place, for God’s ambassador had, as it were, drawn a line all round them and said to them, “choose this day whom you will serve. If Jehovah is God, serve Him. Or if Baal is God, serve him.” As we have gone to our home, we have prayed, “O Lord, we have again told the people Your message! We have not told it with the broken heart that we wanted to feel, but we have truly told it as far as the matter of it is concerned, though we have failed in the spirit of our telling it. Now, O Lord, make the people willing in the day of Your power, to accept the peace that Christ has made, for unless You work in them by Your gracious Spirit, we shall have to cry, ‘Who has believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?’ for they will reject the Savior, refuse His peace and remain Your enemies even to the end of their lives.” The “ambassadors for Christ” must give to their King an account of how they have done their work. May we be able to do it with joy and not with grief!

So, then, you see that the ambassador needs to be careful at all points and *he needs to be very faithful*. If he should be unfaithful, surely it must be woe, woe, woe to him forever! The murderer of men used to be hung in chains as a terror to other evil-doers, but what shall be done to the man who is the murderer of souls by his unfaithfulness? As for anyone who buys “the cure of souls” in the market, so mercenary a beginning, so like to the proposal of Simon Magus, looks as though he who acted thus would prove to be like Simon, “in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.” “Ambassadors for Christ” must start right with clean hands. There must be no bribing in order to get into the ambassadorial office. And they must go on right—no frowns must ever make them turn aside

from the Truth of God and no smiles must ever make them soften their speech so as to please the ungodly! If there is any place where the thunderbolts of Divine Wrath fall most heavily, it must be the head and heart of the man whose ministry was an unfaithful one and who went down to Hell with the blood of souls upon his skirts! Brothers and Sisters in Christ, pray for us! *Pray for us!* PRAY FOR US who are called to be ambassadors for Christ!" The choice even of a hymn has often been the means of the conversion of a soul. A sympathetic expression in prayer has given great comfort to mourners. Our very look has sometimes carried conviction to a hearer, though we did not know the person at whom we were looking. And our mode of speech and even our pronunciation has, under God, had some gracious results when He has willed to make it so! Pray for us, then, that we may be always so guided and directed by God that peace may be made between Him and thousands of immortal souls through our instrumentality!

III. I will not detain you many minutes while I speak upon the last point which is A GREAT DUTY INVOLVED.

And, first, to all to whom the "ambassadors for Christ" may come, let me say, *give us a hearing.* "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ," so give us a hearing that we may deliver our message. Do not say, "We will not hear it." Shall we tell our great King that although He sent us as messengers of peace, the reply of the rebels was, "We do not even want to hear what the King has to say?" Even if you object to us, do not object to our message! Is there something objectionable about ourselves? We are sorry if it is so. But a sensible man, when he knows himself to be in danger, will be glad to accept help even from one whom he does not in all things admire. If you find fault with our tones and censure our manners, and bespatter our persons, do give good heed to our message! When Caesar swam across the river, he held up his Commentaries, so that they should not be injured by getting wet. Surely, if we had to swim through a sea of persecution, we would hold up the Gospel and pray that it might not be carried down by the flood. Strike us if you will, but hear our message! Yes, "hear, and your soul shall live." If it really is a message from God, hear it! Perhaps some of you say that you do not believe that it is God's message—but suppose it is? God grant that you may never know, by sad experience, what will follow the rejection of God's Word of Reconciliation!

A gentleman from London one day met a poor countryman. It was a Sabbath and the person from London had come down for a holiday. When he met the countryman, thinking himself to be a very wise man, he said to him, "Well, Hodge, I suppose you have been taking a walk through the fields." "No, Sir," replied the man, I don't waste my time on the Lord's-Day in that way. I have been worshipping Him and listening to His Word." "So you shut yourself up in a stuffy building for a couple of hours and listen to somebody talking all because you believe the Bible? Don't you know that it is a pack of nonsense? The learned men have

proved that it is so and everyone who believes it is a fool." "Yes," said Hodge, "very likely we are great fools. But yet, after all, we country people do know one or two things." "What do you know?" asked the gentleman. "Well, we know that it is a good thing to have two strings to your bow." "What do you mean, my good man?" "Well, I mean that I have got two strings to my bow. If this Book should not prove to be true, it has given me a deal of comfort and made me a better man than I was before I learned to value it. So that is one good thing. And if it should prove to be true, that is the second string to my bow—and what a blessed thing it will be to me that I have received it, and have enjoyed it! But look at you, Sir," he said, "you have not one string to your bow. If the Bible is not true, I am as well off as you are and I think I am happier, on the whole, than you are, whoever you may be. But if it should prove to be true, what will become of you, Sir?" That is the question that I should like to put to anyone who says that the Bible is not true. *Suppose it should be true, Friend? What will become of you?* We who know it is true ask you to listen to the Word.

The next thing is, embrace the message. It does seem to me to be a most blessed message that I have to bring to everyone here. It is this—

***"There is life for a look at the Crucified One
There is life at this moment for you."***

Whoever trusts Jesus Christ is at once forgiven and accepted! The war is over and peace is proclaimed the moment that the soul repents of sin and believes in Jesus Christ. There cannot be a simpler, sweeter and safer Gospel than that! Dr. Watts truly wrote—

***"Let everlasting glories crown
Your head, my Savior and my Lord!
Your hands have brought salvation down
And writ the blessings in Your Word!
What if we trace the globe around,
And search from Britain to Japan?
There shall be no religion found
So just to God, so safe for man!"***

So embrace the message, we pray you, as you love your souls, and would not destroy yourselves! Accept the peace which the Gospel brings to you!

And then, lastly, I say again to you who have embraced it, and who rejoice in it, *pray for us, pray for us*. I mean not for me, only, but for all who preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, or who teach it in any shape or form. I sometimes think that if all our friends knew our many anxieties, cares, and heartbreaks, they would never forget to pray for us. I thank God that many of you do remember us in your prayers, but there are some, perhaps, who forget that we are always in need of prayer—and if there is one person in this world who needs your prayers beyond all others, I am sure that I am that one! Think of the thousands of souls that gather here from Sabbath to Sabbath, drinking in every syllable that falls from our lips. Have you ever calculated how many thousands of persons pass through this place in one year? And then, week by week, the printed

sermon goes over nearly the whole earth, not only in the English language, but in the language of all civilized men, almost without exception, so that no man knows where he may not find the sermon that was preached here. We constantly have information from persons who, for instance, have been lying dying of the yellow fever in the hospitals of Havana, or have been in Rio Janeiro, or in Australia, or have wandered into the vast prairies and have come across a log cabin and have found there that same word that was preached here within a short space of time after it dropped from our lips! Pray for us that all this may not be in vain!

And then, Beloved, this Church has sent out hundreds of ministers who are now located in all parts of the world and, almost without exception, preaching that same Gospel that we have declared unto you! Think, also, of the thousands of members in this Church—some very good people and some very strange ones—many sick, some dying, and always some needing counsel, or warning, or exhortation that requires all our wit and wisdom—and a great deal more to say the right word at the right time! Then there is that which comes upon us daily—the care of scores and hundreds of churches which, if they have any trouble, resort to us and bring their burdens to one who is burdened enough already! We are wretched to the last degree if we have not your prayers! But if you pray for us, nothing can stagger us! If you uphold us by your prayers, God will make us strong! But if you leave us, we shall be weakness itself. Pray for us, for “we are ambassadors for Christ.”

There are strangers here to whom this part of my discourse may seem egotistic. I cannot help its seeming so to you! But I am speaking to my own friends here about what they know, but of which they sometimes need to be reminded. And if they will pray for me as the result of it, I shall not feel very much troubled in my conscience for having seemed to be egotistic to those who do not know. After all, our reliance is not even upon the prayers of the saints. God is our Helper, and we have done His work in reliance upon His Grace, but we shall be unfaithful tomorrow unless He shall guide and teach and uphold us. Therefore, again we say, Brethren, pray for us! By the love you bear to Christ, pray for us! Amen

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*“Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did
beseech you by us: we implore you on Christ’s
behalf, be reconciled to God.”
2 Corinthians 5:20.*

THERE has long been war between man and his Maker. Our federal head, Adam, threw down the gauntlet in the Garden of Eden. The trumpet was heard to ring through the glades of Paradise, the trumpet which broke the silence of peace and disturbed the song of praise. From that day forward until now there has been no truce, no treaty between God and man by nature. Man has been at variance with God. His heart has been at enmity towards God. He would not be reconciled to God. Never in the heart of any natural man, unless Divine Grace has put it there, has a desire to reestablish peace been felt or entertained! If any of you long to be at peace with your Maker, it is because His Spirit has made you long for it. Left to yourselves, you would go from conflict to conflict, from struggle to struggle, and perpetuate the encounter until it ended in your eternal destruction! But though man will not make terms with God, nor sue for peace at His hands, God shows His unwillingness any longer to be at war with man. That He anxiously desires man to be reconciled unto Him, He proves by taking the first step. He, Himself, sends His ambassadors. He does not invite them from the other party—that were Grace—but He sends ambassadors and He commands those ambassadors to be very earnest—to plead with men, to pray for them, to beseech them that they would be reconciled to God. I take this to be a sure pledge that there is love in the heart of God! Why, at the very announcement of these tidings, the rebellious sinner’s ears should be opened! It were enough to make him say, “I will listen diligently. I will hear what God the Lord shall speak, for if it is true that He takes the first step towards me and that He is willing to make up this deadly quarrel, God forbid that I should turn away! I will even now hear and attend to all that God shall speak to my soul.” May He bless the message to you, that you may be reconciled to Him without a moment’s delay! John Bunyan puts it plainly enough. “If a certain king is besieging a town and he sends out the herald with a trumpet to threaten the inhabitants that if they do not give up the town, he will hang every man of them, then immediately they come to the walls

and give him back a reviling answer! They swear that they will fight it out and will never surrender to such a tyrant. But if he sends an embassy with a white flag to tell them that if they will but surrender and yield to their lawful king, he will pardon every one of them,” even the very vilest of them will relent! Then, says honest John, “do they not come trembling over the walls and throw their gates wide open to receive their gracious monarch.” Would that such a result might be accomplished tonight! While I speak of the great Divine Grace of this Prince of Peace who now sends His ambassadors to the rebellious, may some rebel say, “Then I will be at peace with Him. I will hold out no longer. So irresistible a love as this has dissolved my heart, resolved my choice and compelled my allegiance.”

Well now, let us speak awhile of *the Ambassadors—the Commission* with which they are entrusted—*the duty* they have to discharge—and close with a question—*What then?* First, then, we have to speak of—

I. THE AMBASSADORS.

Welcome messengers are they! All nations, with one accord, have agreed to honor ambassadors. Strange, then, that all nations and all people should have conspired to *dishonor the ambassadors of God!* Which of God’s ambassadors in the olden time was not persecuted, rejected, or slain? Were they not stoned, beheaded, sawn asunder? How continually they were maltreated and made to wander about in sheepskins and goatskins, though of them the world was not worthy! But there have been some men to whom the ambassadors of God have always been welcome. The men whom God had ordained to eternal life! Those on whose behalf, from before all worlds, He had made an effectual Covenant of Peace. From them the ambassadors get a hearty welcome! Standing here to preach as an ambassador, I shall get but little attention from some of my audience. The proclamation of mercy will sound commonplace to many. They will turn on their heels and say, “There is nothing in it.” But mark you, the ambassador of God will be very welcome to some of you who have bitterly felt your estrangement, to some whose hearts are prepared by a sense of ruin for the good tidings of Redemption—to some in whom the secret mystery of Predestination begins to work by the overt energy of Effectual Calling. These shall find their souls greatly but surely drawn to the proclamation of mercy that shall be made, and they will say, “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of peace, that publish salvation!”

Ambassadors are always *especially welcome to a people who are engaged in a war which is beyond their strength*, when their resources are exhausted and the peril of defeat is imminent. If some tiny little principality has ventured to rebel against a great empire, when it is absolutely certain that its villages will be consumed, its provinces ravaged and that all its power will be crushed, ambassadors are pretty sure to receive a cordial welcome. Ah, man, you have bid defiance to the King of Heaven, whose power is Irresistible, by whom rocks are thrown down, whose voice

breaks the cedars of Lebanon, whose hands control the great deep sea! He it is who binds the clouds with a cord and girdles the earth with a belt! Angels that excel in strength cannot stand against Him. From the lofty battlements of Heaven, He hurled down Satan, the great archangel, and the mighty host of rebellious morning stars! How can you stand against Him—shall the stubble contend with the fire? Shall the potter's vessel resist the rod of iron? What are you but a moth, easily crushed beneath His finger? The breath is in your nostrils, and that is not your own—how, then, can you, poor mortal, contend with Him who only has Immortality? Your breath is broken more rapidly than a sear leaf by the wind! How can you venture to be at war with One who has Heaven and earth at His command, who holds the keys of Hell and of death, and who has Tophet as His source of ammunition against you? Listen to His thunder and let your blood curdle! Let His lightning flash, and how are you amazed! How, then, can you stand against the greatness of His power, or endure the terror of His wrath? Happy for you that terms of peace are proclaimed in your ears! God is willing to cease the warfare. He would not have you be His adversary. Will you not gladly accept what He proposes to you? Never, surely, was war more charged with disaster than that into which you have madly rushed!

An ambassador is always *welcome when the people have begun to feel the victorious force of the king*. Yonder province has already yielded. Certain cities have been taken by the sword and given up to be sacked. Now the poor miserable inhabitants are glad enough to get peace. They dread the foot of the conqueror, now that they have felt its weight. Doubtless there are some here present who have known the power of God in their conscience. Perhaps He has scared you with visions, and frightened you with dreams. Though it is but the voice of a man that you heard, yet the Law of God has been very terrible to you, and now you find no pleasure in your pleasure! No joy in your joys. God has begun to break your bones with conviction. He has made you feel that sin is a bitter thing. He has made you drunk with wormwood and broken your teeth with gravel. He has brought you down as the fool in the 107th Psalm, by affliction and by labor, and you are crying out in anguish, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" Yes, doubtless, you that have once felt the weight of God's hand upon your conscience, will rejoice to hear that there is an embassy of peace sent to you!

An ambassador is, likewise, always *welcome to those who are laboring under a fear of total and speedy destruction*. If none of you are in that plight, I remember when I was—when I thought every day it was a marvel of mercies that I was kept alive—and wondered as I woke in the morning if I was not lifting up my eyes with Dives in Hell! Everything about Christ was precious to me then! I think I would have stood in the most crowded Chapel, nor would I have been weary had I sat upon the hardest seat. No length of service would have wearied me, might I but have had an inkling that God would perhaps have mercy upon my soul! My eyes were full of

tears. My soul was faint with watching and I would have kissed the feet of any man who would have told me the way of salvation! But, alas, it seemed as if no man cared for my soul, till at last God blessed an humble instrument to give light to His poor dark child. Hence I know that the news of mercy will be exceedingly welcome to you who stand upon the jaws of Hell, fearing that the gates will soon be bolted upon you and that you will be forever lost. You will be ready to cry like our Methodist friends, "Hallelujah, Glory! Hallelujah, Bless the Lord!" while you hear that God still sends an embassy of peace to your soul!

Most acceptable, too, is a messenger of peace *if the people know that he brings no hard terms*. When a certain king sent to the inhabitants of a town that he would make peace with them, provided he put out their right eyes and cut off their right hands, I am sure the tidings must have caused the utmost consternation—and the ambassador could not be very popular. But there are no hard terms in the Gospel! In fact, there are no terms, no conditions at all! It is an unconditional peace which God makes with men! It is a Gospel which asks nothing of men, but gives them everything! The Lord says, "My oxen and My fatlings are killed. All things are ready, come you to the supper." There is nothing for man to get ready—all things are prepared. The terms—if I must use a word I do not like—are simple and easy—"Believe, and live." With what joy should a rebellious sinner hear the voice of the ambassador who brings no hard conditions from God!

And should not the fame of the King increase the zest with which the embassy is received? Comes it not from Him who cannot lie? No temporary peace is proposed that may presently be broken, but a peace that shall stand fast forever and ever! No temporary armistice, no brief interlude between the deeds of battle do we herald. Peace—eternal, unbroken peace—peace that shall endure in life and outlive death! Peace which shall endure throughout eternity, we testify and make known to you!

This peace is proclaimed to all men. It is proclaimed without exception. "Whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved." None are excluded but those who exclude themselves. Such an ambassador bringing such a message must surely be a welcome messenger from his God! Let us ask now, What is—

II. THE COMMISSION OF PEACE which God has entrusted us to proclaim? The words are concise, the sense is transparent. To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespass unto them—and has committed unto us the word of reconciliation." Let us open the commission. It lies, in a nutshell—"Thus says the Lord of Hosts, As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but had rather that he should turn unto Me and live." "Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord, though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool, though they are red like crimson, they shall be whiter than snow." Our commission begins with the announcement that God is Love, that He is full of pity and compassion, that He is

desirous to receive His creature back, that He wills to forgive and that He elects, if it is consistent with the high attribute of His Justice, to accept even the most rebellious, and to put them among His children. Our commission goes on to disclose the manner, as well as the motive, of mercy. Inasmuch as God is Love, He, in order to remove all difficulties in the way of pardoning rebels, has been pleased to give His only-begotten Son, that He might stand in the place of those whom God has chosen. Their sins He engaged to take, to carry their sorrows and to make an Atonement on their behalf. Thus the Justice of God would be satisfied and His love flow over to the human race. We declare, therefore, that God has given Christ, and He has made it a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that He came into the world to save sinners, even the very chief! Christ, the Son of God, has become Man. Cheerfully and willingly He took upon Himself our nature, veiled the form of Deity in a humble garb of clay, was born of the Virgin Mary, lived a life of holiness and died a death of Sacrifice. Through this marvelous death of the Man, the God, Christ Jesus, God is at peace with His people. The peace is already made, for He is our Peace. God is at peace with every man for whom Jesus died! Jesus Christ stood in the place of His chosen people. Christ was punished for their sins. Justice cannot punish twice for one offense. Christ, the Substitute, being punished, the sinner cannot be amenable for his own offenses. Those for whom Jesus died go free! The proclamation is that God is willing to be reconciled, that He *is* reconciled! It is an announcement, not that you may merely have peace, but that peace is made with God by Jesus Christ for you—full peace, without condition, not half-made, but wholly made—the penalty being completely paid to the last dot and the Sacrifice completely slaughtered till the last drop of blood had expiated the last offense!

But the proclamation needs something more to give us any satisfaction. Are there any tidings in it for you and me? Well, our message goes on to announce that whoever in the wide world will come to Jesus Christ and commit his cause to Him as Redeemer, Savior and Friend, shall forthwith be at peace with God, receive full pardon for all offenses and be welcomed as a favorite of the Most High! He shall know that for him, Jesus Christ did die in his place and as Surety did stand for him when He appeared before God. From condemnation he is, therefore, free! Of salvation he is, therefore, sure! This proclamation, I say, is to be made universally. Though every man will not be blessed by it, the preacher cannot discriminate between those who must and those who will not inherit the blessing! Though only some will accept it, the preacher is not warranted in showing any partiality. It is the Holy Spirit's work to impress the Word on the conscience, and to awaken the conscience by the Word of God. As for us, we are willing enough to turn our face to the north or to the south, to the east or to the west! Gladly would we proclaim it to the red man who hunts the savannahs of America, to the swarthy man who never heard the name of Christ, before, or to the white man who has often

heard, but never heeded it! The same message, that God has accepted Christ as a Substitute for every man that will believe in Christ, and that whoever trusts Christ to save him is, in that moment, saved, will suffice for all. Yes, we would tell them that before the sinner does trust Christ, he is reconciled unto God by His death because the Atonement which He offered had been accepted, and there was peace foreordained between God and that sinner! What a message I have to present! What a proclamation I have to make! Nothing is necessary on your part—God expects nothing of you to merit His esteem, or to enhance the value of His gift. If repentance is indispensable, He is prepared to give it to you! If a tender heart is needed, He is ready to give you a heart of flesh! If you feel that you have a heart of stone, He has engaged to take it away. Does your guilt oppress you? He says, “I will sprinkle clean water, water of pure fountains, upon them, and they shall be cleansed from all their filthiness. And from all their uncleanness will I save them.” Know, all men, that there is no exception made! When Charles II came back to England there was an amnesty, except for certain persons, and these were mentioned by name—Hugh Peters and others were proscribed—but there is no exception here. I find not any traitors singled out and denounced by name! I have to proclaim an indemnity of such universal import that it is indiscriminate, “Whoever believes on Him shall never perish, but shall have everlasting life.”

Moreover, there is no exception made in my commission to any form of sin—unless it is the sin against the Holy Spirit—which carries its own evidence as well as its consequence. Those to whom I now speak, if they feel any drawings of heart towards God, have not committed that mortal crime! Murder, theft, forgery, felony, fornication, adultery and covetousness, which is idolatry—black and hideous as is the catalog—here is pardon for the whole! Ransack the kennels, however filthy! Rake the slums, however odious! Drag out the abominations of the age, however degrading! Here is pardon not only possible, probable, but positive! Bring a man here who has stained himself crimson all over with every sort of infamy, though it be not the lapse of an hour, but the habit of a life, yet God is still able to forgive! Jesus Christ is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him!

I do not know whether you find it very good to hear the proclamation, but I do know that I feel it most gratifying to utter it. Thrice happy am I to have such an announcement to make to rebels. Unknown Hearers, listen to my voice! By what strange chance have yon reckless, heedless, unconverted souls mingled with this throng of worshippers? Not often do you darken the floor of a place of worship! You hardly know how you were led to come in here. To what depths of sin you have run, to what extremities of iniquity you have gone! You marvel to find yourself in the company of God’s people. But since you are here, give heed to the message—“Thus says the Lord, I have blotted out like a cloud your iniquities, and like a thick cloud your sins. Return unto Me, for I am married to

you. I have given My blood to redeem you. Return, O wandering child of man! Return, return, and I will have mercy upon you, for I am God, and not man.” Having thus opened my commission, I will endeavor to perform—

III. A VERY SOLEMN DUTY.

My text supplies me with a warrant. It says, “As though God did beseech you by us, we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be you reconciled unto God.” Then it seems we have not merely to read our commission, but *we have to beseech you to accept it!* Why should we beseech you? Is it not because you are rational creatures, not robots—men, not machines? A machine might be compelled to perform functions without persuasion, but the Spirit of God often acts upon the heart of man by the sound arguments and affectionate entreaties of His servants whom He commissions. We are to beseech you because your hearts are so hard that you are prone to defy God’s power and resist His Grace! Therefore, we pray you to put down your weapons. We are to beseech you because you are unbelieving and will not credit the tidings. You say it is too good to be true that God will have mercy on such as you are. Therefore, we are to put our hand on you, to go down on our knees to you and to beseech you not to put away this blessed embassy! We are to beseech you because you are so proud and self-satisfied that you will sooner follow your own righteousness and cling to your own works than accept a peace already and freely proffered to you! We are to beseech you because you are careless. You give little heed to what is spoken—you will go your way and forget all our proclamations—therefore, are we to press you urgently, instantly, importunately! And we are to beseech you as when a mother pleads for her child’s life, as when a condemned criminal beseeches the judge to have pity on him! I think I never feel so conscious of my own weakness as when I have to ply you thus with exhortations. Oh, there have been a few times in my ministry when I could, with flowing eyes, beseech you to be reconciled to God, but these dry eyes of mine are not so often fountains of tears as I could wish. We need such an one as Richard Baxter to dilate upon this last part of the text. Perhaps we could handle the former part better than he, but he could handle this last far better than we can! Oh, how he would have summoned you by the terrible reality of things to come! With what glaring eyes and seething words he would say, “Oh, men, turn you, turn you, why will you die? You will feel the need of a Savior in the pangs of parting life, when the pulses shall be few and feeble, till with a gasp you shall expire! At the Resurrection, when you will wake up, if not in His likeness, to everlasting shame and contempt! At the Judgment Seat, where your sins shall be published and you shall be called to account for the deeds done in the body! At the dread decree which casts into Hell, forever, those that repent not! You will feel the need of a Savior by the Heaven you will lose and by the Hell into which you will fall! And by eternity, that dread eternity whose years never end—by the wrath to come, the burning indignation of which shall

never cool—by the immortality of your own souls, by the perils you now run, by the promises you despise, by the provocations you multiply, by the penalties you accumulate! We do beseech you to be reconciled to God.” Fly to Jesus! Call upon His name! Trust Him, His Word, His work, His goodness and His Grace! This is the way of reconciliation! Bow the knee and kiss the Son. We do beseech you to do so. Acquaint yourselves now with God and be at peace with Him! My text hangs like a crushing weight upon my soul at this moment. It is awful in its grandeur and it is majestically full of Divine Love. I must read the words again in your hearing. Oh, that the sense might break in on your understanding!

We are to beseech you as though God did beseech you, and we are to do it in Christ’s place. You see, God speaks when His ambassadors speak. I wonder, oh, I wonder, whether I have brains enough to compass the thought of how God would beseech you to be reconciled? ‘Tis the Father’s own pleading with His prodigal son. Can you imagine the father in the parable going after his son and finding him in rags feeding swine? Can you conceive him saying, “My son, my dear son, come back! Come back and I will forgive you all!” You think you hear that son saying to his father “Get you gone, I will not hear of it,” till his father says “My dear son, why will you prefer the company of swine to your father’s house? Why will you wear rags when you might be clothed in the best robe? Why will you starve in a far-off country when my house shall be full of feasting on your return?” What if that son should utter some indignant word and tell his father to his face he would never go back? Oh, I think I see the venerable, loving man falling on his son’s neck and kissing him in his filth just as he is, (“the great love with which He loved us when we were dead in trespasses and sins!”)—and He says to the rebel who insults Him and resents His tenderness, “My dear son, you must come back! I must have you. I cannot be without you. I must have you—come back!” In such a style we ought to plead with men. Ah, then, I cannot plead with you as I would. As though God, Himself, your offended Maker, came to you now as He did to Adam in the cool of the day and said to you, “Oh, return to Me, for I have loved you with an everlasting love,” even so, as though God spoke, would I woo you, you chief of sinners, to return to Him! You know, dear Friends, that the great God did send another Ambassador and that great Ambassador was Christ. Now the Apostle says that we, the ministers, are ambassadors for Christ in Christ’s place. Christ is no more an Ambassador—He has gone to Heaven—we stand in His place to the sons of men, not to make peace, but to proclaim it! What? Am I, then, to speak in Christ’s place? But how can I picture my Lord Jesus standing here? Alas, my imagination is not equal to the task! Would that I had sympathy enough with Him to put myself in His case so as to use His Words! I think I see Him looking at this great throng as once He looked at the inhabitants of Jerusalem. He turns His head round to these galleries, and about on yonder aisles, and at last He bursts into a flood of tears, saying, “How often would I have gathered your children together as

a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not.” He is choked with tears, and when He has paused a moment, He cries, “Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest! Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls. A bruised reed I will not break, nor quench the smoking flax.”

Again, I think I see Him as He looks at you, again, and when He observes some hearts so obstinate and hard that they will not melt, He unwraps His mantle, and exclaims, “Look here!” Do you mark the gash in His side? As He lifts His hands and shows the nail prints, and points downward to His pierced feet, He says, “By these, My wounds, which I endured when suffering for you, O My people, return unto Me! Come, bow at My feet, and take the peace which I have worked out for you. Oh, be not faithless, but believing! Doubt no longer! God is reconciled! Tremble no more! Peace is established. Toil no more at the works of the Law, cling not to your own doings. Cease to consult your feelings. It is finished! When I bowed My head upon the Cross, I finished all for you! Take salvation! Take it now! Come to Me. Come now to Me just as you are!” Alas, this is but a poor representation of my Lord and Master! I could wish myself laid among the clods of the valley, sleeping in my grave, rather than that I should be so poor an ambassador! But, Lord, why did You choose Your servant, and why did You give this people to still hear His voice, if you will not more mightily enable Him to plead with men? I have no more words, oh, let these tears plead with you! I feel that I could freely give my life if it would avail for the saving of your souls! Gladly would I meet a martyr’s death if you would be persuaded thereby to come to Christ for life! But oh, Sinners, no pleading of mine will ever prevail if the pleading of Christ proves ineffectual with you! To each one of you a distinct proclamation of salvation is addressed. Whoever among you will believe that Christ died and that He is able to save you—and will trust your soul upon what He did—shall be saved. Oh, why reject Him? He will not hurt nor harm you! Lay hold of this good hope, for your time is short! Death is hastening on! Eternity is near! Do lay hold of it, for Hell is hot, the flames, thereof, are terrible! Lay hold of it, for Heaven is bright, and the harps of angels are sweet beyond compare! Lay hold of it! It shall make your heart glad on earth, it shall charm away your fears and remove your griefs! Lay hold of it! It shall bear you through Jordan’s billows and land you safe on Canaan’s side. Oh, by the love of the Father, by the blood of Jesus, by the love of the Spirit, I beseech you, Sinner, believe and live! By the Cross and the five wounds, by the agony and bloody sweat, by the Resurrection and by the Ascension, Sinner, believe and live! By every argument that would touch your nature, by every motive that can sway your reason or stir your passions, in the name of God that sent me, by the Almighty that made you, by the Eternal Son that redeemed you, by the gift of the Holy Spirit, Sinner, I command you, with

Divine Authority to sanction my vehemence, that you be reconciled to God through the death of His Son! And—

IV. WHAT THEN?

When we have answered this question we shall have done. What then? Are there not some of you with whom this peace is made at this good hour? I will go back and tell my Master so. Then there shall be fresh ratifications between you and Him. The angels will hear of it and they will strike their harps anew to sweeter lays than they have known before.

Others there are of you that will not be reconciled. I must have an answer from you. Do you hesitate? Do you delay? Do you refuse? You shall never have another warning, some of you! No tears of pity shall be wept for you again. No loving heart shall ever bid you come to Christ again—I must have your answer now! Yes or no? Will you be damned or not? Will you be saved or not? I will not have you say, “When I have a more convenient season I will send for you.” Sinner, it cannot be a more convenient one than this! This is a convenient place—it is God’s House. It is a convenient time—it is the Lord’s-Day. Now, Sinner, will you be reconciled, restored, forgiven? “Will you be made whole?” said Jesus, and I say the same to you, “Will you be made whole?” Do you say, “No”? Must I take that for an answer? Mark you, Sinner, I have to tell my Master—I must tell Him when I seek the closet of the King tonight. I must tell Him your reply that you would not. What then remains for an ambassador to do when he has spoken to you in the name of the Sovereign? If you will not turn, we must shake off the dust of our feet against you! I am clear. I am clear of the blood of you all, I am clear. If you perish, being warned, you perish wantonly! The wrath comes upon you, not on him who, to the best of his power, has told his Master’s message. Yet again, I beg you to accept it! Do you still say no? The white flag will be pulled down. It has been up long enough. Shall I pull it down and run up the red flag now? Shall I hurl threats at you because you heed not entreaties?—

***“If your ears refuse
The language of His Grace,
And hearts grow hard like stubborn Jews,
That unbelieving race,
The Lord in anger,
Shall lift His hand and swear,
You that despised My promised rest
Shall have no portion there.”***

But no, I cannot pull it down, that white flag! My heart will not let me do so! It shall fly there still, it shall fly there as a sign and a symbol of the day of Grace. Mercy is still held out to you. But there is one coming—I can hear his footsteps—who will pull down that white flag. The vision haunts my eyes. That grim, heartless skeleton whom men call, Death, will tear the white flag from its place and up will go the blood-red flag with the black escutcheon of the thunderbolts! Where are you then, Sinners? Where will you be then? You shudder at the thought. He lays his hand on you. There is no escape. Oh, turn you, turn you, turn you!

Come and welcome, Sinner, come now while you are welcome! 'Tis Love invites you! Jesus stretches out His hand to you all the day long. He has stretched out His hands to a rebellious and a gainsaying generation. Do not say, "I will think about it," but yield to His Love who around you now the bands of a man does cast. Do not make a resolution, but commit yourself to the good confession! Now, even now, may Sovereign Grace compel, and Irresistible Love draw you! May you believe with your heart, may you record your profession at once! Before you close your eyes in sleep, just as you would wish before your eyes are closed in death, may you be at peace with God! I pray God, as I entreat you, that this may come to pass, for His Son, Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 18:31-43.**

Verses 31-34. *Then He took unto Him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the Prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished. For He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully treated, and spit upon. And they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death: and the third day He shall rise again. And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.* It would be hard to imagine our Lord speaking more plainly. He tells them of His sufferings in detail—describes exactly what is to happen. But their thoughts did not run that way, and when you are not expecting a thing, it little matters how very plainly you may be told of it. You are doting upon something else and, therefore, you do not readily perceive the meaning. You know how, when you are expecting to hear a thing said, you can hear it even at a great distance, or you think you hear it from the very motion of the man's lips. But if he should say something clean contrary to what you expect, then you do not so readily hear. And these disciples of our Lord were looking to see Him made a king—they could not comprehend that the only crown He was to have would be one of thorns—and that the homage paid to Him would be to be scourged and to be spat upon! They did not understand. And don't you think that sometimes the run of our thoughts may be so contrary to Divine Truth that we may not be able to understand some very plain things in the Bible, which are only difficult to us because our thoughts are not yet running that way? One day when we shall be more completely cleansed from the grossness of this world, many a riddle will become plain enough to us!

35-39. *And it came to pass, that as He was come near unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the road begging. And hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant. And they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. And he cried, saying, Jesus, You Son of David, have mercy on me! And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his*

peace; but he cried so much the more, You son of David, have mercy on me! It's impossible to think that there should be some who think that when results are to be seen, they can ever be regarded as hindrances! For is it not a result of ministry—a result of Jesus passing by—that men cry out, “You Son of David, have mercy on me”? And yet, when the wave sheaf is before them, they seem to put it aside as though it were an impediment in the Savior's way! “Let Him go on sowing.” Well, but, Sir, it will not hinder Him to let Him also reap a little, for evidently there has been good seed shown in this heart—and here is the outcome of it, for the man is crying—“You Son of David, have mercy on me!” We do not get our sermons interrupted in this way, but what a mercy it will be when they are! And I suppose that in some better times when God's Spirit more mightily blesses the word, we shall have to stop our sermons every now and then to deal with anxious souls, or get them to step aside where those that are skillful in Heaven's surgery may bind up their wounds. They will be crying ever and anon, “Sirs, what must we do to be saved? Jesus, You Son of David, have mercy on me.”

40, 41. *And Jesus stood and commanded him to be brought unto Him; and when he was come near, He asked him, saying, What do you want Me to do for you?* If Christ were to come near to every unconverted person here, and say to him, “What do you want Me to do for you?” do you know what it is you want? No. The unhappy circumstance is that the mass of mankind do not know what mercy they should ask for, even if they believed that they had only to ask and have! But, dear Friend, you need deliverance from the power of sin! You need a new heart and a right spirit. You need to give up the sins you love and to follow after the virtues which now you despise! May God give you Grace to know that you need this! But this blind man knew what he wanted.

41-43. *And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Receive your sight: your faith has saved you. And immediately he received his sight and followed Him, glorifying God; and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God.*

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

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

THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL

NO. 1910

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 18TH, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”
2 Corinthians 5:20, 21.***

THE heart of the Gospel is redemption and the essence of redemption is the substitutionary Sacrifice of Christ. They who preach this Truth of God preach the Gospel in whatever else they may be mistaken—but they who preach not the Atonement, whatever else they declare—have missed the soul and substance of the Divine message. In these days I feel bound to go over and over again the elementary Truths of the Gospel. In peaceful times we may feel free to make excursions into interesting districts of Truth which lie far afield, but now we must stay at home and guard the hearths and homes of the Church by defending the first principles of the faith. In this age there have risen up in the Church, itself, men who speak perverse things. There are many that trouble us with their philosophies and novel interpretations, whereby they deny the doctrines they profess to teach and undermine the faith they are pledged to maintain. It is well that some of us who know what we believe and have no secret meanings for our words, should just put our foot down and maintain our standing, holding forth the Word of Life and plainly declaring the foundational truths of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Let me give you a parable. In the days of Nero there was great shortness of food in the city of Rome, although there was abundance of corn to be purchased at Alexandria. A certain man who owned a vessel went down to the sea coast and there he noticed many hungry people straining their eyes toward the sea, watching for the vessels that were to come from Egypt with corn. When these vessels came to the shore, one by one, the poor people wrung their hands in bitter disappointment, for on board the galleys there was nothing but sand which the tyrant emperor had compelled them to bring for use in the arena! It was infamous cruelty, when men were dying of hunger, to command trading vessels to go to and fro and bring nothing else but sand for gladiatorial shows, when wheat was so greatly needed. Then the merchant whose vessel was moored by the quay said to his shipmaster, “Take you good heed that you bring nothing back with you from Alexandria but corn. And whereas, before, you have

brought in the vessel a measure or two of sand, bring you not so much as would lie upon a penny this time. Bring nothing else, I say, but corn, for these people are dying. And now we must keep our vessels for this one business of bringing food for them.”

Alas! I have seen certain mighty galleys, of late, loaded with nothing but mere sand of philosophy and speculation, and I have said within myself, “No, but I will bear nothing in my ship but the revealed Truth of God, the Bread of Life so greatly needed by the people.” God grant us this day that our ship may have nothing on board it that may merely gratify the curiosity, or please the taste, but that there may be necessary Truths for the salvation of souls. I would have each one of you say—“Well, it was just the old, old story of Jesus and His love and nothing else.” I have no desire to be famous for anything but preaching the old Gospel. There are plenty who can fiddle to you the new music—it is for me to have no music at any time but that which is heard in Heaven—“Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, to Him be Glory forever and ever!”

I intend, dear Friends, to begin my discourse with the second part of my text, in which the doctrine of Substitution is set forth in these words—“He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” This is the basis and power of those appeals which it is our duty to make to the consciences of men!

I have found, my Brothers and Sisters, by long experience, that nothing touches the heart like the Cross of Christ. And when the heart is touched and wounded by the two-edged sword of the Law, nothing heals its wounds like the balm which flows from the pierced heart of Jesus. The Cross is life to the spiritually dead. There is an old legend which can have no literal truth in it, but if it is regarded as a parable, it is then most instructive. They say that when the Empress Helena was searching for the true Cross of Jesus they dug deep at Jerusalem and found the three crosses of Calvary buried in the soil. Which out of the three crosses was the veritable Cross upon which Jesus died they could not tell, except by certain tests. So they brought a corpse and laid it on one of the crosses, but there was neither life nor motion. When the same dead body touched another of the crosses it lived—and then they said, “This is the true Cross.”

When we see men quickened, converted and sanctified by the Doctrine of the Substitutionary Sacrifice, we may justly conclude that it is the true Doctrine of Atonement! I have not known men made to live unto God and holiness except by the Doctrine of the death of Christ on man’s behalf. Hearts of stone that before never beat with life have been turned to flesh through the Holy Spirit causing them to know this Truth of God! A sacred tenderness has visited the obstinate when they have heard of Jesus crucified for them. Those who have lain at Hell’s dark door, wrapped about with a sevenfold death-shade, even upon *them* has a great light shined! The story of the great Lover of the souls of men who gave Himself for their salvation is still, in the hands of the Holy Spirit, the greatest of all forces in the realm of mind!

So, this morning, I am going to handle, first, the great Doctrine, and then afterwards, and secondly, as God shall help me, we shall come to the great argument which is contained in the 20th verse—"Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God."

I. First, then, with as much brevity as possible, I will speak upon THE GREAT DOCTRINE. The great Doctrine, the greatest of all, is this, that God, seeing men to be lost by reason of their sin, has taken that sin of theirs and laid it upon His only begotten Son, making Him to be sin for us, even Him who knew no sin and that, in consequence of this transference of sin, he that believes in Christ Jesus is made just and righteous, yes, is made to be the righteousness of God in Christ! Christ was made sin that sinners might be made righteousness! That is the Doctrine of the Substitution of our Lord Jesus Christ on the behalf of guilty men.

Now consider, first, *who was made sin for us?* The description of our great Surety here given is upon one point, only, and it may more than suffice us for our present meditation. Our Substitute was spotless, innocent and pure. "He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin," Christ Jesus, the Son of God, became Incarnate and was made flesh and dwelt here among men. But though He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, He knew no sin. Though upon Him, sin was laid, yet not so as to make Him guilty. He was not, He *could not* be a sinner—He had no personal knowledge of sin. Throughout the whole of His life He never committed an offense against the great Laws of truth and right. The Law was in His heart—it was His Nature to be holy. He could say to all the world, "Which of you convicts Me of sin?" Even His vacillating judge enquired, "Why, what evil has He done?" When all Jerusalem was challenged and bribed to bear witness against Him, no witnesses could be found. It was necessary to misquote and twist His words before a charge could be trumped up against Him by His bitterest enemies. His life brought Him in contact with both the tables of the Law, but no single command had He transgressed. As the Jews examined the Paschal lamb before they slew it, so did scribes and Pharisees, doctors of the Law and rulers and princes examine the Lord Jesus, without finding offense in Him. He was the Lamb of God, without blemish and without spot!

As there was no sin of commission, so was there about our Lord no fault of omission. Probably, dear Brothers and Sisters, we that are Believers have been enabled, by Divine Grace, to escape most sins of commission, but I, for one, have to mourn daily over sins of *omission*. If we have spiritual Graces, yet they do not reach the point required of us. If we do that which is right in itself, yet we usually mar our work upon the wheel either in the motive, or in the manner of doing it, or by the self-satisfaction with which we view it when it is done. We come short of the Glory of God in some respect or other! We forget to do what we ought to do, or, doing it, we are guilty of lukewarmness, self-reliance, unbelief, or some other grievous error. It was not so with our Divine Redeemer! You cannot say that there was *any* feature deficient in His perfect beauty. He was complete in heart, in purpose, in thought, in word, in deed, in spirit.

You could not add anything to the life of Christ without its being manifestly an excrescence. He was emphatically an all-round Man, as we say in these days. His life is a perfect circle, a complete epitome of virtue. No pearl has dropped from the silver string of His Character. No one virtue has overshadowed and dwarfed the rest—all perfections combine in perfect harmony to make in Him one surpassing Perfection!

Neither did our Lord know a sin of thought. His mind never produced an evil wish or desire. There never was, in the heart of our blessed Lord, a wish for any evil pleasure, nor a desire to escape any suffering or shame which was involved in His service. When He said, "Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me," He never desired to escape the bitter potion at the expense of His perfect lifework. The, "if it is possible," meant, "if it is consistent with full obedience to the Father, and the accomplishment of the Divine purpose." We see the weakness of His Nature shrinking and the holiness of His Nature resolving and conquering, as He adds, "nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." He took upon Him the likeness of sinful flesh, but though that flesh often caused Him weariness of body, it never produced in Him the weakness of sin. He took our infirmities, but He never exhibited an infirmity which had the least of blameworthiness attached to it. Never fell there an evil glance from those blessed eyes! Never did His lips let drop a hasty word! Never did those feet go on an evil errand, nor those hands move towards a sinful deed! Because His heart was filled with holiness and love within as well as without, our Lord was unblemished. His desires were as perfect as His actions. Searched by the eyes of Omniscience, no shadow of fault could be found in Him.

Yes, more, there were no tendencies about our Substitute towards evil in any form. In us there are always those tendencies, for the taint of original sin is upon us. We have to govern ourselves and hold ourselves under stern restraint or we would rush headlong to destruction! Our carnal nature lusts to evil and needs to be held in as with bit and bridle. Happy is that man who can master himself. But with regard to our Lord, it was His Nature to be pure, right and loving. All His sweet wills were towards goodness. His unconstrained life was holiness itself—He was "the Holy Child Jesus." The prince of this world found in Him no fuel for the flame which he desired to kindle. Not only did no sin flow *from* Him, but there was no sin *in* Him, nor inclination, nor tendency in that direction. Watch Him in secret and you find Him in prayer. Look into His soul and you find Him eager to do and suffer the Father's will. Oh, the blessed Character of Christ! If I had the tongues of men and of angels I could not worthily set forth His absolute perfection! Justly may the Father be well pleased with Him! Well may Heaven adore Him!

Beloved, it was absolutely necessary that an one who should be able to suffer in our stead should, himself, be spotless. A sinner obnoxious to punishment by reason of his own offenses—what can he do but bear the wrath which is due to his own sin? Our Lord Jesus Christ as Man was made under the Law, but He owed nothing to that Law, for He perfectly fulfilled it in all respects. He was capable of standing in the place of others because He was under no obligations of His own. He was only under obli-

gations towards God because He had voluntarily undertaken to be the Surety and Sacrifice for those whom the Father gave Him. He was clear, Himself, or else He could not have entered into bonds for guilty men.

Oh, how I admire Him, that being such as He was, spotless and thrice holy so that even the heavens were not pure in His sight and He charged His angels with folly, yet He condescended to be made sin for us! How could He endure to be numbered with the transgressor and bear the sin of many? It may be no misery for a sinful man to live with sinful men, but it would be a heavy sorrow for the pure-minded to dwell with a company of abandoned and licentious wretches! What an overwhelming sorrow it must have been to the pure and perfect Christ to tabernacle among the hypocritical, the selfish and the profane! How much worse that He, Himself, should have to take upon Himself the sins of those guilty men! His sensitive and delicate Nature must have shrunk from even the shadow of sin and yet read the words and be astonished—"He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin." Our perfect Lord and Master bore our sins in His own body on the tree. He, before whom the sun, itself, is dim and the pure azure of Heaven is defilement, was made sin! I need not put this in fine words. The fact is, itself, too grand to need any magnifying by human language. To gild refined gold, or paint the lily, were absurd! But much more absurd would it be to try to overlay with flowers of speech the matchless beauties of the Cross. It suffices in simple rhyme to say—

***"Oh, hear that piercing cry!
What can its meaning be?
'My God! My God! Oh why have You
In wrath forsaken Me?'
Oh 'twas because our sins
On Him by God were laid!
He who Himself had never sinned,
For sinners, sin was made."***

This leads me on to the second point of the text which is, *what was done with Him who knew no sin?* He was "made sin." It is an amazing expression—the more you weigh it, the more you will marvel at its singular strength. Only the Holy Spirit might originate such language! It was wise for the Divine Teacher to use very strong expressions, for otherwise the thought might not have entered human minds. Even now, despite the emphasis, clearness, and distinctness of the language used here and elsewhere in Scripture, there are found men daring enough to deny that Substitution is taught in Scripture! With such subtle wits it is useless to argue. It is clear that language has no meaning for them. To read the 53rd chapter of Isaiah and to accept it as relating to the Messiah—and then to deny His Substitutionary Sacrifice is simply wickedness! It would be vain to reason with such beings—they are so blind that if they were transported to the sun, they could not see! In the Church and out of the Church there is a deadly animosity to this Truth of God. Modern thought labors to get away from what is obviously the meaning of the Holy Spirit, that sin was lifted from the guilty and laid upon the Innocent. It is written, "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." This is as plain lan-

guage as can be used. But if any plainer was required, here it is—“He has made Him to be sin for us.”

The Lord God laid upon Jesus, who voluntarily undertook it, all the weight of human sin! Instead of its resting on the sinner who committed it, it was made to rest upon Christ, who did not commit it. And the righteousness which Jesus worked out was placed to the account of the guilty, who had not worked it out, so that the guilty are treated as righteous! Those who, by nature, are guilty, are regarded as righteous, while He who, by Nature, knew no sin whatever, was treated as guilty! I think I must have read in scores of books that such a transference is impossible, but the statement has had no effect upon my mind. I do not care whether it is impossible or not with learned unbelievers—it is evidently possible with God, for He has done it! But they say it is contrary to reason. I do not care about that, either. It may be contrary to the reason of those unbelievers, but it is not contrary to mine! And if I am to be guided by reason, I prefer to follow my own. The Atonement is a miracle and miracles are to be accepted by *faith* rather than measured by calculation. A fact is the best of arguments. It is a *fact* that the Lord has laid on Jesus the iniquity of us all! God’s Revelation proves the fact and our faith defies human questioning! God says it and I believe it! And believing it, I find life and comfort in it. Shall I not preach it? Assuredly I will—

***“Ever since by faith I saw the stream
His flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme
And shall be till I die.”***

Christ was not guilty and could not be made guilty—but He was treated as if He were guilty because He willed to stand in the place of the guilty! Yes, He was not only *treated* as a sinner, but He was treated as if He had been sin, itself, in the abstract. This is an amazing utterance! The Sinless One was made to be sin!

Sin pressed our great Substitute very sorely. He felt the weight of it in the Garden of Gethsemane, where He “sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground.” The full pressure of it came upon Him when He was nailed to the accursed tree. There, in the hours of darkness, He bore infinitely more than we can tell. We know that He bore condemnation from the mouth of man, so that it is written, “He was numbered with the transgressors.” We know that He bore shame for our sakes. Did not your hearts tremble last Sunday evening when our text was, “Then did they spit in His face”? It was a cruel scorn that exhausted itself upon His blessed Person! This, I say, we *know*. We know that He bore pains innumerable of body and of mind—He thirsted, He cried out in the agony of desertion, He bled—He died. We know that He poured out His soul unto death and yielded up the ghost. But there was, at the back and beyond all this, an immeasurable abyss of *suffering*! The Greek Liturgy fitly speaks of, “Your unknown sufferings.” Probably to us they are *unknowable* sufferings. He was God as well as Man and the Godhead lent an Omnipotent power to the Manhood, so that there was compressed within His soul—and endured by it—an amount of anguish of which we can form no conception. I will say no more. It is wise to veil what it is impossible to depict.

This text both veils and discovers His sorrow, as it says, "He made Him to be sin." Look into the words. Perceive their meaning, if you can. The angels desire to look into it. Gaze into this terrible crystal. Let your eyes search deep into this opal, within whose jeweled depth there are flames of fire! The Lord made the perfectly Innocent One to be sin for us! That means more of humiliation, darkness, agony and death than you can conceive. It brought a kind of distraction and well-near a *destruction* to the tender and gentle spirit of our Lord. I do not say that our Substitute endured a Hell—that were unwarrantable. I will not say that He endured either the exact punishment for sin, or an equivalent for it—but I do say that what He endured rendered to the Justice of God a vindication of His Law more clear and more effectual than would have been rendered to it by the damnation of the sinners for whom He died.

The Cross is, under many aspects, a more full Revelation of the wrath of God against human sin than even Tophet and the smoke of torment which goes up forever and ever. Who would know God's hate of sin must see the Only Begotten bleeding in body and bleeding in soul even unto death! He must, in fact, spell out each word of my text and read its innermost meaning. There, my Brothers and Sisters, I am ashamed of the poverty of my explanation and I will, therefore, only repeat the full and sublime language of the Apostle—"He has made Him to be sin for us." It is more than, "He has put Him to grief." It is more than, "God has forsaken Him." It is more than, "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him." It is the most suggestive of all descriptions—"He has made Him to be sin for us." Oh depth of terror and yet height of love!

So I pass on to notice in the third place, *who did it?* The text says, "He has made Him to be sin for us." That is, God Himself it was who appointed His dear Son to be made sin for guilty men! The wise ones tell us that this Substitution cannot be just. Who made them judges of what is right and just? I ask them whether they believe that Jesus suffered and died at all? If they believe that He did, how do they account for the fact? Do they say that He died as an example? Then I ask, is it just for God to allow a sinless Being to die as an example? The fact of our Lord's death is sure and it has to be accounted for. Ours is the fullest and truest explanation.

In the appointment of the Lord Jesus Christ to be made sin for us, there was, first of all, a display of the Divine Sovereignty. God here did what none but He could have done. It would not have been possible for all of us together to have laid sin upon Christ! But it *was* possible for the great Judge of All, who gives no account of His actions, to determine that so it should be. He is the fountain of rectitude and the exercise of His Divine prerogative is always unquestionable righteousness. That the Lord Jesus, who offered Himself as a willing Surety and Substitute, should be accepted as Surety and Substitute for guilty man, was in the power of the great Supreme. In His Divine Sovereignty He accepted Him and before that Sovereignty we bow! If any question it, our only answer is, "No but, O man, who are you that replies against God?"

The death of our Lord also displayed Divine Justice. It pleased God as the Judge of All, that sin should not be forgiven without the exaction of the punishment which had been so righteously threatened to it, or such other display of justice as might vindicate the Law. They say that this is not the God of Love. I answer, it is the God of Love, pre-eminently so! If you had upon the bench, today, a judge whose nature was kindness, itself, it would behoove him, as a judge, to execute justice—and if he did not—he would make his kindness ridiculous! Indeed, his kindness to the criminal would be *unkindness* to society at large! Whatever the judge may be *personally*, he is *officially* compelled to do justice. And “shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” You speak of the Fatherhood of God! Enlarge as you please upon that theme even till you make a heresy of it, but still, God is the great moral Governor of the universe and it behooves Him to deal with sin in such a way that it is seen to be an evil and a bitter thing. God cannot wink at wickedness! I bless His holy name and adore Him that He is not unjust in order to be merciful that He does not spare the guilty in order to indulge His gentleness! Every transgression and disobedience has its just recompense of reward. But, through the Sacrifice of Christ, He is able to justly pardon! I bless His holy name that to vindicate His justice He determined that while a free pardon should be provided for Believers, it should be grounded upon an Atonement which satisfied all the requirements of the Law.

Admire, also, in the substitutionary Sacrifice, the great Grace of God. Never forget that He whom God made to be sin for us was His own Son. Yes, I go further—it was, in some sense, His own Self—for the Son is One with the Father! You may not confound the Persons, but you cannot divide the Substance of the blessed Trinity in Unity. You may not so divide the Son of God from the Father as to forget that God was in Him reconciling the world unto Himself. It is the Father’s other Self, who, on the Cross in human form, does bleed and die. “Light of light, very God of very God.” It is this Light that was eclipsed, that Godhead which purchased the Church with His own blood! Herein is infinite Love! You tell me that God might have pardoned without atonement? I answer, that finite and fallible love might have done so and thus have wounded itself by killing justice—but the love which both required and provided the Atonement is, indeed, Infinite! God, Himself, provided the Atonement by freely and fully giving up Himself in the Person of His Son to suffer in consequence of human sin!

What I want you to notice here is this—if ever your mind should be troubled about the propriety or rightness of a substitutionary Sacrifice, you may at once settle the matter by remembering that God, Himself, “has made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin.” If God did it, it is well done. I am not careful to defend an act of God—let the man who dares accuse his Maker think what he is doing! If God Himself provided the Sacrifice, you can be sure that He has accepted it. There can be no question ever raised about it, since Jehovah made to meet on Him our iniquities. He that made Christ to be sin for us knew what He did and it is not for us to begin to say, “Is this right, or is this not right?” The thrice Holy God has done this

and it must be right! That which satisfies God may well satisfy us. If God is pleased with the Sacrifice of Christ, shall not we be much more than pleased? Shall we not be delighted, entranced, ecstatic to be saved by such a Sacrifice as God Himself appoints, provides and accepts? “He has made Him to be sin for us.”

The last point is, *what happens to us in consequence?* “That we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” Oh this weighty text! No man living can exhaust it! No theologian lived, even in the most prosperous days of theology, who could ever get to the bottom of this statement!

Every man that believes in Jesus is, through Christ having taken his sin, made to be righteous before God! We are righteous through faith in Christ Jesus, “justified by faith.” More than this, we are made not only to have the character of “righteous,” but to become the substance called “righteousness.” I cannot explain this, but it is no small matter. It means no inconsiderable thing when we are said to be “made righteousness.” What is more, we are not only made righteousness, but we are made “the righteousness of God.” Herein is a great mystery! The righteousness which Adam had in the garden was perfect, but it was the righteousness of *man*—ours is the *righteousness of God*. Human righteousness failed, but the Believer has a Divine righteousness which can never fail! He not only has it, but he *is* it—he is “made the righteousness of God in Christ.” We can now sing—

**“With my Savior’s vesture on,
Holy as the Holy One.”**

How acceptable with God must those be who are made by God, Himself, to be “the righteousness of God in Him!” I cannot conceive of anything more complete.

As Christ was made sin and yet never sinned, so are we made righteousness, though we cannot claim to have been righteous in and of ourselves. Sinners though we are and forced to confess it with grief, yet the Lord covers us so completely with the righteousness of Christ that only His righteousness is seen and we are made the righteousness of God in Him. This is true of all the saints, even of as many as believe on His name! Oh, the splendor of this Doctrine! Can you see it, my Friend? Sinner though you are and, in yourself, defiled, deformed and debased, yet if you will accept the great Substitute which God provides for you in the Person of His dear Son, your sins are gone from you and righteousness has come to you! Your sins were laid on Jesus, the Scapegoat—they are yours no longer—He has put them away. I may say that His righteousness is *imputed* to you, but I go further and say with the text, “You are made the righteousness of God in Him.” No Doctrine can be more sweet than this to those who feel the weight of sin and the burden of its curse!

II. So now, gathering all up, I have to close with the second part of the text, which is not teaching, but the application of teaching—A GREAT ARGUMENT. “Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.”

Oh, that these lips had language, or that this heart could speak without them! Then would I plead with every unconverted, unbelieving soul within this place and plead as for my life! Friend, you are at enmity with God and God is angry with you! But on His part there is every readiness for reconciliation. He has made a way by which you can become His friend—a very costly Way to Himself, but free to you. He could not give up His Justice and so destroy the honor of His own Character. But He did give up His Son, His Only-Begotten and His Well-Beloved! And that Son of His has been made sin for us, though He knew no sin! See how God meets you! See how willing, how anxious He is that there should be reconciliation between Himself and guilty men! O Sirs, if you are not saved, it is not because God will not or cannot save you—it is because you refuse to accept His mercy in Christ! If there is any difference between you and God, today, it is not from lack of kindness on His part—it is from lack of willingness on yours! The burden of your ruin must lie at your own door—your blood must be on your own hands!

Now, what we have to say to you, today, is this—we are anxious that you should be at peace with God and, therefore, we act as ambassadors for Christ. I am not going to lay any stress upon the office of ambassador as honorable or authoritative, for I do not feel that this would have weight with you—I lay all the stress upon the peace to which we would bring you. God has reconciled me to Himself and I would gladly have you reconciled, also. I once knew Him not, neither did I care for Him. I lived well enough without Him and sported with the trifles of the day, so as to forget Him. He brought me to seek His face and, seeking His face I found Him. He has blotted out my sins and removed my enmity. I know that I am His servant and that He is my Friend, my Father, my All. And now I cannot help trying, in my poor way, to be an ambassador for Him with you. I do not like that any of you should live at enmity with my Father who made you and that you should be wantonly provoking Him by preferring evil to good. Why should you not be at peace with One who so much wants to be at peace with you? Why should you not love the God of Love and delight in Him who is so kind to you?

What He has done for me, He is quite willing to do for you! He is a God ready to pardon. I have preached His Gospel now for many years, but I never met with a sinner yet that Christ refused to cleanse when he came to Him. I never knew a single case of a man who trusted Jesus and asked to be forgiven, confessing his sin and forsaking it, who was cast out. I say I never met with one man whom Jesus refused, nor shall I ever do so! I have spoken with harlots whom He has restored to purity, drunks whom He has delivered from their evil habit and with men guilty of foul sins who have become pure and chaste through the Grace of our Lord Jesus! They have always told me the same story—"I sought the Lord and He heard me. He has washed me in His blood and I am whiter than snow." Why should *you* not be saved, as well as these?

Dear Friend, perhaps you have never thought of this matter and this morning you did not come here with any idea of thinking of it—but why should you not begin? You came just to hear a well-known preacher. I

pray you forget the preacher and think only of yourself, your God and your Savior. It must be wrong for you to live without a thought of your Maker. To forget Him is to despise Him! It must be wrong for you to refuse the great Atonement—and you refuse it if you do not accept it at once! It must be wrong for you to stand out against your God—and you stand out against Him if you will not be reconciled to Him! Therefore I humbly play the part of an ambassador for Christ and I beseech you believe in Him and live!

Notice how the text puts it—“We are ambassadors for Christ, *as though God did beseech you by us.*” This thought staggers me! As I came along, this morning, I felt as if I could bury my head in my hands and weep as I thought of God beseeching anybody! He speaks and it is done—myriads of angels count themselves happy to fly at His command—and yet man has so become God’s enemy that he will not be reconciled to Him! God would make him His friend and spends the blood of His dear Son to cement that friendship. But man will not have it! Look, the great God turns to *beseeching* His obstinate creatures! His foolish creatures! In this I feel a reverent compassion for God. Must He beseech a rebel to be forgiven? Do you hear it? Angels, do you hear it? He who is the King of Kings veils His Sovereignty and stoops to *beseeching His creatures to be reconciled to Him!* I wonder not that some of my Brethren start back from such an idea and cannot believe that it could be so! It seems so derogatory to the glorious God! Yet my text says it, and it must be true—“As though God did beseech you by us.”

This makes it awful work to preach, does it not? *I ought to beseech you as though God spoke to you through me, looking at you through these eyes and stretching out His hands through these hands?* He says, “All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.” He speaks softly, tenderly and with paternal affection through these poor lips of *mine*, “as though God did beseech you by us.”

Furthermore notice that next line, which if possible has even more force in it—“*We implore you on Christ’s behalf.*” Since Jesus died in our place, we, His redeemed ones, are to implore others on His behalf. And as He poured out His heart for sinners on their behalf, we must, in another way, pour out our hearts for sinners on His behalf. “We implore you on Christ’s behalf.” Now if my Lord were here, this morning, would He pray you to come to Him? I wish, my Master, I were more fit to stand in Your place at this time. Forgive me that I am so incapable. Help me to break my heart, to think that it does not break as it ought to, for these men and women who are determined to destroy themselves and, therefore, pass You by, my Lord, as though You were but a common felon, hanging on a gallows! O Men, how can you think so little of the death of the Son of God? It is the wonder of time, the admiration of eternity! Souls, why will you refuse Eternal Life? Why will you die? Why will you despise Him by whom, alone, you can live?

There is but one Gate of Life—that gate is the open side of Christ—why will you not enter and live? “Come unto Me,” He says, “come unto Me.” I think I hear Him say it—“Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy

laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls." I think I see Him on that last day, that great day of the feast, standing and crying, "If any man thirsts, let Him come unto Me and drink!" I hear Him sweetly declare, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." I am not fit to implore you on Christ's behalf, but I do implore you with all my heart! You that hear my voice from Sunday to Sunday, come and accept the Great Sacrifice and be reconciled to God! You that hear me but this once, I would like you to go away with this ringing in your ears, "Be you reconciled to God!" I have nothing pretty to say to you. I have only to declare that God has prepared a Propitiation and that now He entreats sinners to come to Jesus, that through *Him* they may be reconciled to God!

We do not exhort you to some impossible effort. We do not bid you do some great thing. We do not ask you for money or price. Neither do we demand of you years of miserable feeling. But only this—*be reconciled*. It is not so much reconcile yourselves as, "*be reconciled!*" Yield yourselves to Him who round you, now, the bands of a Man would cast, drawing you with cords of love because He was given for you! His Spirit strives with you—yield to His striving. With Jacob, you know there wrestled a Man till the breaking of the day—let that Man, that God-Man, overcome you! Submit yourselves! Yield to the grasp of those hands which were nailed to the cross for you! Will you not yield to your best Friend? He that does embrace you, now, presses you to a heart that was pierced with the spear on your behalf. Oh, yield! Yield, my Friend!

Do you not feel some softness stealing over you? Steel not your heart against it. He says, with a tone most still and sweet, "Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." Believe and live! Quit the arch-enemy who has held you in his grip! Escape for your life! Look not behind you, stay not in all the plain, but flee where you see the open door of the great Father's house! At the gate, the bleeding Savior is waiting to receive you and to say, "I was made sin for you and you are made the righteousness of God in Me." Father, draw them! Father, draw them! Eternal Spirit, draw them, for Jesus Christ, Your Son's sake! Amen.

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SUBSTITUTION

NO. 141, 142

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JULY 19, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“For He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin.
That we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”
2 Corinthians 5:21.***

A BOOK is the expression of the thoughts of the writer. The book of Nature is an expression of the thoughts of God. We have God's terrible thoughts in the thunder and lightning, God's loving thoughts in the sunshine and the balmy breeze. We have God's bounteous, prudent, careful thoughts in the waving harvest and in the ripening meadow. We have God's brilliant thoughts in the wondrous scenes which are beheld from mountaintop and valley. And we have God's most sweet and pleasant thoughts of beauty in the little flowers that bloom at our feet. But you will remark that God has in Nature given most prominence to those thoughts that needed to have the pre-eminence. He has not given us broad acres overspread with *flowers*, for they were not needed in such abundance. He has spread the fields with corn, that thus the absolute necessities of life might be supplied. We needed most of the thoughts of His Providence. And He has quickened our industry, so that God's Providential care may be read as we ride along the roads on every side. Now God's book of Grace is just like His book of Nature. It is His thoughts written out. This great book, the Bible, this most precious volume, is the heart of God made legible! It is the gold of God's love beaten out into gold leaf so that therewith our thoughts might be plated and we might also have golden, good and holy thoughts concerning Him. And you will mark that, as in Nature, so in Grace—the most necessary is the most prominent! I see in God's Word a rich abundance of flowers of glorious eloquence. Often I find a Prophet marshalling his words like armies for might and like kings for majesty. But far more frequently I read simple declarations of the Truths of God. I see here and there a brilliant thought of beauty but I find whole fields of plain instructive Doctrine which is food for the soul. And I find whole Chapters full of Christ which is Divine Manna whereon the soul feeds. I see starry words to make the Scriptures brilliant, sweet thoughts to make them fair, great thoughts to make them impressive, terrible thoughts to make them awful. But necessary though-

ts, instructive thoughts, saving thoughts—are far more frequent—because far more necessary. Here and there a bed of flowers, but broad acres of living corn of the Gospel of the Grace of God!

You must excuse me, then, if I very frequently dwell on the whole topic of salvation. But last Sabbath I brought you one shock of this wheat in the fashion of Christ's promise, which says, "He who calls on the name of the Lord, shall be saved." And then I sought to show how men might be saved. I bring you now another shock cut down in the same field, teaching you the great philosophy of salvation, the hidden mystery, the great secret, the wonderful discovery which is brought to light by the Gospel—how God is Just and yet the Justifier of the *ungodly*. Let us read the text again and then at once proceed to discuss it. I intend to do today, as I did last Sunday. I shall just be as simple as ever I can. And I shall not attempt one single flight of eloquence or oratory, even if I am capable of it. But let us just go along the ground so that every simple soul may be able to understand—"For He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin. That we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." *Note the Doctrine. The use of it. The enjoyment of it.*

I. First, THE DOCTRINE. There are three persons mentioned here. *He* (that is God) has made *Him* (that is Christ) who knew no sin, to be sin for *us* (sinners) that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Before we can understand the plan of salvation, it is necessary for us to know something about the three persons and, certainly, unless we understand them in some measure, salvation is impossible to us!

1. Here is first, GOD. Let every man know what God is. God is a very different Being from what some of you suppose. The God of Heaven and of earth—the Jehovah of Abraham, of Isaac and Jacob, Creator and Preserver, the God of Holy Scripture and the God of all Grace, is not the God that some men make unto themselves and worship. There are men in this so called Christian land who worship a god who is no more God than Venus or Bacchus! A god made after their own hearts. A god not fashioned out of stone or wood but fashioned from their own thoughts—out of baser stuff than the heathen attempted to make a god of!

The God of Scripture has three great attributes and they are all three implied in the text. The God of Scripture is a *Sovereign* God. That is, He is a God who has absolute authority and absolute power to do exactly as He pleases. Over the head of God there is no law. Upon His arms there is no necessity. He knows no rule but His own free and mighty will. And though He cannot be unjust and cannot do anything but good, yet is His Nature absolutely free. Goodness is the freedom of God's Nature. God is not to be controlled by the will of man, nor the desires of man, nor by

fate in which the superstitious believe. He is a God doing as He wills in the armies of Heaven and in this lower world. He is a God, too, who gives no account of His matters. He makes His creatures just what He chooses to make them and does with them just as He wills. And if any of them resent His acts, He says unto them—"But, O man, who are you that reply against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, why have You made me thus? Has not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?" God is good. But God is Sovereign, absolute, knowing. There is nothing or no one who can control Him. The monarchy of this world is no constitutional and limited monarch—it is not tyrannical but it is absolutely in the hands of an all-wise God. But mark, it is in no hands but His—no cherubim, no seraphim can assist God in the dispensation of His government—

***"He sits on no precarious Throne,
Nor borrows leave to be."***

He is the God of Predestination. The God upon whose absolute will the hinge of fate turns—

***"Chained to His Throne, a volume lies,
With all the fates of men,
With every angel's form and size,
Drawn by the eternal pen.
His Providence unfolds the book,
And makes His councils shine,
Each opening leaf and every stroke,
Fulfills some deep design."***

This is the God of the Bible. This is the God whom we adore—no weak, cowardly God who is controlled by the will of men, who cannot steer the boat of Providence, but a God unalterable, infinite, unerring. This is the God we worship. A God as infinitely above His creatures as the highest thought can fly. And still higher than that!

But, again, the God who is here mentioned is a *God of Infinite justice*. That He is a Sovereign God, I prove from the words that He *has made* Christ to be sin. He could not have done it if He had not been Sovereign. That He is a just God, I infer from my text—seeing that the way of salvation is a great plan of satisfying justice. And we now declare that the God of Holy Scripture is a God of inflexible justice. He is not the God whom some of you adore. You adore a god who winks at great sins. You believe in a god who calls your crimes peccadilloes and little faults. Some of you worship a god who does not punish sin. He is so weakly merciful and so mercilessly weak that he passes by transgression and iniquity and never enacts a punishment. You believe in a god, who, if man sins, does not demand punishment for his offense. You think that a few good works of

your own will pacify him. You think that he is so weak a ruler that a few good words uttered before him in prayer will win sufficient merit to reverse the sentence. Your god is no God! He is as much a false god as the god of the Greeks, or of ancient Nineveh! The God of Scripture is One who is inflexibly severe in justice and will by no means clear the guilty! “The Lord is slow to anger and great in power. And will not at all acquit the wicked.” The God of Scripture is a Ruler, who, when His subjects rebel, marks their crime and never forgives them until He has punished it, either upon them, or upon their Substitute. He is not like the god of some Dissenters who believe in a god without an Atonement, with only some little show upon a cross, which was not, as they say, a real suffering of sin. Their god, the god of the Socinian, just blots out sin without exacting any punishment. He is not the God of the Scriptures! The God of the Bible is as severe as if He were unmerciful and as just as if he were not gracious! And yet He is as gracious and as merciful as if He were not just—yes, more so!

And one more thought here concerning God, or else we cannot establish our discourse upon a sure basis. The God of Scripture is a *God of Grace*—think not that I am now contradicting myself. The God who is inflexibly severe and never pardons sin without punishment is yet a God of illimitable love! Although as a Ruler He will chastise, yet, as the Father-God, He loves to bestow His blessing. “As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies. But had rather that he should turn unto Me and live.” God is Love in its highest degree. He is love rendered more than love. Love is not God but God is Love! He is full of Grace, He is the plenitude of mercy—He delights in mercy! As high as the Heavens are above the earth, so high are His thoughts of love above our thoughts of despair—and His ways of Grace above our ways of fear. This God, in whom these three great attributes harmonize—illimitable Sovereignty, inflexible Justice and unfathomable Grace—these three make up the main attributes of the one God of Heaven and earth whom Christians worship! It is this God before whom we must appear. It is He who has made Christ to be sin for us, though He knew no sin.

2. Thus, we have brought the first Person before you. The second Person of our text is *the Son of God*—Christ, who knew no sin. He is the Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds—begotten, not made. Being of the same substance with the Father, co-equal, co-eternal and co-existent. Is the Father Almighty? So is the Son Almighty. Is the Father Infinite? So is the Son Infinite. He is very God of very God—having a dignity not inferior to the Father but being equal to Him in every respect—God over all, blessed forevermore. Jesus Christ is also the son of Mary, a

Man like unto ourselves. A Man subject to all the infirmities of human nature, except the infirmities of sin. A Man of suffering and of woe, of pain and trouble, of anxiety and fear. A Man of trouble and of doubt, of temptation and of trial, of weakness and death. He is a Man just as we are, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. Now the Person we wish to introduce to you is this complex being, God and Man. Not God humanized, not man Deified, but God, purely, essentially God. Man, purely Man. Man, not more than Man. God, not less than God—the two standing in a sacred union together, the God-Man. Of this God in Christ, our text says that He knew no sin. It does not say that He did not sin. That we know—but it says more than that. He did not *know* sin. He knew not what sin was! He saw it in others but He did not know it by *experience*. He was a perfect stranger to it. It is not merely said that He did not take sin into His heart, but He did not *know* it. It was no acquaintance of His. He was the acquaintance of grief. But He was not the acquaintance of *sin*. He knew no sin of any kind—no sin of thought, no sin of birth, no original, no actual transgression. No sin of lips, or of hand did ever Christ commit. He was pure, perfect, spotless! Like His own Divinity, without spot or blemish, or any such thing, this gracious Person is He who is spoken of in the text! He was a Person utterly incapable of committing anything that was wrong. Lately it has been asserted by some ill-judged ones, that Christ was capable of sin. I think it was Irving who started some such idea that if Christ was not capable of sinning, He could not have been capable of virtue, “For,” they say, “if a man must necessarily be good, there is no virtue in his goodness.” Away with their ridiculous nonsense! Is not God necessarily good? And who dares deny that God is virtuous?

Are not the glorified spirits in Heaven necessarily pure? And yet are they not holy because of that very necessity? Are not the angels, now that they are confirmed, necessarily faultless? And shall anyone dare to deny angelic virtue! The thing is not true! It needs no freedom in order to create virtue. Freedom and virtue generally go together. But necessity and virtue are as much brother and sister as freedom and virtue. Jesus Christ was not capable of sin. It was as utterly impossible for Christ to have sinned, as for fire to drown or for water to burn. I suppose both of these things might be possible under some peculiar circumstances, but it never could have been possible for Christ to have committed or to have endured the shadow of the commission of a sin! He did not know it. He knew no sin.

3. Now I have to introduce the third person. We will not go far for him. The third person is *the sinner*. And where is he? Will you turn your eyes

within you and look for him, each one of you? He is not very far from you. He has been a drunk—he has committed drunkenness and reveling and such like and we know that the man or woman who commits these things has no inheritance in the Kingdom of God. There is another, he has taken God's name in vain. He has sometimes, in his hot passion, asked God to do most fearful things against his limbs and against his soul. Ah, there is the sinner. Where is he? I hear that man, with tearful eyes and with sobbing voice exclaim, "Sir, he is here!" I think I see some woman here, in the midst of us, some of us have accused her, perhaps, and she stands alone trembling and says not a word for herself. Oh, that the Master might say, "neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more." I believe, I must believe, that somewhere among these many thousands, I hear some palpitating heart and that heart, as it beats so hurriedly, cries, "Sin, sin, sin, wrath, wrath, wrath—how can I get deliverance?" Ah, you are the man, a born rebel! Born into the world a sinner, you have added to your native guilt your own transgressions. You have broken the Commandments of God, you have despised God's Love, you have trampled on His Grace, you have gone on until now the arrow of the Lord is drinking up your spirit! God has made you tremble. He has made you to confess your guilt and your transgression. Hear me, then—if your convictions are the work of God's Spirit—you are the person intended in the text! When it says, "He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we"—that is *you*—"might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

I have introduced *the persons* and now I must introduce you to a *scene* of a great exchange which is made according to the text. The third person whom we introduce is *the prisoner at the bar*. As a sinner, God has called him before Him—he is about to be tried for life or death. God is gracious and He desires to save him. God is just and He must punish him. The sinner is to be tried. If there is a verdict of guilty brought in against him, how will the two conflicting attributes work in God's mind? He is loving, He wants to save him. He is just, He must destroy him! How shall this mystery be solved and the riddle be solved? Prisoner at the bar, can you plead, "Not guilty?" He stands speechless. Or, if he speaks, he cries, "I am guilty!"—

***"Should You smite my soul to Hell,
Your righteous Law approves it well."***

Then, you see, if he has pleaded guilty, there is no hope of there being any flaw in the evidence. And even if he had pleaded, "not guilty," yet the evidence is most clear, for God, the Judge, has seen his sin and recorded all his iniquities—so that there would be no hope of his escaping. The prisoner is sure to be found guilty! How can he escape? Is there a flaw in

the indictment? No! It is drawn up by Infinite Wisdom and dictated by Eternal Justice. And there is no hope there. Can he turn king's evidence? Ah, if we could be saved by turning king's evidence, we should all of us be saved! There is an anomaly in our law which often allows the greater criminal to escape, while the lesser criminal is punished. If the one is dastard and coward enough by betraying his comrade, he may save himself. If you turn to the *Newgate Calendar*—if any of you have patience enough to read so vile a piece of literature—you will see that the greater of two murderers has escaped because he turned king's evidence while the other has been hanged.

You have told on your fellows. You have said, "Lord, I thank You I am not as other men. I am not as that adulterer, or even as that publican. I bless You I am not like my neighbor who is an extortioner, a thief and so on." You are telling against your neighbor. You are joint sinners and you are telling a tale against him! There is no hope for you. God's Law knows of no such injustice as a man escaping by turning informer upon others! How then shall the prisoner at the bar escape? Is there any possibility? Oh, how did Heaven wonder! How did the stars stand still with astonishment! And how did the angels stay their songs a moment, when for the first time, God showed how He might be Just and yet be Gracious! Oh, I think I see Heaven astonished and silence in the courts of God for the space of an hour when the Almighty said, "Sinner, I must and will punish you on account of sin! But I love you. The heart of My love yearns over you. How can I make you as Admah? How shall I set you as Zeboim? My Justice says, 'smite,' but My Love stays my hand and says, 'spare, spare the sinner!' Oh, Sinner, My heart has devised it—My Son, the Pure and Perfect, shall stand in your place and be accounted guilty and you, the guilty, shall stand in My Son's place and be accounted righteous!" It would make us leap upon our feet in astonishment if we did but thoroughly understand this—the wonderful mystery of the transposition of Christ and the sinner! Let me put it so plainly that everyone can understand—Christ was spotless—sinners were vile. Says Christ, "My Father, treat Me as if I were a sinner. Treat the sinner as if He were I. Smite as sternly as You please, for I will bear it and thus the heart of Your Love may overflow with Grace and yet Your Justice be unsullied, for the sinner is no sinner now." He stands in Christ's place and with the Savior's garments on, he is accepted!

Do you say that such an exchange as this is unjust? Will you say that God should not have made His Son a Substitute for us and have let us go? Let me remind you it was purely voluntary on the part of Christ. Christ was willing to stand in our place. He had to drink the cup of our pu-

nishment, but He was quite willing to do it. And let me tell you yet one more unanswerable thing—the Substitution of Christ was not an unlawful thing because the Sovereign *God* made Him a Substitute! We have read in history of a certain wife whose attachment to her husband was so great that the wife has gone into the prison and exchanged clothes with him. And while the prisoner was escaping, the wife has remained in the prison. And so the prisoner has escaped by a kind of surreptitious substitution. In such a case there was a clear breach of law and the prisoner escaping might have been pursued and again imprisoned. But in this case the Substitution was made by the highest Authority. The text says, *God* “has made Him to be sin for us.” And therefore Christ did stand in my place and He did make the exchange lawfully. It was with the full determinate counsel of Almighty God, as well as with His own consent, that Christ stood in the sinner’s place, as the sinner does now in Christ’s place. Old Martin Luther was a man for speaking a thing pretty plainly and sometimes he spoke the Truth of God so plainly that he made it look very much like a lie. In one of his sermons he said, “Christ was the greatest Sinner who ever lived.” Now Christ was never a sinner, but yet Martin was right. He meant to say all the sins of Christ’s people were taken off them and put on Christ’s head and so Christ stood in God’s sight as if He *had been the greatest sinner* who ever lived! He was never a sinner. He never knew sin—but good Martin, in his zeal to make men understand what it was, said, “Sinner, you became Christ. Christ, You became a Sinner!” It is not quite the Truth. The sinner is treated as if he were Christ and Christ is treated as if He were the sinner. That is what is meant by the text, *God* “has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin. That we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”

Let me just give you two illustrations of this. The first shall be taken from the Old Testament. When of old, men did come before God with sin, God provided a sacrifice which should be the representative of Christ, inasmuch as the sacrifice died instead of the sinner. The Law ran, “He that sins shall die.” When men had committed sin, they brought a bullock or a sheep before the altar. They put their hand on the bullock’s head and acknowledged their guilt. And by that deed their guilt was *typically* removed from themselves to the bullock. Then, the poor bullock, which had done no wrong, was slaughtered and cast out as a sin offering. That is what every sinner must do with Christ, if he is to be saved. A sinner, by faith, comes and puts his hand on Christ’s head and confessing all his sin—his sin is no longer his—it is put on Christ. Christ hangs upon the tree. He bears the Cross and endures the shame. And so the sin is all gone and cast into the depths of the sea. Take another illustration. We

read in the New Testament, that “the Church (that is, the people of God) is Christ’s bride.” We all know that according to the law, the wife may have many debts. But no sooner is she married than her debts cease to be hers and become her husband’s at once. So if a woman is overwhelmed with debt so that she is in daily fear of the prison, let her but once stand up and give her hand to a man and become his wife and there is none in the world can touch her. The husband is liable for all and she says to her creditor, “Sir, I owe you nothing. My husband did not owe you anything. I incurred the debt. But, inasmuch as I have become his wife, my debts are taken off from me and become his.” It is even so with the sinner and Christ. Christ marries the sinner and puts forth His hand and takes the Church to be His. She is in immeasurable debt to God’s Justice. She owes to God’s vengeance an intolerable weight of wrath and punishment. Christ says, “You are My wife—I have chosen you and I will pay your debts.” And He has paid them and got His full discharge. Now, whoever believes in Christ Jesus has peace with God because, “He has made Christ to be sin for us, though He knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”

And now, I shall have finished the explanation of the text, when I just bid *you remember the consequences of this great Substitution*. Christ was made sin. We are made the righteousness of God. It was in the past, long further back than the memory of angels can reach—it was in the dark past, before cherubim or seraphim had flapped the un navigated ether—when as yet worlds were not and Creation had not a name—God foresaw the sin of man and planned his redemption. An Everlasting Covenant was formed between the Father and the Son, wherein the Son did stipulate to suffer for His elect. And the Father on His part, did covenant to justify them through the Son. Oh, wondrous Covenant, you are the source of all the streams of atoning love! Eternity rolled on, time came and with it soon came the Fall—and then when many years had run their round—the fullness of time arrived and Jesus prepared to fulfill His solemn engagement. He came into the world and was made Man. From that moment, when He became Man—mark the change that was worked in Him. Before, He had been entirely happy. He had never been miserable, never sad. But now as the effects of that terrible Covenant which He had made with God, His Father, begins to pour wrath upon Him. What? You say does God actually account His Son to be a sinner? Yes, He does. His Son agreed to be the Substitute, to stand in the sinner’s place. God begins with Him at His birth. He puts Him in a manger. If He had considered Him as a perfect Man, He would have provided Him a throne—but considering Him as a sinner, He subjects Him to woe and poverty from

beginning to end! And now see Him grown to Manhood. Look at Him—griefs pursue Him, sorrows follow Him. Stop! Griefs, why follow you the Perfect? Why pursue you the Immaculate? Justice, why do you not drive these griefs away?—“The pure should be peaceful and the immaculate should be happy.” The answer comes—“This Man is pure in Himself but He has made Himself impure by taking His people’s sin.” Guilt is imputed to Him and the very imputation of guilt brings grief with all its reality! At last I see Death coming with more than his usual horrors. I see the grim skeleton with his dart well sharpened. I see behind him Hell. I mark the grim Prince of Darkness and all the avengers rising up from their place of torment. I see them all besetting the Savior! I notice their terrible war upon Him in the Garden. I note Him as He lies there wallowing in His blood in fearful soul-death. I see Him as in grief and sorrow, He walks to Pilate’s bar. I see Him mocked and spit upon. I behold Him tormented, maltreated and blasphemed. I see Him nailed to the Cross. I behold the mocking continued and the shame unabated. I mark Him shrieking for water and I hear Him complaining of the forsaking of God! I am astonished! Can this be just that a Perfect Being should suffer thus?—Oh, God, where are You that You can thus permit the oppression of the Innocent? Have You ceased to be King of Justice, else why do You not shield the Perfect One? The answer comes—“Be still. He is perfect in Himself, but He is the Sinner now—He stands in the sinner’s place. The sinner’s guilt is on Him and, therefore, it is right, it is just, it is what He has Himself agreed to, that He should be punished as if He were a sinner, that He should be frowned upon, that He should die and that He should descend to Hades unblest, uncomfited, not helped, not honored and not acknowledged.” This was one of the effects of the great change which Christ made.

And now, take the other side of the question and I have done with the explanation. What was the effect on us? Do you see that sinner there dabbling his hand in lust, defiling his garments with every sin the flesh had ever indulged in? Do you hear him cursing God? Do you mark him breaking every ordinance that God has rendered sacred? But do you see him in a little while pursuing his way to Heaven? He has renounced these sins! He has been converted and has forsaken them! He is going on the way to Heaven. Justice, are you asleep? That man has broken your Law. Is he to go to Heaven? Listen how the fiends come rising from the Pit and cry—“That man deserves to be lost. He may not be now what he used to be, but his past sins must have vengeance.” And yet there he goes safely on his way to Heaven and I see him looking back on all the fiends that accuse him. He cries out, “Behold, who can lay anything to

the charge of God's elect?" And when one would think all Hell would be up in arms and accuse, the grim tyrant lies still and the fiends have nothing to say! And I see him turning his face Heavenward to the Throne of God and hear him cry, "Who is he that condemns?" As with unblushing countenance he challenges the Judge! Oh, Justice, where are you? This man has been a sinner, a rebel—why not smite him to the dust for his impertinent presumption in thus challenging the Justice of God? "No," says Justice, he has been a sinner, but I do not look upon him in that light now. I have punished Christ instead of him—that sinner is no sinner now—he is perfect!" What? Perfect? "Perfect, because Christ was perfect and I look upon him as if he were Christ. Though in himself he is all black as the gates of Kedar, I consider him to be fair as the curtains of Solomon! I made Christ the sinner and I punished Christ. I made the sinner Christ and I magnify and exalt him. And I will put a crown of pure gold upon his head and, by-and-by, I will give him a place among them who are sanctified, where he shall, harp in hand, forever praise the name of the Lord!" This is the grand result to sinners of the great exchange. "For He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin. That we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

II. Now, I have to come towards the close, to my second point, upon which I shall be brief but laborious. WHAT IS THE USE OF THIS DOCTRINE? Turn to the Scriptures and you will see. "Now, then, we are ambassadors for God, as though God did beseech you by us. We pray you in Christ's place to be reconciled to God, for"—here is our grand argument—"He has made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin." Brothers and Sisters, I am about to speak to you. I am about to beseech and exhort you—may the Spirit of God help me to do it with all the earnestness which becomes me. You and I shall face each other soon before the bar of the great Judge and I shall be responsible in the day of account for all I preach to you. Not for my style or talent, or lack of talent—I shall only be responsible for my earnestness and zeal in this matter. And now, before God I entreat you most earnestly to be reconciled to Him! You are by nature at enmity with God. You hate Him, you neglect Him, your enmity shows itself in various ways. I beseech you now to be reconciled to God. I might entreat you to be reconciled because it would be a fearful thing to die with God for your enemy. Who among us can dwell with devouring fire? Who can abide with the eternal burnings? It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, for our God is a consuming fire. Beware, you that forget God, lest He tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver. I beseech you, therefore, be reconciled to God!

I might on the other hand use another argument and remind you that those who are reconciled to God are thereby proved to be the inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven. There are crowns for God's friends. There are harps for them who love Him. There is a mansion prepared for everyone who seeks Him. Therefore, if you would be blessed throughout eternity, be reconciled to God! But I shall not urge that. I shall urge the reason of my text. I beseech you, my Hearer, be reconciled to God because if you repent, it is proof that Christ has stood in your place! Oh, if this argument does not melt you, there is none in Heaven or earth that can! If your heart melts not at such an argument as this, then it is harder than the nether millstone—surely you have a soul of stone and a heart of brass if you will not be reconciled to God who has written this for your encouragement!

I beseech you be reconciled to God because in this there is proof that God is loving you! You think God to be a God of wrath? Would He have given His own Son to be punished if He had hated you? Sinner, if God had anything but thoughts of love towards you, I ask, would He have given up His Son to hang upon the Cross? Think not my God a tyrant! Think Him not a wrathful God, destitute of mercy. His Son, torn from His bosom and given up to die, is the best proof of His love! Oh, Sinner, I need not blame you if you did hate your enemy, but I must blame you, call you mad, if you hate your Friend! Oh, I need not wonder if you would not be reconciled to one who would not be reconciled to you. But inasmuch as you will not, by nature, be reconciled to the God who gave His own Son to die, I must marvel at the stupidity into which your evil nature has hurried you! God is Love—will you not be reconciled to Love? God is Grace—will you not be reconciled to Grace? Oh, you are a rebel of the deepest dye if you will still not be reconciled. Remember, too, oh Sinner, that the way is open for your reconciliation. You need not be punished. No, you shall not be! If you know yourself to be a sinner, by the Spirit's teaching, God will not punish you to maintain His Justice—that Justice is sufficiently maintained by the punishment of Christ! He says, "be reconciled." The child runs away from his father when he has sinned because he fears his father will punish him. But when his father burns the rod and, with a smiling face says, "child, come here," surely it must be an unloving child who would not run into such a father's arms! Sinner, you deserve the sword—God has snapped the sword across the knee of Christ's Atonement and now He says, "Come to Me." You deserve infinite, eternal wrath and the displeasure of God—God has quenched that wrath for all Believers and now He says, "Come to Me and be reconciled."

Do you tell me that you are not a sinner? I was not preaching to you! Do you tell me that you have never rebelled against God? I warn you that though *you* cannot find out your own sins, *God* will find them out! Do you say, “I need no reconciliation, except that which I can make myself?” Be warned that if you reject Christ, you reject your only hope, for all that you can do is less than nothing and vanity! I was not preaching to you, when I said, “Be reconciled.” I was preaching to you, poor afflicted Conscience. I was preaching to you—you that have been a great sinner and transgressor, you that feel your guilt. To you, you adulterer, trembling now under the lash of conviction. To you, you blasphemer, quivering now from head to foot. I preach to You, you thief, whose eyes are now filled with the tears of penitence. You feel that Hell must be your portion unless you are saved through Christ. I preach to you, you that know your guilt! I preach to you and to every one such and I beseech you to be reconciled to God, for God is reconciled to you! Oh, let not your heart stand out against this.

I cannot plead as I wish. Oh, if I could, I would plead with my heart, with my eyes and my lips that I might lead you to the Savior! You need not rail at me and call this an Arminian style of preaching. I care not for your opinion—this style is Scriptural. “As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ’s place, be you reconciled to God.” Poor broken-hearted Sinner, God is as much preaching to you this morning and bidding you be reconciled as if He stood here, Himself, in His own Person. And though I am a mean and puny man by whom He speaks, He speaks now as much as if it were by the voice of angels, “Be reconciled to God!” Come, Friend, turn not your eyes and head away from me. But give me your hand and lend me your heart while I weep over your hand and cry over your heart and beseech you not to despise your own mercy, not to be a suicide to your own soul, not to damn yourself! Now that God has awakened you to feel that you are an enemy, I beseech you now to be His friend! Remember, if you are now convicted of sin, there is no punishment for you. My Master, Jesus Christ, was punished in your place! Will you believe this? Will you trust in it and so be at peace with God? If you say, “No!” then I would have you know that you have put away your own mercy! If you say, “I need no reconciliation,” you have thrust away the only hope you can ever have! Do it at your own hazard. I wash my hands of your blood. But, but, but, if you know yourself to need a Savior! If you would escape the hellish Pit! If you would walk among them who are sanctified—I again, in the name of Him that will condemn you at the Last Day if you reject this invitation—implore and beseech you to be recon-

ciled to God! I am His ambassador. When I have finished this sermon, I shall go back to court.

Sinner, what shall I say of you? Shall I go back and tell my Master that you intend to be His enemy forever? Shall I go back and tell Him, "They heard me, but they regarded not"? They said in their hearts, "we will go away to our sins and our follies and we will not serve your God, neither fear Him!"? Shall I tell Him such a message as that? Must I be driven to go back to His palace with such a fearful story? I beseech you, send me not back so, lest my Master's wrath wax hot and He says—

***"They that despised My promised rest,
Shall have no portion there."***

But oh, may I not go back to court today and tell the Monarch on my knees, "There are some, my Lord, who have been great rebels but when they saw themselves rebels, they threw themselves at the foot of the Cross and asked for pardon! They had strangely revolted, but I heard them say, 'If He will forgive me, I will turn from my evil ways, if He will enable me!' They were gross transgressors and they confessed it. But I heard them say, 'Jesus, Your blood and righteousness are my only trust.'" Happy ambassador! I will go back to my Master with a gladsome countenance and tell Him that peace is made between many a soul and the great God! But miserable ambassador who has to go back and say, "There is no peace made." How shall it be? The Lord decide it! May many hearts give way to Omnipotent Grace and may enemies of Grace be changed into friends that God's elect may be gathered in and His eternal purpose accomplished!

III. And now, I close up by noticing the SWEET ENJOYMENT which this Doctrine brings to a Believer. Mourning Christian! Dry your tears! Are you weeping on account of sin? Why do you weep? Weep because of your sin, but weep not through any fear of punishment! Has the Evil One told you that you shall be condemned? Tell him to his face that he lies! Ah, poor distressed Believer, are you mourning over your own corruptions? Look to your perfect Lord and remember—you are complete in Him—you are in God's sight as perfect as if you had never sinned! No, more than that—the Lord our Righteousness has put a Divine Garment upon you, so that you have more than the righteousness of man—you have the righteousness of *God!* Oh, you who are mourning by reason of in-bred sin and depravity—remember, none of your sins can condemn you! You have learned to hate sin. But you have learned to know that sin is not yours—it is put on Christ's head. Come, be of good cheer—your standing is not in yourself—it is in Christ! Your acceptance is not in yourself, but in your Lord. With all your sin, you are as much accepted

today as in your sanctification! You are as much accepted of God, today, with all your iniquities, as you will be when you stand before His Throne, rendered free from all corruption.

Oh, I beseech you, lay hold on this precious thought—perfection in Christ—for you are perfect in Christ Jesus! With your Savior’s garment on, you are holy as the holy ones. You are now justified by faith. You have now peace with God. Be of good cheer. Do not fear to die! Death has nothing terrible in it for you. Christ has extracted all the gall from the sting of death. Tremble not at judgment—judgment will not bring you another acquittal to add to the acquittal already given in your cause—

***“Bold shall you stand at that great day,
For who anything to your charge can lay?
Fully absolved by Christ you are,
From sin’s tremendous guilt.”***

Ah, when you come to die, you shall challenge God, for you shall say, “My God, You can not condemn me for You have condemned Christ for me. You have punished Christ in my place!” “Who is he that condemns? It is Christ who died, yes, rather, who is risen again, who also sits at the right hand of God and makes intercession for us.” Christian, be glad! Let your head lack no oil and your face no ointment. “Go your way. Eat your bread with joy and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has accepted your works.” Do as Solomon bids us do—live happily all the days of your life. For you are accepted in the Beloved—you are pardoned through the blood and justified through the righteousness of Christ! What have you to fear? Let your face always wear a smile. Let your eyes sparkle with gladness. Live near your Master. Live in the suburbs of the Celestial City as, by-and-by, when your time has come you shall borrow better wings than angels ever wore and outsoar the cherubim and rise up where your Jesus sits—sit at His right hand, even as He has overcome and has sat down at His Father’s right hand! And all this because the Divine Lord “was made to be sin for us, who knew no sin. That we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”

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

CHRIST—OUR SUBSTITUTE

NO. 310

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, APRIL 15, 1860,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

*“For He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin. That we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”
2 Corinthians 5:21.*

SOME TIME ago an excellent lady sought an interview with me with the object, as she said, of enlisting my sympathy upon the question of “Anti-Capital Punishment.” I heard the excellent reasons she urged against hanging men who had committed murder, and though they did not convince me, I did not seek to answer them. She proposed that when a man committed murder he should be confined for life. My remark was, that a great many men who had been confined half their lives were not a bit the better for it and as for her belief that they would necessarily be brought to repentance, I was afraid it was but a dream.

“Ah,” she said, good soul as she was, “that is because we have been all wrong about punishments. We punish people because we think they deserve to be punished. Now we ought to show them,” said she, “that we love them. That we only punish them to make them better.” “Indeed, Madam,” I said, “I have heard that theory a great many times and I have seen much fine writing upon the matter but I am no believer in it. The design of punishment should be rehabilitation, but the ground of punishment lies in the positive guilt of the offender. I believe that when a man does wrong he ought to be punished for it and that there is a guilt in sin which justly merits punishment.”

“Oh no.” She could not see that. “Sin was a very wrong thing, but punishment was not a proper idea.” She thought that people were treated too cruelly in prison and that they ought to be taught that we love them. If they were treated kindly in prison and tenderly dealt with, they would grow so much better, she was sure. With a view of interpreting her own theory, I said, “I suppose, then, you would give criminals all sorts of indulgences in prison. Some great vagabond who has committed burglary dozens of times—I suppose you would let him sit in an easy chair in the evening before a nice fire and mix him a glass of spirits and water and give him his pipe and make him happy, to show him how much we love him.”

Well, no, she would not give him the spirits, but, still, all the rest would do him good. I thought that was a delightful picture, certainly. It seemed to me to be the most prolific method of cultivating rogues which ingenuity could invent. I imagine that you could grow any number of thieves in that way. For it would be a special means of propagating all manner of roguery and wickedness. These very delightful theories to such a simple mind as mine were the source of much amusement—the idea of appeasing villains and treating their crimes as if they were the tumbles and falls of children—made me laugh heartily.

I fancied I saw the government resigning its functions to these excellent persons and the grand results of their marvelously kind experiments. The sword of the magistrate transformed into a soup spoon and the jail a sweet retreat for injured reputations. Little however, did I think I should live to see this kind of stuff taught in pulpits. I doubt not that from it would come out a divinity which would bring down God's moral government from the solemn aspect in which Scripture reveals it, to a namby-pamby sentimentalism, which adores a Deity destitute of every masculine virtue. But we never know today what may occur tomorrow.

We have lived to see a certain sort of men—thank God they are not Baptists—though I am sorry to say there are a great many Baptists who are beginning to follow in their trail—who seek to teach nowadays that God is a universal Father and that our ideas of His dealing with the impenitent as a Judge and not as a Father, are remnants of antiquated error. Sin, according to these men, is a disorder rather than an offense—an error rather than a crime. Love is the only attribute they can discern and the full-orbed Deity they have not known.

Some of these men push their way very far into the bogs and mire of falsehood, until they inform us that eternal punishment is ridiculed as a dream. In fact, books now appear which teach us that there is no such thing as the vicarious Sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, They use the word Atonement, it is true, but in regard to its meaning, they have removed the ancient landmark. They acknowledge that the Father has shown His great love to poor sinful man by sending His Son, but not that God was inflexibly just in the exhibition of His mercy—not that He punished Christ on the behalf of His people—nor that, indeed, God ever will punish anybody in His wrath, or that there is such a thing as justice apart from discipline.

Even sin and Hell are but old words employed henceforth in a new and altered sense. Those are old-fashioned notions, and we poor souls who go on talking about election and imputed righteousness are belied by our time. Yes, and the gentlemen who bring out books on this subject applaud Mr. Maurice and Professor Scott and the like, but are too cowardly to fol-

low them and boldly propound these sentiments. These are the new men whom God has sent down from Heaven, to tell us that the Apostle Paul was all wrong—that our faith is vain, that we have been quite mistaken—that there was no need for propitiating blood to wash away our sins. They tell us our sins needed discipline, but penal vengeance and righteous wrath are quite out of the question.

When I thus speak, I am free to confess that such ideas are not boldly taught by a certain individual whose volume excites these remarks, but as he puffs the books of gross perverters of the Truth of God, I am compelled to believe that he endorses such theology.

Well, Brethren, I am happy to say that sort of stuff has not gained entrance into this pulpit. I dare say the worms will eat the wood before there will be anything of that sort sounded in this place. And may these bones be picked by vultures and this desk be rent in sunder by lions and may every nerve in this body suffer pangs and tortures, before these lips shall give utterance to any such doctrines or sentiments. We are content to remain among the vulgar souls who believe the old Doctrines of Grace. We are willing still to be behind in the great march of intellect and stand by that unmoving Cross. Which, like the pole star, never advances, because it never stirs—but always abides in its place—the guide of the soul to Heaven. It is the one foundation other than which no man can lay and without building upon which, no man shall ever see the face of God and live.

Thus much have I said upon a matter which just now is exciting controversy. It has been my high privilege to be associated with six of our ablest Brethren in the ministry in a letter of protest against the countenance which a certain newspaper seemed willing to lend to this modern heresy. We trust it may be the means, in the hands of God, of helping to check that downward march—that wandering from which seems by some singular infatuation to have unsettled the minds of some Brethren in our denomination.

Now I come to address you upon the topic which is most continually assailed by those who preach “another Gospel” which is not another—but there are some that trouble you and would pervert the “Gospel of Christ,” namely, the doctrine of the substitution of Christ on our behalf—His actual atonement for our sins—and our positive and actual justification through His sufferings and righteousness.

It seems to me that until language can mean the very reverse of what it says—until by some strange logic God’s Word can be contradicted and can be made to belie itself—the doctrine of substitution can never be rooted out of the words which I have selected for my text, “He has made Him to

be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”

First, then, the sinlessness of the Substitute. Secondly, the reality of the imputation of sin to Him. And thirdly, the glorious reality of the imputation of righteousness to us.

I. First, THE SINLESSNESS OF THE SUBSTITUTE. The doctrine of Holy Scripture is this, that inasmuch as man could not keep God’s Law—having fallen in Adam—Christ came and fulfilled the Law on the behalf of His people. And that inasmuch as man had already broken the Divine Law and incurred the penalty of the wrath of God, Christ came and *suffered* in the place of His elect ones, that so by His enduring the full vials of wrath, they might be emptied out and not a drop might ever fall upon the heads of His blood-bought people.

Now, you will readily perceive that if one is to be a substitute for another before God, either to work out a righteousness or to suffer a penalty, that substitute must himself be free from sin. If he has sin of his own, all that he can suffer will be but the due reward of his own iniquity. If he has *himself* transgressed, he cannot suffer for another, because all his sufferings are already due on his own personal account. On the other hand, it is quite clear that none but a perfect man could ever work out a spotless righteousness for us and keep the Law in our place, for if he has dishonored the Commandment in his thought, there must be a corresponding flaw in his service.

If the warp and woof be speckled, how shall he bring forth the robe of milk-white purity and wrap it about our loins? He must be a spotless one who shall become the representative of his people, either to give them a passive or active righteousness—either to offer a satisfaction as the penalty of their sins, or a righteousness as the fulfillment of God’s demand.

It is satisfactory for us to know and to believe beyond a doubt, that our Lord Jesus was without sin. Of course, in His Divine nature He could not know iniquity. And as for His human nature, it never knew the original taint of depravity. He was of the seed of the woman, but not of the tainted and infected seed of Adam. Overshadowed as was the Virgin by the Holy Spirit, no corruption entered into his nativity. That holy Thing which was born of her was neither conceived in sin nor shaped in iniquity. He was brought into this world immaculate. He was immaculately conceived and immaculately born. In Him that natural black blood which we have inherited from Adam never dwelt.

His heart was upright within Him. His soul was without any bias to evil—His imagination had never been darkened. He had no infatuated mind. There was no tendency whatever in Him but to do that which was good, holy and honorable. And as He did not share in the original deprav-

ity, so He did not share in the imputed sin of Adam which we have inherited—not, I mean, in Himself personally, though He took the consequences of that, as He stood as our representative. The sin of Adam had never passed over the head of the second Adam. All that were in the loins of Adam sinned in him when he touched the fruit.

But Jesus was not in the loins of Adam. Though He might be conceived of as being in the womb of the woman—“a new thing which the Lord created in the earth”—He lay not in Adam when he sinned and consequently no guilt from Adam, either of depravity of nature, or of distance from God, ever fell upon Jesus as the result of anything that Adam did. I mean upon Jesus as considered in Himself though He certainly took the sin of Adam as He was the representative of His people.

Again—as in His nature He was free from the corruption and condemnation of the sin of Adam, so also in His life no sin ever corrupted His way. His eyes never flashed with unhallowed anger. His lips never uttered a treacherous or deceitful word. His heart never harbored an evil imagination. Never did He wander after lust. No covetousness ever so much as glanced into His soul. He was “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.” From the beginning of His life to the end you cannot put your finger even upon a mistake, much less upon a willful error. So perfect was He, that no virtue seems to be greater than any other, or by an opposing quality give a bias to the scale of absolute righteousness.

John is distinguished for his love. Peter for his courage. But Jesus Christ is distinguished for neither one above another. Because He possesses all in such sublime unison, such heavenly harmony, that no one virtue stands out above the rest. He is meek, but He is courageous. He is loving, but He is decided. He is bold as a lion, yet He is quiet and peaceful as a lamb. He was like that fine flour which was offered before God in the burnt offering. A flour without grit, so smooth, that when you rubbed it, it was soft and pure—no particles could be discerned—so was His character fully ground, fully compounded.

There was not one feature in His moral countenance which had undue preponderance above the other. But He was replete in everything that was virtuous and good. Tempted He was, it is true, but sin He never did. The whirlwind came from the wilderness and smote upon the four corners of that house, but it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock. The rains descended, Heaven afflicted Him. The winds blew, the mysterious agency of Hell assailed Him. The floods came, all earth was in arms against Him, but yet He stood firm in the midst of all. Never once did He even seem to bend before the tempest—but buffeting the fury of the blast, bearing all the temptations that could ever happen to man, which summed them-

selves up and consummated their fury on Him—He stood to the end—without a single flaw in His life, or a stain upon His spotless robe.

Let us rejoice, then, in this, my beloved Brothers and Sisters, that we have such a Substitute—One who is fit and proper to stand in our place and to suffer in our place, seeing He has no need to offer a sacrifice for Himself—no need to cry for Himself—“Father, I have sinned”—no need to bend the knee of the penitent and confess His own iniquities, for He is without spot or blemish, the perfect lamb of God’s Passover.

I would have you carefully notice the particular expression of the text, for it struck me as being very beautiful and significant—“who knew no sin.” It does not merely say did none, but knew none. Sin was no acquaintance of His. He was acquainted with *grief*, but no acquaintance of *sin*. He had to walk in the midst of its most frequented haunts, but did not know it. Not that He was ignorant of its nature, or did not know its penalty, but He did not know it. He was a stranger to it, He never gave it the wink or nod of familiar recognition.

Of course He knew what sin was, for He was very God—but with sin He had no communion, no fellowship, no brotherhood. He was a perfect stranger in the presence of sin. He was a foreigner. He was not an inhabitant of that land where sin is acknowledged. He passed through the wilderness of suffering, but into the wilderness of sin he could never go. “He knew no sin.” Mark that expression and treasure it up and when you are thinking of your Substitute and see Him hang bleeding upon the Cross, think that you see written in those lines of blood, written along His blessed body, “He knew no sin.” Mingled with the redness of His blood—that Rose of Sharon—behold the purity of His nature, the Lily of the Valley—“He knew no sin.”

II. Let us pass on to notice the second and most important point; THE ACTUAL SUBSTITUTION OF CHRIST and THE REAL IMPUTATION OF SIN TO HIM. “He made Him to be sin for us.”

Here be careful to observe who transferred the sin. God the Father laid on Jesus the iniquities of us all. Man could not make Christ sin. Man could not transfer his guilt to another. It is not for us to say whether Christ could or could not have made Himself sin for us. But certain it is, He did not take this priesthood upon Himself, but He was called of God, as was Aaron. The Redeemer’s vicarious position is warranted, no, ordained by Divine authority. “He has made Him to be sin for us.”

I must now beg you to notice how very explicit the term is. Some of our expositors will have it that the word here used must mean “sin-offering.” “He made Him to be a sin-offering for us.” I thought it well to look to my Greek Testament to see whether it could be so. Of course we all know that the word here translated “sin,” is very often translated “sin-offering,” but it

is always useful, when you have a disputed passage, to look it through and see whether in this case the word would bear such a meaning. These commentators say it means a sin-offering—well, I will read it—“He has made Him to be a sin-offering for us who knew no sin-offering.” Does not that strike you as being ridiculous? They are precisely the same words—and if it is fair to translate it “sin-offering” in one place, it must, in all reason, be fair to translate it so in the other.

The fact is, while in some passages it may be rendered “sin-offering,” in this passage it cannot be so, because it would be to run counter to all honesty to translate the same word in the same sentence two different ways. No. We must take them as they stand. “He has made Him to be sin for us,” not merely an offering, but *sin* for us.

My predecessor, Dr. Gill, edited the works of Tobias Crisp, but Tobias Crisp went further than Dr. Gill or any of us can approve. For in one place Crisp calls Christ a sinner, though he does not mean that He ever sinned himself. He actually calls Christ a transgressor and justifies himself by that passage, “He was numbered with the transgressors.” Martin Luther is reputed to have broadly said that, although Jesus Christ was sinless, yet He was the greatest sinner that ever lived, because all the sins of His people lay upon Him.

Now, such expressions, I think, to be unguarded, if not profane. Certainly Christian men should take care that they use not language which, by the ignorant and uninstructed, may be translated to mean what they never intended to teach. The fact is, Brethren, that in no sense whatever—take that as I say it—in no sense whatever—can Jesus Christ ever be conceived of as having been guilty. “He knew no sin.” Not only was He not guilty of sinning, but He was not guilty of *our* sins. No *guilt* can possibly be ascribed to a man who has not been guilty. He must have had complicity in the deed itself, or else no guilt can possibly be laid on him.

Jesus Christ stands in the midst of all the Divine thunders and suffers all the punishment, but not a drop of sin ever stained Him. In no sense is He ever a guilty man, but always is He an accepted and a holy One. What, then, is the meaning of that very forcible expression of my text? We must interpret Scriptural modes of expression by the verbiage of the speakers. We know that our Master once said, Himself, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood.” He did not mean that the cup was the covenant. He said, “Take, eat, this is My body”—no one of us conceives that the bread is the literal flesh and blood of Christ. We take that bread as if it were the body but it only represents it.

Now, we are to read a passage like this—according to the analogy of faith Jesus Christ was made by His Father sin for us, that is, He was treated as if He had Himself been sin. He was not sin—He was not sinful.

He was not guilty. But, He was *treated* by His Father, as if He had not only been sinful, but as if He had been *sin itself*. That is a strong expression used here.

Not only has He made Him to be the substitute for sin, but to be *sin*. God looked on Christ as if Christ had been sin. Not as if He had taken up the sins of His people, or as if they were laid on Him, though that were true, but as if He Himself had positively been that noxious—that God-hating—that soul-damning thing, called *sin*. When the Judge of all the earth said, “Where is Sin?” Christ presented Himself. He stood before His Father as if He had been the accumulation of all human guilt of the elect. As if He Himself were that thing which God cannot endure, but which He must drive from His presence forever.

And now see how this making of Jesus to be sin was enacted to the fullest extent. The righteous Lord looked on Christ as being sin and therefore Christ must be taken without the camp. Sin cannot be borne in God’s Zion—cannot be allowed to dwell in God’s Jerusalem. It must be taken without the camp—it is a leprous thing—put it away. Cast out from fellowship, from love, from pity—sin must ever be. Take Him away, take Him away, you crowd! Hurry Him through the streets and bear Him to Calvary. Take Him without the camp—as was the beast which was offered for sin without the camp—so must Christ be, who was made sin for us.

And now, God looks on Him as being sin, and sin must bear punishment. Christ is punished. The most fearful of deaths is exacted at His hands and God has no pity on Him. How could He have pity on sin? God hates it. No tongue can tell, no soul can discern the terrible hatred of God to that which is evil and He treats Christ as if He were sin. Jesus prays—but Heaven shuts out His prayer. He cries for water, but Heaven and earth refuse to wet His lips except with vinegar. He turns His eyes to Heaven, He sees nothing there. How could He? God cannot look on sin and sin can have no claim on God—“My God, My God,” Jesus cries, “Why have You forsaken Me?”

O solemn necessity, how could God do anything with sin but forsake it? How could iniquity have fellowship with God? Shall Divine smiles rest on sin? No, no, it must not be. Therefore is it that He who is made sin must bemoan desertion and terror. God cannot touch Him, cannot dwell with Him, cannot come near Him. He is abhorred, cast away. It has pleased the Father to bruise him. He has put Him to grief. At last He dies. God will not keep Him in life—how could He? Is it not the most necessary thing in the world that sin should be buried? “Bury it out of My sight, hide this corruption,” and lo! Jesus, as if He were sin, is put away out of the sight of God and man as a thing obnoxious.

I do not know whether I have clearly uttered what I wanted to state, but what a grim picture that is, to conceive of sin gathered up into one mass—murder, lust and rapine and adultery and all manner of crime—all piled together in one hideous heap. We ourselves, Brethren, impure though we are, could not bear this—how much less should God with His pure and holy eyes bear with that mass of sin and yet there it is. God looked upon Christ as if He were that mass of sin. He was not sin, but He looked upon Him as made sin for us. He stands in our place, assumes our guilt, takes on Him our iniquity and God treats Him as if He had been sin.

Now, my dear Brothers and Sisters, let us just lift up our hearts with gratitude for a few moments. Here we are tonight. We know that we are guilty, but our sins have all been punished years ago. Before my soul believed in Christ, the punishment of my sins had all been endured. We are not to think that Christ's blood derives its efficacy from our faith. *Fact precedes faith*. Christ has redeemed us—faith discovers this—but it was a fact long before we knew it and an undisputed fact, too.

Today we are secure because of that finished sacrifice. Though still defiled by sin, yet who can lay anything to the charge of the man whose guilt is gone, lifted bodily from off him and put upon Christ? How can any punishment fall on that man who ceases to possess sins, because his sin has eighteen hundred years ago been cast upon Christ and Christ has suffered in his place? Oh, glorious triumph of faith to be able to say, whenever I feel the guilt of sin, whenever conscience pricks me, "Yes. it is true, but my Lord is answerable for it all, for He has taken it all upon Himself and suffered in my place."

How precious when I see my debts, to be able to say, "Yes, but the blood of Christ, God's dear Son, has cleansed me from all sin!" How precious, not only to see my sin dying when I believe, but to know that it was dead, it was gone, it ceased to be, eighteen hundred years ago. All the sins that you and I have ever committed, or ever shall commit, if we are heirs of mercy and children of God, are all dead things—

***"Our Jesus nailed them to His Cross,
And sung the triumph when He rose."***

These cannot rise in judgment to condemn—they have all been slain, shrouded, buried. They are removed from us as far as the east is from the west, because "He has made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin"

III. You see, then, the reality of the imputation of sin to Christ from the amazing doctrine that Christ is made sin for us. But now notice the concluding thought, upon which I must dwell a moment, but it must be very briefly, for two reasons—my time has gone and my strength has gone, too.

"THAT WE MIGHT BE MADE THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN HIM." Now, here, I beg you to notice, that it does not simply say that we might

be made righteous, but “that we might be made *the righteousness* of God in Him.” As if righteousness, that lovely, glorious, God-honoring, God-delighting thing—as if we were actually made *that*. God looks on His people as being abstract righteousness, not only righteous, but righteousness. To be righteous, is as if a man should have a box covered with gold, the box would then be golden. But to be righteousness is to have a box of solid gold. To be a righteous man is to have righteousness cast over me. But to be made *righteousness*, that is to be made solid essential righteousness in the sight of God.

Well now, this is a glorious fact and a most wonderful privilege, that we poor sinners are made “the righteousness of God in Him.” God sees no sin in any one of His people, no iniquity in Jacob when he looks upon them in Christ. In themselves He sees nothing but filth and abomination—in Christ nothing but purity and *righteousness*. Is it not, and must it not ever be to the Christian, one of his most delightful privileges to know that altogether apart from anything that we have ever done, or can do, God looks upon His people as being righteous? No, as being *righteousness*—and that despite all the sins they have ever committed—they are accepted in Him as if they had been Christ, while Christ was punished for them as if *He* had been sin.

Why, when I stand in my own place, I am lost and ruined. My place is the place where Judas stood, the place where the devil lies in everlasting shame. But when I stand in Christ’s place—and I fail to stand where faith has put me till I stand there—when I stand in Christ’s place, the Father’s everlastingly Beloved One, the Father’s Accepted One, Him whom the Father delights to honor—when I stand there, I stand where faith has a right to put me and I am in the most joyous spot that a creature of God can occupy. Oh, Christian, get up, get up into the high mountain and stand where your Savior stands, for that is your place.

Lie not there on the dunghill of fallen humanity—that is not your place. Christ has once taken it on your behalf. “He made Him to be sin for us.” Your place is yonder there, above the starry hosts, where He has raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Him. Not there, at the Day of Judgment, where the wicked shriek for shelter and beg for the hills to cover them. But there, where Jesus sits upon His Throne—*there* is your place, my Soul. He will make you to sit upon His Throne, even as He has overcome and has sat down with His Father upon *His* Throne.

Oh, that I could mount to the heights of this argument tonight—it needs a seraphic preacher to picture the saint in Christ, robed in Christ’s righteousness, wearing Christ’s nature, bearing Christ’s palm of victory, sitting on Christ’s Throne, wearing Christ’s crown. And yet this is our

privilege! He wore my crown of thorns. I wear His crown, the crown of glory. He wore my dress, no, rather, he wore my nakedness when He died upon the Cross—I wear His robes, the royal robes of the King of kings. He bore my shame. I bear His honor. He endured my sufferings to this end that my joy may be full and that His joy may be fulfilled in me. He laid in the grave that I might rise from the dead and that I may dwell in Him. And all this He comes again to give me, to make it sure to me and to all that love His appearing, to show that all His people shall enter into their inheritance.

Now, my Brothers and Sisters, Mr. Maurice, McLeod Campbell and their great admirer, Mr. Brown, may go on with their preaching as long as they like—but they will never make a convert of a man who knows what the vitality of religion is. For he who knows what substitution means, he who knows what it is to stand where Christ stands—will never care to occupy the ground on which Mr. Maurice stands. He who has ever been made to sit together with Christ and once to enjoy the real preciousness of a transfer of Christ's righteousness to him and his sin to Christ—that man has eaten the bread of Heaven and will never renounce it for husks.

No, my Brethren, we could lay down our lives for this Truth of God rather than give it up. No, we cannot by any means turn aside from this glorious stability of faith and for this good reason—there is nothing for us in the doctrine which these men teach. It may suit intellectual gentlefolk, I dare say it does. But it will not suit us. We are poor sinners and nothing at all, and if Christ is not our All in All, there is nothing for us. I have often thought the best answer for all these new ideas is that the true Gospel was always preached to the poor—"The poor have the Gospel preached to them." I am sure that the poor will never learn the Gospel of these new divines, for they cannot make heads or tails of it, nor the rich, either.

After you have read through one of their volumes, you have not the least idea of what the book is about, until you have read it through eight or nine times. And then you begin to think you are a very stupid being for ever having read such inflated heresy, for it sours your temper and makes you feel angry to see the precious Truths of God trod under foot. Some of us must stand out against these attacks on the Truth of God, although we love not controversy. We rejoice in the liberty of our fellow men and would have them proclaim their convictions. But if they touch these precious things, they touch the apple of our eye.

We can allow a thousand opinions in the world, but that which infringes upon the precious doctrine of a covenant salvation, through the imputed righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ—against that we must and will—enter our hearty and solemn protest as long as God spares us. Take away once from us those glorious doctrines and where are we,

Brethren? We may lay down and die for nothing remains that is worth living for. We have come to the valley of the shadow of death when we find these doctrines to be untrue. If these things which I speak to you tonight are not the Truths of Christ, if they are not true, there is no comfort left for any poor man under God's sky and it were better for us never to have been born.

I may say what Jonathan Edwards says at the end of his book, "If any man could disprove the doctrines of the Gospel, he should then sit down and weep to think they were not true, for," says he, "it would be the most dreadful calamity that could happen to the world, to have a glimpse of such truths and then for them to melt away in the thin air of fiction, as having no substantiality in them."

Stand up for the Truth of Christ. I would not have you be bigoted, but I would have you be decided. Do not give countenance to any of this trash and error which is going abroad, but stand firm. Be not turned away from your steadfastness by any pretense at intellectuality and high philosophy, but earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints and hold fast the form of sound words which you have heard of us and have been taught, even as you have read in this sacred Book, which is the way of everlasting life.

Thus, Beloved, without gathering up my strength for the fray, or attempting to analyze the subtleties of those who would pervert the simple Gospel, I speak out my mind and utter the kindling of my heart among you. Little enough will you reckon over whom the Holy Spirit has given me the oversight, what the grievous wolves may design if you keep within the fold. Break not the sacred bounds wherein God has enclosed His Church. He has encircled us in the arms of covenant love. He has united us in indissoluble bonds to the Lord Jesus. He has fortified us with the assurance that the Holy Spirit shall guide us into all truth. God grant that those beyond the pale of visible fellowship with us in this eternal Gospel may see their danger and escape from the fowler's snare!

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CHRIST MADE SIN

NO. 3203

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“For He has made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”
2 Corinthians 5:21.***

I DARESAY I have preached from this text several times in your hearing. [See Sermons #141-142, Volume 3—SUBSTITUTION; #310, Volume 6—CHRIST—OUR SUBSTITUTE; #1124, Volume 19—GOD BESEECHING SINNERS BY HIS MINISTERS and #1910, Volume 32—THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] If my life is spared, I hope to preach from it twice as many more! The Doctrine it teaches, like salt upon the table, must never be left out—or, like bread, which is the staff of life—it is proper at every meal.

See you here the foundation Truth of Christianity, the Rock on which our hopes are built! It is the only hope of a sinner, and the only true joy of the Christian—the great transaction, the great Substitution, the great lifting of sin from the sinner to the sinner’s Surety—the punishment of the Surety instead of the sinner—the pouring out of the vials of wrath which were due to the transgressor, upon the head of his Substitute! It is the most grand transaction which ever took place on earth! It is the most wonderful sight that even Hell ever beheld and the most stupendous marvel that Heaven, itself, ever executed—Jesus Christ, made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him!

You scarcely need that I should explain the words when the sense is so plain. A spotless Savior stands in the place of guilty sinners. God lays upon the spotless Savior, the sin of the guilty, so that He becomes, in the expressive language of the text, *sin*. Then He takes off from the innocent Savior His righteousness and puts that to the account of the once-guilty sinners, so that the sinners become *righteousness*—righteousness of the highest and most Divine source—the *righteousness of God in Christ Jesus*.

Of this transaction I would have you think tonight. Think of it adoringly! Think of it lovingly! Think of it joyfully!

I. When you look at the great Doctrine of Substitution, you especially who are concerned in it and can see your sins laid upon Christ, I want you to LOOK AT IT WITH DEVOUT ADORATION.

Lowly and reverently *adore the Justice of God*. God set His heart upon saving your souls, but He would not be unjust, even to indulge His favorite attribute of Mercy. He had purposed that you should be His—He had

set His love upon you, unworthy as you are, before the foundation of the world! Yet to save you, He would not tarnish His Justice. He had said, "The soul that sins, it shall die," and He would not recall the word because it was not too severe, but simply a just and righteous threat. Sooner than He would tarnish His Justice, He bound His only-begotten Son to the pillar and scourged and bruised Him! Sooner than sin should go unpunished, He put that sin upon Christ and punished Him—oh, how tremendously and with what terrific strokes! Christ can tell you, but probably if He did tell you, you could not understand all that God thinks about sin, for God hates it, loathes it and must and will punish it! And upon His Son He laid a tremendous, incomprehensible weight, till the griefs of the dying Redeemer utterly surpassed all our imagination or comprehension! Adore, then, the Justice of God, and think how you might have had to adore it, not at the foot of the Cross, but in the depths of Hell! O my Soul, if you had had your deserts, you would have been driven from the Presence of God! Instead of looking into those languid eyes which wept for you, you would have had to look into His face whose eyes are as a flame of fire! Instead of hearing Him say, "I have blotted out your sins," you might have heard Him say, "Depart, you cursed one, into everlasting fire." Will you not pay as much reverence to the Justice of God exhibited on the Cross as exhibited in Hell? Let your reverence be deeper! It will not be that of a slave, or even of a servant, but let it be quite as humble. Bow low, bless the Justice of God, marvel at its severity, adore its unlimited holiness, join with seraphs who surely at the foot of the Cross may sing, as well as before the Throne of God, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts."

While you admire the Justice, also admire *the Wisdom of God*. We ought to adore God's Wisdom in everything we see in Creation. The physician with his scalpel should adore the Wisdom of God in the anatomical skill by which the human body is formed and fashioned. The traveler, as he passes through the wonders of Nature, should adore the Wisdom of God in the creation of the world, with its towering mountains and with its unknown depths. Every student of the works of God should account the universe as a temple in which the gorgeous outline does not excel the beauty and the holiness of all its fittings, for in the Temple everything speaks of Jehovah's Glory. But, ah, at the foot of the Cross, Wisdom is concentrated—all its rays are concentrated there as with a magnifying glass. We see God there reconciling contrary attributes as they appear to us. We see God there "glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders," and yet "forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin." He smites as though He were cruel. He forgives as though He were not just. He is as generous in passing by sin as if He were not the Judge of all the earth. He is as severe to punish sin as if He were not the tender Father who can press the prodigal to His bosom. Here you see Love and Justice embrace each other in such a wondrous way that I ask you to imitate the seraphs who now that they see what they once desired to look into, veil their faces with their wings, adoring the only wise God!

Further, Beloved, when you have thus thought of His Justice and of His Wisdom, bow your head again in reverence as you contemplate *the Grace of God*. For what reason did God give His only-begotten Son to bleed instead of us? We were worms of insignificance, we were vipers of iniquity—if He saved us, were we worth the saving? We were such infamous traitors that if He doomed us to the eternal fire, we might have been terrible examples of His Wrath, but Heaven’s Darling bleeds that earth’s traitors may not bleed! Shout it! Shout it in Heaven and publish it in all the golden streets every hour of every glorious day, that such is the Grace of God, “that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

And here, while I ask you to adore, I feel inclined to close the sermon and to bow myself in silence before the Grace of God in Christ Jesus. “Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us!” Behold it in the sweat of blood which stained Gethsemane! Behold it in the scourging which has made the name of Gabbatha a terror! Behold it in “the pains, and groans, and dying strife” of Calvary! Bow, did I say? Prostrate your spirits! Lift up your sweetest music, but let your soul feel the deepest abasement as you see this super abounding Grace of God in the Person of the Only-Begotten of the Father, making Him to be sin for us—He who knew no sin!

When you have thus thought of His Justice, His wisdom and His Grace, like a silver thread running through the whole, I want you once more to adore *His Sovereignty*. What Sovereignty is this, that angels who fell should have no Redeemer, but that man, *insignificant man*, being fallen, should find a Savior in Heaven’s Only-Begotten! See this Sovereignty, too, that this precious blood should come to some of us and not to others! Millions in this world have never heard of it. Tens of thousands who have heard of it, have rejected it. Yes, and in this little section of the world’s population encompassed now within these walls, how many there are who have had that precious blood preached in their hearing and presented to them with loving invitations, only to reject it and despise it? And if you and I have felt the power of it, and can see the blood cleansing us from sin, shall we not admire that discriminating, distinguishing Grace which has made us to differ? But the part of Sovereignty which astonishes me most is that God should have been pleased to make *Him* who knew no sin to be sin for us,” that God should be pleased to ordain salvation by *Christ* as our Substitute!

A great many persons rail at this plan of salvation, but if God has determined it, you and I ought to accept it with delight. “Behold,” says God, “I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious.” The Sovereignty of God has determined that no man can be saved except by the atoning Sacrifice of Christ. If any man would be clean, Jehovah declares that he must wash in the fountain which Jesus filled from His veins. If God should put away sin and accept the sinner, He declares that it should only be through that sinner putting his trust in the Sacrifice offered once and for

all by the Lord Jesus Christ upon the Cross. Admire this Sovereignty and adore it by yielding to it! Cavi! not at it. Down, rebellious will! Hush, you naughty reason that would ask, "Why?" and, "Why is there no other method?" Yield, my heart! "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little." Oh, magnificent love! A way as splendid as the end! A plan as glorious as its design! The design to save is not more resplendent than the method by which men are saved. Justice is magnified, Wisdom extolled, Grace resplendent, and every attribute of God glorified! Oh, let us, at the very mention of a dying Savior, bow down and adore!

II. Not to change the topic, but to vary the line of thought, let us endeavor to LOOK LOVINGLY at Jesus Christ made sin for His people.

Every word here may help our love. That word, "*Him*," may remind us of His Person—"He has made *Him* to be sin for us"—Him—the Son of God, coequal and co-eternal with the Father! Him—the son of Mary, born at Bethlehem—the spotless "Son of Man." "He has made *Him* to be sin." I am not going to enlarge. I only want to bring His blessed Person clearly before your mind. He who trod the waves. He who healed the sick He who had compassion upon the multitudes and fed them. He who always lives to make intercession for us—"He has made *Him* to be sin for us." Oh, love Him, Sinner, and let your heart join in the words—

"His Person fixes all my love."

I delight to have you get a hold of Him as being verily a Person. Do not think of Him as a fiction—never do so! Do not regard Him as a mere historical person who walked the stage of history and now is gone. He is very near to you right now! He is still living! We often sing—

"Crown Him Lord of all."

Well, this is that same Glorious One! "He has made *Him* to be sin for us." Think of Him and let your love flow out towards Him!

Would you further excite your love? *Think of His Character.* He knew no sin—there was none within Him—for He had none of our sinful desires and evil propensities. "Tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." Think of that, and then read, "He has made *Him to be sin for us.*" Do not fritter that away by putting in the word, "offering," and saying "sin-offering." The word stands in apposition—what if I say opposition?—to the word, "righteousness," in the other part of the text. He made Him to be as much sin as He makes us to be righteousness! That is to say He makes Him to be sin by *imputation*, as He makes us to be righteousness by imputation! On Him who was never a sinner—who never could be a sinner—our sin was laid! Consider how His holy soul must have shrunk back from being made sin, and yet, I pray you, do not fritter away the words of the Prophet Isaiah, "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." He bore our transgressions and carried our sins in His own body on the Cross. There was before the bar of Justice an absolute transfer made of guilt from His elect to Himself! There He was made sin for us, though He personally knew no sin, "that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." As you think of His pure, immaculate Na-

ture and perfect life—love Him as you see Him bearing the burden of sins not His own, for which He came to atone!

Will not your love be excited when *you think of the difficulty of this imputation?* “He has made Him to be sin.” None but God could have put sin upon Christ. It is well said that there is no lifting of sin from one person to another. There is no such thing, as far as we are concerned, but things which are impossible with man are possible with God. Do you know what it means for Christ to be made sin? You do not, but you can form some guess of what it involves, for when He was made sin, God treated Him as if He had been a sinner—which He never was and never could be. God left Him as He would have left a sinner, till He cried out, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” God smote Him as He would have smitten a sinner, till His Soul was “exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death.” That which was due from His people for sin, or an equivalent to that, was literally exacted at the hands of Jesus Christ, the Son of God! He was made a debtor for our debts and He paid them. You may guess what it was to be a debtor for us by the smart which it cost to discharge our liabilities. He that is a surety shall smart for it—and Jesus found that proverb true. When Justice came to smite the sinner, it found Him in the sinner’s place and smote Him without relenting, laying to the full the whole weight upon Him which had otherwise crushed all mankind forever into the lowermost Hell! Let us love Jesus as we think that He endured all this.

Beloved in the Lord, there is one more string of your harp I would like to touch, and it is *the thought of what you now are*, which the text speaks of. You are made the righteousness of God in Christ! God sees no sin in you, Believer! He has put your sin, or that which was yours, to the account of Christ—and you are innocent before Him. Moreover, He sees you to be righteous. You are not perfectly righteous—the work of His Spirit in you is incomplete as yet—but He looks upon you, not as you are in yourselves, but as you are in Christ Jesus and you are “accepted in the Beloved.” You are, in His sight, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing! What Jesus did is set to your account. He sees His Son in you and then He loves you as He loves His Son. He has put you into union with His Son and you are now hid with Christ in God. I trust you will endeavor to realize this position of yourselves as made the righteousness of God in Christ, and when you do, surely you will love the Savior who has done all this for you—undeserving, helpless, dying, guilty mortals! Oh, that the Lord Jesus would now send fire into all your souls and make you love Him, for surely, if you have but the sense of what He has done and how He did it, and what it cost Him to do it, and who He is that has done it—and who you were for whom He has done it—you will surely say, “Oh, for a thousand hearts that I may love You as I should, and a thousand tongues that I may praise You as I should!”

III. And now, let us JOYFULLY VIEW THE GLORIOUS FACT OF SUBSTITUTION.

And here I will commence with the observation that *till your sin as a Believer is gone, and till, as a Believer, Christ's righteousness is at present your glorious dress, your salvation is in no sense realized by yourselves*. It is not dependent upon your frames and feelings. Your sins are not put away through your repentance. That repentance becomes to you the token of the pardon of sin, but the true cleansing is found, not in the eyes of the penitent, but in the wounds of Jesus! Your sins were virtually discharged upon the accursed Cross. You stand this day accepted, not for anything you are, or can be, or shall be, but entirely and wholly through the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. We cannot state this Truth of God, it seems to me, too boldly. This is the very Doctrine of the Reformation—Justification by Faith, or rather the basis Doctrine upon which it rests. And I am persuaded the more plainly it is preached, the better, for it is the Gospel of salvation to a lost and ruined world!

Beloved, your case is something similar to this. You are in debt and, according to the old laws, you must be cast into prison. You are brought up before the court. You cannot plead that you are not in debt—you are compelled to stand there and say, "Each one of these charges I must admit. These liabilities I have incurred and I have not a single penny with which to meet them." A friend in court, wealthy and generous, pays the debt. Now, the only reason why you go out of court clear, lies in the payment made by your friend. You do not leave the court because you never incurred the debt—no, you *did* incur the debt. And you must admit that you did not leave the court because you pleaded not guilty, or because you promised never to get into debt again. Not so—all that would not have answered your purpose. Your creditor would still have cast you into prison. You did not leave the court because your character is excellent, or you hope to make it so. The only ground of your liberation from your liabilities is found in the fact that *another person has discharged them for you* and that will not be affected by any act you may have committed or shall commit. You may have felt ill today. You might have labored under 20 diseases, but those diseases will not imprison you, neither will they help to set you free. Your freedom hinges upon the fact that the debt was paid for you by another!

Now, Christian, your hope and comfort hang here! This is the diamond rivet which rivets your salvation firmly! Jesus died for you—and those for whom Jesus died, in the sense in which we now use the language—are and must be saved! Unless Eternal Justice can punish two persons for one offense. Unless Eternal Justice can demand payment twice for the same debt—first from the bleeding Surety, and then from those for whom the Surety stood—they must be clear for whom Jesus died! This is the Gospel which we preach! Oh, happy they who have received it, for it is their joy to know it, sinners though they have been, guilty and ruined—and sinners though they are still—yet, since they have believed, Christ is theirs! Christ took their sins and paid their debts! And God Himself can bring no charge against the man who is justified by Christ! "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is

he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.”

Now, Christian, I want you to come, tonight, and enjoy this. Why, Man, *it ought to make your soul dance for joy within you to think that sin is pardoned and righteousness is imputed to you!* This is an unchanging fact, that Christ has saved you. If it was ever a fact, it is always a fact. If it was ever true, it is always true and always alike true—as true now that you are depressed, as yesterday when you were rejoicing. Jesus’ blood does not change like your poor heart. It does not go up and down in value, like the markets, and fluctuate like your faith. If you are saved, you are saved! If you are resting in the blood, you are as safe, today, as you were yesterday—and you are as safe forever! Remember that this is true of all the saints. It is true to great saints, but equally so to little ones. They all stand under this crimson canopy and are alike protected by its blessed shadow from the beams of Divine Justice. It is true to you now. O Beloved, try to live up to it! Say, “Away, my doubts! Away, my fears! I trust a Savior slain and I am saved! Away, my questions! Away, my carnal reasonings! I hate my sins, but I cannot doubt my Savior! It is true I have not lived as a Christian should live, but I will still cast myself into His arms.” It is not faith to trust God as a saint when you feel you are a saint. Faith is to trust Christ as a sinner—while you are conscious that you are a sinner. To come to Jesus and to think yourselves pure, is a sorry coming to Him—but to come with all your impurity—this is true coming!

I say to you, Sinner. I say to you, Saint. I say to you all this one thing, and I have done. When your souls are at the blackest, seek for nothing but the blood! When your souls are at the darkest, seek no light anywhere but in the Cross! Do not cling to preparations, to humbling, to repentings. All these things are good in their way, but they cannot be a balsam to a wounded conscience! Christ and Christ Crucified is what you need. Do not look within—look without. I say, when you repent, it is a base repentance that will not let you trust Christ, for while repentance should have one eye on sin, it should have the other upon the Cross. While repentance should make you lie low, yet it is not repentance, but unbelief, that makes you doubt the power of Christ to save you! Christ never came to save the righteous—He came to save sinners. I would have you magnify the Grace of God by believing that when your sin stares you most in the face, when you are most conscious of it and it seems to be worse than ever, Christ is the same to you and for you, your glorious Surety and your blessed satisfaction! Still believe and still trust, and do not let go your confidence that Christ is able to save sinners, even the chief, and will save you without help from your doings or your feelings! His own right arm will get Himself the victory and, having trod the winepress of Divine Wrath alone, He will save you solely by the merit of His life and of His death! Oh, for Grace to rest in the Savior and to know the truth of

this text—“He has made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him”!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ROMANS 5:1-10; 2 CORINTHIANS 4; 5.**

Romans 5:1-3. *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this Grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also.* Faith has such wondrous power that it makes us rejoice even in trial! It helps Christians to be glad even in the midst of sorrow.

3. *Knowing that tribulation works patience.* The more trial you have, the more spiritual education you receive. You cannot learn the virtue of patience without tribulation any more than a man can learn to be a sailor if he stays on shore! “Tribulation works patience.”

4. *And patience, experience.* If you bear the trial patiently, it leaves the mark of its engraving tool upon your spirit, and you thus become fashioned into an experienced Christian.

4. *And experience, hope.* What God has once done, He may do again. And as He has shown us so much favor, we may reasonably hope that He will show us some more, and that He who has given us Grace, will give us glory.

5. *And hope makes us not ashamed.* Our hope brings us courage—no longer are we trembling and diffident, but we feel like children do towards a loving father—we are happily, restfully at home with our God. “Hope makes us not ashamed.”

5. *Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us.* [See Sermons #829, Volume 14—THE PERFUMING OF THE HEART and #1904, Volume 32—THE PERSONAL PENTECOST AND THE GLORIOUS HOPE—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] When Mary, the sister of Lazarus, anointed the feet of Jesus with the very costly ointment of spikenard, “the house was filled with the odor” of it—and in a similar fashion the love of God perfumes every part of our nature.

6. *For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.* [See Sermons #1191, Volume 20—FOR WHOM DID CHRIST DIE? and #1345, Volume 23—FOR WHOM IS THE GOSPEL MEANT?—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] What a wonderful statement! “Christ died for the ungodly.” Yet it was no slip of the pen, for the Apostle takes up his own expression and preaches the following little sermon upon it—

7. *For scarcely for a righteous man will one die.* If a man is known to be sternly just, like Aristides, nobody would care enough for him to die for him.

7. *Yet perhaps for a good man some would even dare to die.* For a benevolent man, a true philanthropist, a lover of his race, there are some who might say that they would die for him. Yet the Apostle only says,

“Perhaps for a good man some would even dare to die.” It is not very likely, but it is possible.

8. *But God commends His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.* [See Sermon #104, Volume 2—LOVE’S COMMENDATION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Certainly we were not “good” men, we were not even “just” men, but we are included in this black description, “sinners.” And “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” He died for us as sinners—He did not come to save saints, but to save sinners—and it was for sinners that He died.

9. *Much more, then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.* This is a fine piece of argument and strictly logical. If, when we were sinners, Christ died for us, will He let us be condemned, now that He has washed us in His precious blood? Is it possible that after dying for us, He will let us fall from Grace and perish? That will never be! Notice the same kind of argument again—

10. *For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.* [See Sermon #2587, Volume 44—“MUCH MORE”—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] There is a threefold argument here. If Christ died for us when we were His enemies, will He not save us, now that we are His friends? If He died to reconcile us to God, will He not completely save us, now that this great work has been accomplished? And as we were reconciled to God by Christ’s death, shall we not much more be saved by His life? There are three arguments and each one is sound and conclusive. The Believer in Jesus must be eternally saved! If Christ died for sinners, what will He *not* do for Believers, who are no longer enemies, but are reconciled unto God by the death of His Son?

2 Corinthians 4:1. *Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not.* Stern was the labor of the Apostles, but they felt that their work was so all-important, so Divine, that they must not grow weary of it, though they were, doubtless, often weary in it.

2. *But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.* It is no part of the business of Christ’s ministers to modify the Truth of God which He has entrusted to them, or to put new meanings into it which God never meant, draining away the very life-blood of the Gospel and leaving it dead and useless! But it is both our duty and our privilege to state it just as we find it and to proclaim it in as plain a language as possible so that everybody may understand what the teaching of God really is.

3. *But if our Gospel is hid, it is hid to them that are lost.* [See Sermon #1663, Volume 28—THE TRUE GOSPEL IS NO HIDDEN GOSPEL—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] It was not hidden under fine language and oratorical flourishes on the part of the Apostles—there was a far more terrible barrier in the way of its entrance into the hearts of some who heard it.

4-7. *In whom the god of the world has blinded the mind of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels. There is nothing remarkable in us. We are, in ourselves, poor, frail, fragile creatures, like earthen vessels of no particular value! Yet this we do not regret, for there is a good reason for it—*

7-10. *That the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body, the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life, also, of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. He who wishes for an easy time of it must not become a minister of the Gospel! If he is determined to preach it faithfully, fully, simply, straight from his heart, he will often find himself in such circumstances as the Apostle describes in these verses.*

11. *For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. The Apostles were always to the front where the shots were flying the thickest and with the deadliest aim! There they stood, the officers of the army of Christ—and Paul rejoiced that, for one, he was able thus to make himself to be *nothing* that Christ might be the great All-in-All!*

12. *So, then, death works in us, but life in you. So long as Paul could be the means of the salvation of the souls of men, he did not mind what became of himself. Though it should be death to him, he would count it as nothing so long as it should bring life to them!*

13, 14. *We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed and, therefore, have I spoken; we also believe and, therefore, speak; knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us, also, by Jesus, and shall present us with you. Note the assurance of Apostolic preaching and writing. There is no, "if," here, no hesitation, no doubt. The Apostles knew what they believed and knew why they believed it—and they spoke with conviction—nobody was led into doubt by their hesitancy.*

15, 16. *For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant Grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God. For which cause we faint not. Paul had said before that they did not faint, and now he reiterates it that though his ministry was enough to bear him down, and lay him prostrate in the dust, yet he did not faint.*

16, 18. *But though our outward man perishes, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen:*

for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

2 Corinthians 5:1. *For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.* [See Sermon #1719, Volume 29—THE TENT DISSOLVED AND THE MANSION ENTERED—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Is not this grand courage on the part of the Apostle? With all the world against him and he “always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake,” he looks at the new body, the new house that God is making for him and he reckons that to shuffle off this mortal coil will be no loss to him, since when he loses the tent in which he lives, here, he will go to “a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

2-4. *For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from Heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed—*We are not impatient to enter the disembodied state—

4-6. *But clothed upon that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now He that has worked us for the same thing is God, who also has given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident.* Note the ground of the Apostle’s confidence. He is quite sure that, inasmuch as Christ rose from the dead, so all His followers must. And though they die in the Lord’s service, yet they shall not be losers thereby, but they shall the more speedily ascend to their reward! “We are always confident”—

6-9. *Knowing that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (for we walk by faith, not by sight): we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Therefore we labor, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him.* [See Sermons #413, Volume 7—TO DIE OR NOT TO DIE! and #1303, Volume 22—THE BELIEVER IN THE BODY AND OUT OF THE BODY—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] To be well-pleasing to God everywhere, in everything that we do, should be the one aim of a Christian, whether he is in the body or out of the body.

10-13. *For we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he has done, whether it be good or bad, knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust, also, are made manifest in your consciences. For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that you may have something to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart. For whether we are beside ourselves.* And men said that these Apostles had gone out of their minds. Festus said to Paul, “you are beside yourself, much learning does make you mad.” So Paul says, “Whether we are beside ourselves”—

13. *It is to God: or whether we are sober, it is for your cause.* “In either case, we have but one objective and that is to glorify God through your salvation.”

14-15. *For the love of Christ constrains us; because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them, and rose again.* The life of the saved man must never be lived for himself! He is false to his profession if it is so. He must henceforth live as earnestly for God as, aforesaid in his unregeneracy, he lived for himself, for he now has a new life which is not his own to do with it as he pleases, but it belongs entirely to Him who purchased it with His own most precious blood.

16. *Therefore, from now on, we regard no man after the flesh. Even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer.* We do not see Christ with our natural eyes. We do not hear His voice with our natural ears. He is now to us a spiritual Person who communicates with our spirit through His own ever-blessed Spirit.

17. *Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.* There could not be a greater change than that which is worked by regeneration! It is a new creation, the passing away of the old, and the making of all things new. [See Sermons #881, Volume 15—THE BELIEVER A NEW CREATURE and #1328, Volume 22—CHRIST THE MAKER OF ALL THINGS NEW—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

18-21. *And all things are of God who has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and has committed unto us the Word of reconciliation. Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead be you reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.*

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

THE DAY OF SALVATION

NO. 1394

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 13, 1878,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Behold, now is the day of salvation.”
2 Corinthians 6:2.***

NONE can change the outward features of a day. The kings of the earth cannot command for themselves bright days nor inflict upon their enemies days of tempest. It belongs to a higher than they to command the morning and cause the daystar to know its place. It is little they can do in reference to the light, the sun, the clouds or the rain. They cannot bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades nor loose the bands of Orion. Still, rulers and governors and kings have accomplished much in shaping the social character of the days of their subjects. Sometimes, like the king of Nineveh, they have proclaimed days of fasting and their subjects have been clothed in sackcloth. On other occasions they have exercised the prerogative to ordain days of feasting, as Ahasuerus did at the palace of Shushan, when for 180 days, “He showed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honor of his excellent majesty,” by filling the capital with feasting.

Kings of the older stamp were more able to affect the days of their people than they are now. In former times, when men had less wit and more faith in the fable of divine right than they have now, despots could cause a thick darkness over all the land, even darkness that might be felt. They made war according to their own fancy or frenzy—and what is that but moral midnight? What does war mean but crime, suffering, death, poverty? Is it not usually the sum of all villainies? Everything that is evil either marches with it or follows in its train! The very thought of war for our beloved country darkens our heavens. Alas, with what a light heart have despots drawn the sword and sought to wade through slaughter to imaginary glory, shutting the gates of Mercy on mankind that they might seize a province or avenge a jest.

Kings can also brighten men's days when they have a mind to be quiet—they make peace and then the nations bask in the sun and earth covers her battlefields with verdure. Peace gives the poor world respite to bind up her gaping wounds and remedy a little of the mischief of the bloody fight. Hard labor and stern self-denial are not grudged by the suffering peasants if they may but have breathing time and the land may enjoy her Sabbaths. But why should such toil and suffering have been demanded? Simply because kings quarrel and their subjects must die to end the strife!

Princes have also, on occasion, exercised their prerogative by proclaiming days of amnesty and oblivion—a long rebellion has been crushed out and there has been no fear of its return—and so the monarch has thought

it best to refrain from undue severity and overlook the evil which he has subdued. Accordingly, he proclaims that the past shall be blotted out if, by a certain time, rebellious ones will surrender, yield up their arms and promise loyalty. Such days are calm and clear and bring light to despairing rebels who saw no end but the gallows tree. Thus, for humiliation or rejoicing, for war, for peace, or for pardon, monarchs can set their seal upon a day and mark it with their signature in history.

If earthly monarchs can somewhat affect the days of men, what, then, can be done by the King of kings? The Creator of day and night can surely order all our lights and shades! The Ancient of Days is He who can give us “mornings without clouds” or make the day dark with gloom! How often has He made the sun of prosperity to gladden us and how suddenly has He shrouded us beneath the thick clouds of adversity! Our days are in His hands and He is Lord of all! You and I, looking back, may well bow before the power and majesty of the Eternal who has such infinite power over us that none of us can stop His hand nor say unto Him, “What are *you* doing?”

The Lord has had His days of vengeance—are they not written in the book of the wars of the Lord? How terrible was the hour when He opened the sluices of the firmament that the rain might descend in torrents and bade the fountains of the great deep rise to meet the descending floods! How dreadful were the 40 days wherein the floods above the firmament, in tumultuous mirth, leaped downward to embrace their brethren of the ocean till the whole earth was covered with one all-devouring deluge and sea monsters whelped and stabled in the palaces of kings! That was the decree of Justice and the day of vengeance of our God.

Such days have been at other times, as, for instance, when He poured Hell out of Heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah! When He overthrew Pharaoh and all his host in the midst of the Red Sea. And when His sword stayed not from blood till Hivite and Perizzite and all the Canaanites fell before the hand of Joshua because the iniquity of the people was full and the hour of execution had arrived. Those were the “*dies irae*,” and there is another far more terrible yet to come, when Heaven and earth shall flee away before the face of Him that shall sit upon the Great White Throne. Blessed be God, we are not, at this time, living under the rod of vengeance, but our text tells us that “now is the day of salvation”!

When it is a day of vengeance, the Lord does His strange but necessary work thoroughly, for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, says the Lord.” The Prophet said of Him, “The Lord revenges and is furious.” Well did Miriam sing, “The Lord is a man of war, Jehovah is His name.” But when He puts on the silken robes of mercy and proclaims with a silver trumpet the day of salvation, “blessed are the people that know the joyful sound.” I trust that we are among that happy company and have heard with the inner ear the note of Divine Grace! At any rate, the Lord has set a period of salvation, even from the Sacrifice of our Lord Jesus to this present hour. The day of salvation has not been suspended—it lasts on and it shall last till the Lord shall descend from Heaven with a shout—then shall come the judgment and strict Justice shall sit upon the throne.

The Apostle, when he was writing this very wonderful sentence, dreaded lest men should not avail themselves of its great Truth. Read the first verse of the chapter—"We then, as workers together with Him, beseech you, also, that you receive not the Grace of God in vain." The day of salvation is a great favor from God and it would be a fearful thing if we should live in it and miss its privilege! Dear Hearers, it is only of Divine favor that we enjoy this day of amnesty, oblivion and forgiveness and, therefore, we beseech you not to let its golden hours pass over you in vain! This is the great anxiety of my heart at this time in addressing you. I have great fear lest some of you should live in the day of salvation and yet die without being saved!

I fear some of you should live in the midst of light with blinded eyes, should dwell with deaf ears where the silver trumpet sounds and so the Kingdom of God should come very near to you and yet you should not enter it. It will be sad, indeed, if you should see strangers from afar brought into the Kingdom of Heaven and yourselves, who live on its borders, should be utterly thrust out! May the Holy Spirit bless the words which shall now be spoken so that the evil which we fear may not come upon you, but that you may receive this Grace or favor of God to your eternal good! That you may not receive this Grace in vain I shall try, first, to show the grand reason for this day of salvation. Secondly, I shall speak of the glorious day itself. And thirdly, for a minute or two I shall dwell upon the dark shade which may close that day if the Spirit does not lead us into salvation.

I. First, then, THE GRAND REASON FOR THIS DAY—"Now is the day of salvation." Will you kindly read the context in order to understand why there is a present day of salvation? I will take you a little away from the text to the 20th verse of the preceding chapter and ask you to bear in mind that the division into chapters is purely arbitrary and we need take no notice of it whatever. The Apostle says, "Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be you reconciled to God. For He has made Him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

Here, then, is the secret of the whole matter. This day is the day of salvation because, "He has made Him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." There could have been no day of salvation if a Savior had not appeared! And if that Savior had not become our Substitute and Surety, salvation would have been denied us by the stern voice of Justice. But now Christ has come into the world and died for sin—and because He has finished all the works which He undertook, the Lord our God proclaims for us the day of salvation. Notice that, according to the context, this is the day of salvation because we may now be reconciled to God.

"We pray you in Christ's stead, be you reconciled to God." The Lord would not set His ministers to pray men to be reconciled to Him if peace were out of the question. He would not send us upon an impossible errand! God is already reconciled to every sinner who has an interest in the blood of Jesus. Towards those the Lord is full of peace. Nothing is needed

to reconcile God to the believing man. The great thing that is required is to bring men to believe in Jesus Christ that they may be reconciled to God! The feud between you and God, poor prodigal child, need not be continued! You quarreled with your Father and you went into the far country. And now you have spent your substance, but your Father sends you this message, "Be reconciled. Come home, a loving reception awaits you. Return at once."

Because Jesus has died, the partition wall is broken down—the great gulf between a holy God and unholy man is bridged by the atoning blood! You may be reconciled. There is no reason why the terrible quarrel should continue and, therefore, because reconciliation is possible, it is a day of salvation! As long as a man remains an enemy to God he cannot, of course, be saved, for enmity to God is the very essence of his ruin and the sting of his condemnation. While a man lives in enmity to God he is and must be under the power of an evil spirit which curses him! Therefore reconciliation to God is absolutely necessary to the enjoyment of salvation. I repeat, because reconciliation is possible, this day of salvation has come!

Next, lest anyone should exclaim, "But how is it and why is it that so great a gift is conferred? I cannot understand it and therefore I am plunged in doubt"—the plain statement of the 21st verse explains it all—"He has made Him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us." Here is the grand doctrine of Substitution! Oh Soul, if you believe in Christ Jesus you shall be saved because He stood in your place! He took your sin and the Lord made *Him* to be sin on your account and exacted at His hand satisfaction for your iniquity! He bruised Him and put Him to grief so that He was made a curse for us and bore in our place the wrath of Heaven. Now, therefore, the righteous God will not, cannot, need to vindicate His Law a second time! If He has made the Lord Jesus to be sin for us, then He need not visit us for sin nor punish the same offense a second time. No, it would be injustice to lay sin once upon the Substitute and afterwards upon the sinner—therefore well may there be a day of salvation proclaimed since Christ has finished transgression and made an end of sin!

To help us to understand Mercy's great expedient, still better, the Holy Spirit tells us that the Divine design in Christ Jesus is to make us the "righteousness of God" in Christ. Wonderful expression! I shall not attempt to enter into its fullness, but I will content myself with saying that the two expressions of the verse set forth the *imputation* of *sin* to Christ and of *righteousness* to us—the substitution of Christ in our place and the standing of our souls in Christ's place—in terms so forcible that he must be determined not to believe the doctrine who does not see it in the words before us.

Our Lord is not merely made a Sin Offering, but He is made SIN—and we are not merely made righteous in Christ, but we are made RIGHT-EOUSNESS, itself—yes, and the righteousness of *God*, too—which is the very highest conceivable righteousness! I never wish to strain expressions, nor push them one inch beyond their proper meaning, but I think it is difficult to do here, since the language is so very forcible and explicit. If the

doctrine which I have explained were intended to be taught, I do not see how it could be more clearly stated.

Now, Soul, if you desire salvation, see how God can give it to you! As He takes your sin and lays it upon Christ, so He takes Christ's righteousness and lays it upon you! He looks at you as if you were as righteous as His Son who represents you! He treats you as if you had been obedient to all His Laws. He looks upon the model Man, Christ Jesus, the perfect humanity, and He sees in Christ all His people and treats them accordingly. He looks upon His people as if they, themselves, had magnified the Law and made it honorable by a sinless life. Wondrous doctrine, this, and he that believes it shall find rest in his soul! And it is because of it that we are authorized to come forth this day and declare the day of salvation! The guilt of the believing sinner is put away, for Christ has carried it—and now righteousness belongs to the sinner, for God imputes it to him without works—therefore this is the day of salvation!

Still keeping to the context and illustrating the grand reason for the day of salvation in another way—will you kindly read the verse, itself, which contains our text? “ ‘For He says, I have heard you in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I helped you.’ Behold, now is the accepted time. Behold, now is the day of salvation.” It is a quotation! Paul says, “He says.” Where does God say that? We have no difficulty in discovering—it is in the 49th of Isaiah, which passage should be carefully read by you and heartily pondered. I wish to call your special attention to it as opening up the glorious reason for the famous proclamation of which we are preaching.

That chapter, from the 6th to the 12th verse eminently applies to the Messiah, that is, to our Lord Jesus Christ. Of whom else could the Prophet have spoken as in the 7th verse, “Thus says the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and His Holy One, to Him whom man despises, to Him whom the nation abhors, to the Servant of rulers”? Who is this but our Lord as He stood before Herod and Pilate? To this very day He is abhorred of the Jews—they mention Him ordinarily by the name of, “the Crucified,” and to them that term is the embodiment of the utmost scorn! We glory in that word, but to them it is the essence of contempt. “He is despised and rejected of men; a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief.”

We are sure that Isaiah spoke concerning Him, the Crucified, whom we adore! And our next enquiry is, what did he say of Him? Read the 5th and 6th verses: “And now, says the Lord who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, to bring Jacob again to Him, though Israel is not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and My God shall be My strength. And He said, It is a light thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give You for a light to the Gentiles, that You may be My salvation unto the ends of the earth.”

Beloved, are you not glad to hear these words? If you are not curious to hear me, but eager to hear my Master's Truth of God, your heart will be rejoiced at this blessed news—that Christ has come to be the salvation of the Gentiles! We were out in the cold. We were the younger branch of the

family and the heir despised us! We had not yet come into our portion—we were left in darkness and in sin! But now our turn has come and we are favored. From the day when Jesus said, “Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature,” our privileges began! From the day when Paul said, “Seeing you put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles,” ours has been a day of favor and the portion which once belonged only to the seed of Abraham we have obtained! Only we have obtained it to a far larger extent and we see more clearly its deep spiritual meaning and wealth of blessing!

What was veiled under types and shadows is evidently set forth before our eyes. Beloved, tell it all over the world that today salvation has come to the Gentiles and especially to the dwellers in the islands! How remarkable it is that islands are so often alluded to in the Scriptures and that they receive the Gospel so much more readily than any other parts of the world. As for the ends of the earth, surely we are intended by that term, for our forefathers dwelt where Phoenicians made distant and dangerous journeys to find tin and other metals—and our land was thought to be upon creation’s verge, inhabited by a barbarous people of uncouth tongue and yet to us, even to us, has the Gospel come, and now—

**“The British islands are the Lord’s,
Here Abraham’s God is known
While powers and princes, shields and swords,
Submit before His Throne.”**

Jehovah, the God of the whole earth is our God at this day! In this let us exult, for it proves that to the Gentiles the day of salvation has come!

Further, Isaiah goes on to say in the 8th verse, “Thus says the Lord, In an acceptable time have I heard You.” Mark this well. God saves us because He heard the Lord Jesus! There is the secret of all the answers of Divine Grace to the prayers of penitents! He says, “I have heard You in an accepted time: behold, now is the day of salvation.” In the lonely watches of the night our great Intercessor prayed for His own. He lived a life of supplication and He prayed not in vain, for He once said to the Father, “I know that You hear Me always,” and indeed it was always so. His prayers may be said to have reached their highest point when He offered the marvelous intercession recorded in John 17 and followed it up by His strong cries and tears in the Garden when He poured out His soul in agony, where, while prostrate among the olives He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground.

Mysterious was that bloody sweat! Oh you precious drops, you fell not by chance! What did you write on the soil of Gethsemane in crimson hieroglyphs? You wrote upon the earth the reversal of the *curse* which fell upon the ground and the ending of the day of wrath in the day of salvation! That sacred sweat bedewed a garden which henceforth yields the oil of joy, by which Believers may anoint their faces with gladness! Jesus was heard in that He feared and, therefore, to the chief of sinners it is a Gospel of good cheer! “In an acceptable time have I heard You.” Is it not wonderful that Jesus made intercession for transgressors in the Garden who as yet had not learned to pray for themselves?

I trust that among those who hear me there are persons unconverted as yet who, nevertheless, are special objects of the Redeemer's intercession and who shall find salvation because their great Substitute was heard on their account. We were all heard when our Great High Priest was heard! The Father's answer to Him was an answer of peace to all His people. It is added, "In the day of salvation have I helped You." Help came to the Man, Christ Jesus, in His hour of agony. The Father helped Him and there appeared unto Him an angel strengthening Him. How must that angel have marveled as he saw the face of the Incarnate God red with a sweat of blood! The whole scene is beyond conception—the prostrate Savior in agonizing pangs utters strong cries and is helped of His God—

***"His earnest prayer, His deepening groans,
Were heard before angelic thrones!
Amazement wrapped the sky—
'Go, strengthen Christ!' The Father said!
The astonished seraph bowed his head,
And left the realms on high."***

The angel came to *strengthen* our Champion, not to join in the fight. None could share the conflict. Jesus must tread the winepress alone. But the angel was empowered to communicate strength to the Manhood of Christ and he did so. Then it was that being helped in His hour of need, our Master took the appointed cup full of woe and drank it to its utmost dregs and said, "It is finished!" 'Twas then that by one dreadful draught He pledged the Justice of God and gave this day of salvation to the sons of men! You see, then, that our present day of privilege has come to us through the Lord's hearing and helping our Daysman and Redeemer.

But, Beloved, salvation comes to us, also, because according to the 8th verse it is written, "I will preserve You, and give You for a Covenant of the people, to establish the earth." Jesus is now God's Covenant with man and that Covenant is one of peace and favor. The Lord says to each believing man, "Your sins will I remember no more. A new heart also will I give you, and a right spirit will I put within you. You shall be Mine. I will sanctify you and glorify you with My Son. Behold, in token of My faithfulness I have given My Son to be the Seal, the Surety, and the sum of My Covenant. Behold, I have given Him for a Covenant to the people, a Leader and Commander for the people." Brothers and Sisters, you are not under the Covenant of Moses today—you are under the Covenant of Jesus! You are not under Law, but under Grace! And because of this, *today* is the day of salvation!

I cannot at this time enlarge upon the other blessed verses which make up the 49th of Isaiah, but let me say it is because Christ is now anointed to give liberty to all captives and say to them, "Go forth." It is because He brings the darkened ones out of death-shade and says, "show yourselves," that, therefore, this is a day of salvation. And, furthermore, when we are delivered from bondage and darkness, then, because Christ is a Shepherd and leads His flock. And because He makes them to feed in the ways and finds pasture for them in high places. Because He protects them from hunger and thirst and gives them springs of water to drink of—it is because of all this that *now* is the day of salvation!

I will not further enlarge, but only say as I now preach the day of salvation, as I have tried to do with the utmost boldness and fullness, if any of you enquire, "How is it? How is it? Why is Grace so free at this day?" I shall tell you that the cause is quite as marvelous as the fact—that the day of salvation is as surprising as salvation itself—and that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who has done and is doing it all, is the most wonderful of all! In His eyes I see the stars which can shine away the midnight of despair! In His hands I see the majestic might which can break the fetters of Satanic bondage! And in His face I see the sacred guidance which shall bring the sacramental host of His elect safely Home, in unbroken ranks, to the land of the tearless eyes!

II. Now, kindly leave Isaiah and turn back to the text. Under the second head we have to speak upon THE GLORIOUS DAY ITSELF, for the day of salvation is rich with blessing. First, I would commend that day because of its fourfold excellence. Read again the verse in which our text stands. Although the words must be regarded as spoken, in the first place, to our Lord, the best expositors say that they are also addressed to His Church in Him. The word came to Him as the Head and Representative of His people and so to His chosen as one with Him.

So then, Beloved, in this day of salvation our prayer will be heard—"I have heard You in a time accepted." Dear Hearer, if you will sincerely pray in the name of Jesus, you will be heard! Are you very guilty? Ask for mercy and you will be heard. "I have heard You in an accepted time." Have you condemned yourself? Have you written your own death warrant? Are you bowed down with a sense of guilt? Pray and pray, and pray again! Oh, Brothers and Sisters, pray, I beseech you! If you are between the jaws of Hell, still pray, for now is the day of salvation—and it is a day in which he that asks, receives, he that seeks, finds and to him that knocks it shall be opened!

Secondly, we are further told that this day help will be given. What does it say? "In the day of salvation have I helped You." Are you helpless, are you hopeless? This is a day in which God will come to your relief! Do you need strength to break the chains of habit? Do you need power, even, to repent? Do you need help to feel your helplessness? Do you need anything and everything? "Behold," He says, "in the day of salvation have I helped You." He will help you, only ask Him, only trust Him. When there was a great straitness of business in the Manchester district during the American war, and many were out of work and starving, many instances occurred in which persons were found near to death's door, "clamming" as they called it, or dying of starvation.

When they were kindly visited and asked why they did not apply for relief, they answered that they could not ask. British *independence*, as we call it. And a very noble spirit it is within proper bounds! It was strong within them and many a man said, "I could not bring myself to ask." I admire that spirit between man and man, but I do not admire it when it touches the matter of the soul and lies between a poor worthless sinner and the great and ever-blessed God! Do not be proud and say, "I cannot bring myself to ask," for behold, your prayer will be answered now and

whatever help you require will be freely given you! Does not that one fact show that we live in the day of salvation?

And then it is added, "Behold, now is the accepted time," so that the third blessing is that coming sinners will be accepted. If you will come to God, He will not reject you, whoever you may be! However poor your repentance and weak your faith, it is a gracious time and the Lord will freely accept your sincere desires for His Son's sake. Does not this fact encourage you to come? The door of Mercy is open and no man can shut it! The Lord Jesus has never yet rejected a coming sinner and He never will, for it is written, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." It is a season of acceptance, not of rejection—come and partake in the blessing!

And then the fourth excellence is that it is a time of salvation, of which we will speak at greater length. You need saving? Be glad, then, that it is salvation's own day. All that can be needed to secure the salvation of a sinner has been fully prepared by Christ and is now freely presented in the preaching of the Word of God to every soul that is willing to receive it. Jesus was born to save! He died to save! And He lives to save! Now, let me point out that this ought to be peculiarly pleasant news to those who are heavily laden with guilt. I have known the day when, if I had heard such words as these I try to speak, I think I should have leaped at them at once as a hungry dog does at a bone!

Sinners, this is the day of salvation, not a day of justice! Come and confess your sin—you shall not be accused, condemned and punished—but freely forgiven! It is a day in which you may mourn to think you have sinned, but need not despair nor indulge a single unbelieving thought, for that would be unsuitable to the time which is a day of good tidings. From now till the day when you shall pass out of this mortal state it is one long and blessed day of Divine Grace! There was a week of creation and the Lord God performed great wonders of creating power and put not forth His left hand to destroy—so now there is a day of salvation and all around, angels of love are hovering, still singing—"Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, goodwill towards men."

God is saving all that come to Him by Jesus Christ. Everything proclaims salvation! The air is full of gentle voices. In fact, your very existence, continued by long-suffering, is a message of Grace. Your being found in a house of prayer this morning has an eye towards your being saved! Your eager attention gives me hope it shall be so. Shall it not be accomplished *now* by your believing in Jesus? The fountain to wash your guilt away is filled! The "best robe" to cover you is prepared! The finger ring of everlasting love is ready to be put on your finger and the shoes of gladness and of peace are waiting you. Oh, poor Soul, today I have nothing to preach but salvation—salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ! "Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel," said our Lord Jesus. And that Gospel is salvation, *free* salvation to the sons of men!

The Truth of our text should also be very encouraging to those who are fighting against inward sin. I know some who can trust Christ for pardon, but their chief difficulty is how they can be made holy. I greatly delight in seekers in whom this is the main thought—not so much to escape pun-

ishment as to avoid *future* sin. Well, if you are fighting against evil in the name of Jesus Christ, do not be discouraged—you will master it because it is the day of salvation and it is written, “They shall call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.” Do I address a drunk? Has the intoxicating cup a strange fascination for you and have you gone back to drinking, after having often loathed yourself for it?

You need not be a slave to it any longer, for this is the day of salvation from that sin! By faith in Christ you shall be delivered out of that deadly snare! Or have you been tempted to some other gross iniquity which holds you spellbound? Does a certain vice fix its serpent eyes upon you and enchant you till you can no longer restrain yourself? Rejoice, then, for this is the day of salvation from sin! Neither saint nor sinner need sit down under the power of *any* sin, for in Christ Jesus’ name we can overcome the power of evil. Do not excuse yourselves by talking of besetting sins—you must thrust away *all* sin—you must overcome temptation, for if any sin shall totally vanquish you, you will be lost forever since it is only to “him that overcomes” that the crown is given.

How, then, can you overcome? Why, only by the power of Christ, who bids us this day lay hold upon salvation from sin! Come to Him and trust Him—and He will destroy the works of the devil within you. While this is very encouraging to penitents and to those who are fighting with sin, it should be equally cheering to tried Believers. Beloved, are you in deep trouble just now? Is your spirit overwhelmed within you? Be of good cheer, for this is the day of salvation! It is not a time for saints to die in—it is not a day in which the enemy shall triumph over Believers—it is for us the day of salvation! Be glad, then, O you who are assailed by the enemy. Though your foe may put his foot upon your neck, yet he cannot crush your life out, but you may boldly cry, “Rejoice not over me, O my enemy: when I fall, I shall arise again!” It is the day in which Believers must be saved!

Did not Christian, in “Pilgrim’s Progress,” find it so from the very day in which he left the City of Destruction to the time when he passed through the river and said, “I feel the bottom, and it is good”? He had days of conflict, days of weariness and days of deep distress of mind—but all along he was saved—saved from the lions, saved from Giant Despair, from the flatterer’s net and saved from the last river with its chill floods. We also live in the day of salvation. “Ah,” said a Popish bishop once to one of our martyrs, “You are a heretic and you will be damned.” “My lord,” said the heroic man, “there I am at a pass with you. I may be burned, but I never shall be damned.” “Why so?” said his adversary. The man replied by quoting that passage in the old translation, “There is therefore now no damnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.”

Who shall condemn those for whom Christ has died? It is the day of salvation, not of accusation! It is the day of victory, not of defeat, not of captivity, much less the day of destruction to the true people of God! Let us, then, as is most right, hang out the streamers of joy and with glad music set our souls in fit trim to keep the feast of salvation! And do you

not think this Truth of God should encourage all who are at work to win souls for Jesus? Brothers, if I had my pick of days, I should like to go forth and preach the Gospel when it was a day of salvation, wouldn't you? One likes to go down the river with the tide—and if you can have a fair wind, as well, it is grand sailing! But surely, now, whenever you seek souls you have wind and tide with you, for it is the day of salvation! *God* is saving men! It is *His* daily business and His crowning glory and He has set His heart on it!

Just as I remarked that Ahasuerus ordained a season of feasting and banqueted the people and there is no doubt that they did feast at a royal rate, so when the infinite Jehovah proclaims a day of salvation the people shall be saved and there shall be no question about it! Thousands upon thousands of erring ones shall repent and believe and so shall be saved to the glory of His Grace. Do not tell me that London is very wicked—I know it is. But the Lord has many people in this city and He will redeem them from all iniquity. Our rural population may also be, in many places, perishing in gross darkness, but “the Lord knows them that are His.” He has jewels in yonder cottages and He will make them to be His own. His chosen are hidden away in the dark mines of iniquity, but He will find out His gold and purify it. His everlasting purpose shall not fail and His infinite pity shall not be stopped!

Glory be to His blessed name! He will accomplish all His purposes, for this is the day of salvation and His people shall be called to Him by some means, by any means, by every means! They shall be brought up out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay. And they shall know that the Lord saves not by might, nor by power, but by His Spirit! I think I have worked out this point sufficiently. “Now is the day of salvation.” I wonder whether anybody misunderstands me? Dear Friends, you know we commonly call this year, 1878, a year of Divine Grace. We are quite right, for it is so. We say Anno Domini, the year of our Lord, and so it is—it is Jesus Christ's year!

Any time between the first of January and the last of December in which you seek Him, He will be found of you. Suppose you try it now? There cannot be a better hour! Here, where many have found Him, consecrate that seat on which you sit. Dear Brothers and Sisters, may the Holy Spirit help you to do so by now saying, “I would be reconciled to You, my God, by the great Mediator. I would accept this salvation which you have freely set before me.” I pray you do so!

III. To some of you I have spoken these many years, getting, now, into the 25th year, and shall I speak in vain? Our last word was to be something about A DARK CLOUD WHICH MAY DARKEN THE CLOSE OF THIS DAY OF SALVATION. I pray it may not, yet I fear it. My dread is lest you receive this great favor in vain, lest you live in this day of salvation and yet are lost. That will be for me a calamity, for I shall lose my labor and more—there will be your mother's tears all lost, your father's prayers all lost—and your Sunday school teacher's earnest instructions all lost and other ministers' frequent invitations all gone for nothing!

May it not be so, for that is unprofitable for you as well as for us. You will have lost all those Sabbaths, all those Bible readings, all those pricks of conscience. I know some of you are very attentive hearers and yet you have not found Grace in this day of salvation. Salvation is all round you, yet you have it not! You have wasted golden opportunities. Ah, there will come a day when you will wish for another Sabbath but it will be denied you! Your last sermon shall have been heard and your last warning shall have been received. Do not lose, I pray you, the privileges you enjoy of being born in a Christian land, of having an open Bible and of listening to an earnest ministry! Do not let those who never enjoyed such privileges have, in the eternal world, the advantage over you!

Do not let Sodom and Gomorrah and Tyre and Sidon have to tell you that it is more tolerable for them in Hell than for you! The Lord Jesus assures us that it will be so if you have been hearers of the Gospel and lived in the day of salvation and refused this Divine Grace. The text says it is a day—and a day comes to an end! These are not words of mine, but the words of Scripture. Again, He limits a certain day, saying in David, “Today if you will hear His voice.” Do you not see that the day of salvation, though it has lasted 1,800 years and more, is still a *day* and will surely end? The opportunity of mercy will not last forever—let none deceive you as to that matter! The hope of Divine Grace will end with the day of Divine Grace. Let not the smooth-tongued ministers of the devil who enter the pulpits of Christ now-a-days delude you as to any vain hope that another day of Grace will come!

I have no such flattering message to speak to you, but I speak as this Book teaches. If you let this day of salvation pass and if you glide into another world unsaved, you are lost forever. I know no more, but I know that this Bible so declares it. “These shall go away into everlasting punishment and the righteous into life eternal.” Do not indulge vain dreams! If the Lord speaks of a day, be sure that He has limited the day—and if He declares this to be the day of salvation, you are not authorized to expect that another such period will ever come. “If He that despised Moses’ Law died without mercy under two or three witnesses” (listen to that!)—“of how much sorer punishment, suppose you, shall he be thought worthy, who has trod under foot the Son of God?”

Oh, yield to the Lord Jesus! Accept His salvation and trust Him at once! I pray you, in Christ’s place, be reconciled to God. Amen.

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

NOW

NO. 603

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 4, 1864,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“For He says, I have heard You in a time accepted and in the day of salvation have I succored You: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”
2 Corinthians 6:2.***

WE frequently hear the question discussed as to which are the best times. Some are perpetually singing the praises of the “good old times,” though, if one reads the pages of history it does not appear that the old times deserve any very special praise—unless oppression, ignorance, persecution and abundant suffering deserve to be the theme of song! It is the common habit of the fathers, with tears in their eyes, to say, “The former days were better than these.” But we have the wisdom of Solomon on our side when we tell them they do not enquire wisely concerning this. “Do not say, Why were the former days better than these? For you do not enquire wisely concerning this” (Eccl. 7:10).

There are others who are always boasting of the present eventful period. There was none like it—this is the era of invention and of progress, the age of liberty and of light—when slavery must cast away her fetters and superstition must hide herself among her congenial associates—the moles and bats. But I cannot perceive that this century is so much the age of gold as to need very enthusiastic praises. Its greatest virtues are counterbalanced by greater sins. And the progress which has been made towards liberty has scarcely kept pace with its advance towards licentiousness—the barriers have been broken down, it is true—but in some places the bulwarks have fallen, too.

Many there are with bright eyes looking forward to the future and their declaration is that the “good time is coming,” if we but “wait a little longer”—if we will but look ahead, till this beast shall have been slain, that vial shall have been poured out and the other seal shall have been broken—*then* it is that we shall arrive at halcyon times! We agree with these watchful waiters—the age of gold is yet to come. The Advent is the world’s best and brightest hope, insomuch that every lover of his kind may importunately cry out, “Come quickly! Yes, come quickly, Lord Jesus!”

But there is one thought which should not leave us when talking about times and seasons, namely, that now, now, just now, this present flying moment—that second which is being recorded by the ticking of yonder clock—is the only time which we have to work with! I can do nothing with the days that are past. I can do nothing with the days future—though I

reach out towards them—I cannot improve them. The past and present are fields far beyond the reach of my culture. I can neither plow nor sow the future, nor can I prune and correct the past. For practical purposes, the only time I have is that which is just now passing.

Did I say I had it? While I said I had it, it is gone like the meteor which dashes adown the sky, or the eagle which flies afar, or the swift ships which disappear beyond the horizon! Time present is the only time I may ever have. Before any future shall have become present, I may be merged in eternity. As far as I know, this day may be the end of my life's career and when yonder sun sinks to his rest, I may sink to my rest also, so far as time is concerned. If there is more time allotted to me, yet it will never come to me in any other guise and form than as time *present*. I call it future now, but when I get, say, to 1866, or 1880, it will be just like these moments—it will be to me present *then*—and consequently, for practical purposes, however much we may speculate upon the past or the future, the present moment is the only time we have, may have, or ever can have!

And it becomes important that all our thoughts should be centered upon it if we would make our calling and election sure. Our text directs us to that solemn employment and it does so by a very telling argument. You perceive that our text is a quotation. How ought we to value the Old Testament! If inspired men of God, who spoke by the Holy Spirit quoted the Old Testament, how valuable must its bejeweled sentences be! The Apostle here quotes from the forty-ninth chapter of Isaiah, the eighth verse. In that passage the Lord God is speaking to the Messiah, speaking to our Lord Jesus Christ and He says to Him, “In an acceptable time have I heard You and in a day of salvation have I helped You.”

The first part, then, of this verse is a quotation from Isaiah. The second part of the verse is Paul's commentary upon the passage—“Behold, now is the accepted time.” He takes his text from the Old Testament, but he gives us a New Testament sermon upon it. Let us try, if we can, to catch the Apostle's meaning. When Paul was reading in Isaiah, he perceived that the Lord Jehovah had expressly said to him, “Whom man despises, to Him whom the nation abhors (and who is this but the Lord Jesus?) in an acceptable time have I heard You.”

Jesus' sighs and tears and bloody sweat in the garden of Gethsemane did not fall unheeded. Like the blood of Abel, they cried from the ground and were heard acceptably above. An answer was given—this was plainly proved by the descent of the angel to strengthen the Savior. So the prophetic words add, “In a time accepted and in the day of salvation have I succored You.” The Apostle infers from this that inasmuch as God has accepted Christ, the representative of His people, He has thereby ushered in an era of acceptance. Acceptance given to the Savior is, in the Apostle's view, acceptance given to sinners.

Inasmuch as Christ is heard—He prayed not for Himself, but for us—there is, therefore, an accepted time for us begun and commenced from the day when Christ went up to the tree, stretched His hands to the nails, bowed His head to death and said, “It is finished.” Paraphrase the text

thus—"I have heard Jesus, the Surety, in an acceptable time. In the day of salvation have I succored Him, the mighty Savior. And therefore to you, My people, to you, poor lost and wandering sinners, to you, now is the accepted time. Now is the day of salvation."

If Christ had not died, there had never been a day of salvation. If Christ had not been heard and accepted, an accepted time could never have come to us! But since He, man's representative, has obtained favor in the eyes of God and through His complete work has forever settled that favor upon Himself, there is favor in the heart of God to those whom Christ represented—even to those transgressors for whom He makes intercession!

We shall now take the text, as God may help us, using it, first, to look at the now of *Believers*. Then, at the now of *sinners*. And after this taking wing from the text, we shall offer a few reflections upon now in Heaven. And close with a few solemn thoughts upon now in Hell.

I. First, then, NOW, WITH THE BELIEVER. With him, "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." As a Believer, it is well for the Christian to live in the present. I say, as a Believer, for, alas, there is a temptation to make our faith a thing of the *past*. It is nearly sixteen years since I first looked to the Crucified Redeemer and was lightened and my face was not ashamed. Is there a temptation in me to say the faith which I exercised in Christ in my youthful days has saved me, and therefore I am now in a different position from what I was then and need not feel now as I did at first?

If there is such a temptation, let me shake it off as a man would shake off the deadly sleep of frozen climates. Let me, this morning, feel myself to be still just what I was—a loathsome sinner, undeserving, ill-deserving, Hell-deserving. And what then? Why, let me, then, this morning stand where I stood in the first moment of my salvation—at the foot of the Savior's Cross and look up and view the flowing of His soul-redeeming blood, with Divine assurance, knowing He has made my peace with God. At this moment, my dear Brothers and Sisters, your proper standing is as a sinner saved by blood, looking up to those dear wounds from which your pardon streamed.

Have you had many virtues since then? Has the Grace of God led you on to add to your faith, courage? And to your courage, experience? And to your experience, brotherly kindness? And to brotherly kindness, charity? Yet, for all this, your safest, happiest, holiest, best position is at the foot of the Cross—with none of these things in your hand as the price of your salvation, but looking to your Redeemer—who alone has found a ransom for you. Since the day of your espousals you have committed many sins—dare you look at them without trembling? How often have we grieved our Lord? Our love to Him? Shall we dare call it love? Our faith in Him, how mixed with unbelief! Our zeal, how dashed with selfishness! Our humility, how stained with pride! Our patience, how spoiled with murmuring!

Our every good thing is marred and rendered worthless! What a crop of weeds the soil of our heart has produced! When we look within we see, "The spirit that dwells in us lusts to envy," and every unclean bird seeks a

lodging place in our hearts as in a grove of vanities—what shall we do? Why, come just now with all these sins and wash once more in that fountain which has lost none of its fullness! And feel the power of that precious blood which has not diminished one whit in its efficacy! I know the temptation is to climb to some higher room, but let us be warned by the nonsuccess of the boasting Pharisee and taught by the justification of the humble publican, still to cry, “God be merciful to me a sinner.”

Beware of trying to live before God as a minister. Brother minister, this is poor living—to live officially, to go to the closet or come into God’s House merely as holding a certain profession! Oh, this is starving work! If your tendency is to live as Church members, if not altogether as worldly men, rouse yourselves from it, I pray you, and confess with Paul, “And the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

The proper place of a Christian is never to get one inch beyond this—a monument of Grace—a sinner saved by blood. I live *in* Jesus, *on* Jesus, *for* Jesus, *with* Jesus and hope soon to be perfectly conformed to His likeness. Let me remember that if there could be a moment in which my soul might stand out of Christ—no longer leaning upon Him and no longer covered with His righteousness—that very moment I must be condemned! For there is no condemnation *only* to them that are in Christ Jesus. But there is a terrible condemnation against every soul that is out of Him.

Have you climbed so high that you have towered above the place of the poor thief? Come back again, Brother, for you have climbed to a dangerous altitude and maybe you shall find it a gallows where Haman was hanged and you shall hang with him. Or have you dived so deep in a sense of your own depravity, that you have forgotten to rest on Jesus Christ as able, still, to save you? My Brother, look up from the hole of the pit, for in it there is no water and you will perish there with a grievous famine.

O, then, away with all but Jesus! None but Jesus—this must be our watchword at the gates of death and we must enter Heaven with it! As we have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so must we walk in Him—He must be Alpha and Omega, Beginning and End, Author and Finisher, First and Last. As Believers, let us by God the Holy Spirit’s Grace keep our trust just where it was at first—in Him whom God has set forth to be a Propitiation for our sins!

Take the word “now,” again, and look at the Christian as a professor. Now you are in the House of God, my dear Friends and you remember that you profess to be followers of Christ. Now, therefore, you sing in holy hymns of praise and join in solemn prayers to God as Christians should do in the worship of God. Tomorrow morning, some of you, perhaps, will be at Copenhagen Fields’ Market, some of you at Newgate Market, others of you will be lighting the fire in your master’s house, others seeing to your numerous families, others taking down the shop shutters—will you then remember, dear Friends, that now, where you are then —you are a Christian?

You are not to say, "I was a Christian yesterday," but "now, now I am not a Christian." A customer will come in. The temptation will be, perhaps, to take more than you ought to do. Will you please remember, "Now I am a child of God"? not, "yesterday, when I was listening to Mr. Spurgeon at the Tabernacle," but now! When you are in the market, there will be much to plague and vex you and perhaps you will think, "I cannot enjoy the Presence of God here." Oh, but my dear Brothers and Sisters, "now is the accepted time." Buying sheep, selling bullocks, using the hammer, snipping with the scissors, working at the plow, tending your sheep—now, *now*, NOW is the day of salvation—you are still a Christian—therefore act as a Christian!

But you are much plagued and vexed. Somebody teases you, things go wrong—what could be a better stop to that little rising passion, what could keep the naughty spirit under control better than to remember—"Now, now I am a Christian—even now." A true Christian cannot shake off his character. He is really what he is—he always must be a Christian. I heard the other day of a certain Scotch moderate minister, who being much provoked by a person in his parish, said, "If I were not a minister, I would give you a sound thrashing, Sir." And when he was further irritated, he took off his coat and said, "There is the minister—there he lies." He was then in his shirt sleeves—"There is the minister and I am only So-and-So and will give you your due." And he proceeded at once to give the man a sound thrashing.

It is just possible the man may have deserved it. That is not my point. But if a man can say, "There lies the minister," or, when you take off your coat tonight, if you can say, "There lies the member of the Church." If you, good women, when you take off your gowns, can say, as you hang up your best attire in the wardrobe, "There goes the Christian," then you have no religion at all, you have none whatever worth having! You have the faith of devils that will damn you, but not the faith of Christians that will save you!

It is not a *religious coat*, but a *renewed heart*—I pray you keep this at all times on your mind—"Now I am accepted. Now I am saved—how can such a man as I do such a thing? How, then, can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" Mordecai once wore the king's robe, but he soon took it off because he was not really a king. And thus do many act who wear the garb of religion in the House of God, but cast it off when they go home. When Lord Burleigh, Queen Elizabeth's counselor, reached his home he was so little pleased with the cares of State, that taking off his robe, he threw it down, saying, "Lay there, Lord Chancellor." Ah, how irksome must some men's religion be to them and how cheerfully would they lay aside its restraints! But you who are really the Lord's, will, I trust, feel your faith to be your constant help and your profession your perpetual honor. You will not, you *cannot* sin, because you are born of God.

Suppose a Brother has his pen in his hand and is going to write what we sometimes call a nasty letter—now suppose an angel should whisper in his ear as he is writing, "Now, now, you are one of God's chosen. You

have been washed in the precious blood of Christ and now you profess to be a member of His body, a king and a priest unto God.” Why, I think he would throw the pen away and tear the paper up. Or, just when you are about to proceed to extremities with some poor soul who asks your mercy, if you could remember that you are now, even now, an heir of Heaven, I think you would say, “Lord, give me Grace to act according to my profession and not to stain the character I have assumed.” Let “now” stay upon your mind with regard to your profession and the duty which it brings.

Dear Friends, let me comfort your hearts by the remembrance that now, as a child of God, you are a possessor of present privileges. I do not know what your frame of mind may be this morning. You may have been very much tempted, you may feel, through some sickness of body, anything but cheerful. But if you believe in Christ, remember now you are a son of God and though it does not yet appear what you shall be, yet when He shall appear, you shall be like He, for you shall see Him as He is.

At this very moment, I, a Believer in Christ, am completely pardoned—no spot of sin remains on me if I believe in Jesus. White as the newly-fallen snow is every soul that has been washed in the precious blood. Think of this delightful Truth of God, desponding Christian, and let your countenance be sad no more! Your eye of faith is dim, your evidences are very slender, your graces are at a low ebb, but you are completely forgiven, absolved and acquitted at this moment, if your soul rests upon the Rock of Ages! You are completely justified at this moment, despite your sins. Wearing your Savior’s righteousness, you stand all beautiful in the eyes of God at this very moment—the words of Solomon to the spouse are the words of Christ to you though you are vexed with a thousand cares—“You are all fair My love: there is no spot in you.”

Covered with His righteousness and washed in His blood, even the pure and holy eyes of God can find no fault in you, and, as a consequence of this, you are this moment accepted! “He has not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither has He seen perverseness in Israel.” “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” God does not look upon you with any anger. Though your heart may be struggling and tormented with sin, yet if you are resting upon God’s Son, the love of God is flowing out to you in a stream which never can be stopped. Think of this sweet thought and let your soul be filled with the perfume of it! Loved of God *now*, the object of the almighty affection of the Blessed One are you NOW.

No, more than this, you are not only accepted—you are in union with Christ now. Beloved Believer, can you realize it? You are a member of His body, of His flesh and of His bones! There is a vital union at this instant between you and the Lord of Glory! The life-blood flows from Him, the Head, to you. And at this moment, whether in your worst state of feeling or your best, you are now one with Jesus, by eternal union—ONE! I would to God we realized our present privileges! We are thinking about the Heaven that is to come and forgetting the Heaven below. The first we should do—but the second we should not leave undone. The men of Divine Grace find that the fruits of Paradise hang over the wall and they be-

gin to pluck and eat them before they pass the gates of pearl. Come, Christian, "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Since Jesus is accepted, so you are even now. Live upon your present privileges and be glad!

Remember that wherever there is present privilege there is also a present *duty* to be performed and so I touch a string which I made to sound just now. Since "now is the accepted time" with sinners, now is the accepted time for you to work, O Christian. I know what you intend to do—you have vast plans and machinery. My Brother, I do not care what you mean to do tomorrow, but I do care about what you intend to do *today*. Oh, those daydreams of ours! We are always intending in a year or two's time to be such valorous defenders of the faith, such good soldiers of Christ, such good winners of souls!

My dear Brothers and Sisters, what are you doing *now*? There flies that moment! What does it bear upon its wings? Another drop of the stream of time is passed away—what action of yours is reflected on its crystal surface? Are you doing anything now? "I do not know," says one, "I do not know that I can do anything just now. When the service is broken up, I may get home and then try to do something." I would pray you remember that, "*now* is the accepted time," and therefore seek now to get your heart warm. And when the service is over, think you hear the *now*, and begin to speak to those in the pew, or on the way home talk to any person you may meet with. And then, tomorrow, do not say, "Sunday is over and I cannot do any good on the week-day," but think you hear the clarion sound of this word now!

You have a sister unsaved, pray for her *now*. You have a brother unconverted, write to him if you cannot speak to him and do it now. There is a court, a blind alley, which needs visiting. A dying man who needs instruction—do it now. Do you feel you have a talent? Use it now. You think you will have a better sphere in ten years' time? I pray you get a sphere *now*, for *now* is the day of salvation! I say again, I do not care what you do with your tomorrow. If you will but give God your *now*, your tomorrows will be all right. For duty, then, let the Christian prize the "now."

One more thought. The Christian remembers that now he may die. What is his prospect now? Let him take courage. If his Lord should come now, he has his loins girt about and his lamp well trimmed and he is ready to enter into the supper. He will not be overtaken as by a thief, but his Lord, when He comes, shall find him watching—and should death come before the Advent, then he can say, "Now shall I enter into my rest. Now shall I see the face of my Lord Jesus without a veil to hide Him and I shall be with Him supremely blest."

The glorious Advent or the bliss of Heaven is your prospect now! Not that you will go to Heaven if you die in twenty years' time—but if you die *now*—if the hand of death should take you in the street, or you should feel its numbing influence while you are in the pew! Now the celestial band shall bear you to the sublimities of Glory and introduce you to the Pres-

ence of Him whom you love! Now, Christian, rejoice, now labor, now live at the foot of the Savior's Cross!

II. May the Master give us power on the second point to deal with "NOW" AS IT RESPECTS THE SINNER. The great mischief of most men is that they procrastinate. It is not that they resolve to be damned, but that they resolve to be saved *tomorrow*. It is not that they reject Christ forever, but that they reject Christ today. And truly they might as well reject Him forever, as continue perpetually to reject Him "now."

Sinner, let me put your "now" before you as a man. You must soon pass away and be forgotten, like the flowers that withered in autumn and the insects which flitted through the summer hours. Now, then, is your time to think about eternity and to prepare yourself to meet your God. "See to your business first, James," said a careful father—"get a good trade and after that, look to your religion." There spoke a FOOL who knew not that infinite Wisdom has commanded, "Seek you first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. And all these things shall be added unto you." Would you give God the tail end of your life? Take care lest you have no old age at all! For many candles are blown out as soon as lit.

Would you, as a lamb, be Satan's? And when you are withered and worn out, shall the lean skeleton of tottering weakness be brought and laid upon the altar? Be it not so! Let your flower be plucked in the bud and put into the hand of Jesus. God grant you Grace to seek Him in the days of your youth, for the promise is, "They that seek Me early shall find Me." As a man, I charge you, since there is only a "day of salvation" before the sun goes down and the black night of eternal ruin shall come upon you, lay hold upon the hope that is set before you!

As a sinner, I also address you concerning *this* "now." Now is the day of salvation—you need it now. God is angry with you now. You are condemned already! It is not only the torment of Hell you have to dread, but if you have your senses, you would tremble at your present state. Now without God. Now without hope. Now an alien from the commonwealth of Israel! Now dead in trespasses and sins. Now in danger of the wrath to come! You need a Savior this morning, young man! Young woman, I do not charge you to store up medicine against the maladies of twenty years from now—it is the sickness of *today* of which I would gladly have you cured this very morning! It is not to look after a danger which shall press upon you when you grow old that I exhort you, but *now* you are on the brink of the precipice!

Now, therefore, you need to be saved! And here comes the beauty of my text—as a sinner under the Gospel, I pray you to remember—"Now is the accepted time"! The most of my unconverted hearers do not believe this. I know what you are saying. You say, "I have had a great many thoughts about religion." But why do you not believe in Christ now? "Well," you say, "I will endeavor to think seriously of it." But what will be the result of your thinking? After you have thought ever so much, do you imagine you will *think* yourself into salvation? If the Gospel command were, "Think and be saved," I would cheerfully allow you a month's thinking. But the com-

mand is, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ," and, "Now is the accepted time."

"But, Sir, I do not think such things should be done in a hurry." A hurry? What does David say? "I made haste and delayed not to keep Your commandments." A hurry? When a man is on the edge of damnation and on the borders of the grave? Do not talk of hurry, Sir—when it is a case of life and death. Let us fly swift as a flash of lightning. "Well, but I do not feel prepared." Do you think that disobeying God will make you more prepared? If you have lived a month without believing, you have lived a month in sin! Do you think when you have sinned more, you will be better prepared to obey the command which comes to you, "Believe now in the Lord Jesus Christ"? "Yes, but my heart feels so hard."

Dear Friend, do you think you will be able to soften it between this and next week, or next month, or next year? Is there anything in the Word of God which leads you to believe that you can, in any way, soften your own heart? Is not this a mighty work of Grace? And when the text says, "Now is the accepted time," does not this suppose that even if you have a hard heart, still it is true that NOW is the accepted time? "Well, but," says one, "I do not feel convicted enough." That is to say, dear Friend, you do not think that "now is the accepted time." You think that another time when you get more convicted will be the accepted time.

Here is a quarrel between God and you. He says "Now," you say, "No, no, it cannot be true! When I am more convicted, then will be the time." My dear Friend, are you not altogether mistaken? The likelihoods are that you never will be more convicted than now, if you are brought now to think upon these things. Your heart will certainly grow harder in the course of time—softer, never! I never heard the case of a man whose heart was made softer by delay. "Yes, but I should like to get home and pray." My text does not say it will be the accepted time when you get home and pray. It says, "Now!" And as I find you are "now" in this pew, "now" is the accepted time. If you trust Christ *now*, you will be accepted—if *now* you are enabled to throw yourself simply into the hands of Christ—*now* is the accepted time between God and you.

"Well," says another, "it does seem strange to think that I shall be saved this morning—there must be a little time occupied in it, surely?" The text says, "Now is the accepted time," it does not say, "There is an accepted time lasting through a period of weeks or months in which we pump ourselves up into a state of Grace." No! "Now," in a moment, acceptance is given. "But do you really mean it" says one, "that I, as I am, trusting Christ this morning, without any previous preparation whatever, shall be accepted?" My dear Friend, it is not what *I* mean—it is what the *Scripture* means. "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." The moment a sinner trusts in Christ, he is saved and if you trust Him now, it is the day of salvation to you!

Will you kindly look at that text—just open your Bibles now and look at it—you especially who are unconverted—whether my hearers or readers! It has two fingerposts to point to it—two beholds. "Behold, now is the ac-

cepted time.” Now, stop and look at that. Do you believe it? Say, “Yes,” or “No.” There is another “Behold.” “Behold, now is the day of salvation.” Do you believe *that*? I have asked you to look at the text, because I want you to look in its face and, if you dare, say, “That is a lie”—no, you do not dare say that! Then if you do not dare to say so, away must go, in a single moment, all those excuses which you make about a hard heart, not being convicted enough, praying, reading, preparing, and so on.

Now, just as the clock ticks, not as an event to take place during a quarter of an hour, but in a moment the whole thing is done—“Now is the day of salvation.” And what do you say to this? Does God the Holy Spirit now lead your soul to say, “Gracious Lord, I trust my soul with You now”? Oh, it is all done! Fly up to Heaven, angels! Bear the tidings! Tell the spirits who look down, anxiously watching for the spreading kingdom of the Savior, that another heir of Glory is born, another prodigal has returned to his Father’s house! Now! Now! Now! O God, let conquering Grace get the victory!

How my soul has longed over this text! And now when I get at it, I cannot handle it as I would. But, if I might, I would gladly take some of you by the hand—think that I have your hand now—and I would put this to you! I may never have another opportunity of preaching this text in your ears, for you may be gone before there is another season to hear. “Will you be made whole?” “Can you believe?” “If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believes.” Old Nabal said to David, “There are many servants nowadays that break away every man from his master.” A bad old fellow, but he spoke a good sentence there without knowing it. Are there not some here who will break away from their old master?

Are there not some who would gladly be servants of Christ and no longer servants of Satan? O Souls, if God has made you willing to break with Satan, to lay hold on Christ, this is not a day in which Christ will deny you, for He has expressly said He will accept you now, for, “Now is the accepted time.” But, Sir, I am a harlot steeped up to the throat in vice.” Still, “Now is the accepted time.” Ah, but I have grown gray, Sir. I am seventy or eighty and have lived in sin all these years.” Yes, but. “Now is the accepted time.” Do you believe it or not? “Oh, I have refused the invitation a thousand times over.” Yes, but still, still the abundant Grace of God says, “Now, is the accepted time.” I would to God some of you would decide this very morning, this very morning in your pew where you are now sitting. Now, O Spirit of the living God, waken those whom You have chosen and set apart unto eternal life.

I have not time now to dwell on the other two points. We will merely, therefore, hint at them.

III. Now IN HEAVEN! Can you think of it? NOW in Heaven! They now delight in the society of Christ. They are now blest with communion with all the glorified spirits. They are now resting from their labors, their toils, their sufferings. They are now full of joys, while with their golden harps they sing. They are just now satisfied with the favor and full of the good-

ness of the Lord. They are now knowing what they knew not here, knowing even as they are known.

They are now more than conquerors, waving their palm branches. They are now safely shut in from all fear of danger. They are now perfect, without taint of sin or remnant of corruption. They are now supremely blest. I merely point the finger where my wing cannot carry me and where my eyes cannot see. Such are your friends who have departed. Your wife is there now. Your little infant children are there. Your brother is there, your grandsire is there and we, if we should now die, blessed be the name of God, many of us should know what they know and taste what they enjoy in an instant!

IV. But this is a dreary thought—Now IN HELL! Some of my hearers who listened to me last year and in the years that are past, are now—NOW—in Hell! Now, where no hope can come! Now, where no Gospel shall ever be preached! Now, where they bitterly regret their wasted Sabbaths and despised opportunities! Now, where memory holds a dreadful reign, reminding them of all their sins! Now, “Where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched”—where they gnaw their fire-tormented tongues in vain! Now, where God’s fury is manifested to the full in Tophet’s hideous fire!

Now, where devils, once their tempters, become their tormentors! Now, where sinners who kept jovial company, help to increase the doleful misery of sighs and groans and weeping and gnashing of teeth! Now, accursed of God, accursed forever and ever! And within a moment, that may be the lot of every sinner here! Within the twinkling of an eye, there is not a man or woman among us out of Christ who may not know this. One drop of blood goes wrong—a thousand chances, as we say—may cause it and Hell is your portion.

Every anatomist knows that hundreds of times in an hour, through the internal economy of the human frame, our life is in danger. No, there is not a second in which it is not so. “Great God! On what a feeble thread hang everlasting things!”—

***“Our life contains a thousand springs,
And dies if one is gone.
Strange that a harp of a thousand strings
Should keep in tune so long.”***

While we are in this danger, we are passing on to our doom—

***“We nightly pitch our moving tent
A day’s march nearer home.”***

But where is that home to be with you unconverted ones?

When the express trains first began to run to Scotland there was seen at the station, one evening, a gentleman tall and thin, whose cheek had the consumptive mark upon it. The porters asked him several questions about his luggage, of which there was a good deal. And when he had been asked several times by different persons, another came up and said, “Where are you going, Sir?” Being of short temper and in great haste, he said, “To Hell!” A servant of Christ passed by that moment and heard the

answer. He sought to get in the same carriage and did so, but at the other end of it.

Now this gentleman was talking very freely to different persons upon common topics and the man thought, "I will get a word in if I can." So he joined in the general tenor of the conversation till they alighted at a refreshment station, when, taking the opportunity, he said to the gentleman, "When do you expect to get to the end of your journey?" "Oh," said he, "I am going to cross at such-and-such a town by the boat tonight and hope to get to my journey's end about twelve o'clock tomorrow morning."

The man said, "I think you misunderstand my question. You said when the porter asked you just now where you were going, that you were going to a very different place." "Ah, yes, I remember I did," said the gentleman, "but I am sometimes very hasty." The other said to him, "Was it true? Are you going to Hell? If so, when do you expect to get there?" And he began to talk to him about that sickness which he could see so certainly in his cheeks and warned him that unless he sought another road and fled to Christ, the only Refuge, he would certainly reach that dreadful end.

There are some in this place, who if they were labeled this morning as to where they are going, would have to be directed "to Hell." You know that this is the case! And when will you get to your journey's end? Some here may live another fifty years. I pray God that that question of mine may haunt you and if it is never blessed to you before, may it be then—"When will you yet to your journey's end? When will you arrive in Hell?"

This morning some of you may, in your hearts, say, "I am journeying there, but, by the Grace of God, I have come to a dead halt and not another inch will I go! Lord, make me ready to go to Heaven! Give me Grace now to trust the Savior that I may live." May God bless these feeble words of mine to His glory and your profit. Amen.

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OUR POSITION AND OUR PURPOSE

NO. 3245

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 13, 1911.

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

*“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.
2 Corinthians 7:1.*

KINDLING with strong emotion, constrained by the love of Christ and animated by the fellowship of all spiritual blessing, the Apostle here strikes out an exhortation in which he appeals to the noblest passions of the children of God—to their sense of a Divine lineage and a present endowment—as well as of an exalted destiny for an incentive to purity of character and holiness of life.

I. The first thought which he gives to stir up in us this godly ambition is that THE CHRISTIAN IS POSSESSED OF MOST GLORIOUS PRIVILEGES.

By such words—“Having therefore these promises,” I understand not merely having the promises in reversion, as they belonged to the Jews, but having them in possession, having received them, having obtained them, having gotten them, having grasped them and being seized of them, as lawyers express it, so that the promises are no longer mere promises, but things which we have actually in our possession! I understand, by Paul’s language here, that Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ have a thousand blessed promises in the enjoyment of which they daily live.

The promises he especially refers to are mentioned in the previous Chapter. They appear to be these—first, *Divine indwelling*—“I will dwell in them.” Now, this is no light or inferior privilege of the Christian Church. God has been pleased to make the bodies of His people to be the temples of the Holy Spirit. At this very moment, in every one of you who have put your trust in the Lord Jesus, Deity resides! He dwells not in houses made with hands, that is to say, of man’s building, but yet He dwells within these houses of clay, tabernacling in us—this is a promise which we have actually obtained and are now positively enjoying.

The next is *Divine communion*—“I will dwell in them and walk in them.” As God talked with Abraham, so He does with every Believer. God is not to us afar off, but He is our near and dear Friend, our close acquaintance—

“With Him high converse I maintain;

Bold as He is I dare to be.

If I can tell Him my heart, He will also tell me His heart, for, “the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.” Communion is not merely a matter of promise to you and me, Beloved, but we enjoy it now! I hope it has become habitual with us to abide with Jesus Christ. At morning break, we can frequently say, “When I awake, I am still with You.” And when the sun has gone down and we toss upon the bed, and cannot sleep, in the night watches our soul talks with Him whose eyes never slumber. Blessed is His name, this walking of Christ with His people is one of the daily privileges of the heir of Heaven!

Another promise we have obtained is that of *Divine covenanting*—“and I will be their God and they shall be My people.” God gives Himself to His people to be theirs, and they, by the purchase of His own Son, and by the effectual conquest of the arm of His Grace, are His. He has chosen us for His inheritance and granted to us that He should become our portion and our inheritance. “I will be their God and they shall be My people.” Yes, God has entered into Covenant relations with us, bound Himself by promise and yet further by another immutable thing in which it is impossible for Him to lie, namely, by His oath. There are between us and our God bonds which cannot be snapped, links that can never be severed. Let us thank God, tonight, and summon every faculty of our souls to praise His name. This is one of the blessings which was communicated to some of the past saints, though they did not perfectly understand and comprehend it. Cannot you and I basking in sunlight—light compared with which theirs was but twilight—say that we have obtained this promise?

In addition to all this, we have *Divine adoption*—“I will be a Father unto you and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.” Is not this our blessed state? He loves us with a father’s love, guides us with a father’s care, protects us with a father’s watchfulness, instructs us with a father’s wisdom, bears with us with a father’s patience, longs for us with a father’s longing! We are His tender children and He is our loving Parent. These are not things which are yet to come, like the Second Advent of our Lord in millennia splendor—they are promises which we have obtained! These are things common to the worshippers at that altar of which we have a right to eat, and familiar at that table where we daily feed.

How unspeakably great is the dignity of a Christian if we look at it in the light of these blessings! Before we understood it, how we thirsted after it! We thought, when under conviction of sin, could we dare hope be among God’s people? It would be enough joy for us if we never had an earthly joy beside! I am afraid that since their blessings have become ours, we have not prized them as we should. Perhaps for this cause we are sometimes brought into the prison of doubt and our faith fails us. Just as we do not know the value of health till we are sick, so some of these blessed privileges are not valued by us until we have to walk in the

dark and sigh and cry after unbroken fellowship amidst intermittent snatches of sweet assurance! The Lord give His people to know the value of these heavenly realities that in an abiding sense of their calling and their standing, they may act in a way that is worthy of such great dignities!

Now you perceive that it is necessary for us to get a good clear view of the possessions of the Christian because it is from then Paul draws his argument—"Having therefore these promises." He uses not the logic of the Law, nor the logic of threats, but the logic of love—"we have these mercies; we are so unspeakably favored; we are living in the daily enjoyment of Divine indwelling, Divine communion, Divine covenanting and Divine adoption." Therefore he takes a step in advance and says, "let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit." It is clear, then, that the Doctrines of Grace, fragrant as they are of the privileges of the Christian, do not logically and spontaneously lead to licentiousness as some have profanely said, but they naturally and instinctively, lawfully and reasonably, lead to holiness of life! The fact that we are absolutely and unconditionally saved by God's Grace, that our standing is secure and that we have become the children of God, is not an incentive to careless walking and to unholy living! Such an argument is the weak invention of malice—unworthy, I had almost said, of the Father of Lies—for Satan is known to palm off his offspring with a plausible appearance. But the argument is to gratitude in the heart and obedience in the life. What is obedience to God but holiness? True obedience would be holiness in perfection!

II. We now proceed to an appropriate inference. THE CHRISTIAN, BEING POSSESSED OF GLORIOUS PRIVILEGES, IS THEREFORE LABORING TO BE RID OF OBNOXIOUS EVILS.

"Let us cleanse ourselves," says the Apostle. What then? Do they need cleansing? Are they such originally and by nature that they must be cleansed? God's blood-bought, quickened people—and yet need cleansing? Ah, yes, Brothers and Sisters, every one of them, even the Apostle Paul, himself! Where will you find a warmer spirit, a more zealous heart, a more consecrated man than the Apostle Paul? And yet *he* says, "Let us cleanse ourselves." It surely would not be presumptuous on my part, if there should be in this assembly some venerable saint who has been for many years kept in the faith with unblemished garments and engaged above many in the service of the Master in winning souls—it would not be presumptuous if I should say to him—"Let us cleanse ourselves." I suppose that the nearer we get to Heaven, the more conscious we shall be of our imperfections. The more Light of God we get, the more we discover our own darkness. That which is scarcely accounted sin by some men, will be a grievous defilement to a tender conscience. It is not that we are greater sinners as we grow older, but that we have a finer sensibility of sin and see that to be sin which we winked at in the days of our

ignorance. Yes, we may say to those whose gray hairs show that they are getting near Home, "Let us cleanse ourselves." And if it is thus to the holiest and most eminent of the people of God, much more is it to us, Beloved—common saints, scarcely worthy to be called saints at all—only that we trust we are washed in the precious blood and are saved through the righteousness of Jesus Christ! "Let us cleanse ourselves."

How pointedly the Apostle puts it! I want you to notice the points. The work is *personal*—"Let us cleanse *ourselves*." It were more in accordance with our tastes to cleanse other people and attempt a moral reformation among our neighbors. Oh, it is easy to find other men's faults and to bring the whole force of our mind against them! It is delightful to expose vice and lampoon the follies of the age with a dash of wit to enliven it, or to preach virtue with a little of the sugar of scandal to sweeten a painful tale! It highly gratifies some people when they can find a fault in some highly-respected Brother—they pull him to pieces with about the same zest that might be displayed by a crow or an ape. That is their forte, the strength of their genius—detraction—pulling to pieces what they could not put together and attempting to raise themselves by lowering others! But notice the Apostle says, "Let us cleanse ourselves." Oh, that we would all look at home! Oh, that we did more indoor work in this department! Yes, it is certainly our business to tell our Brother of his faults—this ought we to have done, but certainly we ought not to have left the *other undone*, for that is our first business! "Let us cleanse ourselves." It is all very well to drag the Church of God up to the altar, like some bleeding victim, and there to stab her with the sharpest knife of our criticism, and to say of the modern Church that she is not this, and she is not that. One might rather ask, "How far do I help to make her what she is? If she is degenerate, how far is that degeneracy consequent upon my having fallen from the high standing which I ought to have occupied?" We shall all have contributed our quota to the reform of the Church when we are, ourselves, reformed. There can be no better way of promoting general holiness than by increasing in personal holiness. "Let us cleanse ourselves."

There is activity needed, however, in discharging this personal duty. "Let us cleanse ourselves." It seems to imply that the Christian, while he is acted upon by Divine influence and is cleansed by the Holy Spirit, is also an active agent of his own sanctification. He is not like the vessels and the pots of which the Apostle speaks that were cleansed under the Law—but man is a free agent and the holiness which God works in him is not the pretended holiness of candlesticks and altars, but it is the holiness of a responsible being—a holiness which is not forced upon him, but which his whole soul gives consent to! He purges himself. Depend upon it, you and I do not grow holy by going to sleep. People are not made to grow in Grace as plants grow, of which it is said, "They grow you know not how." The Christian is developed by actively seeking growth, by earnestly striving after holiness and resolutely endeavoring to obtain it.

The utmost of our activity ought to be put forth in cleansing ourselves. Your bad temper—you will not overcome that by saying, “Well, you know I am quick-tempered. I cannot help it.” But you *must* help it! You must if you are a Christian. You have no more right to shake hands with a bad temper than you have to fraternize with the devil! You have got to overcome it and, in the name of God, you must! Or if you happens to be of a slothful disposition, you must not say, “Ah, well, you know I am naturally so.” Yes, what you are *naturally* we know—you are naturally as bad as you can be! But surely that is not the point we are concerned with—what you are to become by Divine Grace. Albeit sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit, yet it is equally true and this we must always bear in mind, that the Holy Spirit makes us active agents in our own sanctification! In the first work of regeneration, doubtless the soul is passive because it is dead—and the dead cannot contribute to their own quickening—but being quickened, He “works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure.” He does not work in us to sleep and to slumber—His good pleasure is answered by us when we are constrained to will and to do! Hence the Apostle’s argument, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that works it in you. He works it in—you work it out. You have to bring out in the outward life what He works in the inner springs of your spiritual being. You are to work it out because He works it in.” Sin is to be driven out of us as the Canaanites were driven out of Canaan by the edge of the sword. Jericho’s walls will come down, but not without being compassed about seven days. Weary may be your march, but march you must if you would conquer! How does the Apostle put it? “We wrestle not against flesh and blood,” and so on, but he represented the conquest as being a conquest gained by wrestling. He declares that he had to fight with his old nature and the conflict was stern. Although saved by Grace, gracious souls make marvelous efforts—efforts beyond their natural powers—to enter into a state of rest from sin.

Nor must we stop short of *universality* in our purgations and cleansing—“Let us cleanse ourselves *from all filthiness*.” Your eyes must not spare, your heart must not pity one pet sin. Most man would gladly be holy if it were not for some *one* sin that they vainly flatter themselves to be harmless. “From all filthiness let us cleanse ourselves.” O Christian, you may very well doubt your right to that name unless all sin is obnoxious to you! You have no right to say, “I will give up pride and vanity,” if you excuse yourself for being covetous. If covetousness is the leak in your vessel, it will sink it quite as surely as pride! If neither pride nor covetousness should be there, yet if you have an unforgiving temper and cannot be heartily reconciled to those who offend you, you shall just as soon prove yourself to be reprobate that way by any other! It must be an interesting sight to be the father of a Jewish family purging out the leaven before the Passover. He lights a candle, you know, and goes to the cupboard under the stairs, or wherever the bread may be kept, and takes

care that every bit is put away. He then has every cupboard unlocked and rummages with a brush in his hand—himself personally—and with a candle, too, to see lest there should be even a crumb of leaven—for he cannot keep the Passover if there is a crumb of leaven in the house! Such should be our earnest searching after all filthiness to get it all out! But search as best we may, I am afraid something will still be left. There will be some beloved idol hidden away somewhere in the recesses of the mind. The heart will cling to its idols in such a style that we cannot find them all with one investigation! There is always the need to search again and again—they must be searched after—and we must, each one, be prepared to say—

***“The dearest idol I have known,
Whate’er that idol may be,
Help me to tear it from Your Throne,
And worship only Thee.”***

The Apostle shows *the thoroughness of this work* by saying, “Let us cleanse ourselves *from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.*” “Filthiness of to flesh.” We may reckon this to include all the outside sins so well known and so easily distinguishable—those degrading sins which even morality condemns. Possibly, Christian, although you may guard yourself against these, yet you will be in danger from the next class, namely, sins of the spirit. These are the mothers of the sins of the flesh! Someone killed a wasp in the early spring and it was said that he had killed a thousand wasps, for that wasp was full of eggs. Sins of the spirit are full of that spawn which, when matured, issues in shameful delinquencies. If you can cleanse yourself from these, you will save yourself from dangers you little reckon—the outward life will be right enough when the inward life is right. I wish we were more concerned about cleansing ourselves from the filthiness of the spirit. I am inclined to think that some men heedlessly pollute their spirits—I mean that they do it willfully. I am not sure that when there is a divorce case in the papers, I have any business to read it—yet a great many very good Christian people who often pray to be delivered from temptation, take pretty good care that they master all its details! When there is a bad story afloat about anybody, I do not know that I should listen to it, yet that curiosity of ours often tempts the devil to tempt us! If there is any ditch-water, or any dirty puddle of water, I do not know that I am bound to get a drink out of it. True, I may be an officer appointed to taste the water, but if I am not, I would rather avoid the noxious sip—it were better to leave it alone. We may all do a great deal of that kind of thing and, nowadays, when the press ventilates everything and it is published all over the world, I am sure that Christians pollute their spirits a great deal more than they have any occasion to do! And besides that, we can turn over a sin in our mind, you know, till we become so accustomed to it that we do not think it to be a sin. I know that some Christians have managed at last to trick their conscience into the idea that what they do is not sin in *them*, but would be sin in other

people—that they are so constituted that they require to be tolerated in this point, and to take a little liberty in the other point so that, generally speaking, although it would be very, very wrong for other people to do the same—they have got a sort of spiritual indulgence such as used to be issued by Rome, and they never doubt that they can sin with impunity! Ah, dear Friends, this will not do! “Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.”

The drift of the argument is this—if God dwells in us, let us make the house clean for so pure a God. What? Indwelling Deity and unclean lusts? Indwelling Godhead and yet a spirit defiled with evil thoughts? God forbid! Let us cry aloud unto the Most High that in this thing we may be cleansed and that the temple may be fit for the habitation of the Master. What? Does God walk in us, and hold communion with us, and shall we let Belial come in? What concord can we have with Christ? Shall we give ourselves up to be the servants of Mammon when God has become our Friend, our Companion? It must not be! Divine indwelling and Divine communion both require from us personal holiness. Has the Lord entered into a Covenant with us that we shall be His people? Than does not this involve a call upon us to live like His people, as becomes godliness? Favored and privileged above other men to be a peculiar people. Separated unto God’s own Self—shall there be nothing peculiar about our lives? Shall we not be zealous for good works?

Divinely adopted into the family of the Most High and made heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ, what need is there of further argument to constrain us to holiness? You see the, “therefore.” It means just this—because we have attained to such choice and special privileges, “therefore”—for this reason, “let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.”

III. The text goes on to DESCRIBE THE CHRISTIAN AS AIMING AT A MOST EXALTED POSITION—“Perfecting holiness.”

There was a bitter discussion, at one time, about the possibility of perfection in the flesh. It was a most unhappy thing that this controversy arose at all. Between Mr. Wesley and Mr. Toplady fierce altercations were carried on. Between Mr. Wesley and Mr. Whitefield I believe the dispute was conducted in a temper honorable to both sides. One admires the Christian love of the two Brothers, who both of them stood to advocate what they believed to be the Truth of God and did maintain, I believe, their own views of Truth in a very proper spirit. But, as the dispute was carried on between Mr. Wesley and Mr. Toplady, I do not think it was creditable to the Christianity of either—they both of them seemed to have lost their temper and to have forgotten that “the wrath of man works not the righteousness of God.” Hence this Doctrine of Christian Perfection never seems to me to have had fair consideration at all. It has been made an arena for controversy then rather a subject for deliberate thought.

“Can a Christian be perfect in this life?” When this question was put to me, the other night, I answered, “No.” “Well, but is not the Christian perfect when he gets to Heaven?” “Yes.” “Well, then, he was perfect when he died, was he not?” I thought he must be—I do not understand any change taking place in the solemn article of death—between the moment of departure from this world and the moment of entrance into Heaven. “Very well!” was the answer, “but he was in the flesh, then, you know.” The question thus turned on being in the flesh—and the answer is obvious. The flesh is inherently sinful and all its carnal desires are at enmity against God. Perfection at present does not aim at regenerating the old nature—such perfection will be effected at the resurrection of the just. But as many as are perfect must control and keep the flesh and its motions completely under dominion. That is our present duty. If the death of the body looses us from sin, the mortification of our members which are upon the earth must be our continual aim till we are delivered from the bondage of corruption. An illustration may explain my meaning. I can imagine a room in your house being perfectly clean, but I cannot imagine it being kept perfectly clean unless the process by which it was first cleansed is frequently repeated. Whether that room is in constant use, or whether it is shut up after a monastic fashion, it will require to be swept and dusted every day or it will not be perfectly clean very long.

I remember hearing a man say that he had lived for six years without having sinned in either thought, or word, or deed. I apprehend that he committed a sin, then, if he never had done so before, in uttering such a proud, boastful speech! It seemed to me that if he had known anything about his own heart, he would not have dared to speak thus! Were it true of me, I think I would be like a man who had diamonds about him and dared not tell anybody, for fear the mention of it should prompt someone to rob him of his treasure! I would keep it all to myself. If such a priceless pearl as perfection can belong to any of the saints—and I were the happy possessor—I would be very jealous of it, lest anyone should know it and seek to deprive me of it! No, no—I cannot believe that the flesh can be perfect, nor, consequently, that a man can be perfect in this flesh! I cannot believe that we shall ever live to see people walking up and down in this world without sin. But I can believe that it is our duty to be perfect, that this Law of God means perfection and that the Law as it is in Christ—for there it is, you know—is binding on the Christian! It is not, as in the hands of Moses, armed with power to justify or to condemn him, for he is not under the Law, but under Grace. But it is binding upon him as it is in the hands of Christ! The Law, as it is in the hands of Christ, is just as glorious, just as perfect, just as complete as when it was in the hands of Moses. Christ did not come to destroy the Law, or to cast it down, but to establish it! And therefore, notwithstanding every point where I fall short of perfection as a creature, I am complete in Christ Jesus. That which God requires of me is that I should be perfect.

That I can understand. And the next thing I should know is that *for such perfection I ought to pray*. I should not like to pray for anything short of that. I should not like, at the Prayer Meeting, to hear any of you say, “Lord, bring us half-way toward perfection.” No, no, no! Our prayer must be, “Lord, put away all my sin—deliver me from it altogether.” And God would not teach you to pray for what He did not mean to give. Your perfection is God’s design, for He has chosen you to be conformed to the image of His Son—and what is that? Surely the image of His Son is perfection! There were no faults in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are to be made like He and as this is the work and design of Grace, then perfection is the center of the target at which God’s Grace is always aiming. All that He works in us is with this great ultimate end and aim—that He may sanctify us wholly—spirit, soul and body, and that He may release us from sin and make us perfect even as our Father who is in Heaven is perfect. Oh, when will it be? When will it be? Why, the very thought of it makes me feel as if I could sing—

**“Oh, happy hour, oh, blest abode,
I shall be near and like my God.”**

What a joy it will be to be just like He—to have no more corruption of the flesh and no more temptations to sin to destroy the soul’s delight and pleasure in her God! May the Lord hasten on the day! “Perfecting holiness.”

Although a young artist, when he starts in his work, dares not hope that he shall come up to Praxiteles in sculpture, or to Apelles in painting, yet were he to set before himself anything short of the highest standard, he would not be likely to attain honor as an academician. When he begins to work, he studies not imperfect pictures, but the most perfect models he can find. He studies Raphael. He wants to see what Michael Angelo could do. “Oh,” says one, “what are you trying to paint? Are you trying to be a Raphael? Will you ever paint like Raphael or Michael Angelo? Never.” What do your sneers and jibes mean? Would you have him go and buy some worthless printing at a pawnshop and copy that? What sort of an artist would he make, then? The only possibility of his being a good artist is his taking perfect models. So with you, Christian, your model has to be the perfect Savior—and this is to be what you are to aim at every day, “perfecting holiness.” And for all you may say, “Ah, I shall never come up to that. Many failures have proved to me that I shall not reach it.” Yet you will do better with that as your ambition than you could have done if you had selected some imperfect model and had said, “Well, if I am as good as that man, that will suit me.” Nothing but perfection must content you! Beloved, press forward towards it and God speed you in the race!

IV. Follow me one step further and observe how THE CHRISTIAN IS PROMPTED BY THE MOST SACRED OF MOTIVES—“Perfecting holiness *in the fear of God.*”

An abiding sense of God's Presence, a perpetual feeling of our obligations to our Creator produces a reverent fear of God—not the slavish, servile fear which brings torment—but the fear which bows the tall archangel in adoration before the Throne of God, the fear which makes the cherub veil his face with his wings while he adores the Lord. Such a constant fear as this is the mainspring of Christian holiness! Not the fear of man, though many people are kept moral by that. Not the fear of some Christian whom you respect, lest he should upbraid you—that fear may be very helpful, in some cases, to keep men from certain sins, but it is a fitter motive for an infant than for a man! No, your great motive is to be the fear of God. Not the fear of the public eye. This is a very marvelous thing. Have you not often noticed that the very thing which the world calls, “bad, shameful, horrible, detestable,” if it does not succeed—would be thought clever, creditable, to be admired if it succeeded? I believe that there have been scores of venturesome traders who have acquired wealth and gained a reputation for brilliant shrewdness by the very means which we see so much and so properly reprobated in certain other large traders nowadays—the only difference being that one man was fortunate enough to jump over the ditch, while the other man jumped in—but both were equally reckless! The world only appreciates success—that is the measure of the world's morality. The true Christian has a higher system of ethics. He perfects holiness in the fear of God—and if he should be successful, and the world should say, “Well done! Well done!”—yet, if he felt he had done a wrong thing or an unholy thing, his conscience would prick him. He would be as uneasy as though everybody pointed the finger of scorn at him! I think he would be as restless as Zacchaeus was until he had made a just disposition of his unholy gains.

I cannot speak to you as I would wish tonight. But ah, were the hour of my departure come, were I allowed but to utter one sentence and then must die, I would say to you members of this Church, “Be holy!” Whatever you are, seek to be holy. And if you will not be holy—if you have a mind to keep your sins—do us the favor to lay down your profession! If you *will* have your sins and go to Hell, you can do it so much better outside the Church than you can inside. I cannot see why you need do Christ the double ill—turn to be His enemy, and yet profess to be His friend. Get out of the Church, you that are hypocrites! What profit can you get? There are no loaves and fishes that I know of to be had here. If you want them, there are some places where you can have them in abundance. There is no particular honor that I know of in being associated with *this* Church—we are generally held in little enough esteem by the world. Why should you come unless you intend to be true followers of the Crucified? Why, why, Deacon, if you love the world, do you pretend to love the Church? Judas, Judas, go sell somebody else! What need do you have to sell Christ and to be a son of perdition? O you who are unholy, you who cheat in business, you who can lie in your daily lives—there is scope enough for you outside of God's Church—why do you need to come with

your filthiness where you are not asked to come, nor wanted? The Word of God calls His saints to come out and be separate from such, but when once they thrust themselves into the Church, what shall we say? We feel like the servants who would gladly root up the tares, but that we must not do. They must both grow together until the harvest! Yet we would not sleep, but be watchful to prevent the enemy sowing more tares among the wheat. Be holy, be holy, be holy! You that are servants, be holy in the family! You that are masters, show holiness among your employees. Mothers and fathers, let your children see your piety! Children, may the Holy Spirit make you to be the holiest of children like the holy Child Jesus! And may it be a point with one and all of us that if we live, we will live unto Christ, so that when we die, we may be found in Him, made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light!

The Lord bless you, dear Friends, for Jesus sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 PETER 1:1-8.**

Verse 1. *Simon Peter, a servant and an Apostle of Jesus Christ.* Peter was pleased to be able to write those words. There was a time when he had thrice denied his Master, but now he is glad to call himself, “a servant of Jesus Christ.” Once he had said, “I know not the Man,” but now he claims that he has been sent out by that glorious Lord to be His Apostle—a sent one—“a servant and an Apostle of Jesus Christ.” Probably he had ringing in his ears at that moment, those blessed words, “Feed My sheep. Feed My lambs.” And he was going to do that work again in this, his second general Epistle.

1. *To them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ.* These Epistles are not written to everybody. Some readers do not seem to remember this fact. This one is written, says the Apostle, “to them that have obtained like precious faith with us.” The faith of the weakest Believer in Jesus is the same kind of faith as that which was found in Simon Peter—who stands among the very first of the worthies in the College of Apostles. “Like precious faith with us.” Only think of it, you whose faith is of a very trembling sort, which might be well described as, “little faith.” Yet yours is “like precious faith” with that of Peter and the rest of the Apostles. The tiniest diamond is as truly a diamond as the Koh-I-Noor, and the smallest faith, if it is really the work of the Spirit of God, is “like precious faith” with that of the Apostles.

2. *Grace and peace be multiplied unto you—*You have some measure of these choice blessings—may you have a great many times as much! When we go to the multiplication table, we not only multiply by two and by three, but we can multiply by a hundred—we can multiply by ten thousand. Oh, that God would thus multiply to us the Grace and the

peace that He has already given us! “Grace and peace be multiplied unto you—

2. *Through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.* The more we know of God, the more grounds and reasons shall we have for enjoying Grace and peace. And the more we know of God and of Jesus, our Lord, the more will our enjoyment of Grace and peace be multiplied.

3. *According as His Divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that has called us to Glory and virtue.* It is through knowing God that we realize that “His Divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness,” for all these things are in Him—and as we know Him, trust Him, love Him and become like He—we also come to possess all these precious things in Him.

4. *Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these you might be partakers of the Divine Nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.* [See Sermon #551, Volume 10—FAITH AND LIFE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] See what is God’s great objective in giving us these “exceeding great and precious promises.” It is that we may become morally and spiritually like Himself—just and true and holy and righteous, even as God Himself is. O Brothers and Sisters, we fall far short of the high example that we find set before us in our gracious God! Nevertheless, we press forward towards the goal, strengthened by God Himself, who, having begun to make us like Himself, will never cease that blessed work until He has fully accomplished it.

5. *And beside this, giving all diligence*—For we cannot expect to go to Heaven asleep. We are not taken there against our wills. It is not our will that accomplishes our salvation, but still, it is not accomplished without our will. “Giving diligence,” yes, but more than that, “giving *all* diligence”—

5, 6. *Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance.* It is ignorance that is intemperate and rash.

6-8. *And to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.* For if these things are in you, and abound, they make you that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. What Christian ever wishes to be barren or unfruitful? Is it not the aspiration of every branch in the true vine to bring forth much fruit?

[The conclusion of this exposition is after Sermon #3248, Volume 57—
GATHERING WITHOUT PLANTING—

Read/download the entire sermon free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

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

SORROW AND SORROW

NO. 2691

**A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 1900.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 31, 1881.**

***“For godly sorrow works repentance to salvation not to be
repented of: but the sorrow of the world works death.”
2 Corinthians 7:10.***

MANY years ago and, indeed, in some measure to a later date, preachers of the Word seemed mainly to dwell upon the inner experience of men. They both preached sermons and wrote books in which they set forth the condition of convinced sinners, describing what they usually felt before they found peace with God. They were very strict in their search for the genuine tokens of true repentance and the internal evidences of regeneration. They preached continually upon the work of the Spirit of God in convincing sinners of their lost condition, but they were not accustomed to say to them so baldly and so boldly as we do now, “Believe, and live.” And the consequence was that a large number of truly awakened persons were kept in bondage and did not come into the liberty wherewith Christ makes Believers free—at least, not so soon as they do nowadays. I believe that under God’s blessing, those experimental preachers were the means of producing very sturdy Christians. They did a great deal of deep plowing with a very sharp plowshare before they began to sow the good Seed of the Kingdom of God. They took care to use the pointed needle of the Law of God to make a way for the silken thread of the Gospel, so that what they did sew was well sewn—and the garments which they made did not tear quite so easily as much of the spiritual raiment does which is made in these days of more showy, but less substantial, labor.

Still, there was this defect about that style of preaching—it led men to look too much within instead of looking away from self to Christ. No matter how faithfully they proclaimed the Grace of God, they preached some sort of preparation for the reception of that Grace and, therefore, sinners often looked to themselves to see whether they had that preparation rather than to the Grace of God which it was most desirable that they should seek. I believe you may say so much about the disease of sin, that instead of leading the sinner in despair to turn his gaze to Christ, as the bitten Israelites looked to the brazen serpent as the only remedy—you may merely make him sit down and study the disease—and look, and look, and look again for the various symptoms you have described. And

though he will be well acquainted with the disease, he will not, in that way, find a cure for it. You may dive as far as you like into the sea, but you will not find any fire there. You may rake as long as you please in the burning fiery furnace, but you will never reach any cooling blocks of ice. You may hunt, for many a day, in the human heart's natural death, but you will not there discover any signs of life. And, within the morgue of man's corruption, you shall never be able to discern any remedy for a sin-sick soul. It was in that particular that the experimental preaching lacked an important element.

But now, times have changed and many of us who are ministers of the Gospel, do very plainly proclaim to sinners the message, "Believe, and live." This plain declaration rings out from almost every part of our land—not yet quite in every place—I would that it were so—but still, there is a large company of Evangelical preachers continually repeating the Apostolic message, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." I am sure that much good must result from this proclamation of the Truth of God, for this is God's ordained way of blessing the souls of men. And yet—and yet—I sometimes fear lest there should be all sowing and no plowing—lest there should be the preaching only of the remedy, with almost an entire ignoring of the disease—and lest the message, "Believe, and live," should take the place of that other great Truth of God, "You must be born again."

It will never do for men to be led to think that they are healed before they know that they are sick unto death, or to imagine that they are clothed before they see themselves to be naked, or to be taught to trust Christ before they are aware that they have anything for which they have need to trust Him! It would be a happy circumstance if, in our preaching, we could have a blending of these two elements so that we could have somewhat of our forefathers' deep experimental teaching and, with it, and growing out of it a plain, unfettered delivery of the Gospel declaration, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved."

"How are the two things to be reconciled?" someone asks. My dear Brother, I have long ago given up trying to reconcile friends who never fell out. These two Truths of God are both taught in Scripture and, therefore, they cannot be at variance with one another. You would be as much puzzled to prove where they differ as I would be to show that they agree. I am confident that they do agree because I find them both in the Book. Therefore, let them both be preached. Somehow, we are constantly coming across Truths that lie side by side, like the metals on which the railway carriages run. If we only preach one of them, it will be like trying to run the train on a single rail. You know that there are often two Truths, if not three, closely connected with one another. I am frequently led to see that there is a trinity of Truths as there is a Trinity in the Godhead—and if they are all preached, in due proportion, they will balance one another and prevent any one Truth of God from being too prominent. Luther, with his free justification by faith, is apt to go too far unless there shall come in Calvin and Zwingli, with their balancing Truths, to set him right. Even Paul's Inspired Words might have been the means of leading

some men astray unless James had also been inspired to write on the practical side of the Truth of God so that Paul's meaning could be the better understood. There is nothing wrong in the teaching of either Paul or James—they are both right—the two together bring out both aspects of Truth.

I am going to preach tonight about sorrow for sin. I hope it has not yet quite gone out of the world. I trust that sorrowful penitence still exists, though I have not heard much about it lately. People seem to jump into faith very quickly nowadays. I do not disapprove of that happy leap, but still, I hope my old friend, Repentance, is not dead! I am desperately in love with repentance—it seems to me to be the twin sister to faith. I do not, myself, understand much about dry-eyed faith—I know that I came to Christ by the way of Weeping-Cross. I did not come to shelter beneath His blood immediately when I heard of it, as I now wish that I had done, but when I did come to Calvary, by faith, it was with great weeping and supplication, confessing my transgressions and desiring to find salvation in Jesus, and in Jesus only.

Now, concerning this sorrow for sin, I want, first, *to remove certain erroneous ideas with regard to it*. Secondly, *to distinguish between the two sorrows mentioned in the text*—the godly sorrow which works repentance to salvation, and the sorrow of the world which works death. And then, thirdly, we will *indulge ourselves in sorrow for sin*. We will finish up with some happy sorrow, that blessed, godly sorrow which is never to be repented of or regretted!

I. First, then, I want to try to REMOVE CERTAIN ERRONEOUS IDEAS WITH REGARD TO SORROW FOR SIN.

Some persons seem to think *that mere sorrow of mind in reference to sin is repentance*, but it is not. Read the text, and you will at once see that it is not. "Godly sorrow works repentance." Therefore, it is not, *itself*, repentance. It is an agent employed in *producing* repentance, but it is not, *itself*, repentance. There is, in the world, a great deal of sorrow on account of sin which is certainly not repentance and never leads to it. Some transgressors are sorry for sin for a time—they are convicted of guilt with a transitory conviction which soon passes away. Many are sorry for sin because of its temporal consequences—and many more because of its *eternal* consequences. They are afraid of Hell. If there were no Hell, they would like to continue to live in sin. They would be delighted if it could be proved that there is no God. Nothing would please them better than to have the Law of the Lord and all its penal consequences abolished. They are as fond of sin as ever they were, but they sorrow because they see that it is bringing them down to the gulf of Perdition. Now, that kind of sorrow is not repentance! A moth may burn its wings in the candle and then, full of pain, fly back to the flame. There is no repentance in the moth, though there is pain—and so, there is no repentance in some men, though there is in them a measure of sorrow on account of their sin. Do not, therefore, make a mistake in this matter, and think that sorrow for sin is, or even necessarily *leads* to, repentance.

Next, do not fall into the other mistake, and imagine *that there can be such a thing as repentance without sorrow for sin*, for there can never be such a thing! I heard a person say, and, as I thought, say very flippantly, that it was a great thing to know the Greek language because, in that way, you found out that repentance “simply meant a change of mind.” The Brother who said that did not appear to me to know much about the *English* language, and I was quite certain that he did not know *alpha* from *beta* in the Greek language—but that is what he said, “it simply meant a change of mind.” Ah, it *does* mean a change of mind, but what a change of mind! In my opinion, such a translation of the Greek as that would not imply that repentance was anything less than it is commonly understood to be, but a far greater thing. It is an entire and total change of mind, a turning of the mind right round, so that it hates what once it loved and loves what once it hated—it forms different judgments from what it always did before—and no longer puts bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter, darkness for light and light for darkness. It judges righteous judgment, for the change of mind is thorough and complete! And therefore I say that there is no repentance that is worth anything which is not accompanied by sorrow for sin.

Just think for a moment. Here is a man who says, “I repent.” But are you really sorry that you sinned? “No,” he replies. Then, my dear Sir, you cannot have truly repented, for a man who has not got so far as repentance is often sorry for having done wrong. When a man is convinced that he has transgressed against God, he ought to be sorry—and if you tell me that there can be such a thing as spiritual repentance and yet no sorrow for having broken the Law of God, I tell you that you do not know what you are talking about! The thing is clearly, on the very face of it, impossible! There must be a deep hatred of the sin that you have committed and even of the *thought* of ever committing that sin again. There must be sincere sorrow that you should have ever transgressed against God and that you should be liable to transgress again. If there is no such sorrow as that in your heart, one of the things which are necessary to a genuine repentance is absent.

I have tried, thus, to correct two mistakes, but there is a third which I must point out to you. There are some persons who seem to think *that we must reach a certain point of wretchedness or else we are not truly penitent*. They imagine that we must grieve up to a certain point of temperature or we cannot be saved. And they watch the convicted sinner to see when he gets near to what they consider to be a sufficient measure of brokenness of heart. But there are different methods of measuring this state of the spirit. I believe that some of our Hyper-Calvinistic brethren rigidly apply a very long measure, indeed, to all cases of this kind. I remember that one young friend, before whom I had set the Gospel very simply, said to me, “But is that all I have to do? Have I only to believe in Christ in order that I may be saved? Why, my father was six months in trouble of soul before he could find the Savior. And part of the time he was so bad that he had to be put in a lunatic asylum.” Yes, that is the kind of notion some people have—that there is a certain amount of

alarm, distress, apprehension and fear which a man has to *feel* before he is up to the mark in this respect. But there is *nothing* at all in the Word of God to support that idea!

I will not waste time by dwelling upon it because it is altogether a baseless supposition. We admit that many who come to Christ have passed through very great terror and agony before doing so, but a large part of their suffering was the work of the devil—not the work of the Spirit of God at all! A great part of it might have been spared if they had not been so ignorant. And a still larger part of it they might never have suffered if they had heard the Gospel preached with greater simplicity and had not been muddled and handled so roughly by some who put their own *experience* into the place of the Savior! After all, we are not saved by any feelings or alarms that we may have. The source of eternal life is yonder, on that Cross, and he who looks there, be he *who* he may or *what* he may, shall find salvation in the glance that spies out the wounded God! Not *our* wounds, but *His* wounds—not *our* griefs, but *His* griefs—not *our* tears, but *His* blood saves us! Away, therefore, forever, with the notion that there is a certain point of grief that has to be reached to qualify us for coming to the Savior!

Then, again, there is another mistake made by many—that *this sorrow for sin only happens once*—as a sort of squall, or a hurricane, or thunderstorm that breaks over a man once, and then he is converted and he talks about that experience all the rest of his life, but he has nothing more to do with it. Why, dear Friends, there is nothing more erroneous than that! For myself, I freely confess that I have a very much greater sorrow for sin, today, than I had when I came to the Savior more than 30 years ago. I hate sin much more intensely, now, than I did when I was under conviction. I am sure I do. There are some things that I did not know to be sin, then, that I do know to be sin, now, and therefore I strive to be rid of them. I have a much keener sense of the vileness of my own heart, now, than I had when first I came to Christ, and I think that many other Believers here will say that it is the same with them. Sorrow for sin is a perpetual rain—a sweet, soft shower which, to a truly gracious man, lasts all his life! He is always sorrowful that he has sinned. He is continually grieved that there should still be any sin remaining in him and he will never leave off grieving till all that sin has gone.

I could almost wish that in Heaven, itself, the Lord would let me mourn that I ever sinned. Good old Rowland Hill used to say that the only thing about Heaven that he did not quite like was that he should leave off repenting there. He supposed that no tear of sorrow for sin could be ever allowed to fall there. It is a sweet thing to be sorrowful for sin, to be sorrowful for impurity, to be sorrowful for anything that made Jesus sorrow—it is not a thing that happens once and then is done with—the godly sorrow of a Believer lasts throughout his life.

I want to also correct another mistake, namely, *that sorrow for sin is a miserable feeling*. The moment the word, “sorrow,” is mentioned, many people suppose that it must necessarily be grief of a bitter kind. Ah, but there is a *sweet* sorrow, a *healthy* sorrow. In honey, there is a sweetness

that cloy after awhile. We may eat too much of it and make ourselves ill. But in repentance there is a bitter sweetness, or a sweet bitterness—which shall I call it?—of which, the more you have, the better it is for you! I can truly say that I hardly know a sweeter joy than to lay my head in my Heavenly Father's bosom and say, "Father, I have sinned, but You have forgiven me and, oh, I do love You!" It is such bliss, whenever you are troubled in heart, to go to God, again, just as you went to Him at the first, as a poor sinner and to say, "Lord, I mourn to think that I should have been what I have been—that I should have fallen so far short even of my own ideal of what I meant to have been. But I know that You love me and the more sure I am of the fact, and the more glad I am because of it, the more grieved I am to think that I do not live as such love as Yours deserves that I should live."

What have you been doing that is wrong, Brother, Sister? Are the consolations of God small with you? Is there any secret sin that is keeping you sad and sorrowful? Shall I help you find out the source of the evil? Have you been neglecting the reading of the Word? Have you been lax in private prayer of late? Have you been getting covetous? As you have grown richer, have you grown tighter in the fist? Have you been getting more worldly? Do you speak less about Christ than you used to and more about vanity? Have you been mixing with bad company? Have you been entangled by a so-called friend who is no help to you, but who really hinders you greatly in spiritual things? Have you been forming some associations that you know Christ does not approve of? Have you been letting things go a little amiss in your business—only a little amiss? Still, you know that things are not straight and that you could not face a thorough examination of your affairs. Have you fallen out with your brother and can you not forgive him? Have you had a quarrel, you two sisters, and will you not love each other? Yet you call yourselves Christians!

So I might go on to mention 50 other things and any one of those things would be quite sufficient to take from you the joy of the Lord and to bring you into a lean state, spiritually. You know that you were once like the land of Egypt during her seven years of plenty, when all went well with you. I pray God that you may not have seven years of famine, as they had in Egypt, for it is amazing how the lean cows will eat up the fat cows, and yet never be any the fatter themselves. One would have thought that if the seven lean beasts ate up the seven fat ones, they would get fat, themselves—but they did not! And you may have a sad time of declension that will eat up all your years of zeal and holy joy, yet those years may not be one whit the better because of the strange feast!

Come, Brother! Come, Sister! You and I cannot afford to live at a distance from Christ! We cannot afford to live in a state of misery. A Christian who is not glad—why, what sort of a Christian is he? I cannot bear to see religion served up with vinegar. No, Brothers and Sisters, it ought to be sweet in itself—so sweet that if you poured a bottle of vinegar in it, you would not make it sour! A Christian ought to be a happy person. He is not true to his colors—he is not true to his Master—he is not true to himself—unless he is happy! Let us have a good drink of the "wines on

the lees, well refined," till we forget our misery and remember it no more in the ecstatic joy and intense delight which the love of Christ and communion with God shall give us again! If you have backslidden, come back this very hour! Confess your sin in backsliding from God, and Christ will soon give you back your old joy and gladness.

It does not spoil your happiness, my Brother or Sister, to confess your sin. The unhappiness is in *not* making the confession. If you are a child and you have done something wrong towards your father, you are unhappy as long as you try to conceal it. You old folks can remember that when you were boys at home and you had been doing wrong, you sometimes said, "I shall not acknowledge it." But all the while that you hardened yourself, you were miserable—you know that you were! You missed your father's good-night kiss and your mother's smile. And although, as long as you stubbornly held out, you thought yourself very brave, yet you were very miserable. But did you not also know what it was, afterwards, to go and say, "Father," or, "Mother, I was very wrong to do what I did and I am truly sorry"? Then, as you received the kiss of full forgiveness, I do not suppose you ever felt more happy than that in all your life! That is the way for God's child always to do. Whenever you have done wrong, go at once to your Heavenly Father with godly sorrow for that sin—and get the sweet kiss of His forgiving love all over again! That is not wretchedness, it is happiness of the highest kind! It is the safest and surest way to maintain communion with God that I know of—unless, indeed, it is true, as some of our friends say, that they live without sinning altogether—about which I will say no more just now.

There are some who also erroneously think *that sorrow for sin must be mixed with unbelief*. They suppose that if a man is sorrowful for sin, he must be afraid that he will be lost, he must fear that his sin can never be forgiven him. Permit me, however, to explain that no such black cloud as that need follow upon the heels of our repentance! The best sorrow for sin is that which never doubts Christ's ability to wash it out—that cries out in grief for having sinned—and yet says, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." It is not right, on the part of your child, if he comes and says, "Father, I have done wrong and I do not believe you will ever forgive me." Why, he is wrong all over, then, is he not? You can see the evil that is in his heart boiling over in such talk as that! But there is no need for it to be so with you, my Brother or Sister! Rather say, "My Father, I have sinned, and I mourn that I have done so, but, at the same time, I not only know that You will forgive, but I know that You have already forgiven me for Christ's sake. I have laid my hands upon the head of the great Sacrifice and Substitute and I know that, ere I was born, in His own Person, He carried my sin away, even as of old the scapegoat carried the sin of Israel into the wilderness, and it is gone forever, for You have said, 'The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found.' Lord, I trust to the substitutionary Sacrifice offered by Your dear Son, and I feel at perfect peace with You. And, for that very reason, I hate sin more than I ever

did, and I grieve more than I ever did in my life, to think I should ever have been guilty of it.”

Thus have I tried to remove a few erroneous ideas out of the way. Yet I fear that they will continue to deceive many as long as the world stands.

II. Now, secondly, I want to help you to **DISTINGUISH BETWEEN THE TWO SORROWS MENTIONED IN THE TEXT.** First, there is a godly sorrow which, “works repentance to salvation not to be repented of.” If you have marginal notes in your Bibles, you will see that in the preceding verse, where we read, “you were made sorry after a godly manner,” in the margin it reads, “you were made sorry according to God.” And that rendering lets a great deal of light into the meaning of our text—“sorrow according to God.”

Now, mark, the true sorrow which we ought to have and which saves men instrumentally, is sorrow on account of sin because it is *sin against God*. That is the very pith of godly sorrow, as penitent David cried, “Against You, You only, have I sinned and done this evil in Your sight.” And as the prodigal said, “Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in your sight.” O my dear Hearers, ask yourselves whether you have sorrowed for sin because it is sin against God—for any hypocrite is sorry for sin which injures himself, or which may damage his reputation among men—but the essential thing is to be sorry because the evil is a wrong done to *God*. You know that men do not generally trouble much about wrong done to God. A crime is usually a wrong done to *man*, so we think it is a horrible thing. But a sin, inasmuch as it is against God, many people do not care at all about that.

If I were to personally address any man or woman in this place, and say, “You are a sinner,” each one would reply, “Yes, that is true.” But if I were to say to a man, “You are a criminal,” he would be ready to knock me down! So, you see, a criminal is one who offends against men and that is, in our view, a very horrible thing. But a sinner being only one who offends against *God*—that is not, according to most people’s notion, anything in particular—so they do not care much about it. Oh, but when a man is really awakened, he sees that the wickedness of the offense is that it is an offense against God! That is the worst part of the offense, as he rightly judges, and he therefore sorrows over it. This is a sorrow which is to be cultivated by us—the mourning over sin because it is committed against God.

Then, notice, that it is also a sorrow which is associated with a believing faith, for a godly sorrow must be one that makes the heart that feels it yield itself to Christ. Yielding itself to Christ, it must believe in Christ, for, if I do not believe in Christ, it is certain that I have not yielded myself to Him. Therefore, the only sorrow for sin that is worth having is that which brings me to yield myself up to the Lord Jesus Christ and to accept God’s mercy in God’s own way. If you have any sort of sorrow for sin which does not lead you to believe in Christ, away with it! Away with it! A repentance that does not repent at the Cross is a repentance which will have to be repented of—true sorrow for sin must be blended with a child-

like submission to God and consequent confidence in Christ—otherwise it is not “godly sorrow.”

“Godly sorrow” is, next, known by its leading to repentance. It “works repentance”—“a change of mind” about everything and especially about sin. A man is so sorry for having done wrong that he now thinks differently of all wrong-doing. He thinks differently of his entire life and his mind is made up, God helping him, to live just the opposite way to that in which he has formerly lived. When sorrow for sin leads to that result, we may be quite sure that it is the work of the Spirit of God and that it is acceptable in His sight.

It also leads on to deliverance from sin, for the text says, “Godly sorrow works repentance to salvation.” Now, what is salvation? Some people think that it means being saved from going down to Hell. That is the *result* of salvation, but salvation means being saved from the power of sin and being saved from the tendency to sin, as well as being saved from the punishment of sin. That is a blessed sorrow which leads us to such a change of mind that the bonds of sin are snapped and we become free men in Christ Jesus, saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation from the bondage and the power of sin and Satan!

That is the kind of sorrow to cultivate, for it leads to perpetual perseverance in the ways of God. Notice that the text says it is a salvation not to be repented of, or, if you like, a repentance not to be repented of. I have known men repent after a fashion, and they have been very sorry for it afterwards. I knew a wild sort of fellow who was brought to his knees at the penitent-form and he did cry away at a fine rate—but you could never get him inside that place again. He was always ashamed of himself, for it was a repentance that needed to be repented of, and he did repent of it. There is many a dog that gets back to his vomit as soon as he can, and there is many a sow that is sorry for being washed, and glad enough to get back to wallow in the mire. But that is not the kind of change that the Apostle mentions here. True godly sorrow is that which leads to repentance never to be repented of, for the man says, “No, I left my sin, and if I wanted to go back to it, I have plenty of opportunity to do so. But I cannot go back to it, I hate it. There,” he says, “I have been tempted over and over again and my feet had well-nigh slipped, but the eternal life within me, kept there by the Spirit of God, has driven me back to Christ! I could not do this great wickedness and sin against God. I have already smarted too much to put my hand again into the fire. I grieved my God too much and brought too much grief upon my own heart, for me to play the fool, again, and once more to go into the pur-*lieus* of iniquity.”

Happy is that man who has had enough of the smart of sin to make it sour and bitter to him all the rest of his days, so that now, with changed heart and renewed spirit, he perseveres in the ways of God, never thinking of going back, but resolved “through floods or flames” to force his way to Heaven, to be, by Divine Grace, master over every sin that assails him! That is the kind of sorrow which I pray that God may work in everyone here who has never yet felt it.

III. Now, to close, let us pray God the Holy Spirit to enable us to INDULGE OURSELVES IN GODLY SORROW FOR SIN.

I will not say anything about the sorrow of the world that works death, but leave that sad subject in order that we may devote this little space that remains to the enjoyment of godly sorrow for sin.

Remember, Beloved, that *it is now all forgiven*. Our sin is all gone. It will never be mentioned against us anymore forever! The depths of the ocean of oblivion have covered the Egyptians of our sins, there is not one of them left. Therefore, “sing you to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously.” The Red Sea waves of the Redeemer’s blood have rolled over all our sins and they sank to the bottom like a stone. “As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.” That is, they are removed to an infinite distance from which they can never be brought back! They are gone—they are all gone, and gone forever!

And now, Beloved, let us ask ourselves—*how could we have sinned against such a forgiving God?* If we had known how readily He would forgive us, surely we could not have offended Him as we have done. Such a God as He is—was there ever any like He? Well might the Prophet Micah exclaim, “Who is a God like unto You, that pardons iniquity and passes by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage?” O God, how could I ever have offended You? Having done so, how could I continue to rebel against You all those long years? How could I resist the yearnings of Your love and the entreaties of Your Spirit? Oh, why did I linger so long before coming back to such a Father, who clasped me to his heart and kissed away all my transgressions, and said, “Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet.” Burst forth into tears, O eyes that have so long been dry! O hearts that have been like the rock in the desert, let the sweet love of God strike you, like the rod of Moses, and let the waters leap forth! The thought that we have sinned against such a God may well cause us godly sorrow.

And, then, we should further sorrow as we remember that *our pardon has come to us through Jesus Christ*. Yet it was against Him that we sinned—against Him who, for our sakes, left the Throne and royalties of Heaven, and was born a Babe at Bethlehem—against Him who sat weary on the well at Sychar and said, “Give Me to drink,” yet to whom we refused to give the water of our heart’s love. Think, Brothers and Sisters, that you and I have sinned against Him who said, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head.” We have sinned against Him who never did us any wrong, never did us an ill turn, or said a hard word to us, but who, blessed be His infinite love, went up to the Cross for us and gave His hands to the cruel nails, and His whole body to death, that He might redeem us from our sins, and save us forever. O Jesus, my Savior, against You have I offended! O strong Son of God, Incarnate Deity, whom, though we have not seen, we do by faith unceasingly adore, it is against You we have offended! We have sinned against Him to whom we are married forever—against Him who is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh—against Him, the kisses of whose mouth are sweeter than honey or the honey-

comb. O my Heart, you might well break, though you were made of cast steel, to think that you have rebelled against Him who is all goodness and all love to you!

I tell you, dear Friends, one thing that always makes me grieve to think that I have sinned, is *my election*. Oh, when I first knew that God had chosen me to be His from before the foundation of the world, I could not make out how I could have been so mad as to have lived without Him—to have lived in opposition to Him. And then, when I found that Christ had engraved me, even me, upon the palms of His hands, and written my name upon His heart, then I smote upon my breast and said, “Woe is me that I, a man so much loved, should, nevertheless, have been such a transgressor and have sinned so grievously against my God!”

Come, Brothers and Sisters, plunge with me into this pool of holy sorrow! Well you may, for think how some of you have been favored by Sovereign Grace! Think how God called you out of the depths of sin—how long and how patiently He bore with you! Some of you were converted when you were 60 or 70 years old—can you ever love Him enough, and can you ever grieve enough because you lived so long in sin? And you who were converted when you were but boys and girls—can you ever bless Him enough for calling you so early? Can you ever blame yourself enough for not loving Him more, and not serving Him better? As for me, I am the worst and the lowest among you all because I owe more to God’s Grace than anyone else in this place. To have this sweet privilege of talking about His love, why, I would not change places with Gabriel, himself, for he, at any rate, has never had the privilege of telling such a story of redeeming Grace and dying love as I have to tell! Yet I am ashamed of myself for speaking so coldly and so feebly concerning my blessed Savior. I could almost flee from my pulpit because I cannot speak better of Him and move your hearts more earnestly to hate your sin.

But so it is—the more mercy we have received, the more sorrow for sin should we feel. The more love, the more delight and rapture we have experienced, the more lamentation should we make that we should ever have sinned, and that we should be so prone to sin again even after we have been forgiven! I often have to cry, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Some people tell me that Paul wrote that lament before he was converted, or when he was just converted, and they talk about rising above all such experiences as that. But I find that the nearer I get to God, the more is my experience just like that of the Apostle when he wrote those words. And whereas I only knew that I had so much sin when I had a clear view of God and a strong sense of being His, yet it is then that I have learned how terrible it is that there should still be the possibility of sin hanging about me, and I have cried, “Oh, that I were delivered from this body of death that still drags me down to the dust!”

I am sure it will be the same with you, Beloved. The more your joy in the Lord and the nearer you come to perfection, the deeper will be your lamentation—the bitterer, yet in some senses the sweeter will be your sorrow that there should be any sin still remaining within you. I say

again, this is sweet sorrowing—sweet, sweet sorrow and, till you get to Heaven, I could scarcely wish you any better joy than this—to go home and creep to the foot of the Cross and lie there, sorrowing over your sin against such a Savior, yet rejoicing that it is all forgiven—

***“He that is down needs fear no fall,
He that is low no pride”—***

so, as you lie there, look up—

***“And view the flowing
Of the Savior’s precious blood,
With Divine assurance knowing
He has made your peace with God.”***

And then say—

***“My sins, my sins, my Savior,
Their guilt I never knew”—***

“till I knew what they cost You—till I knew Your great love to me—till I knew my sins were all forgiven! But now they are forgiven, they torture me with a sweet grief of which I would gladly die.”—

***“Lord, let me weep for nothing but sin,
And after none but Thee;
And then I would—oh, that I might!
A constant weeper be.”***

This is joy, rest, patience, bliss—just to lie there and weep, and wash with tears the feet that came upon that errand of love and mercy for us! And still look, and love, and long, and weep, and look, and love, and long, and weep again, and kiss again and again the blessed feet of Him who has redeemed us unto God by His blood!

The Lord keep us there, dear Friends! Amen. Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—555, 69, 580.

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*“And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave themselves
to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.”
2 Corinthians 8:5.*

HERE we see the Apostle Paul disappointed, though he was never discontented. God had taught him how to abound and how to suffer need. In the School of Grace he had learned contentment, but at this time he had met with disappointment. Things had not happened as he thought they should have done and now he tells the Corinthians how the Churches of Macedonia have disappointed him. “This they did, not as we hoped.”

Paul's disappointment, too, was concerning money, although that was a thing the Apostle never cared about at all. He never lived with any idea of gain—he held it almost in contempt. Yet here he is disappointed about money matters and he is writing of his disappointment. But do not run away with a mistaken idea of what Paul meant. Though this is one of the many unexpected things which happened to him, it is different in its character from most of his other disappointments. His expectations were not realized on this occasion because they were *exceeded!* He was disappointed with the Churches of Macedonia because they did a great deal *more* than he ever expected them to do. “This they did,” he says, “not as we hoped.” He had only hoped that they would give a little, for they were not rich people—and a little would show their generosity to the poor saints in Jerusalem. And he was ready to make much of that little and thank God that they were willing to remember those who were more in need than themselves. But they went far beyond anything he expected of them. Paul bore record that their liberality was up to the utmost limit of their power, “yes, and beyond their power.” A little from them would have been more than a much larger sum from richer people. Our gifts are not to be measured by the amount we contribute, but by the surplus kept in our own hands. The two mites of the widow were, in Christ's eyes, worth more than all the other money cast into the treasury, for, “she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.”

Not only did those Macedonian Believers give much, but they gave it willingly. “They were willing of themselves.” This added fragrance to their gift. They needed no pressing or urging—the Apostle did not have to or-

ganize a “Fancy Fair” to wheedle the money out of them, nor even to preach loud and long to awaken them to their duty. “They were willing of themselves.” I thank God that you, my people, have always abounded in “the same Grace, also.” Still, what we have done is nothing compared to the need which lies before us. May those who have, up to now, been ready to bestow their goods, be found even more willing now to contribute to the cause of God and generously give towards the spread of the Gospel, the education of ministers and the needs of the orphans! Let there be no necessity laid upon you except the sweet compulsion of love, remembering that “God loves a cheerful giver.”

But these Macedonians gave more than money—they gave themselves. Paul writes, “They first gave themselves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.” This was the best donation—better, even, than the two mites of the poor widow. She gave her living, but they gave their *lives*, their very being! They also gave the best donation in the best way. They did not stop with giving themselves to the Lord, they also gave themselves to the Lord’s *people*. This is the will of God, that those who yield themselves up to Him should join those who are already His.

In speaking to you concerning these Churches of Macedonia, I would say, first, that *these people are an example to us* in several particulars. And when I have spoken a little upon that subject, I will say, in the second place, *Let us follow their example*.

I. First, then, THESE PEOPLE ARE AN EXAMPLE TO US. The Grace of God seems to have been so largely bestowed upon them that they, of whom but little was expected, sprang at once into the chief place of honor. Sometimes we see this in Churches today—poor and despised communities suddenly excel all their Brothers and Sisters. “The lame take the prey.” The great works of the world are not done by the great people of the world, but as the tiny coral insects, patiently working unseen, produce large results, it often happens that the weakest Brothers and Sisters bestow a large legacy of blessing upon us! This was the case in Macedonia—“The abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.” As an ounce of example is worth a pound of precept, let us study the conduct of those early Christians very carefully.

First, they are an example because *they followed the right order*. They did the first thing, first. Paul says, concerning them, “This they did, not as we hoped, but first gave themselves to the Lord.” You know that it spoils even good things when you reverse the right order in which they should be done and, as we commonly say, put the cart before the horse. Did you ever hear of the servant who was told to go and sweep a room and then dust it, who went and dusted the room and *then* swept it? She did not obey her orders because she did not observe the right order. Her work might as well have been left undone! Great mischief always comes of departing from God’s method in spiritual things. When the Lord tells you to believe and be baptized, if you are baptized, first, and believe afterwards, you have upset the Scriptural order and have practically disobeyed it! You have not kept to God’s Word at all. There is nothing like doing the right

thing in the right order. Do *what* Christ tells you and do it *as* Christ tells you. These Macedonian Believers put the first thing, first. They first gave themselves to the Lord and afterwards they gave themselves to the Church of God!

This is the first thing, because it is of the first importance. If you are Christ's, join Christ's people. But the first thing is, see to it that you are Christ's! Yield yourself unto Him. Trust in Him. This is the first thing and everything else is a poor second in comparison with it. Dear Friend, have you given yourself to the Lord? Can you truly say, "I am my Lord's, and He is mine. I have, by His Grace, made sure of that"? Especially you young people who are just starting out in life—let this be your prime care. May God give you Grace to yield yourself to Christ even now, before you meet the fiercer temptations of the world! Stand still and consider the matter, and say, "I will now unreservedly yield myself to Him who died for me—

***'Now that my journey's just begun,
My course so little trod;
I'll stay before I further run,
And give myself to God.'***

Yielding ourselves to the Lord comes first and thus makes the second thing valid. If it does not come first, the second is good for nothing! If a man gives himself to the Church, he must not, therefore, suppose that he has given himself to God. To give himself to the *people* of God, before giving himself, first, to *God*, will do the man no good. It will, indeed, do him a positive injury. The man who acts in this way is either self-deceived, or else a deceiver—he does wrong to God, to the Church, to himself and is thus a threefold offender! You have no right to either of the ordinances of Christ if you do not belong to Him—they are only for Believers—and until you first give yourself to the Lord, you have no right to be reckoned among the people of God! If you come to the Lord's Table as an unbeliever, so far from getting any good there, you will eat and drink condemnation to yourself, for you cannot discern the Lord's body and, therefore, you cannot rightly use the bread and cup which are the emblems of His broken body and poured out blood. Dear Friend, do that first thing, first! First give yourself to the Lord and *then* give yourself to us by the will of God!

This is the first thing, again, because it leads to the second. I do not think that those Macedonians would ever have thought of giving themselves up to the Church if they had not first given themselves up to God, for in those days, you know, to join the Christian Church meant enduring shame, persecution and frequently death! They had to steal away by night to the private assemblies of the saints—and if they joined the Church and it was once known—there would probably soon be the cry, "Christians to the lions!" And they would be taken to the amphitheatre, first to be exhibited, and then to be devoured by wild beasts!

Men did not care about joining Christian Churches in those days unless they first gave themselves to the Lord. The persecution of the early Christians was a wonderful means of keeping the Churches pure. Church

officers, then, did not need to examine those who sought fellowship with them as we are obliged to do, for not many were likely to present themselves unless they loved their Lord and His Gospel better than life, itself. But even then some hypocrites did profess to be the Lord's people, though their heart was far from Him. In these soft and silken days I would be the more earnest in saying to you—Do not give yourselves to us. Do not think of joining any Christian Church, until, first of all, you have given yourselves to the Lord. Make a very searching enquiry into your own spiritual state before you offer yourself as a candidate for Church fellowship. Many of you do this. I have been struck, again and again, with the fact that the results of our special services in this place are not garnered quickly. Sometimes people come in numbers to join us who trace their first impulse to some special effort put forth here a year or two before. I fear that many wait too long, but there should be no undue haste in the matter. Make sure that, first, you are the Lord's—then come and be baptized, confessing your faith. Now, do you trust Christ? Have you become Christ's servant? Have you taken His Cross upon your shoulders to bear it after Him? Then come and welcome, and join with His people! But you must not do it until, first, you are the Lord's.

These Macedonians are examples, next, because *they were free in what they did*. They “first *gave* themselves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.” They did not come to God by compulsion. There was a gentle pressure put upon them by the Holy Spirit, which made them willing in the day of God's power—and they willingly and cheerfully gave themselves up to God. Are you doing so, dear Friend? Is your religion a thing which has been impressed upon you by your surroundings, by your Christian friends, or by the demands of society? Such a religion is not worth having! To be truly the Lord's, there must be a voluntary giving up of yourself to Him and to His service. You must be able to say—

**“Tis done! The great transaction's done;
I am my Lord's, and He is mine;
He drew me, and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice Divine.”**

Then you will be able to sing the chorus at the end of it—

“Happy day! Happy day,”

and you will not feel it to be a misery to have given yourself up to God, but your soul's greatest delight! And so be like those who gave themselves to the Lord and did it cheerfully and freely.

They gave themselves, also, wholly and unreservedly. This is proved by the fact that their money followed the gift of themselves. The dedication of their persons was followed by the consecration of their purses. It was no half-hearted offering of a languid devotion, but a real and practical yielding up of every bit of their being to be entirely and forever the Lord's. Now, this is the sort of conversion that delights both God and His people—when the whole man is all aflame with love to Christ—when there is no attempt to compromise matters, or to keep back any part of that which is the Lord's. When we are able truthfully to sing—

***“Take my life, and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.
Take my silver and my gold,
Not a mite would I withhold.
Take myself, and I will be
Always, only, all for Thee.”***

These Macedonians were so eager to be out-and-out for Christ that they, without any constraint, gave themselves to His people. I delight to see young Believers coming forward promptly and cheerfully, feeling, “Yes, I belong to Christ, and I should like to join those who also belong to Him.” To have it pressed upon you by one and another and to be urged to do it almost spoils it. I think that it is with our *gift of ourselves* to Christ and His people as it is with plucking a peach—if it is handled much, or pulled off the tree by a rough grasp of the hand—the beautiful bloom is quickly gone from it. Christ loves to have our hearts with the bloom on them! He delights to see us willingly yielding ourselves!

I remember the difficulty that I had, when I was converted and wished to join the Christian Church in the place where I lived. I called upon the minister four successive days before I could see him. Each time there was some obstacle in the way of an interview and, as I could not see him at all, I wrote and told him that I would go down to the Church Meeting and propose myself as a member. He looked upon me as a strange character, but I meant what I said, for I felt that I could not be happy without fellowship with the people of God. I needed to be wherever they were and if anybody ridiculed them, I wished to be ridiculed with them. And if people had an ugly name for them, I wanted to be called by that ugly name, for I felt that unless I suffered with Christ in His humiliation, I could not expect to reign with Him in His Glory. Beloved Friends, give yourselves, first, to God and afterwards to His Church, as these people did, cheerfully and promptly, without pressure or excitement. They came forward, not even as the Apostle hoped, but they went beyond all that!

In the third place, these people are good examples, not only in following the right order and doing it willingly, but because *they had a sense of obedience in both*. What they did, they did because they found that it was “the will of God.” It was the calm decision of hearts made sensitive by the Holy Spirit. Their faith was a living one and produced these good fruits. They were not carried away by emotion, but led by reason and conscience to give all to Him who deserved more than all they could give.

They felt that it was right to give themselves first to the Lord. They said, “How can we do otherwise? Christ has bought us with His blood—we must give ourselves to Him. God has chosen us from before the foundation of the world—we must choose Him. The Holy Spirit has renewed us. This new nature of ours must belong to Him. We are God’s by election, by creation, by Providence, by redemption, by new creation, by adoption—and His we will be forever and ever.” They felt that they could not do otherwise, but must be wholly the Lord’s because of what the Lord had done for them. This is the Apostle’s argument when He says, “For the love of Christ

constrains us; because we thus judge that if One died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again." I wish that, under the sweet constraint of Divine Love, many of you might be led at once to give yourselves to the Lord!

Well, then, they felt the same thing about giving themselves to the Apostle and giving themselves to the Church! They said, "We will give ourselves up to this Apostle who has brought the Word of the Lord to us. He shall lead us. He has been a messenger from God to us—we will let him be our captain. What he bids us do, we will do, for we are persuaded that he is a man of God and he seeks not himself, nor ours, but us! He seeks to glorify God by leading us to nobler deeds of Grace and to greater heights of excellence. We will give ourselves to him and to the Church." Surely, dear Friend, if a man of God has been used to bring you out of darkness into Christ's marvelous light, you may well feel that such a man shall still lead you on! As long as he is faithful to his Master, you may very naturally and gladly be faithful to him. "They first gave themselves to the Lord, and unto *us* by the will of God."

They also had a sense of obedience in helping the poor, especially the poor saints, and, most of all, the poor saints at Jerusalem. Perhaps, mindful of that ancient promise, "Blessed is he that considers the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble," they recognized that the care of those in poverty and distress was specially pleasing to Him to whom they had given themselves. For that reason they would gladly make their contribution to the utmost limit of their power. Doubtless, they had heard the word that the Lord Jesus spoke to His disciples, "You have the poor with you always, and whenever you will, you may do them good: but Me you have not always," and as they could not directly bestow their goods on Christ, they willingly bestowed them, out of love to Him, upon the poor who knew His name! If we cannot give gold and silver to the Head of the Church in Heaven, we may help His poor members on earth. The reception of Christ into the heart and the yielding of the life to His sway has always been fruitful of beneficence to the poor.

Zacchaeus has not been the only one who, when he received Christ, has said, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor." Some men, today, in their zeal for the poor, deliberately shut their eyes to this fact that before the time of Christ the poor were left to their hard lot—and that any alleviation which has come to them has come from disciples of the lowly Jesus who was so poor that He had not where to lay His head. Christ is the poor man's truest Friend—and those who give themselves to Christ must always see to it that they also give of their substance to the poor and thus lay up "treasure in Heaven."

Paul distinctly states that these Macedonian Christians gave themselves to the Church "by the will of God." Beloved, it is the will of God that you who love Him should be numbered with His people. It is for your comfort. It is for your growth. It is for your preservation. If you belong to Christ, you should belong to Christ's Church. You already owe something

to the Church. By its means, the preaching of the Gospel has been kept alive in the world. Through its preaching you have been converted. Through someone of its members you were brought to Jesus' feet. It is your duty and the Church's due that you should give yourself to the Church by the will of God! Think it over and see if it is not so. I say not that you should join *this* Church. You may be quite a stranger to us, but there is a place where God has fed your soul. There is a company of people somewhere, among whom you have often been taken up to Heaven's gate. There is an assembly where you first of all found the Savior. Go, I pray you, and, by the will of God, give yourself to that Church, as you have given yourself to Christ.

You cannot tell the joy I have had today in visiting one who is lying grievously ill. My dear friend, in talking with me just now, as I sat by his bedside, said to me, "Pastor, do you remember what you said to me when you baptized me?" I said, "No, I do not." "Well," he said, it was 35 years ago, and when I was stepping into the water, you said, 'Let us praise God for this, Brother. I hope He will make you a gift, a precious gift, to this Church.' And then you stopped before you baptized me, and said, 'Lord, make him useful, grant him Grace to serve You for many years to come!' It was 35 years ago," he said, "and yet I remember it as if it were but yesterday, how you prayed for me, and how you finished up by saying, 'And, when your feet shall touch the cold waters of the river of death, may you find it firm beneath you!' Oh, dear Pastor," he said, "it IS firm beneath my feet! I was never so happy or so joyful as I am now, in the expectation of soon beholding the face of Him I love."

Our Brother also added, "How little does modern theology supply to a man on the brink of eternity! I want no theories about Inspiration, or about the Atonement. The Word of God is true to me from beginning to end and the precious blood of Jesus is my only hope." I said to him, "My brother said to me, the other day, what John Wesley said to Charles. He said, 'Brother, our people die well.'" "Yes," my friend who is ill answered, "they do, for as an elder of the Church, I have visited very many, and they always die with sure and confident faith." I never see a doubt in any of our friends when they come to die! I have more doubts than they seem to have. Alas, that it should be so! But I expect to play the man when I die, as they do, resting in that same Savior! But, Brothers and Sisters, we would have been great losers if that Brother had not, 35 years ago, having given himself to the Lord, also given himself to me and to the Church over which the Lord had made me overseer. Blessed be God, who has kept him and us even to this day!

Thus you see that these people of Macedonia are an example to us.

II. Secondly—and this I will urge very strongly on you all—LET US FOLLOW THEIR EXAMPLE. What use can we make of that example if we do not follow it? Let us make those Philippians, who are now citizens of a better city, glad when they hear that some, even in this 19th Century, were fired by their example to yield self and substance to their Lord and ours—to give all to Him who is the King of the country where they now have

their blessed abode and where every man who now gives himself to Christ shall also reign with Him! Do you think that, if they came back to earth, they would behave differently? Do you think that they would give less, now, that they know their Lord more? No! Had they a chance of living here, again, they would even more willingly yield themselves and more ungrudgingly give of their substance to their dear Lord and Master!

First, imitate their example in this particular—*give yourself to the Lord*. You who have done it, do it again! And you who have, up till this moment, kept back that which He claims, make a full surrender right now! Do not wait to make yourself better, or to feel better, but, just as you are, determine to be His and to be His forever! Say, “I do *now*, first of all give myself to You. I trust in the death of Christ as my only hope of eternal life and I give myself up to Him, believing that He will save me. There are many reasons why I should do this, but the chief reason is that Jesus gave Himself for me—shall I not, then, give myself to Him ‘who loved me, and gave Himself for me’? What is there that I should like to keep back? I know of nothing. No, let Him take all.”—

**“Savior! Your dying love
You gave me—
Nor should I anything withhold,
My Lord, from You.
In love my soul would bow,
My heart fulfill its vow,
Some offering bring You now,
Something for You.”**

The best offering you can bring to Christ is yourself, for until you have given yourself to Him, He cannot accept any other offering at your hands. Unless you are really Christ’s, you cannot be truly happy. Surely, this is a motive that will appeal to you! You wish to live a happy life, do you not? There is no happiness without holiness—and no holiness without faith in the Lord Jesus Christ! Give yourself to Him and He will make you holy and happy, too. True joy will never be yours until “the joy of the Lord is your strength.” To abide in Christ is Heaven begun below. “Blessed are they that dwell in Your house: they will be still praising You.” Those who know the Lord best, praise Him the most! Therefore would I urge you to give yourself to Him at this good hour.

Furthermore, we are only safe as we are given up to Christ’s keeping. Only His power can save us from our adversary the devil, who, “as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour.” If you give yourself to the Lord, you will be “safe in the arms of Jesus.” He will hold you despite all the assaults of your foes and none shall pluck you out of His hands, so that you may exultingly say with Paul, “I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.”

Some of us gave ourselves to Christ 40 years ago. Oh, how thankful I am that I can say, “Forty years ago”! Some of you came 30 years ago; some 20; some ten. Some of you only gave yourselves to Christ quite lately, when my dear Brothers Fullerton and Smith were at the Taberna-

cle. Well, do you wish to run back? If any of you do, I know one who does not, but who says, “Lord, I come again, as if I never had come before, and my heart’s desire is to be fully Yours, more entirely Yours than I have ever been! Take heart, and hands, and feet, and eyes, and ears, and tongue—take life, and will, and all my powers of body, mind, and soul! Take all I am, and all I have, and all I ever shall have—take it all, for it is all Yours!” Will you not say so? While I am speaking, say it in your own souls! These Macedonians, “first gave themselves to the Lord.” May some do this for the first time, even now! Each one of them shall then be able to sing—

**“Oh, I am my Beloved’s,
And my Beloved’s mine!
He brings a poor vile sinner
Into His ‘house of wine.’
I stand upon His merit—
I know no other stand—
Not even where Glory dwells
In Immanuel’s land.”**

In the next place, follow this example and *give yourself to the Church*. You that are members of the Church have not found it perfect and I hope that you feel almost glad that you have not. If I had never joined a Church till I had found one that was perfect, I would never have joined one at all! And the moment I did join it, if I had found one, I should have spoiled it, for it would not have been a perfect Church after I had become a member of it. Still, imperfect as it is, it is the dearest place on earth to us—

**“My soul shall pray for Zion still,
While life or breath remains;
There my best friends, my kindred dwell,
There God my Savior reigns.”**

All who have first given themselves to the Lord, should, as speedily as possible, also give themselves to the Lord’s people. How else is there to be a Church on the earth? If it is right for anyone to refrain from membership in the Church, it is right for *everyone*, and then the testimony for God would be lost to the world! As I have already said, the Church is faulty, but that is no excuse for your not joining it, if you are the Lord’s. Nor need your own faults keep you back, for the Church is not an institution for perfect people, but a sanctuary for sinners saved by Grace, who, though they are saved, are still sinners and need all the help they can derive from the sympathy and guidance of their fellow Believers. The Church is the nursery for God’s weak children where they are nourished and grow strong. It is the fold for Christ’s sheep—the home for Christ’s family.

It is due to the minister that you should join some Christian Church. If the Lord has blessed you under our ministry, tell us. I think that I once told you the story, which I know to be accurate, of a Church clergyman, a sincere, earnest Brother, who had preached for years and, to the best of his knowledge, had never seen a conversion and, therefore, concluded that his ministry had been useless. On the day he was buried, a gentleman was observed to stand and weep much at his grave, and someone asked him why he did so. He said, “Nobody can tell what that man was to

me. He led me from darkness into the Light of God and his word has been my comfort for years.” Yet that gentleman had never told the minister! He had never spoken to him of the blessing he had received under his ministry and he had let the good man die under the impression that he had been useless! When someone told him how the clergyman had grieved over his apparent failure, he said, “Oh, I did not know that he felt like that! I wish that I had told him what a blessing his sermons were to me.”

Now, if we say anything foolish, or if we are reported to have said something silly which probably we never did say, we have plenty of friends to write and correct us, to whom we are greatly obliged, of course! But there are some who are so afraid that we might be puffed up that they will not tell us even though they get a blessing from us. At any rate, be just, be grateful and let the servant of God know that his Master has blessed his message to your soul.

If it is not due to the minister that you should join the Church and help in its work, I think it is due to our fellow workers. Some of them are working for Christ with all their might and in the schools and elsewhere they are fainting for lack of helpers. Let me tell you what you are like. It is a hot autumn day and a man is reaping. The sweat pours from his face as he bonds to his task, and he fears that he will never get to the end of the field. And all the time you are pleasantly occupied leaning over a gate and saying to yourself, “That is an uncommonly good laborer.” Or, perhaps, instead of doing that, you are saying, “Why, he does not handle the sickle properly! I could show him a better way of reaping.” But as you never attempt to show us, we have only your own word to go by—and you must excuse us for being a little skeptical on the subject! The work of the Church is generally left to a few earnest folk. Is that right? Is it right that a *few* should do all the work, while many others, who profess to belong to Christ, are doing nothing at all? Let that not be *your* case—if you have given yourselves to the Lord, give yourselves to His Church—according to His will.

Think again, what a lack of fellowship there will be if those who have given themselves to the Lord do not also give themselves to His people. Possibly you ask, “What should I gain by joining the Church?” That is a miserable question to ask! I will answer it by asking another—Do you know how much you will lose by *not* joining the Church? You will lose the satisfaction of having done your Lord’s will. You will lose the joy of fellowship with your Brothers and Sisters in Christ. You will lose the opportunity of helping, by your example, the weak ones of the flock. Your question should not be, “What should I gain for myself?” but, “What can I do for others?” And the answer should be, “I will join the Church because this is the will of God and there I shall be of benefit to my fellow Christians.”

In the third place, you should follow the example of these Macedonian Believers and *give yourself both to the Lord and to His Church*. Put the two together and thus begin to place yourself wholly in the line of God’s will. Joining the Church without being the Lord’s, no matter from whatever motive it is done, is a course of action fraught with great danger to the

soul, for none are more dead than those who only have a name to live. On the other hand, much blessing is missed if those who are the Lord's do not unite themselves with His people.

If you have given yourself to the Lord, give yourself, next, to His people, that you may, with them, bear witness for Christ. Here is a certain number of people who, with all their faults, are the true followers of Christ. Join them and say, "I, too, am a follower of Christ." That is what membership with the Church means. It is as if you should say, "If the world is divided into two camps, I am on the side of King Jesus, and under His banner I will fight as one of those who bear witness to the Truths of God that He has revealed."

Do it, next, to spread the Gospel. Everybody is needed in this service, today, for the clear light of the Gospel is sadly obscured in many places. We cannot all be preachers, for if all were preachers, where would be the hearers? But we need everybody to be talking about Christ, by lips and life, by the printed and the spoken word—telling about salvation by the precious blood for all who believe, forgiveness through the Grace of God for the guilty, renovation by the Holy Spirit for the depraved. Come, then, and give yourselves to the Lord, and then to His Church in order that you may spread the Gospel!

Do this, again, to maintain the Church. Nothing in the world is dearer to God's heart than His Church. Therefore, being His, let us also belong to it that by our prayers, our gifts and our labors, we may support and strengthen it. If those who are Christ's refrained, even for a generation, from numbering themselves with His people, there would be no visible Church, no ordinances maintained and, I fear, very little preaching of the Gospel. Therefore follow the Macedonian example for the sake of the Church.

And finally, do it that you may grow in love and continue to prove your love to your Lord and His Church. And also that you may continue to live unto the Lord and increase your life by mingling with others who are alive unto God. My dear friend, who is now lying so ill, of whom I have told you, does not regret that he joined the Church, for, being a commercial traveler, he had opportunities of preaching Christ in different places. And that he might render the best possible service to his Lord, he always lived wherever his pastor told him to live, seeing that his business interests did not tie him down to any particular place. If there was no Church in a town, he went and lived there till he had raised one! Then he moved off to another spot and founded another Church. And so he continued to spread the knowledge of his Lord and Master! He is now lying between life and death and if he is raised up, again, it will be a miracle—yet perhaps the Lord will do that work of healing if He has yet further service for our Brother on earth. [The Brother referred to has been raised up, as by a miracle. His recovery was a great encouragement to many as they prayed for their Pastor's restoration.] Though he is so ill, he does not regret anything that he has done, but only wishes that it had been in his power, as it was in his will, to do still more for his Master! Those who are about to

be welcomed into the Church, as we gather around the Communion Table, may regret it if they are not good men and true, but if they have first given themselves to the Lord, they will never regret the step they are now taking in identifying themselves with His Church.

The sum of all that I have said is this—let all who are not the Lord's come and, first of all, give themselves to Him and then give themselves to His people and to His service. And let those of us who are already Christ's, keep together and fulfill our vows more than ever we have done—and so prove continually that we have given ourselves to the Lord and to His people, according to His will. Thus shall God be magnified, Christ glorified, His Church increased and the world blessed. God grant it, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—2 Corinthians 8.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—427, 661, 944.**

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:

MY DEAR FRIENDS—The last month of the year is upon us, and mercy, like a river, continues to flow side by side with the pathway of our lives. It is for us to abide faithful to our Lord and to His Truth since He is always faithful to His promise and to His Covenant. We should be foolish, indeed, if we sought for other comfort or confidence than that which we daily find in Jehovah, our God. In HIM let us remain steadfast and immovable while life remains.

I hope I am climbing the hill of returning strength. As yet I have hardly crept upward enough to be quite sure that I am, on the whole, a little above where I was when I left home. My publishers wished to begin the year with a portrait, but I submitted to be taken off—the result is too painful. I do not think that any of my friends would wish to see the picture twice. To those who meet me I do not appear to be much the worse for wear, but when I sit down before the camera, the unflattering sun puts down details of countenance which it would not be pleasing to remember. So the publishers must wait a little, as they will, right cheerfully.

I mention this that I may ask a continuance of the prayers of the sermon readers. I am anxious to be soon in my place, or at least to be making progress toward fitness for it. Meanwhile, may our Lord use these printed sermons for the good of His Church and cause!

Yours very truly,

C. H. Spurgeon,

Mentone, December 5, 1891.

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

JOINING THE CHURCH

NO. 3411

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 18, 1914.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING OCTOBER 24, 1869.

*“And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own
Selves unto the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.”*
2 Corinthians 8:5.

SOME persons are always trying to prove what is customary in the Christian Church. They are always seeking after instances and precedents. The worst of it is that many of these people look for old things that are not old enough—the old things of the Church of Rome, for instance, and mediaeval customs and observances which are nothing but authentic trumpery! If they want the real old solid things, they should go back to the Apostolic times. The best book of Church history from which to gather ritual, true ritual, is the Acts of the Apostles! And when the Christian Church shall go back to that, instead of enquiring about what the primitive Christians did in the second or third century, she will come much nearer to the knowledge of what she ought to do!

Now, our text tells us of one old custom in the Apostles' days. Those who became Christians first gave themselves to the Lord and then they gave themselves to the Church, according to God's will. Let us ponder these things in their order. Of course we shall think of the main and most important point first—that action which gives value and beauty to all that follows and is its fruit—

I. THE SOUL'S SUPREME GIFT

The first thing that the original Christians, the Christians of the old and Holy Spirit times did was, “they gave themselves unto the Lord.” This is vital, the one all-important bestowal. Have all of us who are professors that we are Christ's disciples really given ourselves to the Lord? Are there not in this House of Prayer some who have never thought of doing so, and even some who would reject with contempt the idea of doing so? Oh, my Hearers, the day will come when you will look at these matters in a very different light! And in the next world it will be seen that it would have been your highest wisdom to have given yourselves to the Lord—and your supreme folly to have lived unto self!

When these early Christians gave themselves to the Lord, the first thing manifestly was *that the giving and the gift were sincere*. Should any here present have given themselves to the Lord, let them ask themselves whether their gift was sincere. These primitive Believers meant what they said. There was a deep reality about their consecration—they gave them-

selves over to Jesus Christ to be entirely His. Remember that in those times this meant very much more than we are ever made to suffer now. A man who gave himself to Christ in those days was put out of the synagogue if he was a Jew. He was cast out of society if he happened to be a heathen. He was dragged up before the tribunals. He was frequently cast in prison—as frequently beaten with many stripes—and very often he was put to death by fire, or by the sword. But these early Christians knew what was to happen and, knowing it, yet deliberately they gave themselves up to the Lord. Oh, dear professors here present, has your gift of yourselves to Christ been as sincere as that, or did you merely come and make a profession because others did? And have you stuck to that profession, lie though it was, because you did not like the shame of confessing that you had made a mistake? Oh, is it sincere or not? If it is not, God make it so, for it is only that which is of the heart that will stand the trial of the Last Great Day! Lord, deliver us from having any religion in which the heart is not found!

Their gift of themselves to the Lord was, in the next place, *a willing gift*. All the soldiers of Christ are volunteers and yet they are all pressed men. The Grace of God constrains men to become Christians, but yet only constrains them consistently with the laws of their mind! The freedom of the will is as great a truth as is the Predestination of God. The Grace of God, without violating our wills, makes men willing in the day of God's power—and they give themselves to Jesus Christ. You cannot be a Christian against your will! How could it be? A servant of God against his will? A child of God against his will? No, it never was so and it never shall be so! Here and now, you Christians, I shall ask you whether you are not cheerfully, gladly, unreservedly the servants of God! I know you are and that bond you made years ago is not irksome to you now, but if you are genuine saints, you repeat it again tonight and you hope to repeat it in life and in death, for you are willingly and exultantly the Lord's own!

The gift that these early Christians made was, in the next place, *an intelligent one*. They did not receive into the Church in Paul's days unintelligent people. They knew that no sponsorship could avail here. They knew, as one would think all rational people ought to know, that the religion of Jesus Christ cannot exist where there is no clear apprehension of the saving Truth of God.

Only where the understanding was able to grasp the Saviorship of Jesus could there be spiritual life and true conversion. No religious rite, or ceremony, or ordinance could confer this. I have heard ministers tell their congregations, "You were made Christians in your infancy and you ought to stand to the vows then made for you." Surely every man's conscience tells him there is not a shadow of ground for such reasoning! What have I to do with, or what do I care about vows that were made for me when I was a child? Were they bad or were they good—they never consulted me and I have nothing to do with them, nor will I have! Whether they promised that I would serve God, or that I would serve the devil, I equally reject their responsibility and their sponsorship! As an intelligent

being, I speak for myself before God and none shall speak for me! If I had been dedicated to Moloch, should I in my manhood accept the dedication? God forbid! And even if I were dedicated to Christ, I will not accept a dedication which I know Christ never accepted because He never asked for it. He asks my *personal* dedication. He asks only for intelligent love, intelligent service—and I trust that many of you came to Christ knowing what you did, knowing what repentance meant, knowing what faith meant, having counted the cost of what a life of holiness would be and then deliberately, as men and women of judgment and understanding, said, “O Prince, we enlist beneath Your banner! O Immanuel, write our names in Your muster-roll, for we will be Your servants from now on and forever!” It was a sincere gift, it was a willing gift and it was an intelligent gift that these first Christians made of themselves to the Lord!

My Brothers and Sisters, it was, moreover, *a complete surrender which they made*. No Christian in the olden times gave himself in part to the Lord and in part reserved himself for idols, or for himself—and had any attempted to have done so, they would have been spurned, for it is of Christ’s rule in the Church that He will have all or none. You must, as a Christian, be all a Christian, or nothing of a Christian! There is no such thing as dividing between God and the devil, between righteousness and sin. The surrender must be without reserve and without limit. If you have truly given yourselves to the Lord, you have given Him your body—no more to be polluted with sin, but to be a Temple of the Holy Spirit. You have given Him your mind—no more to be a free thinker after the boasted free thought of the slaves of skepticism. You have given up your faculties—to sit with them at the feet of Christ to learn of Him, to take His teaching for the Truth of God and His Word the one court of appeal for all questions. You take Him to be your Teacher beyond all dispute and His Doctrine to be unsullied truth for you. You have also given up to Him your tongue to speak for Him, your hands to work for Him, your feet to walk or run for Him—your every faculty of body and mind in beautiful partnership for His service!

As for your newborn, angelic, spiritual nature—that must emphatically be the Lord’s—and will always be the royal and reigning power within. You are today in the trinity of your nature—body, soul and spirit—altogether Christ’s! And this includes, if you are a sincere Christian, all that you have—all of talents, all of time, all of property, all of influence, all of relationship, all of opportunity. You count nothing to be your own from this time forth, but you say with the spouse, “I am my Beloved’s and my Beloved is mine.”

Again, the surrender which every true Christian makes is *a surrender to the Lord*. That, my Brothers and Sisters, is where it must begin—with the Lord! We ought not to give ourselves up to the Church until we have given ourselves up to the Lord. And it must never be a giving of ourselves up to priests. Oh, scorn that! Of all the wretches that live, the worst are priests! Of all the curses that ever fell upon earth—I will not except even the devil—the worst is priestcraft! I care not whether it wears the garb of

the dissenting minister, or the clergyman of the Established Church, or the Roman Catholic, the Muslim or the heathen—no man can do your religion for you! If any man pretends that he can, or that he can pardon your sin, or do anything for you before God, put him aside—he is a base impostor! Never surrender your thoughts or your mind to any man. Pin your opinions to no man's coat sleeves. To the Lord make the surrender complete and ample—to His Truth, to His Law, to His Gospel make your surrender as complete as if you made yourselves slaves, or a stone to be carved by His hands! You shall rise in dignity as you sink in selfhood. You shall become free in proportion as you wear God's bonds. You shall become great as you become little in yourselves. Give yourselves wholly up to God. Mind it is to Him—not to any man, not to any creed, not to any sect—but wholly and entirely to the Lord who loved you from before the foundation of the world! To the Lord who bought you with His heart's blood! To the Lord whose Spirit sealed your adoption within your souls!

Mind this, then! Mark it as the first step in all public acts of religion—you must give yourselves first to the Lord! You have no right to talk about joining a Christian Church until you have done that—"first to the Lord." You have no right to be baptized until you have done that—"first to the Lord." You have no right to sit at the Communion Table until you have done that—"first to the Lord." Give yourselves first to the Lord with unfeigned repentance for sin and simple and hearty confidence in Jesus! And then, as a complete giving-up of yourselves to the Lord—you may come to every hallowed act of service, to every privilege-feast of love—but not until then! Oh, Sirs, your sacraments and your ceremonies—God abhors them until first you have given Him your hearts! Vain are your oblations! Your incense is an abomination to Him! It is an evil, and worse than an evil—it is a mockery of God, an insult to Him—until first your heart surrenders itself to Jesus and your manhood becomes the rightful property of God by your willing yielding of it to Him!

I cannot press this matter by way of questioning everyone present, but still I would like to ask of every conscience, especially of every professing Christian, to answer this question, "My Soul, have you given yourself up, through the Grace of God, to belong to the Lord?" Do you mean that, or is it a farce? Have you made it real, or is it all a sham? Do you feel within your soul tonight a desire to make it more complete a gift? Do you pray for Grace to make it perfect in the future? Do you rest alone upon the precious blood of Jesus? Then do you desire to glorify God so long as you are in this body? Oh, then 'tis well with you and you may go the next step with me. If not, hands off all ordinances, hands off all promises! There is nothing in the Bible and there is nothing in the Church for you until you first are reconciled to God by the death of Jesus Christ! And now let us turn to consider briefly the second giving of the soul—

II. THE GIFT THAT FOLLOWS THE SUPREME ONE.

I want to know this passage aright. I think I do. "They first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us"—that is, they gave "their own selves" unto us—by the will of God. After a true Christian has given him-

self or herself to the Lord, the very next act should be to give themselves to the Christian Church. They should at once assay, as Paul did, to be united to the Brethren of Christ. Somewhere in the district where he lives, if there is a Christian Church, the newborn Believer should at once seek fellowship with others who love his Lord, because saved by His Grace. The right way to do this is to give *himself*. Not his name, his money, not his mere presence, his sympathy, his active labors—all these are part of the gift—but the soul of it all is to give *himself*. In the whole force and weight of his influence, personality and ability, as far as God shall help him, he is to give up to the Church.

What is involved in this giving up of ourselves to the Christian Church? I will repeat it, so as to refresh the memories of many members here who have forgotten it. It is your *duty* to be united to the Christian Church. What does that mean? What duties spring out of it? There is, first, *consistency of character*. If you make no profession of religion and live as you like—you shall answer for that at the Last Great Day. But if you join a Christian Church, take heed how you live, for your actions may become doubly watched—and will be doubly sinful if you fall into inconsistency! You are a servant in the family and a member of a Christian Church—there must be in you no eye-service! There must be about you nothing which would dishonor a good servant of Jesus Christ! You are a husband—you have no business to be a bad-tempered, domineering tyrant to your wife! If you are, you ought not to be a member of a Christian Church at all! You are a wife—you ought not to be an untidy, idle, novel-reading woman, neglecting your family duties! If so, I do not care what classes you attend, or what Prayer Meetings—you have no business to act like that and profess to be a Christian! You are a Christian, you say, and have joined the Church—then in your trade you have no business to fall into the tricks and knavery that are common on all sides! If you cannot live without being a rogue, do not be a professor of religion! It will be quite as well for you to go to Hell at once, as you are, as to go there with a millstone about your neck through having made a profession, a base and wicked profession, of godliness which you did not carry out. No, Sirs, if you will not, in the strength and spirit of God's Grace, strive after consistency of moral conduct, you have no right to talk about giving yourselves to the Church, which you will disgrace! You will only sin yourselves into a deeper condemnation. Therefore, stay away from it!

The next thing that is required of every member of Christ's Church is *attendance upon the means of Grace*. I do not mean merely Sunday attendance. Any hypocrite comes on a Sunday, but they do not, to my knowledge, all of them, come on Monday to the Prayer Meeting, nor all to the weeknight service on a Thursday. I am pretty certain of this, though some of them may. Weeknight meetings and services are a powerful test. Many cannot come, I know, and I do not ask that domestic duties be sacrificed, even for public worship. But there are some who ought to be present who are not and, indeed, all of you, so far as opportunity will

permit, and if you reside within reasonable distance, should come. Take care that you do not become lax in that respect.

Another duty of all Church members is *to aid and comfort one another*. Just as among Freemasons—give the grip and you get a kindly word and a brotherly recognition—so should it be among Christians, only in a higher sense. You must comfort those that mourn, help those who are poor and, in general, we ought to watch out for each other's interests, seeing that in the Church we are all members of one family. You are to "do good unto all men, especially unto such as are of the household of faith." Let your crumbs be given to the sparrows out of doors, but let your Brothers and Sisters have the most and best of what you can give! This is the plain duty of every Christian.

Every Church member, too, is to try to give himself to the Church in the sense of *doing his share in all Church work*. Shame on the Church member who has no post that he can occupy, who is neither generous with his purse, nor diligent with his hands, nor earnest with his heart, nor speaking with his tongue! You cannot all do all, but each must take his place and niche, for everyone who is doing nothing—what is he but a drone in the hive who will surely be expelled before long? I hope, my dear Friends, I can say that I did this when I joined the Church of Christ. I well remember how I joined it, for I forced myself into the Church of God by telling the minister—who was lax and slow—after I had called four or five times and could not see him, that I had done my duty and if he did not see me, I would call a Church Meeting, myself, and tell them I believed in Christ and ask them if they would have me! I know when I did it, I meant it! I know there was not one among them all who more intensely meant it, then, and I mean it now! I give myself up to Christ and to Christ's religion. I do not mind speaking upon politics when they touch upon Christianity. I do not mind helping on the common cause of philanthropy, or any work for the good of my fellow men—but to no work do I give myself with my whole heart and spirit but to that of spreading abroad the knowledge of Christ's name! This, I think, ought to be to the Christian the first and last thing. Does your religion cover your drapery, or your drapery your Christianity—which, Sir? You are a politician—right enough—I am glad that there should be an honest man in such a place. Does your religion, however, cover your politics, or do your politics devour your religion? You are a working man. Well, it is an honorable position and all honor to the hard-working man—but does your religion permeate and give quality to your hard work? Do you love Christ with it all? Do you feel all the while that, most of all, you must be a Christian? Then I do not care what you are, whether you are a blacksmith or a chimney-sweep, a king or a crossing-sweeper—it is of small account! First and foremost, must you be a Christian and all else must be subordinated to that—for this the Christian Church has a right to expect.

Now I know there are some who say, "Well, I hope I have given myself to the Lord, but I do not intend to give myself to any church, because_____." Now, why not? "*Because I can be a Christian without it.*"

Now, are you quite clear about that? You can be as good a Christian by disobedience to your Lord's commands as by being obedient? Well, suppose everybody else did the same? Suppose all Christians in the world said, "I shall not join the Church." Why there would be no visible Church! There would be no ordinances! That would be a very bad thing and yet, *one* doing it—what is right for one is right for all—why should not all of us do it? Then you believe that if you were to do an act which has a tendency to destroy the visible Church of God, you would be as good a Christian as if you did your best to build up that Church? I do not believe it, Sir! Nor do you, either. You have not any such a belief—it is only a trumpety excuse for something else. There is a brick—a very good one. What is the brick made for? To help to build a house with. It is of no use for that brick to tell you that it is just as good a brick while it is kicking about on the ground as it would be in the house. It is a good-for-nothing brick! Until it is built into the wall, it is no good! So you rolling-stone Christians, I do not believe that you are answering your purpose—you are living contrary to the life which Christ would have you live—and you are much to blame for the injury you do! "Oh," says one, "though I hope I love the Lord, yet if I were to join the Church, *I would feel it such a bond upon me.*" Just what you ought to feel! Ought you not to feel that you are bound to holiness, now, and bound to Christ, now? Oh, those blessed bonds! If there is anything that could make me feel more bound to holiness than I am, I should like to feel that fetter, for it is only liberty to feel bound to godliness, uprightness and carefulness of living!

"Oh," says another, "if I were to join the Church, *I am afraid that I would not be able to hold on.*" You expect to hold on, I suppose, *out of the Church*—that is to say, you feel safer in disobeying Christ than in obeying Him! Strange feeling, that! Oh, you had better come and say, "My Master, I know Your saints ought to be united together in Church fellowship, for Churches were instituted by Your Apostles—and I trust I have Grace to carry out the obligation. I have no strength of my own, my Master, but my strength lies in resting upon You—I will follow where You lead and leave the rest to You."

"Ah, but," says another, "*I cannot join the Church—it is so imperfect.*" You then, are perfect, of course! If so, I advise you to go to Heaven and join the Church, there, for certainly you are not fit to join it on earth and would be quite out of place!

"Yes," says another, "but I see so much that is wrong about Christians." There is nothing wrong in yourself, I suppose? I can only say, my Brother, that if the Church of God is not better than I am, I am sorry for it. I felt, when I joined the Church, that I would be getting a deal more good than I should be likely to bring into it. And with all the faults I have seen in living these 20 years or more in the Christian Church, I can say, as an honest man, that the members of the Church are the excellent of the earth in whom is all my delight—though they are not perfect, but a long way from it! If, out of Heaven, there are to be found any who really live near to God, it is the members of the Church of Christ.

“Ah,” says another, “*but there are a rare lot of hypocrites.*” You are very sound and sincere yourself, I suppose? I trust you are so, but then you ought to come and join the Church to add to its soundness by your own. I am sure, my dear Friends, none of you will shut up your shops tomorrow morning, or refuse to take a sovereign when a customer comes in because there happen to be some smashers about who are dealing with bad coins! No, not you! And you do not believe the theory of some, that because some professing Christians are hypocrites, therefore all are, for that would be as though you would say that because some sovereigns are bad, therefore all are bad—which would be clearly wrong, for if all sovereigns were counterfeits, it would never pay for the counterfeiter to try to pass his counterfeits! It is the quantity of good metal that passes off the bad. There is a fine good quantity of respectable golden Christians still in the world and still in the Church—rest assured of that!

“Well,” says one, “I do not think—though I *hope* I am a servant of God—that I can join the Church. You see, *it is so looked down upon.*” Oh, what a blessed look-down that is! I do think, Brothers and Sisters, there is no honor in the world equal to that of being looked down upon by that which is called, “Society,” in this country! The most of people are slaves to what they call, “respectability.” Respectability? When a man puts on a coat on Sunday that he has paid for. When he worships God by night or by day. Whether men see him or not—when he is an honest, straightforward man—I do not care how small his earnings are, he is a respectable man! And he need never bend his neck to the idea of Society or its artificial respectability!

These various kinds of humbug, for they are no other, keep many from joining the Christian Church because they are afraid of being looked down upon by respectable people in Society. I read in a paper only yesterday that it would be no use to create Nonconformist peers, because in the next generation they would cease to be Nonconformist and become respectable in their religion—and *I am afraid it is true!* It is outrageous that as soon as some persons rise in social position they renounce the Church to which they gave themselves when they gave themselves to the Lord! The day will come when the poorest Christian will be exalted above the proudest peer that did not fear God—when God will take out of the hovels and cottages of England a peerage of an Imperial race that will put to the blush all the kings and princes of the world! And these He will set above the seraphim when others will be cast from His Presence!

I say to any of you who will not join this Church because doing so would lower your respectability—neither I or Jesus Christ asks you to join it! If these are the gods you worship—Society and Respectability—go to your beggarly gods and worship them, but God will require it of your hands in the Day of Account. There is nothing better than the service of Christ! For my own part, to be despised, pointed at, hooted in the streets, called by all manner of evil names—I would accept it all, sooner than all the stars of knighthoods and peerages if the service of Christ necessitated it, for this is the true honor of the Christian when he truly serves

his Master! The day is coming when the Lord will divide between those that love Him and those that love Him not—and every day is getting ready for that last division. This very night the division is being made! In the preaching of the Gospel it is being carried out. Let each man take his stand and ask himself the question—Are you with Christ or with Belial? Are you with God, with Christ, with the precious blood, or do you still rank with sinful pleasures and their delights? As you will have to answer for it when the skies are on a blaze and the earth reels, and the Judgment trumpet summons you before the Great White Throne, so answer it now! And you brave spirits who have loved your Savior—if you have never yet joined His army, come and enlist now! And you loving spirits who are tender and who have shrunk back awhile, come forward now—

***“You that are men now serve Him
Against unnumbered foes!
Your courage rise with danger,
And strength to strength oppose.”***

Today stand up for Jesus! Today be willing to be the off-scouring of all things for His name’s sake. And then, when He comes in His Glory, yours shall be the reward, a reward that shall far outweigh any losses that you can sustain today! “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” “He that with his heart believes and with his mouth makes confession shall be saved.” Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and may His blessing rest upon you! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: 2 CORINTHIANS 8.

The Apostle is writing concerning a certain collection which was being made for the poor saints of Jerusalem. It was from Jerusalem that the Gospel had spread into Greece and, therefore, those who had received spiritual things from the poor Jews at Jerusalem were bound by every tie of holy brotherhood to remember their benefactors in the time of famine. The Apostle stirs up the Corinthian Church about this contribution.

Verse 1. *Moreover, brethren, we make known to you.* Or, “we make you to know.”

1, 2. *Of the Grace of God bestowed on the Churches of Macedonia. How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their generosity.* It is good to stir one Christian up by the example of another and Paul excites those at Corinth by the example of the Churches in Macedonia—especially, no doubt, the Church at Philippi. He says that they were in great affliction and they were very poor, but yet they had been so filled with the Grace of God that their very poverty had enabled them to “abound to the riches of their generosity,” for what they gave became more in proportion because they were so poor.

3. *For to their power, I bear record, yes, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves.* Without any pressure! Without even a hint—spontaneously!

4. *Praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.* “Take upon us the communion,” for that blessed word “*Koinonia*,” communion, is applied not only to the Lord’s Supper and to such fellowship as that, but to communion with poor saints—fellowship with them by helping their necessities. And Paul says that the Macedonian Churches pressed it upon him that he should take their money and go with it to Jerusalem and distribute it. He appears to have been very reluctant to do this, but they pressed it upon him.

5. *And this they did, not as we hoped.* That is, “according to our hopes.”

6. *But first gave their own selves to the Lord and unto us by the will of God.* They first gave of themselves to God and then asked Paul to take it that he might use it for God in the distribution of Christian charity among the poor saints at Jerusalem.

6, 7. *So we urged Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same Grace also. Therefore, as you abound in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that you abound in this Grace also.* They were a famous Church—this Church at Corinth, having gifted men in abundance more than other Churches—to the extent that they did not have one man for a pastor because they so abounded in brethren able to edify. And he urges them, as they were forward in all things, not to be backward in their generosity.

8. *I speak not by commandment.* “I do not wish to put it upon you as a law. I want it to be spontaneous on your part.”

8, 9. *But by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love. For you know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you, through His poverty, might be rich.* What a touching argument! How could he find a better? Help your Brothers and Sisters in Jerusalem that are in need, even though that help should pinch you, for you know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and what He did, and what He gave that you might be rich!

10. *And herein I give my advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago.* They had begun last year—perhaps not a year ago, but some months ago in the previous year—to talk the matter over and to make promises. And they had been among the first to undertake the work, but as yet they had not done it.

11. *Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance, also, out of that which you have.* They had not a minister, you see, and what is everybody’s business is nobody’s business—and so the contribution was not carried out. And in

general, the Church at Corinth is about the worst in the New Testament, and that for this very reason—that it had not any oversight. It is the pattern Church of certain Brothers whom we have among us this day—in the very example of them! And they quote this as an example, whereas it is put here as a beacon, and a very excellent beacon, too, to warn us against any such thing! Everything was sixes and sevens, good people as they were. Seeing that they had no order and no discipline, nothing got done, and they wearied the Apostle's life because of that. God would have things done decently and in order—and He gives to His Churches, pastors after His own heart! And when He does, then is the Church able to carry out her desires and her activities with something like practical common-sense. But here a year ago, months ago, they had talked the matter over and made a promise—and now Paul has to say to them, "Now, therefore, perform the doing of it." They had no deacons to look them up, I will be bound to say.

12-14. *For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man has, and not according to that he has not. For I mean not that other men be eased and you burdened, but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their need—that their abundance may also be a supply for your need—that there may be equality.* It is in the Christian Church, alone, that we shall ever find liberty, equality and fraternity thoroughly represented. There, by the life of Christ within His people spiritually, that shall be realized, and the Apostle backs up this thought of his, which Bengel has beautifully put when he says, "We ought to minister of our luxuries to the comfort of others, and of our comforts to the necessities of others." So we should, to keep up a balance that when one suffers needs and another abounds, there may be an equality made.

15. *As it is written, he that had gathered much. Much manna*

15-17. *Had nothing left over: and he that had gathered little had no lack. But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you. For, indeed, he accepted the exhortation, but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you. Or, "he is coming to you," for he bore this letter to them.*

18. *And we have sent with him the Brother whose praise is in the Gospel throughout all the churches: And what Brother was that? Nobody knows. And a Brother who has praise in all the Churches may be well content to have his name forgotten! Oh, it would be a sweet thing to have praise in all the Churches anonymously, so that it all might go up to God. It may have been Luke. Probably it was. It may not have been Luke. Probably it was not. We do not know who it was. But it is not important. What does it matter? As Mr. Whitfield used to say, "Let my name perish, but let Christ's name last forever." "And we have sent with him the Brother whose praise is in the Gospel throughout all the churches."*

19. *And not that only, but who was also chosen of the Churches to travel with us with this Grace, Or "with this gift."*

19, 20. *Which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind. Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us.* He had other brethren associated with him lest anybody should even hint that Paul was benefited thereby. And, oh, in the distribution of the Lord's money, it becomes us to be exceedingly careful! Paul adds this.

21. *Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.* That the thing might be so clear and transparent that while God knew that Paul was honest, everybody else might know it, too, for others had been associated with him.

22, 23. *And we have sent with them our Brother whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent upon the great confidence which I have in you. Whether any do enquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellow helper concerning you: or our brethren be enquired of, they are the messengers of the Churches, and the Glory of Christ.* How beautiful to see Paul so praising his brethren—very humble, commonplace persons as compared with himself, but he admires the Grace of God in them. How very different from the general spirit of depreciation that you find even among Christians—afraid to praise anybody lest they should be exalted above measure. You might leave that to the devil! He will take care that they are not exalted above measure but you need not be as particular about that. Often the best thing that can be done for God's servant is to encourage him, for, though you may not know it, he may have a multitude of depressions, heavy toil and earnest care and much watching which may bring him down. Paul speaks well of the Brotherhood—let us try to do the same. But what does he call these simple-minded men who are going with him to distribute this money? Does he call them the *Glory of Christ*? Yes! Christ is the Glory of God and His people are the Glory of Christ! He glories whenever He is glorified by them! They are the result of the travail of His soul and in that sense they are His Glory.

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

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

CHRIST'S MOTIVE AND OURS

NO. 2232

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
NOVEMBER 29, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*"For your sakes."
2 Corinthians 8:9.*

*"For His sake."
Philippians 1:29.*

The true test of any action lies in its motive. Many a deed which seems to be glorious is really mean and ignoble because it is done with a base intention. While other actions which appear to be poor and paltry, if we truly understood them, would be seen to be full of the glory and beauty of a noble purpose. The mainspring of a watch is the most important part of it. The spring of an action is everything. My sermon from these two texts will be on the motive which inspired Christ's redeeming work and the motive which should inspire our service for Him. He *did all* for our sakes—we should *do all* for His sake. Fix your attention, then, chiefly, not on the deed, but on the *motive* which is its root.

The less of self in any effort, the nobler it is. A great work, undertaken and completed from selfish motives, is much less praiseworthy than the feeble endeavor put forth to help other people. Selfishness is, perhaps, the worst of all meanness, but *spiritual* selfishness is the form of the evil most to be dreaded. With Christ there was no self-seeking. Not for Himself did He come to earth—not for Himself did He suffer. He lived for others and died for others. "For you know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you, through His poverty, might be rich." In this glorious unselfishness Christ is not only our Savior, He is also our Example. As He did not live for self, we, too, must learn to deny ourselves and live like He. It is in living and acting, "for His sake," that we shall most truly "follow His steps."

We are often told, in these days, that we should live for the good of others, and we ought to heed the call. But there is so little in our fellow men to call forth the spirit of self-sacrifice that if we have no higher motive, we shall soon become tired of our efforts on their behalf. The true way is to live for *Christ* and then, "for His sake," seek to save our fellow men. With such a constraining power we shall not be weary in well-doing, for though men may fail us, and frequent discouragement meet us in our toil, our impelling force will always be the same. As we whisper it to ourselves again and again, "for His sake," we shall be made strong to do or to suffer.

If you thus go forth to the service of each day, "for His sake," realizing that He, "for your sakes," gave Himself to toil and agony, and even to death, itself, you will daily grow into sympathy with Christ. His Divine compassion for men will take hold upon you—you will be lifted up above the life of the world and, as you go about doing good, you will be able to touch the sorrow of the earth with a tender hand. You will grow like He you serve.

I have heard of a man who lived in a certain town and while he lived, was greatly misunderstood. It was known that he had a large income, yet he lived a miserly life, and loud were the murmurs at the scanty help he gave to those around him. He stinted himself in many ways and hoarded his money. But when he died, the popular verdict was reversed, for *then* the motive of all his economy was manifested. He left his fortune to build a reservoir and an aqueduct, to bring a constant supply of pure water to the town where he had been despised and misunderstood! This was the chief need of the people and for a long time they had suffered much from drought and disease because of the scanty water supply. All the years that they had misjudged him, he was silently and unselfishly living for their sakes. When they discovered his motive, it was too late to do anything for him further than to hand down to future generations the memory of his noble and generous deed. But *we* can do much, "for His sake," who has brought to us the *living water* and who, though He died for us, is now alive, again, and will live forevermore. If He thus loved me, and lived for me, nothing that I can do is too much for Him—

***"When often, like a wayward child,
I murmur at His will,
Then this sweet word, 'For Jesus' sake,'
My restless heart can still.
I bow my head and gently led,
His easy yoke I take—
And all the day, and all the way,
An echo in my heart shall say—
'For Jesus sake!'"***

Without dwelling on the immediate connection of the words which I have chosen from two familiar and beautiful verses, I would, with these two texts, weave a fabric of love. See what Jesus did for us and then think what we can do for Jesus. "For your sakes" Christ did His deeds of love. "For His sake" we are called upon to live and labor among the sons of men. May His love enkindle ours!

I. First, let us consider THE MOTIVE OF CHRIST'S WORK. "*For your sakes.*" As many of you as have believed in Christ Jesus may know that, "*for your sakes,*" the Lord of Glory stooped to be a suffering, dying Man.

In meditating on the motive that moved the Lord Jesus to come to your rescue, consider, first, *the august Person* who undertook your salvation and died, "for your sakes." He was God. "He thought it not robbery to be equal with God." He made the heavens. "Without Him was not anything made that was made." The angels delighted to do Him homage! Every seraph's wing would fly at His bidding—all the host of Heaven worshipped at His feet. All the powers of Nature were under His control. He needed *nothing* to make Him glorious—all things were His and the power to make

more than all! He might truly say, "If I were hungry, I would not tell you: for the world is Mine and the fullness thereof."

Hymned day without night by all the sacred choristers, He did not lack for praise. Nor did He lack for servants—legions of angels were always ready to do His commands, hearkening unto the voice of His word. It was this God, this Ever-Blessed One who was, from eternity with the Father, and in whom the Father had infinite delight, who looked upon men with the eye of love! He that was born in Bethlehem's manger was the Infinite as well as the Infant. And He that lived, here, the life of a peasant, toiling and suffering, was that same God who made the heavens and the earth, but who deigned to be Incarnate for our sakes. Well might Isaiah, in his prophetic vision, proclaim the royal titles of the "Child" who was to be born and the "Son" who, in the fullness of time, would be given to us and for us—"The government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

Let this Truth of God sink into your souls, that it was *God* who came from Heaven, "for your sakes." It was no inferior being, no one like yourselves, but it was very God of very God who loved you with an everlasting and infinite affection! I have often turned that thought over in my mind, but I have never been able to express it as I have wished. If I were told that all the sons of men cared for me, that would be but as a drop in a bucket compared with Jehovah, Himself, regarding me! If it were said that all the princes of the earth had fallen at some poor man's feet and laid aside their dignities that they might relieve his necessities, it would be counted condescending kindness—but such an act would not be worthy to be spoken of in comparison with that infinite condescension and unparalleled love which brought the Savior from the skies to rescue and redeem such worthless rebels as we were! It is not possible that all the condescension of all the kind and compassionate men who have ever lived should be more than as a small grain that could not turn the scale compared with the everlasting hills of the Savior's wondrous love!

Think, too, of *the insignificant clients* on whom all this wealth of affection was poured. As you remember the Person who came here, "for your sakes," and then, wonderful stoop! consider who you are—who *we* are—for whose sakes He died, do not our hearts melt at the thought? Brothers and Sisters, if we truly know ourselves, we have a very poor opinion of ourselves when compared with Christ! Humility has been rightly said to be a correct estimate of ourselves. What were we but the most insignificant creatures? If our whole race had been blotted out, there need have been no gap in the creation of God, or if there had seemed to be a void for a moment, He had but to speak the word and myriads of creatures, prompt to obey His will, would have filled up the space! How was it that Jesus, the Son of God, should suffer for such insignificant worms—such insects of an hour as we are?

But we are not only insignificant, we are also wicked. "We have sinned with our fathers. We have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly." Even the Lord's children have to confess, "All we, like sheep, have gone

astray; we have turned, everyone, to his own way." But, oh, wonder of love, they can add, "and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all!" As sinners, we deserve nothing but God's thunderbolts, yet, trusting in His dear Son, we receive nothing but His mercy! Having desperately sinned and broken all His Commandments, if He had said, "Perish forever, you guilty rebels," He would have spoken only the sentence that strict justice required. Instead of that, He said to His Only-Begotten, "You shall die that they may not die. I will take You, My Son, My Isaac, and offer You upon the altar of sacrifice that through Your death men may live." This is, indeed, a marvel of Grace! This must be one of the things the angels desire to look into! Our thoughts cannot compass this wondrous work, nor can our words describe it!

Many of us, also, were not only sinful, as the whole race is, but we were peculiarly sinful. Some of us feel inclined to dispute with Saul of Tarsus for the title, "chief of sinners." It will always remain a wonder to me that the Son of God should have condescended to die *for me*. Were you a drunk and has the Holy Spirit shown you that Jesus died for you? And are you now rejoicing that you are washed in His precious blood? Were you one of the women who, like Mary Magdalene, were rightly called sinners? And have you, like she, washed your robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb? Then you are constrained to exclaim with wonder and gratitude—

***"Depth of mercy, can there be
Mercy still reserved for me?
Can my God His wrath forbear?
Me, the chief of sinners, spare?"***

I fancy that I hear one and another of you adoring God's matchless mercy and saying, with wonder and surprise, "Is it really true that mercy is brought *to me* by God's own Son? Could nothing less than the death of the Only-Begotten save my sinful soul? Did He condescend to *die for me*? Well may I admire the Grace thus manifested and raise my glad song of thanksgiving to Him who has done such great things for me!" Each of us can see some peculiarity in his own case. Some of us have not offended so grievously in outward conduct as others have done, but, then, we had better instruction in our childhood and, consequently, our sins were *doubly* heinous, for we sinned against light and knowledge! Some of us have had to violate our conscience terribly in order to sin as we have done. It may be that some of you lived 40 or 50 years as unbelievers and yet, at last, you were brought to bow at the dear feet that were pierced for you. Oh, I am sure you bless His name that ever He shed His blood for you—and I dare say you feel as I do, sometimes, that none in the Glory Land will be able to raise such a song of adoring gratitude as you will when all Heaven shall ring with the grand chorus of those who have been redeemed from among men!

Thus have we considered, first, the august Person who accomplished the great work of our redemption. And, secondly, the poor sinful creatures for whose sake He suffered.

Now let me invite you to consider *the wondrous work* which this master motive inspired. "For your sakes" God became Incarnate—the Son of God

took into union with Himself *our nature*—without which He could not have suffered and died. We read concerning Him, “Being found in fashion as a Man, He humbled Himself.” If we had never heard of that fact, before, our ears and heart would be astonished at the words! At the end of each clause I feel inclined to pause, and say, “Look! Look! Was there ever such a wonder as this—the Infinite became Incarnate! He ate and He hungered! He drank and He thirsted! He needed to be housed from the wintry storm, but He “had not where to lay His head.” He wanted human sympathy, but, “all His disciples forsook Him and fled.” He was the “Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief,” and all, “for your sakes.”

The words that follow our text tell us that, “He became poor.” You know that, in this world, the poverty of a man is usually reckoned in proportion to the position of affluence from which he has come down. One who was born a pauper is not relatively so poor as the man who was once a king, but has been reduced to beggary, for in the one case there is no experience of the luxury which riches can command, and in the other no adaptability to the shifts and privations of those who have always been in poverty. When the Christ of God, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, was forsaken by His Father, deserted by His friends, and left alone to suffer, “for your sakes,” that was the direst poverty that was ever known!

See your Lord beneath the olives of Gethsemane! Bloody sweat falls to the ground as, being in an agony, He prays more earnestly—“If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me”—but it must not pass from Him. “For your sakes” He must drink it! “For your sakes” every bitter drop must be drained! Then see Him as He stands, without an advocate, before Herod, Pilate and Caiaphas—“taken from prison and from judgment.” Mark His sufferings as they hound Him through the streets of Jerusalem, along the Sorrowful Way! Behold Him as, at last, they fasten His hands and His feet to the cruel wood and lift Him up ‘twixt earth and Heaven, to suffer the death of the Cross! Let those who will, depreciate the sufferings of Christ—I believe there was in the God-Man, Christ Jesus, an infinite capacity for suffering and that His body, so wondrously formed, was able to endure and did endure, infinitely more than human thought can imagine—while, at the same time, the sufferings of His soul were the very soul of His sufferings! Well did the Spirit-taught poet, Joseph Hart, write—

***“Much we talk of Jesus’ blood,
But how little’s understood!
Of His sufferings, so intense,
Angels have no perfect sense.
Who can rightly comprehend
Their beginning or their end?
‘Tis to God and God alone
That their weight is fully known.”***

All this Christ suffered, “for your sakes.” What love and gratitude ought to fill your heart as you think of all that Jesus bore on your behalf! If you had a wife who, when you lay sick, watched you with such anxious care that she undermined her own health and brought herself down to the grave through her devotion to you, oh, with what love you think of her, that she should suffer even unto death for your sake! If you were ever delivered from a watery grave, and the brave fellow who rescued you, him-

self, sank back into the water and was drowned, you can never forget his noble self-sacrifice, but you will always cherish his memory, for he died for your sake!

There is a story I have often read, of an American gentleman who was accustomed to go frequently to a tomb and plant fresh flowers. When someone asked why he did so, he said that when the time came for him to go to the war, he was detained by some business and the man who lay beneath the sod became his substitute, performed his duty and died in the battle. Over that carefully-kept grave, he had the words inscribed, "He died for me!" There is something melting in the thought of another dying for you—how much more melting is it when that One is the Christ of Calvary! Why, you feel, "Here is One of whom I never deserved anything, taking my place! Here is One whom I have badly treated and against whom I have offended—yet *He* suffered for me—He took my place, He bore my sins, He *died* for me! Therefore I will live for Him. I will love Him. I will give myself wholly and unreservedly to Him and to His blessed service." "For your sakes" Christ died. If you believe that, you cannot help loving and serving Him! It is an old theme which I am bringing before your minds, but it is the grandest theme that ever inspired a mortal tongue, or stirred a human heart!

I want you that love the Lord to consider, next, *the comprehensive motive* for which He worked the wondrous work which I have so imperfectly described—"For your sakes." I would have you remember that everything He was and everything He did was, "for your sakes." "For your sakes" the midnight prayer upon the bleak mountain's side. "For your sakes" the scoffing and the jeering that followed Him wherever He went. "For your sakes" the agony in the garden. "For your sakes" the flagellation of the Roman lash. "For your sakes" He gave His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. "For your sakes" the shame and the spitting. "For your sakes," He "became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross." Say it, my Brothers and Sisters! Let your hearts say it now and wet the words with tears—"For our sakes He suffered all this."

Think of Him for a moment as He is taken down from the Cross. In fair white linen they wrap that blessed body, covered with its own blood. I think I see Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, and Joseph of Arimathea, looking on that poor mangled frame. Those dear eyes, once so bright with love, now closed in death. Those wonder-working hands that multiplied the loaves and fishes, now stiff and cold. And those blessed feet that trod the sea, now all lifeless. O Joseph, and you, Mary, this was for you—"for your sakes"! But also for mine and for the sake of all my Brothers and Sisters who are resting by faith on that finished Sacrifice! They laid the dear body in Joseph's new tomb, the virgin sepulcher wherein never man had lain, and there they left our great Champion sleeping a while in the darkness of death. As He lay there, it was "for your sakes."

Yes, and blessed be His name, when the appointed morning came, He lived again, the stone was rolled away from the sepulcher and He came forth from the tomb! It was, "for your sakes," He rose. The 40 days He lived on earth were "for your sakes." And when from off the brow of Olivet

He ascended to His Father's right hand, it was, "for your sakes." He said to His disciples, "I go to prepare a place for you." There, seated on His Throne of Glory, He holds the scepter and rules all worlds, "for your sakes." There as an Intercessor, He pleads with God, "for your sakes." There is not a gem in His crown but it is there, "for your sakes." There is not a jewel on His breastplate but it is there, "for your sakes." From head to foot He is what He is, "for your sakes." And when He shall come a second time—as soon He will—to judge the world in righteousness, and to "gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of Heaven to the other" to usher in the reign of truth and establish His Throne forever, it will be all, "for your sakes," who have believed on His name! "For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant Grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God."

We might thus continue, but we will not. May God make this thought burn in your heart—All that Christ has done for us is for our sakes! I suppose it is because we are such fallen creatures that these considerations do not move us as they should. Granite is wax compared with our hearts! Oh, that we did but feel the fire of Jesus' love! Like coals of juniper which have a most vehement flame, our hearts should burn within us while we talked of that dear love which brought Him to the grave and took Him from the grave to the heavens—and shall bring Him back from the heavens to take His people up to be with Him where He is and to live with Him forever!

II. Having meditated on the motive which moved Christ in the work He accomplished for us, let us consider THE MOTIVE WHICH SHOULD INSPIRE ALL OUR SERVICE FOR HIM—"For His sake."

This second text is in the Epistle to the Philippians, first chapter, and 29th verse. "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake." What are we that we should be allowed the high honor of suffering, "for His sake"? It is a great privilege to do, or to be, or to bear *anything* for Him. Our suffering can never be worth a thought when compared with His—and any sacrifice that we could offer, "for His sake," would be small, indeed, when contrasted with the infinite Sacrifice that He has already made for our sakes. If you are rejoicing in the fact that Christ died for you, it will be very easy to prompt in your hearts the desire to do something, "for His sake."

I find in Scripture that the thought expressed in the words, "for His sake," may be enlarged and assume six or seven phases. For instance, in the Gospel of Matthew, fifth chapter, and 10th verse, our Lord puts it, "*for righteousness' sake*"—"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake." I understand, then, that if a man suffers as a Christian for doing that which is right, he is suffering for Christ's sake. If he cannot and will not act disreputably and contrary to the commands of God, as others do, the suffering which he willingly bears, the loss which he cheerfully incurs because of his uprightness, is so much borne for Christ's sake.

If a man is out-and-out righteous in this world, he will be sure to be pointed at by certain persons as an oddity. He cannot lie, as others lie,

nor practice tricks in trade as others do—nor frequent their places of amusement, nor indulge in their lusts and, therefore, straightway they say—“He is a hypocrite! He is a cant!” And as they cannot understand the principle which inspires him, they impute to him motives which he abhors. This is how they talk—“He is doing it for the sake of being thought a saint,” “He is paid for it.” “He has some sinister motive or other.” Or else they sum up the whole matter by declaring, “He is a downright impostor.”

Now, if in any of these ways you are made to suffer for that which is right—for speaking the truth and acting the truth—never mind, Brothers and Sisters, but rather rejoice that you are permitted to suffer for Christ's sake! Say within yourself, “If my dear Lord lost all things for me, I may well lose some things for Him. If He was stripped to the last rag for me, I may well be content to be poor, ‘for His sake.’” Set your face like a flint and say, “We can be poor, but we cannot be dishonest. We can suffer, but we cannot sin.” Many men say, when we talk to them thus, “But, you know, we must live.” I do not see that there is any necessity for your living if you cannot live honestly. It would be better to die than to do wrong—any amount of suffering would be better than that we should deny our Lord and Master! Remember Peter's words, “If you suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are you: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts,” or, as the Revised Version has the last clause, “Sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord.”

In the Word of God, yet another form is given to this suffering or doing for Christ's sake, and it assumes this shape—“*for the Gospel's sake.*” In His first Epistle to the Corinthians, ninth chapter, and 23rd verse, Paul writes of what he did, “for the Gospel's sake,” and our Lord speaks of some who, when there was persecution, “for the Word's sake,” were offended. Now, if you are put to any shame for the sake of the Gospel, you suffer, “for His sake.” And if you labor to spread the Gospel and publish the Word of God—if it is your daily endeavor to tell to others God's way of salvation, you are doing something, “for His sake,” for the Gospel and Christ are so wrapped up together that what is done for the Gospel's sake, is done, “for His sake.”

Yet another view of the subject is given to us when the Apostle, in his letter to the Colossians, first chapter, and 24th verse, speaks of certain saints honoring Christ by suffering, “*for His body's sake, which is the Church.*” That is another form of rendering homage to Christ and doing what we do, “for His sake.” O Brothers and Sisters, we ought to do much more than we do for God's people! They are the body of Christ. We should, everyone of us, feel it an honor to be allowed to unloose the laces of His shoes and to wash His feet—well, poor saints are Christ's feet! When you are feeding them, you are feeding Him, for certainly, if Paul, in persecuting them, persecuted Christ, it is clear that you, when you are helping them for Christ's sake, are doing it for Him! Oh, lay out your lives for His Church's sake! His dear people deserve it at your hands and their Lord deserves it, too.

Then, again, Paul, in His second Epistle to Timothy, second chapter, and 10th verse, uses the phrase, “*for the elect's sakes,*” by which I think he

comprehends, not only those who are in the Church as yet, but those who are to be. Happy is that man who spends all his time in seeking out poor wanderers, that he may bring in God's elect! Happy is he who lays all his talents and all his strength upon the altar of God, consecrated to this aim—that he may find out the chosen of the Father, the redeemed by the blood of Jesus and, in the hand of the Spirit, be the instrument of bringing them back to their Father's house from which they have wandered. When you serve Christ's people, always do it, "for His sake."

Further, we have the expression, "*the Kingdom of God's sake,*" when our Master tells Peter, as recorded in the 18th chapter of Luke, 29th verse, that no one who has left anything for Him and for it, shall fail of present and eternal reward. This is another way in which we can serve Christ our King, by being willing to sacrifice "house, or parents, or brothers and sisters, or wife, or children, for the Kingdom of God's sake."

There is one other remarkable expression used by John in his second Epistle, at the second verse. He there speaks of something done, "*for the Truth's sake,* which dwells in us." Ah, it is not merely the Gospel we are to defend, but we are to defend that living Seed which the Holy Spirit has put into us, that Truth of God which we have tasted, handled and felt—that theology which is not that of the Book, only, but that which is written on the fleshy tablets of our hearts. I hope there are many of you who keep back your hand from sin because the Truth that is in you will not let you touch it—and who put forth *both* your hands to serve the Lord because the Truth that is in you compels you to it! The new nature, that living, incorruptible Seed, constrains you and you judge that if Christ died for you, you must live and, if necessary, you will die for Him. I would ask great things from those for whom Christ has done great things. When you make sin little, and Hell little, you also make Christ little—and then, in consequence, you think you owe Him but little and you will render Him but little. But when you feel the weight of sin and see the preciousness of your Redeemer and feel, in some measure, the obligations under which you are to Him, then you say—

"Oh! what shall I do, my Savior to praise."

There have been, in the Christian Church, at different times, men and women of highly consecrated spirit who seem to have realized what their Lord expected of them. I dare say that they were very dissatisfied with themselves, but as we read their biographies, we are charmed with their consecration of spirit. The Truth of God and especially the Christ, who *is* the Truth, had such influence over their lives, that they truly lived, "for His sake." May we have many such in our ranks! I do not know whether it may be the duty of any of you to go to foreign lands, "for His sake." I only hope there are some young men here who will offer themselves for missionary service, for blessed are they that bear the Gospel into "the regions beyond," carrying their lives in their hands! They shall stand very near to the eternal Throne of God in the day when the King rewards His faithful servants.

I do not know whether there may be any of our Sisters here who are bound to consecrate their lives to the nursing of the sick where fevers are rife, or where pestilence abounds, but they who can do such service to

humanity, for Christ's sake, shall receive no light word of approbation at the Last Great Day. But, probably, the mass of us will have to abide in our calling and, therefore, I would say, if we must do so, let our life be all, "for His sake." I would desire never to come to this platform but, "for His sake." Never to say even a word about the Gospel but, "for His sake." And you, in your home, dear mother, go and bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, "for His sake." Take those dear little ones and present them to Him. Say, "Jesus, I give them to You—accept and save them. I devote them to Your service, as Hannah gave Samuel to the Lord." Then, "for His sake," teach them holiness. "For His sake" be patient with them and, "for His sake," bring them up, always, in the fear of the Lord.

You men of business, go out and labor, "for His sake." I could almost envy some of you who have acquired an adequate income. Keep the warehouse or shop open, "for His sake," and give more largely to His cause. And you who are not in a position of competence, but are struggling for your daily bread, "for His sake," never do a wrong thing. Sometimes, when you are half inclined to yield to the tempter, imagine that your Savior is standing by your side and that He puts His pierced hand upon your shoulder and says, "If you are, indeed, bought with My blood, let there be justice in all your dealings with your fellows. No, more, be generous as well as just, for My sake, for I would have you so act that all men shall know that you are My disciple."

Perhaps some of you, who profess to be Christians, are living altogether for yourselves, instead of living unto God. When you are at home tonight, sitting quietly in your room, alone, I could half wish that the Lord Jesus would enter and say to you, "I have loved you with an everlasting love, and laid down My life for you. What are you doing for Me in return?" Suppose He looked at you with those gentle, yet heart-searching eyes of His, and you looked into that face which was marred more than any man's, what would you say? Oh, I think I should have to cover my face for very shame! And yet I am not living in forgetfulness of Him and I am trying to do Him some humble service. But as for those who do nothing, with the exception of sitting to hear sermons, or sometimes dropping in at a Prayer Meeting, or, now and then, giving a little to the cause of God—perhaps as little as they dare—oh, what would they say in His Presence? You will all be in His Presence, soon! Perhaps sooner than you expect—and among the sorrows that will trouble you on your death-bed, if you are unfaithful to your Lord, will be this—that you have done so little for Him while you had the opportunity.

When sitting by the side of one of our dying members, a poor weak girl, wasted by consumption, I was charmed as she whispered in my ear that when she was brought to Jesus, she had such joy that she had striven to do something for Him but mourned that she could accomplish so little. Poor child! She tried to teach a class of boys and half killed herself in the struggle to keep them quiet. She felt constrained, by love to her Lord, to try to do something for Him, and as there happened to be nothing else to do, she began to teach some rough children who were far too wild for her.

But she did not regret it. Oh, no! I am sure, if she could be raised up, she would take to such work, again, "for His sake." And I am sure that any of you, if you have given of your substance, or given of your time, or given of your abilities, "for His sake," will never have to say, when you are lying as she was, and breathing out your life, "I did too much for my Savior." You will rather bless His name that He accepted the little that you could do! And like our young Sister, mourn that it is so little compared with what He deserves!

I therefore say to each one of you, Brothers and Sisters—If you have, indeed, been washed in the blood of Christ, spend yourself for Him—do not mock Him. If it was in play that you were redeemed and if the Crucifixion was but a sport, then go and trifle with the service of Christ. But if, indeed, the blood-mark of a real Savior is upon you and you have been washed in the fountain filled with His precious blood, go and live really useful, consecrated lives into which you shall throw your whole heart and soul and strength, "for His sake!"

Who shall pile a monument worthy of the Savior who did so much, "for your sakes?" Who shall compose a song sweet enough for the Christ of God who came for our redemption? Who shall sound the trumpets loudly enough for Immanuel, who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor? Who shall bring offerings of gold and frankincense rich enough for Him who gave up all for His people? Crown Him, you angels! You seraphim, adore Him! O God, You alone can give Him the recompense of honor which He merits! Glory be to His name forever! Let us take as our motto, from now on, these words, "For His sake." "For His sake," let us put up with poverty, counting it to be richest to be poor if He would have it so. "For His sake," let us cheerfully endure bodily sufferings, being glad if they make us more useful for Him. "For His sake," let us live in toil and die in obscurity, if so we can best glorify Him. Let our song be that of the gifted songstress, of whose hymn I have already quoted one verse—

***"In suffering sore, or toilsome task,
His burden light I'll bear;
'For Jesus' sake' shall sweeten all,
Till His bright home I share.
And then this song more sweet, more strong,
In Heaven my harp shall wake—
Led all the way, till that glad day
Eternally, my heart shall say,
'For Jesus sake.'"***

I will close when I have only added that if any of you have not at present any interest in this sacrifice and this service of which my two texts speak, I have just this word for you. It is, at least, a blessing that you are still permitted to listen to the Gospel. Let me very briefly tell once more, "the old, old story of Jesus and His love." Jesus Christ died in the place of sinners. We deserved to be punished for our sins. Under the Law of Moses there was no pardon for sin except through the blood of a sacrifice. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is *the one Sacrifice* for sins forever, of which the thousands of bullocks and lambs slain under the Law were but types. Every man who trusts to the death of the Lamb of God may know that Jesus Christ was punished in His place, so that God can be just and yet for-

give the guilty. He can, without violating His justice, remit sin and pardon iniquity because a Substitute has been found whose death has an infinite value because of the Divine Nature of the Sufferer. He has borne the iniquities of all who trust Him. "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall go your way a saved soul, even though you came into this house steeped in sin, or through terrible conviction on the very verge of despair. God grant that many of you may trust in Jesus this very hour, "for His sake!" Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—2 Corinthians 8.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—282, 296, 709.**

TO THE READERS OF MY SERMONS:

MY DEAR FRIENDS—This morning I read in *The Times* that "Mr. Spurgeon is *rapidly* recovering." These words exactly describe what I am *not* doing. The symptoms are the same as when I was at home. I am tossed up and down upon the waves of my disease and what is thought progress, today, is gone tomorrow. I have seasons of utter prostration. Always weak, it seems at times that I have no strength whatever and must altogether collapse. *I shall recover*, for this is the tenor of the prayers which our God has so far answered, but there are no traces or signs of anything *rapid* about my condition. *Emphatically*, any advance I make is *the slowest of all slow things*. I write this at once to prevent disappointment to sanguine friends. I know not why I should be the object of so much tender sympathy, but as I am thus privileged I would have a sensitive regard for the feelings of such benefactors and warn them against statements for which there is no basis in truth. Their friend remains feeble and has no hasty recovery to expect. Please continue prayer. Have great patience. Relieve me of anxiety as to the institutions and praise God for what He has already done.

Your deeply-indebted servant, for Christ's sake,
Mentone, November 21, 1891,

C. H. SPURGEON.

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THE CONDESCENSION OF CHRIST

NO. 151

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, SEPTEMBER 13, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might be rich.”
2 Corinthians 8:9.***

The Apostle, in this chapter, was endeavoring to stir up the Corinthians to liberality. He desired them to contribute something for those who were the poor in the flock, that he might be able to minister to their necessities. He tells them that the Churches of Macedonia, though very much poorer than the Church at Corinth, had done even beyond their means for the relief of the Lord’s family and he exhorts the Corinthians to do the same.

But suddenly recollecting that examples taken from inferiors seldom have a powerful effect, he lays aside his argument drawn from the Church of Macedonia and he holds before them a reason for liberality which the hardest heart can scarcely resist, if once that reason be applied by the Spirit. “My Brethren,” said he, “there is One above, by whom you hope you have been saved, One whom you call Master and Lord. Now if you will but imitate Him you cannot be ungenerous or illiberal. For, my Brethren, I tell you a thing which is an old thing with you and an undisputed truth—‘For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might be rich.’ Let this constrain you to benevolence.”

O Christian, whenever you are inclined to an avaricious withholding from the Church of God, think of your Savior giving up all that He had to serve you and can you then, when you behold self-denial so noble—can you then be selfish and regard yourself? When the claims of the poor of the flock are pressed upon you remember Jesus. Imagine you see Him look you in the face and say to you, “I gave Myself for you and do you withhold yourself from Me? If you do so, you know not My love in all its heights and depths and lengths and breadths.”

And now, dear Friends, the argument of the Apostle shall be our subject today. It divides itself in an extremely simple manner. We have first, the pristine condition of our Savior—“*He was rich.*” We have next, *His condescension*—“He became poor.” And then we have *the effect and result of His poverty*—“That we might be made rich.” We shall then close by giving you a doctrine, a question and an exhortation. May God bless all these and help us to tell them aright.

I. First, then, our text tells us THAT JESUS CHRIST WAS RICH. Think not that our Savior began to live when He was born of the Virgin Mary.

Imagine not that He dates His existence from the manger at Bethlehem. Remember He is the Eternal. He is before all things and by Him all things consist. There was never a time in which there was not God. And just so, there was never a period in which there was not Christ Jesus our Lord. He is self-existent, has no beginning of days, neither end of years. He is the immortal, invisible, the only wise God, our Savior.

Now, in the past eternity which had elapsed before His mission to this world, we are told that Jesus Christ was rich and to those of us who believe His glories and trust in His divinity, it is not hard to see how He was so. Jesus was rich in possessions. Lift up your eye, Believer, and for a moment review the riches of my Lord Jesus before He condescended to become poor for you. Behold Him sitting upon His Throne and declaring His own all-sufficiency. "If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the cattle on a thousand hills are Mine. Mine are the hidden treasures of gold. Mine are the pearls that the diver cannot reach. Mine every precious thing that earth has seen."

The Lord Jesus might have said, "I can stretch My scepter from the east even to the west and all is Mine, the whole of this world and yonder worlds that glitter in far off space, all are Mine. The illimitable expanse of unmeasured space, filled as it is with worlds that I have made—all this is Mine. Fly upward and you cannot reach the summit of the hill of My dominions. Dive downwards and you can not enter into the innermost depths of My sway. From the highest Throne in glory to the lowest pit of Hell, all, all is mine without exception. I can put the broad arrow of My kingdom upon everything that I have made."

But He had more—which makes men richer still. We have heard of kings in olden times who were fabulously rich and when their riches were summed up we read in the old romances, "And this man was possessed of the philosopher's stone, whereby he turned all things into gold." Surely all the treasures that he had before were as nothing compared with this precious stone that brought up the rear. Now, whatever might be the wealth of Christ in things created, He has the *power of creation* and therein lies His boundless wealth. If He had pleased He could have spoken worlds into existence.

He had but to lift His finger and a new universe as boundless as the present would have leaped into existence. At the will of His mind, millions of angels would have stood before Him. Legions of bright spirits would have flashed into being. He spoke and it was done. He commanded and it stood fast. He who said "Light, be," and light was had power to say to all things, "Be," and they should be. Herein, then, lies His riches. This creating power is one of the brightest jewels of His crown.

We call men rich, too, who have *honor* and though men have ever so much wealth, yet if they be in disgrace and shame they must not reckon themselves among the rich. But our Lord Jesus has honor—honor such as none but a Divine Being could receive. When He sat upon His Throne,

before He relinquished the glorious mantle of His sovereignty to become a man, all earth was filled with His glory. He could look both beneath and all around Him and the inscription, "Glory be unto God," was written over all space. Day and night the smoking incense of praise ascended before Him from golden vials held by spirits who bowed in reverence.

The harps of myriads of cherubim and seraphim continually thrilled with His praise and the voices of all those mighty hosts were ever eloquent in adoration. It may be that on set days the princes from the far-off realms, the kings, the mighty ones of His boundless realms came to the court of Christ and brought each His annual revenue. Oh, who can tell but that in the vast eternity at certain grand eras, the great bell was rung and all the mighty hosts that were created gathered together in solemn review before His Throne? Who can tell the high holiday that was kept in the court of Heaven when these bright spirits bowed before His Throne in joy and gladness and, all united, raised their voices in shouts and hallelujahs such as mortal ear has never heard?

Oh, can you tell the depths of the rivers of praise that flowed hard by the city of God? Can you imagine to yourselves the sweetness of that harmony that perpetually poured into the ear of Jesus, Messiah, King, Eternal, equal with God His Father? No. At the thought of the glory of His kingdom and the riches and majesty of His power our souls are spent within us, our words fail, we cannot utter the tithe of His glories.

Nor was He poor in any other sense. He that has wealth on earth and honor, too, is poor if he has not *love*. I would rather be the pauper, dependent upon charity and have love, than I would be the prince, despised and hated, whose death is looked for as a benefit. Without love, man—give him all the diamonds and pearls and gold that mortal has conceived—is poor. But Jesus was not poor in love. When He came to earth, He did not come to get our love because His soul was solitary. Oh no, His Father had a full delight in Him from all eternity. The heart of Jehovah, the first Person of the Sacred Trinity, was divinely, immutably linked to Him. He was Beloved of the Father and of the Holy Spirit.

The three Persons took a sacred complacency and delight in each other. And besides that, how was He loved by those bright spirits who had not fallen! I cannot tell what countless orders and creatures there are created who still stand fast in obedience to God. It is not possible for us to know whether there are, or not, as many races of created beings as we know there are created men on earth. We cannot tell but that in the boundless regions of space, there are worlds inhabited by beings infinitely superior to us—but certain it is there were the holy angels and they loved our Savior. They stood day and night with wings outstretched, waiting for His commands, hearkening to the voice of His word and when He bade them fly, there was love in their countenance and joy in their hearts.

They loved to serve Him and it is not all fiction that when there was war in Heaven and when God cast out the devil and his legions, then the elect

angels showed their love to Him, being valiant in fight and strong in power. He wanted not our love to make Him happy, He was rich enough in love without us.

Now, though a spirit from the upper world should come to tell you of the riches of Jesus he could not do it. Gabriel, in your flights you have mounted higher than my imagination dares to follow you but you have never gained the summit of the Throne of God—

“Dark with insufferable light your skirts appear.”

Jesus, who is he that could look upon the brow of Your Majesty, who is he that could comprehend the strength of the arm of Your might? You are God, You are infinite and we poor finite things are lost in You. The insect of an hour cannot comprehend Yourself. We bow before You, we adore You. You are God over all, blessed forever. But as for the comprehension of Your boundless riches, as for being able to tell Your treasures, or to reckon up Your wealth—that is impossible. All we know is that the wealth of God, that the treasures of the infinite, that the riches of eternity, were all Your own—You were rich beyond all thought.

II. The Lord Jesus Christ, then, was rich. We all believe that, though none of us can truly speak it forth. Oh how surprised angels were when they were first informed that Jesus Christ, the Prince of Light and Majesty, intended to shroud Himself in clay and become a babe and live and die! We know not how it was first mentioned to the angels but when the rumor first began to get afloat among the sacred hosts you may imagine what strange wonderment there was. What? Is it true that He whose crown was all arrayed with stars, would lay that crown aside? What? Is it certain that He about whose shoulders was cast the purple of the universe, would become a man, dressed in a peasant’s garment?

Could it be true that He who is everlasting and immortal would one day be nailed to a Cross? Oh, how their wonderment increased! They desired to look into it. And when He descended from on high, they followed Him, for Jesus was “seen of angels,” and seen in a special sense. They looked upon Him in rapturous amazement wondering what it all could mean. “He for our sakes became poor.” Do you see Him as on that day of Heaven’s eclipse He did ungird His majesty? Oh, can you conceive the yet increasing wonder of the Heavenly hosts when the deed was actually done? When they saw the tiara taken off, when they saw Him unbind His girdle of stars and cast away His sandals of gold?

Can you conceive it, when He said to them, “I do not disdain the womb of the virgin, I am going down to earth to become a man”? Can you picture them as they declared they would follow Him! Yes, they followed Him as near as He would permit them. And when they came to earth, they began to sing, “Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will towards men.” Nor would they go away till they had made the shepherds wonder and till Heaven had hung out new stars in honor of the new-born King.

And now wonder, you angels, the Infinite has become an infant. He, upon whose shoulders the universe does hang, hangs at His mother's breast.

He who created all things and bears up the pillars of creation has now become so weak that He must be carried by a woman! And oh, wonder you that knew Him in His riches, while you admire His poverty! Where sleeps the new-born king? Had He the best room in Caesar's palace? Has a cradle of gold been prepared for Him and pillows of down, on which to rest His head? No, where the ox fed, in the dilapidated stable, in the manger—there the Savior lies, swathed in the swaddling bands of the children of poverty. Nor there does He rest long—on a sudden His mother must carry him to Egypt—He goes there and becomes a stranger in a strange land.

When He comes back, see Him that made the worlds handle the hammer and the nails, assisting His father in the trade of a carpenter! Mark Him who has put the star on high and made them glisten in the night! Mark Him without one star of glory upon His brow—a simple child as other children. Yet leave for awhile the scenes of His childhood and His earlier life. See Him when He becomes a man and now you may say, indeed, that for our sakes He did become poor. Never was there a poorer man than Christ. He was the prince of poverty. He was the reverse of Crisus—*he* might be on the top of the hill of riches, *Christ* stood in the lowest vale of poverty.

Look at His garment, it is woven from the top throughout, the garment of the poor! As for His food, He oftentimes did hunger and always was dependent upon the charity of others for the relief of His wants! He who scattered the harvest over the broad acres of the world, had not sometimes anything to stay the pangs of hunger. He who dug the springs of the ocean, sat upon a well and said to a Samaritan woman, "Give me to drink!" He rode in no chariot, He walked His weary way, foot sore, over the flints of Galilee. He had not where to lay His head.

He looked upon the fox as it hurried to its burrow and the fowl as it went to its resting place and He said, "Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests but I, the Son of Man, have not where to lay My head." He who had once been waited on by angels, becomes the servant of servants, takes a towel, girds Himself and washes His disciples' feet. He who was once honored with the hallelujahs of ages, is now spit upon and despised! He who was loved by His Father and had abundance of the wealth of affection, could say, "He that eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me."

Oh for words to picture the humiliation of Christ! What leagues of distance between Him that sat upon the Throne and Him that died upon the Cross! Oh, who can tell the mighty chasm between yonder heights of glory and the Cross of deepest woe! Trace Him, Christian, He has left you His manger, to show you how God came down to man. He has bequeathed you His Cross, to show you how man can ascend to God. Follow Him, fol-

low Him all His journey through. Begin with Him in the wilderness of temptation. See Him fasting there and hungering, with the wild beasts around Him.

Trace Him along His weary way, as the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief—He is the bye-word of the drunkard, He is the song of the scorner and He is hooted at by the malicious. Look at Him as they point their finger at Him and call Him, “drunken man and wine-bibber!” Follow Him along His *via dolorosa*, until at last you meet Him among the olives of Gethsemane. Look at Him sweating great drops of blood! Follow Him to the pavement of Gabbatha. See Him pouring out rivers of gore beneath the cruel whips of Roman soldiers! With weeping eye follow Him to the Cross of Calvary. See Him nailed there! Mark His poverty, so poor, that they have stripped Him naked from head to foot and exposed Him to the face of the sun!

So poor, that when He asked them for water they gave Him vinegar to drink! So poor, that His unpillowed head is girt with thorns in death! Oh, Lion of Man, I know not which to admire most—Your height of glory, or Your depths of misery! Oh, Man slain for us, shall we not exalt You? God, over all, blessed forever, shall we not give You the loudest song? “He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor.” If I had a tale to tell you this day of some king, who, out of love to some fair maiden, left his kingdom and became a peasant like herself, you would stand and wonder and would listen to the charming tale.

But when I tell of God concealing His dignity to become our Savior, your hearts are scarcely touched. Ah, my Friends, we know the tale so well, we have heard it so often! And, alas, some of us tell it so badly that we cannot expect that you would be as interested in it as the subject does demand. But surely, as it is said of some great works of architecture, that though they be seen every morning there is always something fresh to wonder at—so we might say of Christ—that though we saw Him every day, we should always see fresh reason to love and wonder and adore. “He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor.”

I have thought that there is one peculiarity about the poverty of Christ that ought not to be forgotten by us. Those who were nursed upon the lap of want feel less the woes of their condition. But I have met with others whose poverty I could pity. They were once rich. Their very dress which now hangs about them in tatters tells you that they once stood foremost in the ranks of life. You meet them among the poorest of the poor. You pity them more than those who have been born and bred to poverty because they have known something better. Among all those who are poor, I have always found the greatest amount of suffering in those who had seen better days.

I can remember, even now, the look of some who have said to me when they have received assistance—and I have given it as delicately as I could, lest it should look like charity—“Ah, Sir, I have known better days.” And

the tear stood in the eye and the heart was smitten at bitter recollections. The least slight to such a person, or even too unmasked a kindness, becomes like a knife cutting the heart. "I have known better days," sounds like a knell over their joys. And verily our Lord Jesus might have said in all His sorrows, "I have known better days than these."

Methinks when He was tempted of the devil in the wilderness, it must have been hard for Him to have restrained Himself from dashing the devil into pieces. If I had been the Son of God, methinks feeling as I do now, if that devil had tempted me I should have dashed him into the nethermost Hell in the twinkling of an eye! And then conceive the patience our Lord must have had, standing on the pinnacle of the temple, when the devil said, "Fall down and worship me." He would not touch him, the vile deceiver, but let him do what he pleased. Oh, what might of misery and love there must have been in the Savior's heart when He was spit upon by the men He had created!

When the eyes He Himself had filled with vision, looked on Him with scorn and when the tongues, to which He Himself had given utterance, hissed and blasphemed Him! Oh, my Friends, if the Savior had felt as we do, and I doubt not He did feel in some measure as we do—only by great patience He curbed Himself—methinks He might have swept them all away. And, as they said, He might have come down from the Cross and delivered Himself and destroyed them utterly. It was mighty patience that could bear to tread this world beneath His feet and not to crush it, when it so ill-treated its Redeemer. Marvel at the patience which restrained Him. Marvel also at the poverty He must have felt, the poverty of spirit, when they rebuked Him and He reviled them not again—when they scoffed Him and yet He said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." He had seen brighter days. That made His misery more bitter and His poverty more poor.

III. Well, now we come to the third point—WHY DID THE SAVIOR COME TO DIE AND BE POOR? Hear this, you sons of Adam—the Scripture says, "For your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might be made rich." For *your* sakes. Now, when I address you as a great congregation, you will not feel the beauty of this expression, "For your sake." Husband and wife, walking in the fear of God, let me take you by the hand and look you in the face—let me repeat those words "for your sakes He became poor." Young man, let a Brother of your own age look on you and repeat these words—"Though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor." Gray-headed Believer, let me look on you and say the same—"For your sake He became poor."

Brethren, take the word home and see if it does not melt you—"Though He was rich, yet for *my* sake He became poor." Beg for the influences of the Spirit upon that truth and it will make your heart devout and your spirit loving—"I am the chief of sinners, yet for *my* sake He died." Come let me hear you speak, let us bring the sinner here and let him soliloquize—"I

cursed Him, I blasphemed Him and yet for *my* sake He was made poor. I scoffed at His minister, I broke His Sabbath, yet for my sake was He made poor. What? Jesus, would You die for one who was not worth Your having? Would You shed Your blood for one who would have shed Your blood, if it had been in his power?

What? Would You die for one so worthless, so vile?" "Yes, yes," says Jesus, "I shed that blood for *you*." Now let the saint speak—"I," he may say, "have professed to love Him but how cold my love! How little have I served Him! How far have I lived from Him! I have not had sweet communion with Him as I ought to have had. When have I been spending and spent in His service? And yet, my Lord, You do say, "for *your* sake I was made poor." "Yes," says Jesus, "see Me in My miseries. See Me in My agonies. See Me in My death—all these I suffered for *your* sake." Will you not love Him who loved you to *your* great excess and became poor for your sake?

That, however, is not the point to which we wish to bring you, just now. The point is this, *the reason why Christ died* was "that we through His poverty might be rich." He became poor from His riches, that our poverty might become rich out of His poverty. Brethren, we have now a joyful theme before us—those who are partakers of the Savior's blood are rich. All those for whom the Savior died, having believed in His name and given themselves to Him, are this day rich. And yet I have some of you here who cannot call a foot of land your own. You have nothing to call your own today—you know not how you will be supported through another week.

You are poor and yet if you are a child of God I know that Christ's end is answered in you. You are *rich*. No, I did not mock you when I said you were rich. I did not taunt you—you are. You are really rich—you are *rich in possessions*. You have in your possession now things more costly than gems, more valuable than gold and silver. Silver and gold have I none, you may say. But if you can say afterwards, "Christ is All," you have outspoken all that the man can say who had piles of gold and silver.

"But," you say, "I have nothing." Man, you have all things! Know you not what Paul said? He declares that "things present and things to come and this world and life and death, all are yours and you are Christ's and Christ is God's." The great machinery of Providence has no wheel which does not revolve for you. The great economy of Grace with all its fullness is yours. Remember that adoption, justification, sanctification—are all yours. You have everything that heart can wish in spiritual things and you have everything that is necessary for this life. For you know who has said, "having food and raiment, let us therewith be content."

You are rich—rich with true riches and not with the riches of a dream. There are times when men by night do scrape gold and silver together, like shells upon the sea shore. But when they wake in the morning they find themselves penniless. But yours are everlasting treasures. Yours are solid riches. When the sun of eternity shall have melted the rich man's gold away, yours shall endure. A rich man has a *cistern* full of riches. But a

poor saint has got a *fountain* of mercy. And he is the richer who has a fountain.

Now if my neighbor is a rich man, he may have as much wealth as ever he pleases—it is only a cistern full—it will soon be exhausted. But a Christian has a fountain that ever flows and let him draw, draw on forever—the fountain will still keep on flowing. However large may be the stagnant pool if it is stagnant, it is but of little worth. But the flowing stream, though it seem to be but small, needs but time and it will have produced an immense volume of precious water. You are never to have a great pool of riches, they are always to keep on flowing to you.

“Your bread shall be given you and your water shall be pure.” As old William Huntingdon says, “The Christian has a hand-basket portion. Many a man, when his daughter marries, does not give her much. But he says to her, ‘I shall send you a sack of flour one day and so-and-so the next day and now and then a sum of gold. And as long as I live I will always send you something.’” Says he, “She will get a great deal more than her Sister who has had a thousand pounds down. That is how my God deals with me. He gives to the rich man all at once but to me day by day.”

Ah, Egypt, you were rich when your granaries were full but those granaries might be emptied. Israel were far richer when they could not see their granaries but only saw the manna drop from Heaven, day by day. Now, Christian, that is your portion—the portion of the fountain always flowing and not of the cistern—full and soon to be emptied.

But remember, O saint, that your wealth does not all lie in your possessions just now. Remember you are rich in *promises*. Let a man be ever so poor as to the metal that he has—let him have in his possession promissory notes from rich and true men—and he says, “I have no gold in my purse but here is a note for such-and-such a sum—I know the signature, I can trust the firm—I am rich, though I have no metal in hand.” And so the Christian can say, “If I have no riches in possession, I have the promise of them—my God has said, ‘No good thing will I withhold from them that walk uprightly’—that is a promise that makes me rich. He has told me, ‘My bread shall be given me and my water shall be sure.’ I cannot doubt His signature, I know His word to be authentic. And as for His faithfulness, I would not so dishonor Him as to think He would break His promise. No, the promise is as good as the thing itself. If it is God’s promise, it is just as sure that I shall have it, as if I had it.”

But then the Christian is very rich in *reversion*. When a certain old man dies that I know of, I believe that I shall be so immensely rich that I shall dwell in a place that is paved with gold—the walls of which are built with precious stones. But, my Friends, you have all got an old man to die and when he is dead if you are followers of Jesus, you will come in for your inheritance. You know who that man is, he is very often spoken of in Scripture—may the old man in you die daily and may the new man be

strengthened in you. When that old man of corruption, your old nature, shall totter into its grave, then you will come in for your property.

Christians are like heirs, they have not much in their minority and they are minors now—but when they come of age they shall have the whole of their estate. If I meet a minor, he says, “That is my property.” “You cannot sell it Sir, you cannot lay hold of it.” “No,” says he, “I know I cannot but it is mine when I am one-and-twenty. I shall then have complete control but at the same time it is as really mine now as it ever will be. I have a legal right to it and though my guardians take care of it for me it is mine, not theirs.”

And now, Christian, in Heaven there is a crown of gold which is yours today. It will be no more yours when you have it on your head than it is now. I remember to have heard it reported that I once spoke in metaphor and bade Christians look at all the crowns hanging in rows in Heaven—very likely I did say it—but if not, I will say it now. Up, Christian, see the crowns all ready and mark your own—stand and wonder at it—see with what pearls it is dressed and how heavy it is with gold! And that is for your head, your poor aching head. Your poor tortured brain shall yet have that crown for its arraying!

And see that garment! It is stiff with gems and white like snow. And that is for you! When your week-day garment shall be done with this shall be the raiment of your everlasting Sabbath. When you have worn out this poor body, there remains for you, “A house not made with hands eternal in the Heavens.” Up to the summit, Christian! And survey your inheritance and when you have surveyed it all, when you have seen your present possessions, your promised possessions, your entailed possessions—then remember that all these were bought by the poverty of your Savior!

Look upon all you have and say, “Christ bought them for me.” Look on every promise and see the blood stains on it. Yes, look, too, on the harps and crowns of Heaven and read the bloody purchase! Remember, you could never have been anything but a damned sinner unless Christ had bought you! Remember if He had remained in Heaven you would forever have remained in Hell. Unless He had shrouded and eclipsed His own honor you would never have had a ray of light to shine upon you. Therefore bless His dear name, extol Him, trace every stream to the Fountain. And bless Him who is the source and the Fountain of everything you have. Brethren, “You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might be rich.”

IV. I have not done. I have three things now to say and I shall say them as briefly as possible.

The first is a *doctrine*. The doctrine is this—If Christ in His poverty made us rich, what will He do now that He is glorified? If the Man of Sorrows saved my soul, will the Man now exalted suffer it to perish? If the dy-

ing Savior availed for our salvation, should not the living, interceding Savior, abundantly secure it?—

**“He lived, He lives and sits above,
Forever interceding there.
What shall divide us from His love,
Or what shall sink us in despair?”**

If when the nail was in Your hand, O Jesus, You did rout all Hell, can You be defeated now that You have grasped the scepter? If, when the crown of thorns was put about Your brow You did prostrate the dragon, can You be overcome and conquered now that the acclamations of angels are ascending to You? No, my Brethren, we can trust the glorified Jesus—we can repose ourselves on His bosom. If He were so strong in poverty, what must He be in riches?

The next thing is a *question*. That question is a simple one. My Hearer, have you been made rich by Christ’s poverty? You say, “I am good enough without Christ, I want no Savior.” Oh, you are like her of old who said, “I am rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing, whereas, says the Lord, ‘You are naked and poor and miserable.’ ” O you that live by good works and think that you shall go to Heaven because you are as good as others—all the merits you can ever earn yourselves are good for nothing. All that human nature ever made turns to a blot and a curse. If those are your riches, you are no saints. But can you say this morning, my Hearers, “I am by nature without anything and God has by the power of His Spirit taught me my nothingness”?

My Brother, my Sister, have you taken Christ to be your All in All? Can you say this day, with an unfaltering tongue, “My Lord, my God, I have nothing. But You are my all”? Come, I beseech you, do not shirk the question. You are careless, heedless, answer it, then, in the negative. But when you have answered it, I beseech you beware of what you have said. You are sinful, you feel it. Come, I beseech you, and lay hold on Jesus. Remember, Christ came to make those rich that have nothing of their own. My Savior is a Physician. If you can heal yourself, He will have nothing to do with you.

Remember, my Savior came to clothe the naked. He will clothe you if you have not a rag of your own. But unless you let Him do it from head to foot, He will have nothing to do with you. Christ says He will never have a partner, He will do all or none. Come then, have you given up all to Christ? Have you no reliance and trust save in the Cross of Jesus? Then you have answered the question well. Be happy, be Joyous. If death should surprise you the next hour, you are secure. Go on your way and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

And now I close with the third thing, which is an *exhortation*. Sinner, do you this morning feel your poverty? Then look to Christ’s poverty. O you that are today troubled on account of sin—and there are many such here—God has not let you alone, He has been plowing your heart with the sharp plowshare of conviction. You are this day saying, “What must I do

to be saved?" You would give all you have to have an interest in Jesus Christ. Your soul is this day sorely broken and tormented.

O Sinner, if you would find salvation you must find it in the veins of Jesus. Now wipe that tear from your eye a moment and look here. Do you see Him high where the Cross rears its terrible form? There He is. Do you see Him? Mark His head. See the crown of thorns and the beaded drops still standing on His temples? Mark His eyes. They are just closing in death. Can you see the lines of agony, so desperate in woe? Do you see His hands? See the streamlets of blood flowing down them? Hark, He is about to speak. "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me!"

Did you hear that, Sinner? Pause a moment longer, take another survey of His Person—how emaciated His body and how sick His spirit! Look at Him. But hark, He is about to speak again—"It is finished." What does He mean by that? He means that He has finished your salvation. Look to Him and find salvation there. Remember, to be saved, all that God wants of a penitent is to look to Jesus. My life for this—if you will risk your all on Christ you shall be saved. I will be Christ's bondsman today to be bound forever if He breaks His promise.

He has said, "Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." It is not your hands that will save you. It must be your eyes. Look from those works whereby you hope to be saved. No longer strive to weave a garment that will not hide your sin. Throw away that shuttle. It is only filled with cobwebs. What garment can you weave with that? Look to Him and you are saved. Never sinner looked and was lost. Do you mark that eye there? One glance will save you, one glimpse will set you free. Do you say, "I am a guilty sinner?" Your guilt is the reason why I bid you look. Do you say "I cannot look"? Oh, may God help you to look now.

Remember, Christ will not reject you. You may reject Him. Remember now, there is the cup of mercy put to your lips by the hand of Jesus. I know if you feel your need, Satan may tempt you not to drink but he will not prevail. You will put your lips, feebly and faintly, perhaps, to it. But oh, do but sip it and the first draught shall give you bliss and the deeper you shall drink, the more of Heaven shall you know. Sinner, believe on Jesus Christ. Hear the whole Gospel preached to you. It is written in God's Word, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Hear me translate it—He that believes and is *immersed* shall be saved. Believe! Trust yourself on the Savior! Make a profession of your faith in Baptism and then you may rejoice in Jesus, that He has saved you.

But remember not to make a profession till you have believed—remember, Baptism is nothing until you have faith. Remember, it is a farce and a falsehood until you have first believed. And afterwards it is nothing but the profession of your faith. Oh, believe that, cast yourself upon Christ and you are saved forever! The Lord add His blessing, for the Savior's sake. Amen.

POVERTY AND RICHES

NO. 2364

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JUNE 10 1894.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 22, 1888.

“For you know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you, through His poverty, might be rich,”
2 Corinthians 8:9.

I AM very weary, tonight, having had day after day, almost without cessation, to make a supreme effort to address large assemblies. I felt, therefore, that the only subject that I could handle would be some theme that was restful and did not require any great thought on the part of the preacher or his hearers. I want to have a bath and rest myself while I am speaking to you, and, perhaps, it may not hurt you, either, for I doubt not that you often grow weary with daily cares. So we shall have no difficult problem, no mysterious doctrine to consider at this time, but shall only talk about things that we know.

The text begins, “For *you know* the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.” You know this, for you believe it. You have no doubt, whatever, that there was a wondrous graciousness in the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace is an attribute of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit—and you know that there was infinite Grace, favor, compassion, in the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ—and it was *that* and *not* your merits, which constrained Him to lay aside the royalties of Heaven and endure the sufferings and the griefs of our mortality. “You know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

You know this Grace, too, because you have learned to perceive the outcome of it. You not only know it as a seed, but you know the blessed flowers that have grown out of it because, in His Grace, He became poor that you might be rich. And, in taking of those riches which He has procured for you, you have not only drunk of His bitter soup, but you have drunk of the spiced wine of His pomegranate, so that you now know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ by that which is the fruit and the outcome of it.

I think that the Apostle here meant that we also know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ through what He has done for us. We might have known, as a matter of fact, that Jesus was gracious, but we could not have seen it so as practically to know it if He, having been rich, had *not become poor*, that we, through His poverty, might be rich. The way the Apostle shows that Truth of God is just this. He was urging the Corinthian Christians to liberality. They were a far richer community than the Church at Philippi, but He tells them that the Churches of Macedonia,

out of their poverty, had often been generous to the poor and he persuades these Corinthians, who were better off, not to be behind the Philippians.

After Paul had quoted this example to them, he felt that he had a far stronger argument to fall back upon. He seemed to say, "How am I to know your Grace except by your works? How am I to know that you have Christ in your hearts except by what you give out of your gifts to help your poorer friends?" He then gives this as the proof that we must see Grace by the results it produces—"You know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ by this fact, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you, through His poverty, might be rich." The same Law of God, that the Grace within must be manifest by the action without, applies to Christ as well as to us. If He had not become poor to make us rich, how would we have fully known His Grace? And if you and I do not give of our substance, and of our talents, to the poor, and to the cause of Christ, how shall we know and how shall others know that there is any Grace at all within our hearts?

Beloved, as I have said before, I may say to you, again—you know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ because you have not only *heard* it, but you have *seen* it—you have *tasted* and *handled* the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Your hope of Heaven lies in that Grace! Your daily comfort lies there. If Christ were not gracious, you would be graceless. If you did not know His Grace, you would have no Grace of your own, for certain—for it is from Him, as from an ever-flowing fountain—that all the streams of Grace come to you. Happy men and happy women if, as I read this text, "You know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," you can each one say, "Yes, I do know it, glory be to God!"

There are two things for me to talk about tonight. They are both very simple and lie on the surface of the text. The first is, *the poverty of our Lord Jesus Christ*. And the second is, *the riches of His saints*.

I. First, let us think of THE POVERTY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST—"Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor."

This poverty was voluntarily undertaken for our sakes. There was no need that Christ should be poor except for our sakes. Some persons are born poor and it seems as if, with all their struggles, they could never rise out of poverty. But of our Lord Jesus Christ it can truly be said, "He was rich." Shall I take you back in thought to the glories of the eternity when, as very God of very God, He dwelt in the bosom of the Father? He was so rich that all He possessed was as nothing to Him. He was not dependent upon any of the angels He had created, nor did He rely for Glory upon any of the works of His hands. Truly, Heaven was His abode, but He could have made ten thousand heavens if He had willed to do so! All the greatest wonders He had ever made were but specimens of what He *could* make. He had all possibility of inconceivable and immeasurable wealth within His power, yet He laid aside all that, denied Himself the power to enrich Himself, and came down to earth that He might help us! His poverty was all voluntary—there was a necessity laid upon Him, but the sole necessity was *His own love*. There was no need, as far as He was concerned, that He should ever be poor—the only need was because *we*

were in need and He loved us so that He would rescue us from poverty and make us eternally rich!

Our Lord's was also very emphatic poverty. I believe that it is quite true that no one knows the pinch of poverty like a person who has once been rich. It is your fallen emperor who has to beg his bread, who knows what beggary is! It is the man who once possessed broad acres who, at last, has to rent his lodging in a miserable attic, who knows what poverty is! So was it with the Savior—He was emphatically rich. You cannot press into the word, "rich," all that Jesus was—you have to feel that it is a very poor word, even though it is rich, with which to describe His heavenly condition. He was emphatically rich and so, when He descended into poverty, it was poverty with an emphasis laid upon it, the contrast was so great. The difference between the richest and the poorest man is just nothing compared with the difference between Christ in the Glory of His Godhead and Christ in His humiliation—the stoop was altogether immeasurable! You cannot describe His riches and you cannot describe His poverty. You have never had any idea of how high He was as God and you can never imagine how low He stooped when He cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

His poverty, then, was voluntarily undertaken and it was emphasized by its contrast to the riches He had before. Now let us try to examine some of the details of this poverty.

First, this poverty of Christ was seen *in His condition*. It was great poverty to Him to be a Man. Humanity is a poor thing when you set it in comparison with the Deity. What a narrow space does man fill—but God is Infinite. What little can man do—but God is Omnipotent. How little does man know—but God is Omniscient. How confined is man to a single spot—yet God is Omnipresent. I say not that Jesus ever ceased to be God, but we must remember that He became Man and, in becoming Man, He became poor in comparison with His condition as God. But then, as Man, He was also a poor Man. He might have been born in marble halls, swaying the scepter of an universal empire and, from His *birth*, receiving the homage of all mankind. But instead of that, you know, He was reputed to be the carpenter's Son, His mother was but a humble Jewish maid and His birthplace was a stable—poor accommodation for the Prince of the kings of the earth!

His early life was spent in a carpentry shop and afterwards His companions were mostly poor fishermen. You do not find Him consorting with the senators and philosophers, or great ones of the earth—He goes from one lowly home to another. And for His maintenance He is dependent upon the alms of His followers. Certain women ministered unto Him of their substance. He was, all His life, familiar with poverty, so that He could say, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head." You remember that passage which is broken up by our translators so as to make a chapter begin where there should be no division? "Every man went unto His own house. Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives," for He had not a house—His only home was among the olive trees where He pleaded with His God!

Then remember that Christ, while He was here, was a Servant. He was the Servant of the Father. Though He counted it not robbery to be equal with God, yet He took upon Himself the form of a Servant. He has been well called, by the Latins, "*Servus servorum*," the Servant of servants. And you see Him in that character when He rises from supper, lays aside His garments, takes a towel and girds Himself—and pouring water into a basin, begins to wash His disciples' feet. Well did He say, "I am among you as He that serves." He, before whom the brightest seraph veils His face and lies low in humble adoration, yet washes His disciples' feet! You can understand, then, how in His condition He is numbered among the poor.

Perhaps the poverty of Christ is seen more clearly as to His condition, in His association, not only with poor disciples, but with the despised of mankind. The Pharisees truly said, "This Man receives sinners and eats with them." This was the occasion when Luke wrote, "Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him." He made Himself their companion for their good, for He had come to seek and to save that which was lost. He condescended to be among the very lowest, no, He did not *sometimes* stoop to them, but He seemed to be always in their midst, always raking in the mire to find the jewels that had been lost there! So, Beloved, you will see that as a Man, a *poor* Man, a Servant, and associating with the very lowest of men for their good, Christ had become, indeed, poor in His condition.

The second point of His poverty was *in His reputation*. All Glory belonged to Christ, the praises of all the heavenly host were gladly given to Him, but He made Himself of no reputation. Often, while He was here, men treated Him with all the scorn and contempt that they could possibly display. Let me quote these words slowly, "Then did they spit in His face." They blindfolded Him. They buffeted Him. They struck Him with the palms of their hands, saying, "Prophecy unto us, Christ! Who is he that struck You?" They called Him, "a gluttonous Man and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." They took His reputation from Him—some even went so far as to say that He worked His miracles through Beelzebub, the prince of the devils! It was not possible that they could degrade Him lower than they did! Their scorn went to the very uttermost against this blessed and adorable Son of God! Even those who were reputed to be good men, at times, thought little of Him. His mother and His brothers and sisters tried to entrap Him because they, evidently, judged that He was insane! And in the time of His direst need, all His disciples fled from Him and left Him alone. In His greatest extremity no man did Him homage, but everyone had an ill word for Him. In this respect He was poor—He made Himself of no reputation.

I do not know whether any of you ever had to do what has fallen to the lot of some few—after standing in good repute among your brethren—deliberately knowing what you were doing, to do that which subjects you to misrepresentation and scorn, but to do it for the Lord's sake and to suffer all the consequences without wincing. I can tell you that it is a poverty, indeed, to a tender spirit to be bereft of the respect which one has long enjoyed. Yet the Savior, out of love of us, stripped Himself of

every single vestment of honor that He had a right to wear—and He became despised and rejected of men, a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief! This was a part of His poverty—poverty of *reputation*.

Then, thirdly, there was a poverty *in operation*, for the Lord Jesus Christ, in His own natural estate, was able to do anything that He pleased. There was nothing which He wished to do which He could not do. Did He but judge it right to create or to destroy, all was in His power. But when He came to this earth, for our sakes He became poor. It was necessary, then, for Him to put a restraint upon His own Omnipotence. He is hungry, but it is a temptation of the Evil One which suggests to Him that He should turn stones into bread. He is thirsty and at a word from Him, the water would have leaped from the well! But He has to beg from a woman of Samaria and say to her, “Give Me to drink.” He never works a miracle on His own behalf. He makes Himself as poor as to His operations, as unable to help Himself, as the most incapable among us! And this, mark you, by a continued determination of His will that He would remain poor, for had He so determined, He could, with but a wish, have summoned legions of angels to come from Heaven to His assistance! How can I sufficiently admire this voluntary poverty of operation? Our Lord Jesus Christ will restrict Himself to loss, suffering and even death, when, naturally, He possesses the power to deliver Himself from all these trials.

The next kind of poverty that I see in Christ is poverty *in communion*. If a man were ever so poor, yet if he could always associate with persons of education and refinement, supposing him to be a man of that kind, poverty would be a small matter. “We cultivate,” said the Edinburgh students, “we cultivate literature upon a little oatmeal porridge,” and nobody seems to pity them! Nobody *needs* to pity them—they are quite willing to take the porridge if they can get the literature! If they can associate with men of thought and men of standing, they have a feast of reason and have a flow of soul—and they are content with a little oatmeal if that is their only fare. But our Savior never consorted with anybody who could, for a moment, be called His equal! He learned from no man. There was one disciple whom Jesus loved—we can all tell why He loved John—because John was the nearest to his Master. But what a long way down it was from Jesus to John! It makes a man feel himself in an awful solitude when he outgrows his fellows. You may pine for such a position, young man, and long to reach the very highest peak of the mountain, but it is cold up there and bleak, and lonely! I believe far greater enjoyment is to be had when you are the equal of your fellow men and can associate with them as such. But as for our Lord and Master, He seems always on the pinnacle of the Temple or the summit of the mountain. I know that in His *condescension* He is never there! He stoops to the people, but still it is a stoop and, stooping, you know, is back-aching work. I mean, it is heart-aching work to be always having to stoop and to have nobody who is your comrade and associate.

Jesus shut Himself off from the grandest company that He might have had, from the senate of the skies, from the assemblies of the perfect, from the multitude of angels! The heavenly beings may come and go

casually with errands from on high, but, for the most part, Jesus is here to associate with the sinful—His perfect mind to be in constant contact with the ignorant—His trained and cultured and holy spirit to be vexed by the frivolous and the fickle who cannot be depended upon. What a poverty must the faithful, the just, the true, the wise Savior have felt when even His disciples could not understand Him and when, as He unveiled some of the deeper Truths of God, He had come to reveal, “many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him.” It was a greater poverty, still, when, in the Garden, rising from the agony and bloody sweat, He found the three that were nearest to Him, sleeping, and He said to them, “What, could you not watch with Me one hour?” Ah, then was He in the depths of poverty, indeed, as to the communion of His spirit!

Still, I think that we have not reached the lowest deeps of the Savior’s poverty till we come to the fact of His *bearing sin*. A man may be very poor as to worldly goods and he may be able to bear it. He may have taken another’s debts upon himself and they may press heavily upon him, yet the load may not crush Him. But when he loses his character because of no wrong of his own, but because he wishes to deliver another, and when he has to come into contact with the sin of another and cannot help coming into contact with it—if his mind is pure and innocent—it is an awful poverty to him! Brothers and Sisters, it is the greatest miracle I ever heard of that the Lamb of God should bear the sin of men at all—and should so bear sin as to take it away, because, remember, there was in Christ no taint of sin of any kind!

There was no inclination to sin in Him and yet, (hear these Inspired Words), “He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin.” Of course, the Savior never could be sinful and we will use no words that might even *suggest* such a thought! We would, with indignation, repudiate such an idea, but yet He did occupy the sinner’s place. He did endure the sinner’s curse—“As it is written, cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree.” No, I will even dare to say that before the Lord God, He stood as the *one* Sinner, though He was no sinner! But the Lord made to meet on Him the iniquity of us all. Jesus stood to answer the summons of the Law of God and to appear there as the Substitute for His people, “the Just for the unjust.” But still, to appear there for the unjust—“who His own Self bore our sins in His own body on the tree.” Let me give you those words, again—“who His own Self bore our sins in His own body on the tree.”

He who was “God over all, blessed forever.” He without whom was not anything made that was made—for Him to whom the cherubim and seraphim continually cry, “Holy, holy, holy”—this must be abject poverty, indeed, that though He was rich in holiness, for our sakes He became poor in bearing our sin!

The end of His poverty and the climax of it, was when *at last He died*. We have, perhaps, never realized the wonder that He “who only has immortality” did actually die! His spirit departed. He gave up the ghost, the ghost who had been a guest within His body. He gave up that guest and His body was tenantless—an empty house. What a sight is that, (I wonder not that great painters have tried to depict it), the taking of Christ

down from the Cross, the wrapping of His mangled body in the fair white linen and the precious spices! Can this really be the Son of God, the Redeemer of men? Do they wrap Him up in a winding sheet and do the holy men and women actually bear Him to a tomb? Yes, and to a *borrowed tomb*, for as He had lain in a borrowed cradle, He now sleeps in a borrowed sepulcher! They put Him there, for He is dead. His eyes are as firmly closed as those of any other dead man and His hands are as cold and motionless, for Christ's was no fancied death. The Lord of Life and Glory did actually die and there, in Joseph's tomb, was He buried. And from there He rose the third day. As the earth quakes and the angel rolls away the stone from the sepulcher, say to yourselves, "You know, now, the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor," so poor that He actually lay, awhile, dead in Joseph's tomb!

There I leave this first point. May God the Holy Spirit help us to understand the poverty of our Lord Jesus Christ!

II. But now, dear Friends, very rapidly, but yet I trust, deliberately, I want to show you THE RICHES OF BELIEVERS. They are exactly parallel with the poverty of Christ. Our Lord Jesus Christ did not come into the world to become poor with regard to money, or that you and I might become rich in worldly wealth, for many of the best of His people are still as poor as poverty, so far as this paltry pelf is concerned! He came to give us *true* riches as He came to endure *true* poverty. I have brought before your notice a poverty that did not lie so much in the scantiness of His apparel, or in the hardness of His fare, as in other matters. So the riches which Christ gives do not lie in our being clothed in scarlet and fine linen, or faring sumptuously every day—they are similar in character to the marks of our Lord's poverty!

First, then, He made His people rich *in condition*. Brothers and Sisters, we are servants, as Christ was. But that which was a lowering to Him is a lifting up for us! To us there is no greater honor than to be called the servants of the Lord Jesus Christ—and to wait upon the servants of God. To be *servus servorum* is a privilege that any one of us might covet. To wash the disciples' feet is now an honor to us and we feel it to be so. If the servant is permitted to be as his Master, it is a great exaltation for him. By Christ's poverty, we are made rich in our condition, so that, today, we are the sons of God! Today we have access to the Mercy Seat! Today God listens to the voice of a man! Today Jesus has made us kings and priests unto God and we shall reign forever and ever! The condition of the believing man is a highly exalted one in proportion as the condition of Christ was one of humiliation and poverty!

So is it with regard to the Believer *in his reputation*. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, what a reputation Christ has given us! He has given us the reputation which He threw away, for now we are righteous in His righteousness! We are comely in the comeliness which He puts upon us! We have a name and a place, now, better than that of sons and daughters! We are not now reckoned among the guilty, but among the godly! We are not numbered among the rebellious strangers, but among the obedient chil-

dren! Oh, blessed be the name of Jesus! He has clothed us with honor because He clothed Himself with shame!

The same is true as to *our operation*. I showed you how Christ voluntarily narrowed and limited His power, but behold how He has *widened* our power! There is a text I often look at and admire. Jesus said, “He that believes on Me, the works that I do shall He do, also, and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto My Father.” He makes us to have an almost boundless power! We are nothing but poor feeble men and yet how wonderfully does God use men! Have you ever noticed, in Paul’s Epistles, how he represents the minister of Christ as being both father and mother to a new-born soul? Writing to Philemon, he says, “I beseech you for my son, Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds.” And to the Galatians he writes, “My little children, of whom I travail in birth, again, until Christ is formed in you.” Is it not a very wonderful thing that we should be called, “workers, together with God”—our weakness working side by side with Omnipotence, itself?

My Brothers and Sisters, perhaps you do not know how greatly Christ has enriched you. Have you ever proven how rich He has made you in the power of prayer? “Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.” “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.” We do not make enough use of the great name of Christ! If we did, we would work miracles—I mean not in the material world, but *spiritual miracles* would be at our beck and call! Our great Lord Jesus, by His poverty of operation, has made us rich in a wondrous power of Grace!

I also said that He had become poor *in communion* and I showed you how narrow was the circle of men with whom He could associate. But He has wonderfully enriched us in communion, so that we have come, “to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, who are written in Heaven.” Behold, He has given us such fellowship with Himself that He says of us who believe, “These are My mother, and My sister, and My brothers.” We also have fellowship with God—“Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.” What riches He has given us here!

Next, you remember, I spoke about Christ’s bearing sin as being an awful instance of His poverty, but by His Substitution, we have *acceptance with God*. See how rich He has made us, for we are, “accepted in the Beloved.” “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” That is a wonderful passage in Jeremiah’s prophecy, “This is the name wherewith she shall be called, the Lord Our Righteousness.” What? The Church, itself, called, “The Lord Our Righteousness”? Yes, she takes her husband’s name! The Church has Christ’s own title bestowed upon her! Christ became poor, indeed, as He stood in our place, but He has fixed us in a large and wealthy place by giving us complete acceptance with the Father through His righteousness.

Then, as I completed the story, I pictured our Lord Jesus as lying in the death sleep of the tomb. But think, O Beloved, that He has now, in consequence of that death, given us *eternal life*. His own words are, “He that believes on Me has everlasting life.” “Whoever lives and believes in

Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" Because Christ died, we live. Because He died, we shall never die! The capital sentence has been executed upon our Substitute and can never be executed again. Punishment cannot be inflicted, first on the bleeding Surety, and then on those for whom that Surety stood! Therefore we live by His death and over us, the Second Death can have no power! Death is not annihilation. No thoughtful person ever fancies that it is. Death is the separation of the soul from the body. Death, in its highest sense, is the separation of the soul from God. We may know the first death, the rending of the soul from the body, but the Second Death, the separation of the soul from God—that we shall never know—for Jesus knew it on our behalf when He said, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" But now, "Christ being raised from the dead dies no more; death has no more dominion over Him, for in that He died, He died unto sin, once: but in that He lives, He lives unto God." Oh, how rich He has made us in the indestructible everlasting life which He has bestowed upon us through His atoning death and His glorious Resurrection!

I close with just these two or three remarks which the subject suggests.

First, if such is the result of Christ's poverty, "that you, through His poverty, might be rich," what will the result of His riches be? If by His death we live, what must be the outcome of His life? If by His humiliation we are so enriched, what will come of His Glory? If by His first coming, when He came as a Sin-Offering, all this is accomplished, what may *not* be expected when He shall come a second time without a Sin-Offering unto salvation? Try and work out that problem if you can!

Here is another. If Christ's poverty is such as I have tried to describe it, what must the riches of His people be? If our riches are proportionate to His poverty, what rich people we are! He was poor as poor can be and we, if we are believing in Him, are as rich as rich can be! So low as He went, so high do we rise! That is how the scales of the sanctuary act—as He sinks, we go up! Will you try to see how high you must be according to this standard? What riches must belong to you when you judge of them by Christ's poverty!

The next question is, if such are our riches, why do we complain of poverty? There stands a child of God who does not know whether he has any Grace. He is putting his hand into his soul's pocket to see whether he can find a pennyworth of Grace. My Brother, all things are yours if you are Christ's, for it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell! There is many a child of the King who is entitled to reign like a prince, who continues to live like a miser. He weighs every ounce he eats. He starves himself, spiritually, near unto death. What are you doing? Why shouldn't you, to whom God has given Christ, that is to say, *everything*—be glad in the Lord and rejoice with unspeakable joy—and full of glory?

I close with one more question. If such was His power, why shouldn't we, also, for His Glory, be willing to be poor? If He would throw aside His honor, why shouldn't we throw ours aside? If He gave up His ease, why shouldn't we give up ours? If He was willing to be a Servant, why

shouldn't we be servants? If He made Himself of no reputation, why shouldn't we do the same? That is very different from the action of my friend over there who said, "Well, you know, I shall not stand it. I do not think that I should be treated like that. I really feel that I ought to be more respected." Ah, poor Soul, if you knew yourself, you would not talk so! Who among us deserves *any* respect? They call us, "Reverend." It makes me sick to think that any mortal man should be considered a "reverend" person! What reverence can be due to us except that every wife is to "see that she reverences her husband"? That is Scriptural—but it is never said that every hearer is to reverence the preacher! Oh, what poor creatures we are at our best!

If God were to permit us to be doormats to the Church, it would be too high an honor for us! I have seen a broom, sometimes, outside a door where farming men come to brush their boots. It is a grand thing for a man to be just like that. I think that I am getting very near to that honor and glory, so many are scraping their boots against me just now, and I am well content that it should be so if they get some of the mud off and do not go and spoil God's floor inside. Let all of us feel that what becomes of us matters nothing at all! Let us be willing to die in a ditch so long as Jesus Christ sits on the Throne of God and His great Truth is established in the world.

"You know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor." Go and imitate Him and be willing to be *nothing* at all, if only He may be All in All. God bless you! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
*Psalm 22:1-21.***

This marvelous Psalm is a wonderful prophecy which might seem as if it had been composed *after* the suffering of our Lord. But it was written *many hundreds of years before* His Incarnation and death. It is "a Psalm of David," and is dedicated, "To the chief Musician upon Aijeleth Shaha," or, as the margin renders it, "the hind of the morning." We know who that hunted Hind of the morning is. We seem to see Him panting, his flanks white with foam, pressed by the dogs, almost torn to pieces by the cruel enemy. The Psalm begins with words that, in all their fullness, belong to nobody else but our Well-Beloved.

Verse 1. *My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?* Every word is emphatic. You may put the stress where you please, upon every single word. "My God, My God." With two hands He takes hold on God, crying, "My God, My God," "Eloi, Eloi, My Strong One, why have You forsaken Me?" Or read it, "Why have You forsaken Me?" "Why have You forsaken Me?" "Why have You forsaken Me?" You get a different shade of meaning each time, but each meaning is true.

1. *Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My roaring?* The Savior's prayers had ceased to be articulate. They had become, in His own judgement, like the pained crying of a wounded beast. He calls them, "My roaring." Oh, what prayers were those of our Lord on the Cross! Sometimes we, too, feel as if we could not pray—we can only sigh,

and sob, and groan. Well, if it even came to *roaring*, we would have a fuller sympathy with Christ, for He could say, "Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My roaring?"

2, 3. *O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You hear not; and in the night season, and am not silent. But You are holy, O You that inhabit the praises of Israel.* Jesus will find no fault with God. Even if in His dire extremity, God forsakes Him, yet He will not utter even a whisper against Him—"You are holy, O You that inhabit the praises of Israel."

4-6. *Our fathers trusted in You: they trusted, and You did deliver them. They cried unto You, and were delivered: they trusted in You, and were not confounded. But I am a worm, and no man.* The allusion here is to a little red worm which, when it is crushed, seems to be all blood and nothing else—the Savior compares Himself to that little red worm, "and no man."

6. *A reproach of men, and despised of the people.* They would not let Him be numbered with them. They accounted Him as an off cast and an outcast.

7, 8. *All they that see Me laugh Me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the LORD that He would deliver Him: let Him deliver Him, seeing He delighted in Him.* Will you try to picture the Savior saying all these words as He hangs upon the Cross? That is the best commentary upon the Psalm. Hanging there, nailed to the cruel wood, in terrible bodily and mental anguish and deserted of God, He soliloquizes after this sad fashion. You will understand it all so well if you have Him in your mind's eye as we are reading.

9-10. *But You are He that took Me out of the womb: You did make Me hope when I was upon My mother's breasts. I was cast upon You from the womb: You are My God from My mother's belly.* We could not help ourselves then. At the moment of our birth, everything depended upon God and so it does in the moment of our death. It is well to remember those years of helpless infancy when we could not feed ourselves. We were taken care of, then, when we hung in absolute impotence upon our mother's breast—then surely, if a second childhood should come, if all our powers should fail us, and we should be once more as weak as we were at our birth—He that helped us in the beginning will help us in the end! Thus the Savior comforted Himself as He went on praying—

11. *Be not far from Me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help.* Oh, the bitterness of that cry, "None to help!" "They have all gone. The disciples have all fled. Judas has betrayed Me. Peter has denied Me. There is none to help. Be not far from Me." There stand the Roman soldiers, the High Priest and the Scribes and Pharisees—and Jesus says—

12-14. *Many bulls have compassed Me; strong bulls of Bashan have beset Me round. They gaped upon Me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint.* They were, no doubt, dislocated by the dreadful shaking and jarring that our Savior must have suffered when they dashed the Cross into the hole dug for it.

14. *My heart is like wax; it Has melted in the midst of Me.* When the heart goes, everything goes. When the heart fails, and begins to melt,

then it seems as if everything is loosening and the man is in the anguish of death.

15. *My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and My tongue cleaves to My jaws.* Our Lord was parched with the fever brought on by the terrible anguish and strain upon the hands and feet, which are full of nerves and very tender. A slight wound of the thumb has brought on lockjaw, but what the wounds of the Savior's delicate and sensitive body must have been, we cannot possibly tell—"My tongue cleaves to My jaws."

16. *And You have brought Me into the dust of death.* He felt as if His very frame was all turning to the dust of which the body is made. So complete is the breaking up of the whole manhood when a strong fever is upon one.

16. *For dogs have compassed Me.* There was the ribald crowd—not, this time, the bulls of Bashan, the great ones, but the mob—the masses of the common people hooting at Him. "Dogs have compassed Me."

16. *The assembly of the wicked have enclosed Me: they forced My hands and My feet.* Can anybody else be speaking here but Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of David, the King of the Jews? Now is this Hind of the morning hunted till the dogs and the hunters have made a circle round Him. "The assembly of the wicked have enclosed Me." Here is Christ's Crucifixion beyond all doubt—"They pierced My hands and My feet."

17. *I can count all My bones.* He is so emaciated that, as He looks down upon His body, He says, "I can count all My bones."

17. *They look and stare upon Me.* The delicate modesty of the Savior is shocked. They have stripped Him and hung Him up—and there they stand and gloat—their cruel eyes upon His matchless body. "They look and stare upon Me."

18. *They part My garment among them, and cast lots for My clothing.* How accurate is this description, even to the least detail! How wondrously was this Poet-Prophet inspired when he thus drew the portrait of the Crucified Christ! "They part My garments among them, and cast lots for My clothing."

19-21. *But be not You far from Me, O LORD: O My strength, hasten You to help Me. Deliver My Soul from the sword: My darling life from the power of the dog. Save Me from the lion's mouth: for You have heard Me.* So far, You see, the Psalm describes the sufferings of our Divine Redeemer and then it changes. The light of the sun has broken out from the midday darkness! God has smiled on Him, once more, and the Psalm changes its tone altogether as the Savior congratulates Himself upon the result of His passion. The Psalm ends with these memorable words, "It is finished." Our version puts it, "He has done this." It might just as well be rendered, "It is finished," for the sense is precisely the same. And when Jesus had said this, He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—282, 942, 278.

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CHRIST'S POVERTY, OUR RICHES NO. 2716

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 3, 1901.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 18, 1880.**

***“For you know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though
He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you,
through His poverty might be rich.”
2 Corinthians 8:9.***

IT is well to notice that Believers are to be constrained to Christian duty by Gospel motives rather than by legal arguments. It is poor work to try to stir up a Christian to perform an act of Grace by an argument fetched from a heathen moralist. And it is equally poor work to try and lead a child of God to perform a service of love by an argument which is applicable only to a slave. Hence you will find that the Apostle Paul, when he wants to urge the saints in Corinth to liberality, does not tell them what they are bound to do according to the requirements of the Law of God, for they are not under the Law—he uses arguments suitable for men who have come under the blessed Sovereignty of Divine Grace!

It is also noteworthy that with regard to Christian liberality, there are no rules laid down in the Word of God. I remember hearing somebody say, “I would like to know *exactly* what I ought to give.” Yes, dear Friend, no doubt you would. But you are not under a system similar to that by which the Jews were obliged to pay tithes to the priests. If there were any such rule laid down in the Gospel, it would destroy the beauty of spontaneous giving and take away all the bloom from the fruit of your liberality! There is no law to tell me what I should give my father on his birthday. There is no rule laid down in any law book to decide what present a husband should give to his wife, nor what token of affection we should bestow upon others whom we love. No, the gift must be a free one, or it has lost all its sweetness.

Yet this absence of law and rule does not mean that you are, therefore, to give less than the Jews did, but rather that you shall give more because, if I rightly understand what is implied in the term, Christian liberality, it is to be according to the example of Christ Himself! Our text really gives the Christian law of liberality—“*For you know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you, through His poverty might be rich.*” That is to say, we should give as we love. You know how much our Lord Jesus Christ loved by knowing how much He gave. He gave Himself for us because He loved

us with all the force and energy of His Nature. Why did that woman break the alabaster box and pour the precious ointment upon Christ's head, when it might have been sold for much, and the money given to the poor, or when she might have kept her ointment for herself? She gave much because she loved much. I commend that rule to you—give as you love and measure your love by your gift!

Further, for this also seems to be the teaching of the text—give till you feel it—for the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ was proven by the fact that, “though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor.” He gave till He felt it, gave till He knew that He was giving all that He had. And I do verily believe that the great sweetness of giving to God begins when we feel the pinch, when we have to deny ourselves in order that we may give. Then it is that there is the true spirit of Christian liberality! Our Lord Jesus Christ gets from a good many people what they would not dare to keep back from Him, and what they can readily enough part with—it is sometimes about as much as their shoestrings cost them in a year—certainly not as much as they spend upon the smallest of their many luxuries. Yet the most of them consider that they have done all that they should when such insignificant offerings have been laid at their Lord's feet! But, dear Friends, I hope that it will be your rule both to give as you love, and to give till you feel it.

And next, we should in some sense give all, for that is the meaning of the text—“Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor.” He emptied Himself, He gave all that He had. And we, as Christians, are bound to confess that we belong to Christ and that all we possess is to be used by us as stewards under Him, not reckoning anything to be our own, but gladly admitting that He has entrusted it all to us to be used prudently, wisely and discreetly for His Glory. Oh, that we all came up to that standard! Then should we have the great pattern and model of Christian liberality reproduced in ourselves far more largely than it is at present!

I was obliged to say what I have in order to introduce the text to your notice, for we ought never to take a passage of Scripture out of its connection without first of all explaining its real meaning and purport. Still, Christian liberality is not to be my main subject at this time. I want, rather, to show you, first, how *Christ has enriched us by His poverty*, “that you, through His poverty might be rich.” When I have spoken about that, I purpose to spend a few minutes in speaking upon *our enjoyment of the riches which Christ's poverty has bestowed upon us*.

I. First, then, I am to tell you about OUR ENRICHMENT BY CHRIST'S POVERTY. How is it that, by Christ's poverty, we become rich?

Firstly, *it was poverty in Christ's part to become a Man at all*. God the Illimitable, the Infinite, veiled Himself in human flesh! God the Omnipotent, the Eternal, came here in the form of a Baby hanging in weakness at a woman's breast. God, whom angels adore, before whom all Heaven bows with deepest solemnity of awe, was found where horned oxen fed—and in a manger was He laid. It was poverty for Him to take these rags of our poor humanity and clothe Himself with them, for His own robe was

the light, His chariot was a flame of fire, His palace the Heaven of God! Yet was He found at Bethlehem, a Child born, a Son given, that He might redeem His people from all iniquity! We cannot comprehend the condescension of Christ half as much as the angels can—they have a far higher view of the Glory of God than we have and, therefore, they have a clearer apprehension of the wondrous steep which Jesus made when He became Man for our sakes. What poverty it was for Him—it was not so much for Joseph and for Mary as for Him—to be in the inn and to find that there was no room for Him! In fact, what poverty it was for Him to be a Baby at all!

Yet it is by that poverty of His that we become rich, for now, every believing man may lift up his head and rejoice that there is One who sits upon the very Throne of God, who also is a Man even as he is. Neither Gabriel, nor any other angel, has ever been taken into union with God as we have been! “For unto which of the angels said He say at any time, You are My Son, this day have I begotten You?” “He took not up angels, but He took up the seed of Abraham.” Well may we say, “Lord, what is man, that You are mindful of him? Or the son of man, that You visit him? You crowned him with glory and honor and set him over the works of Your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet.” Now the next Person to God is man, and Manhood and Godhead are, in Christ Jesus, joined in a wondrous unity which is indissoluble throughout eternity! O my Brothers and Sisters, at the very outset of our subject we see how the poverty of Christ Incarnate has enriched us!

Being born, *our blessed Lord lived, for many years, a life of poverty at Nazareth.* He was a carpenter, the reputed son of the village carpenter. One is sometimes inclined to wonder what He did throughout those 30 years, and to wish that some authentic record of them had been presented. “Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart” and, at times, we feel some regret that she was not Inspired to write down the sayings of the Holy Child, the wondrous speeches of the sanctified Youth as He grew up, the wise words that He uttered as He pushed the plane and drove the nails. Yet we are sure that it was not necessary for us to know all that, or it would have been revealed to us. Enough is recorded for us to see that He remained in poverty and obscurity at Nazareth for our sakes, because, dear Brothers and Sisters, during those 30 years He was preparing for His public work. It was necessary that He should bear that restraint which, for a time, He put upon Himself.

I doubt not that some of us might have done more for our Lord if we had not begun so soon—if we had enjoyed, in seclusion like our Savior's, more opportunities of growing in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man—we might, perhaps, have been made more fit for our work even if the term of our service had been somewhat shortened. However what might be with us, we know that our Master was hidden away in quietude, and His poverty was making us rich because He was preparing to achieve that wondrous life-work by which He has enriched all His people to all eternity! He was away there, at Nazareth, having sympathy with obscure people, sympathy with artisans, sympathy with those of whom

we seldom hear much, sympathy with those who are shut up in workshops from morning till night, tempted in all points like as they are, yet without sin. And, at this moment, the wealth of His great heart, so rich as it is in intense sympathy with manhood, is making us rich because for those 30 years He was so poor and so obscure.

He came out, at last, into public life, and *when He emerged from obscurity, it was to a life of poverty*. You remember His words concerning Himself—"Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head." He was dependent upon the gifts of His followers, or upon the godly women who ministered unto Him of their substance.

He never made a will, for He had no real or personal property to leave. Yet He made that best of all wills when He said, "Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My Glory, which You have given Me: for You loved Me before the foundation of the world." Jesus of Nazareth was most manifestly a poor Man and in His poverty He suffered hunger, and thirst, and weariness, and all the woes that are usually associated with poverty.

I might summarize His whole life by quoting Paul's words, "It became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." That earthly life of His was every moment of it proving that "in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of His people. For in that He Himself has suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted." "We have not a High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." He knows your poverty, dear Friends, your needs, your woes. All that makes life bitter to you, He has tasted, only He drank to the very dregs from the cup of which you do but sip a little now and then. It is His poverty that makes you rich at the present moment—and you shall be forever full of comfort and joy because He was so poor while He was here below!

But it was towards the close of His life here on earth that our Master entered into the deepest poverty of all. And I want you who are believers in Jesus Christ, you who are really His followers, to have patience with me while I show Him to you in the extremity of His poverty and ask you to see how, *even in His deepest agony*, He has made you rich. See Him there, amid the olives in Gethsemane's Garden, prostrate in prayer, and covered with a bloody sweat as He pleads with His Father on His people's behalf. Do you see that cup, filled with wormwood and gall, of which He must drink if you are to be saved? Can you bear the sight? Are you not overwhelmed with penitent sorrow as you see the Lord of Life and Glory lying there covered with His own gore—and know that all His agony was on your account? It is that poverty of His which has made you rich, for He has taken from your hands the cup of His Father's just wrath against sin and He has drained it Himself! And, instead thereof, He has set be-

fore you the cup of salvation from which He bids you to drink the new wine of the Kingdom of God full of joy and delight! So, drink and forget your poverty, and remember your misery no more! "Yes, drink abundantly, O Beloved!" Behold, your Savior gives you the love of God to drink—and better than the wine of angels is the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord! Yet you never could have had that cup of blessing in your hand if He had not first emptied that other cup which His Father gave Him to drink—that cup of awful bitterness which He resolved that you should never taste.

See Him rising from prayer in Gethsemane and, behold, Judas comes and with a kiss betrays Him—and in that betrayal He was poor, indeed. But He has, through His poverty, made you rich, for you never shall be betrayed as He was! They bound Him and led Him away as their captive—and who is poorer than the man who has lost his liberty, and is taken off to prison and to judgment? Yet that captivity of His has made you a free man in Christ Jesus. When He was personally arrested, He said, concerning His disciples, "Let these go their way that the saying might be fulfilled, which He spoke, Of them which You gave Me have I lost none." And it is the same with you if you believe in Him—no warrant from the Court of Heaven shall ever come to you, nor from Hell, either. If the Son has made you free, you are free, indeed, and you shall be free forever! Christ's captivity has led your captivity captive, and thus again His poverty has made you rich.

Next, they take Him away to Annas and Caiaphas. Picture the scene as best you can. He stands before a cruel high priest who insults and mocks Him. Note the depth of His poverty. He is brought so low that He receives no help from the one specially ordained to be the helper of the helpless! Then see how rich you are—for, inasmuch as He had to appear before an unkind and wicked high priest, you have a High Priest who can be touched with the feeling of your infirmities! You have a tender and gentle High Priest to whom you may always come without hesitation or fear! But, had He not stood as a prisoner before Annas and Caiaphas, He would never have become what He now is as the merciful and gracious High Priest exactly adapted to your needs.

Now the wicked men begin to accuse Him. He is brought so low that they even rob Him of His Character! Yet, to do that, they have to find false witnesses and these do not agree! But, still, they do find witnesses to accuse Him in order that they may take His life. Surely, a man is never poorer than when he is left in the hands of his enemies to be slandered in open court, and to have none to speak in His defense! But let your joy rise high while you remember that it was because Christ was falsely accused that you can now confidently say, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us." "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Therefore He will lay no iniquity upon those who are in Him. "He was numbered with the transgressors." His name was put in the place of our names and, therefore, we are no longer

numbered with the transgressors, for no one can now lay anything to our charge, for He has met every accusation on our behalf!

While they had our gracious Master in their power, Herod, Pilate, the priests and the people mocked Him. Oh, it was shameful mockery! They ridiculed His royalty by putting a reed scepter into His hand, a soldier's old purple coat over His shoulders and a thorny crown upon His blessed brow. They cast scorn upon His prophetic office by blinding His eyes and buffeting Him, and saying, "Prophecy unto us, Christ, Who is he that struck You?" They spat in His face. They struck Him with their hands. They treated Him as the vilest of the vile. Now, Beloved, see how you are enriched by His poverty. Because of all this shame which Christ endured, you shall not be put to shame nor be confounded, world without end! To each Believer, the ancient promise is true, "No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment, you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of Me, says the Lord." Yes, just as low as your Savior stooped in His humiliation, so high do you rise because of your union to Him! Just as much as He was mocked, so much are you honored! He was treated like a slave and felon, so you are made to be a son of the Highest—

***"Behold what wondrous Grace
The Father has bestowed
On sinners of a mortal race,
To call them sons of God!"***

Not only did those wicked men mock our Lord, but they also scourged Him with those cruel thongs which made deep furrows on His blessed back. Oh, what abject poverty was that when His very body was not reckoned as His own, but was allowed to be brutally beaten at the will of another! Yet see how rich He has made us by His poverty, for it is written, "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." There is no scourging for you, Believer, for the stripes have all fallen upon your Substitute! God's sword of justice has been sheathed in the very heart of Christ, so, if you believe in Him, it can never touch you! Oh, how secure you are! Not a blow can fall upon you now—not the smallest drop of Divine wrath can ever be your bitter portion, for Jesus bore the blows for you and drank the cup of wrath quite dry. Your warfare is accomplished, your iniquity is pardoned, for, in the Person of your great Substitute, you received of the Lord's hand, double for all your sins, and you are forever clear.

After they had scourged the Savior, they condemned Him to death, even the death of the Cross, for they cried, "Crucify Him, crucify Him," "and Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required." Yet, while you mourn over that crowning act of infamy, let your hearts dance for very joy, for because Jesus was condemned, the Believer can never be! Here is the Scripture to prove my assertion—"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." God has absolved you, O Believer, from all your guilt, and you are absolved forever! Christ has washed you in His precious blood and you are clean every whit—no speck, nor spot, nor

stain of sin remains upon you, even in the sight of God Himself—therefore, go your way and sing for joy of heart!

At last they hanged Him up on the Cross to die. He was made a curse for us, that the curse which was upon us might be taken away forever. They stripped Him naked, that we might be clothed with His righteousness. God forsook Him, so that He might never have to forsake us. His disciples all ran away from Him and left Him alone, that we might never be alone, but might always have the Father with us and, at last, come “to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant.”

See, now, the Lord of Life and Glory has bowed His head in death! He has yielded up the ghost. His poverty has reached its climax, for He is stripped of life itself. Yet therein is the greatest cause of joy for all Believers, for we died in Him and sin died in Him and, for us, death died in Him! So our greatest riches spring from His deepest poverty—we find eternal life in His death, a Heaven in His Cross—we ascend to Heaven through His grave!

I want you, dear Friends, to keep this thought vividly and constantly before your minds, that it is Christ's poverty that makes you rich. You must look on everything that relates to your Lord and yourselves by way of contrast—just so far as He goes down, you go up. Just as much as He is emptied, you are filled. Just as He is condemned, you are justified. Just as surely as He dies, so surely do you live beyond the fear of death. Here is a deep mine of unspeakably rich treasure for you—dig in it as much as you can, for you will never exhaust it!

II. I will not detain you many minutes with the second part of our subject, but I want to give you a few practical lessons while I speak about our ENJOYMENT OF CHRIST'S RICHES.

Think, dear child of God, that, as it is Christ's poverty that has made you rich, *how poor you would be if you had not Christ!* Perhaps you are possessed of a great deal of worldly property, but it would be poor stuff—would it not—if you had not Christ with it? All our temporal mercies are like so many ciphers—they count for nothing by themselves—but when you have Christ, there is the great unit before the ciphers and He gives to them a value which they could not have without Him! All the gold of the Indies, all the silver of Potosi, all the treasures of the world cannot fill the heart of man. How poor is any man who is here with us now, who has not Christ as his Savior! You do not think so? But you will think so one of these days, and all Believers here pray that you may think so this very hour! Whatever your title-deeds may be, and however large your possessions—if you have not Christ, you are a poor man. Perhaps, on the other hand, you are in deep poverty and have not anything in this world to call your own. What a poor creature you must be if you have no treasure laid up in Heaven! To go home to a miserable hovel in this world. To earn next to nothing and then to go out of this world into the next, still poorer...O poor, poor Soul! Do try, I pray you, to obtain an inheritance in the world to come, for, if you are without God, and without Christ, you

are indeed a poverty-stricken creature! God grant that you may not rest contented in your present wretched condition!

The next observation is that if it is Christ's poverty that has made His people rich, *how foolish are we to try and find our riches in the world!* It is our tendency to try, if we can, to find something that will satisfy us apart from Christ. That is not either wise or kind on our part. If the Lord gives you temporal mercies, take heed that you do not set your heart upon them. Say concerning them, "They are only toys lent me for a season, and they will have to be given up whenever they are claimed by Him who lent them." Always beware of thinking that this world is your home—you are not to be here long enough to strike root. "Ah," said one to a wealthy man, when he went over his estates, "these are the things that make it hard to die." So they do. Therefore mind that you always feel like a plant that the gardener has loosely laid in the ground till he can find time to plant it. Suck up just enough nourishment to live upon, but say to yourself, "I am not to always live here, but in a garden where biting winds can never blow. Where—

***"Everlasting spring abides,
And never withering flowers'—***

"so I have but to live on here till the Gardener comes and puts me in my proper place." Find not your riches, dear Friend, in a world where Christ had none, but look for your treasure in the land where moth and rust do not corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal.

The next remark I will make is, *how unbelieving it is of some of us to feel poor if we really have been made rich by the poverty of Christ!* Is all that I have been talking about only a matter of fancy, or a freak of the imagination? If it is so, we will throw it away and beg you not to accept it. But, my dear Brothers and Sisters, if you really believe that Christ's poverty has made you rich, what are those furrows doing on your brow? Why those carking cares, those anxious thoughts that so oft perplex you? You say that they come because you are so poor—but how is that? Christ's poverty has made you rich! You have not many of this world's poor three-penny pieces and cracked four-pennies, but you have that which is worth more than gold and diamonds—you have an eternal inheritance! So what are you fretting and worrying yourself about?

Here is a young prince who has got down among the rough boys in the street, and he is crying because he has lost a piece of an old broken plate. You say to him, "Child, go home to the palace, for your father, the king, will give you royal playthings." And when I see one who is a child of the King of Kings acting as if he were a worldling, I may well say to him, "Go home, child, to your Father, and begin to rejoice in the eternal possessions which He has laid up for you." You know that we sometimes sing—

***"He that has made my Heaven secure,
Will here all good provide.
While Christ is rich, can I be poor?
What can I need beside?"***

Good old John Ryland was right when he sang like that, and we shall be wise if we follow his example. You will have as much as you need,

Friend, if you trust in the Lord, for “no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.” You know that one cane is enough for a man to walk with, but some of our friends have a great bundle of canes and I know some of them who have cartloads of walking-sticks—yet they cannot use more than one at a time. King George III once met a stable-boy and said to him, “What do you get, Jack, for your work?” “I get nothing, Sir,” the boy replied, “only my food and drink, and a place to sleep in.” The king said, “Well, that is all they give me.” That is about all that a man really needs—you cannot eat 10 times as much as you now do, even if you have it—and you cannot wear a hundred suits of clothes at once if you have them! If you have more than you need, you cannot enjoy it, so be content with what you have and go through the world thanking God that He will take care of you for time and for eternity!

Once again, *how ungrateful it must be in us if we ever flinch from any loss for Christ's sake*, for He became absolutely poor, even unto death, that He might make us rich! Shall we ever hesitate to part with anything for His sake? What if following Him should involve us in losses, or if we cannot trade as some people do because the fear of God restrains us, or if we have to give up a situation because we cannot break the Sabbath, or because of some other conscientious difficulty? We ought to gladly take the spoiling of our goods, and rejoice even to suffer the loss of all things, if need be, for the sake of Him by whose poverty we have been made rich!

And, finally, *how vast is the inheritance which Christ has given to His people!* If you are to judge of what He gave us by what He *gave up* for us, it must be something absolutely amazing! If our riches are really in proportion to His poverty, that poverty, even to bloody sweat and death upon the Cross, was so extreme that our riches must be extreme, too! Lift up your eyes, you sons of light, look beyond that narrow stream of death—over there is your heritage! Do you see that fair city smiling in everlasting light far brighter than the sun? Behold its jeweled courses, and its 12 foundations sparkling like a rainbow with divers hues of wealth! And do you hear, as you stand outside its gates of pearl, the matchless melody of the new song that goes up day and night? Do you see the white robes of the shining ones, in peerless bliss, as they traverse the pavements of gold and cast their crowns at the feet of the King, their Lord and Savior? All that is yours—and your Lord has given you a guarantee that you shall have it and all that is needed to bring you there in due time! And you may be there very soon for all you know.

But suppose you should live to the extreme limit of human life? How soon those years will pass! Or suppose that Christ should come all of a sudden—and He may come at any moment. Or suppose that while you are sitting here, a convoy of angels should come and bear your spirit away? We are much nearer than we think—some of us are very much nearer than we think, to our eternal rest. It is only a week or two, a month or two, a year or two before we shall be there. Then, courage, my Soul!—

“The way may be rough, but it cannot be long,

And I'll smooth it with hope, and cheer it with song."

I remember preaching, one summer's afternoon, about the New Jerusalem. There was a sister sitting on my right hand downstairs—not in this building, but in a country place—and I noticed her eyes sparkling as I spoke. It seemed to stir my very soul as she looked at me with such an extraordinary gaze of joy, and I was stirred up to say something more, and something better about our happy Home above. When I saw her, apparently still looking at me, a minute or two later, I perceived the same fixed gaze, and I stopped and said, "I think that Sister is dead." And she was. She had gone Home without a sigh, or a groan, or a moan. In the fullness of the prospect, the delight seemed to have swelled like a mighty wave and washed her on to the heavenly shore! Who knows how soon a similar experience may be ours? We may go to sleep tonight and awake in eternal Glory! We are not far from Home, so let us be of good cheer, and rejoice, and praise and bless our Divine Lord that He should ever have stooped so low to raise us so high!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PHILIPPIANS 1:12-30; 2:1-13.**

Philippians 1:12-14. *But I want you to understand, brethren, that the things which happened to me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel; so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; and many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the Word without fear.* Notice the beautiful self-forgetfulness of the Apostle Paul. So long as the Gospel could be more widely published, he did not mind where he was, or what he suffered. He was able to witness for Christ among the Praetorian guards who had the charge of the prison where he was confined and who, also, in their turn, were on duty in Caesar's palace. So Paul says that through his being in bonds there, the particulars concerning his imprisonment were talked about even in the imperial palace—and by that means the Gospel was made known to many in Caesar's household. Then, in addition, other brethren who, perhaps, might have felt compelled to be quiet in his presence, finding that their leader was removed from them, waxed confident to come out and "speak the Word without fear." The same sort of thing has often happened since. You have sometimes seen a widely spreading oak tree cut down and you have missed its grateful shadow. Yet, afterwards, you have discovered that many little trees which would have been dwarfed beneath its shade, have grown more rapidly in its absence and, in like manner, the removal of some eminent servant of the Lord Jesus Christ has frequently made room for others to spring up and more than fill his place.

15-19. *Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife; and some also of goodwill: the one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the Gospel. What then? Notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice,*

yes, and will rejoice. For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. It is much to be desired that all who preach Christ should preach in a right spirit, but even if they do not, let us be glad that Christ is preached! Even though it is only a portion of the Gospel that is proclaimed, and there is much mixed with it from which we greatly differ, yet, if Christ is preached, His Gospel will win its own way and work out His great purposes of love and mercy. You have, perhaps, sometimes seen a little fire kindled among the dead autumn leaves which are damp. And you have noticed that despite all the smoke, the fire has continued to live and burn. So is it with the eternal Truth of God. Notwithstanding all the error with which it is often dampened, and almost smothered, it will live and the Truth of God will conquer the error which is piled upon it. So Paul says, "I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ."

20, 21. *According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it is by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.* Again I bid you mark Paul's devotion and self-forgetfulness. It seems to be a matter of no choice with him whether he serves God in life or glorifies Him in death. The emblem of the American Baptist Missionary Union is an ox standing between a plow and an altar, with the motto, "Ready for either"—Ready to spend and be spent in labor, or to be a sacrifice, whichever the Lord pleases.

22-27. *But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labor: yet what I shall choose I know not. For I am in a strait between the two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more necessary for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; that your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again. Only let your conversation be as it becomes the Gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel.* What a happy Church is that where the members all "stand fast in one spirit," and where they are all, "with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel"—not striving with each other, but all fighting for the faith once and for all delivered to the saints!

28. *And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.* They give you up as lost because they cannot frighten you! They take it as a token of your perdition that you are not terrified by them and it is so to them. Yet, to you, the peacefulness with which you can endure slander and persecution should be a token of your salvation.

29. *For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake.* What an honor this is to be conferred upon any follower of Christ—"not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake"! It is not every Christian who receives this mark of

honor. There are some Believers who have peculiarly tender places in their hearts and who are wounded and gashed by the unkind remarks of those who love them not because they love the Lord Jesus Christ. But to you, my Brother, my Sister, it is given—and you may well rejoice in such a gift—“not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake.”

30. *Having the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me.*

Philippians 2:1-4. *If there is, therefore, any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any heart and mercies, fulfill you my joy, that you be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things. Do not obey the world's maxim, “Take care of Number One.” “Look not every man on his own things.”*

4-7. *But every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation. Observe that expression, “of no reputation.”*

7. *And took upon Him the form of a Servant. A slave.*

7, 8. *And was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a Man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. What a cruel and ignominious death for the Son of God to suffer! Did He lose anything by all this wondrous condescension? Will you lose anything by any dishonor that may come upon you for Christ's sake, for the Truth of God's sake? No! Listen to what followed our Savior's humiliation—*

9-11. *Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Note how the Apostle, after writing on this high theme, again seeks the practical good of his friends at Philippi.*

12, 13. *Therefore, my Beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.*

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—260, 278, 297, 848.

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NO. 3092

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 14, 1908.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 17, 1874.**

***“For you know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you, through His poverty, might be rich.”
2 Corinthians 8:9.***

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text are as follows—#151, Volume 3—THE CONDESCENSION OF CHRIST; #2232, Volume 37—CHRIST'S MOTIVE AND OURS; #2364, Volume 40—POVERTY AND RICHES and #2716, Volume 47—CHRIST'S POVERTY, OUR RICHES—

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WE may, for once, dispense with a preface, and go straight to our subject. The text speaks, first, *of something that we know*. When we have, for a while, meditated upon that, we will speak of *some things that are due because of this something that we know*.

I. First, then, I am going to talk to you about SOMETHING THAT YOU KNOW.

I have heard that people like to be told, over and over again, what they already know. If you tell them what they do not know they may or may not listen to you, but if you tell them what they do know, they will be sure to be interested. If I were to speak about the town from which one of our friends from the country has come. If I were to mention something that occurred not long ago in the High Street of that town, I would be sure to have his eyes fixed upon me and his ears opened to my words. “Ah,” he would say, “I know that town well. I was there Saturday afternoon.” Well now, I am going to speak of something with which all Christians are so familiar that I may refer to it as something that they certainly know. Whatever else they know or do not know, I may address all of them who are here and say, “You know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Beloved Believers, you could not have been Believers in Christ if you had not known this! You could not have had faith if you had not had this knowledge—it would have been impossible for you to have been converted unless you had known Jesus Christ who has now your soul's entire confidence! It is an essential part of your very profession that you should know this and, therefore, we assume that you do. Whatever else you do not know—and I suppose there are some Doctrines that are yet too high or too deep for you to comprehend, and some experiences to which you have not yet attained, and some Graces that are as yet not consciously enjoyed by you—you do “know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you, through His poverty, might be rich.”

You know, first, that *“He was rich.”* We believe that He was infinitely rich and eternally rich, for He was “very God of very God,” and none can be compared for riches with God, who has boundless wealth. God was able to create the heavens and the earth at His own good pleasure and of Christ we are expressly told that “by Him were all things created.” “He was rich” in His essential Deity and rich in the homage of the holy beings that He had made. The hosts of blessed spirits adored Him, principalities and powers counted it their highest honor to be conformed to His will. Heaven is Heaven because He is there. “By Him all things consist” and, therefore, all things reflect His Glory. We are not among those who think that Jesus was a mere Man—blessed be God, we know better than that! We could not trust our salvation to the very best of men. But Christ is God—He “thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” He certainly was rich in happiness. We cannot conceive of His ever feeling a pang of pain or having a single thought of care while yet He dwelt in His Father’s bosom. He must have been as happy as He was holy! We say that “He was rich,” but that is a poor expression, after all, for human language utterly fails to express how rich He was. He was more than rich—He was more than great, He was GOD—all that that word can possibly mean! We know that we have no controversy about that, for “without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh.”

We also know, dear Friends, that though He was rich, *“He became poor.”* I am only telling you something that you know full well, but let your minds be refreshed with the remembrance that Christ was so poor that He was wrapped with baby clothes just as any other infant was. Although He was The Infinite, He was so poor that He had to be sheltered in a stable because there was no room for Him in the inn. Afterwards, He was so poor that He was banished from His own country and had to flee into Egypt. He was so poor that He was the fit companion of a humble carpenter at Nazareth. So poor that when He came out into public life, His dress was the common garment of a laborer, woven from the top throughout without a seam. He had not where to lay His head, though foxes had their holes and birds their nests. He was so poor that He was indebted for His daily bread to the charity of gracious women who followed Him and ministered to Him of their substance. Though the cattle on a thousand hills were His, He sat upon a well at Sychar and said to a poor woman, “Give Me a drink.” Oftentimes, He knew what faintness and hunger meant—and the longer He lived, the more intense His poverty became, until, at last, He was left without a friend when He most needed sympathy—without one to speak a good word for Him when He was arraigned before the bar of those who had resolved to condemn Him to death! Then was He taken out to die without a rag to cover Him. And when He was dead, He was indebted for a tomb to one who lent it to Him out of love. Never was there anywhere else such poverty as the poverty of Christ, for it was not merely external, it was also internal. He became so poor, through bearing our sin, that He had to lose the light of His Father’s Countenance, emptying Himself of all the repute He had. He became a spectacle of scorn and shame because our shameful sin had been laid upon Him. See Him on yonder shameful Cross! Mark His many

wounds, hear His expiring cry! And as you gaze upon that spectacle of majestic misery, remember that although He was rich, He became thus poor.

I must remind you, yet further, of something else that you know—“that though He was rich, *yet for your sakes He became poor.*” I want everyone of you, if it is true, to say, “For my sake, out of love to me, Jesus Christ left His Throne in Heaven to die on the Cross of Calvary.” Forget that there is anybody else here now if you can, and just take this Truth of God to yourself—Jesus Christ loved you and gave Himself for you—as much as if nobody else had ever lived. For you were poured out those drops of gore which streamed from His blessed brow in the Gethsemane sweat. For you He endured that shameful kiss by which Judas betrayed Him. For you His blessed shoulders were bared to the cruel Roman scourge. For you His hands were bound with cords, His thorn-crowned head smitten by the soldiers and His marred Countenance became smeared with their abominable spittle! For you the Lord of Glory became “a worm and no man,” and was “despised and rejected of men.” Surely there was nothing in you that could have merited love mighty enough to suffer so! Yet it was all for you and for me!

I seemed to be speaking to myself just now and I would gladly stop preaching and sit down and weep that Christ should have borne all this for me, as I am sure He did. But, Beloved Brothers and Sisters, will not you also remember that it was for your sakes that He became poor? Let each one of you, in imagination, stand at the foot of the Cross and say, “That suffering was all for me! That sacred head was wounded for me! Those dear eyes were red with weeping for me! Those lips that are like lilies dropping sweet-smelling myrrh, and those cheeks, so full of love and tenderness, were stained and marred for me! Those holy hands and those cruelly-fastened feet from which His life’s blood flowed, poured out that sacred flood for me! That throat all parched, those limbs all dislocated by the jarring of the Cross—above all else, His soul’s deep distress, the unknown anguish that made Him cry, ‘*Lama Sabachthani?*’—all this was for me!” Ask God the Holy Spirit to write all this on your soul, dear Brother or sister in Christ, and to make you feel, “All this was for me.”

Notice also that as Christ, for your sakes, became poor, it was “*that you, though His poverty, might be rich.*” It will be a change of thought for you if you now think that you are rich. I hope you felt like weeping, just now, when I spoke of how Christ became poor. Now feel like singing as I remind you how rich you are! You are rich through that which is imputed to you, for all that Jesus had and did is yours. His matchless Righteousness is yours—you have it on already if you are a Believer—and so you are arrayed in fair white linen, whiter than any fuller could make it! His Atonement is yours. His precious blood has washed all your guilt away and you are now whiter than snow, without spot even before the eyes of the All-Seeing One!

You have also riches of another kind—riches within you. The life of Christ is in you by reason of His death. For you the Holy Spirit has so

worked in you that the life of God is within you and you can never die! Because Christ lives, you must also live. You may be wearing very poor apparel tonight and have but few coins in your purse, but you are very rich—the Czar of all of Russia and all the emperors who have ever lived are not as rich as you are unless they also have a share in all that you possess, for “all things are yours,” and no one can have more than “all things.”—

**“This world is yours, and worlds to come.
Earth is your lodge, and Heaven your home!”**

When the stars come out, count them if you can, for all the glories of Heaven are yours. And beyond the stars, the endless realms of bliss are all yours. It is not merely for today or for tomorrow that “all things are yours,” but they shall be yours throughout the eternal ages! When the sun’s lamp has burnt out and the moon has been turned into blood, still shall you live on as long as the unending life of God, and all the Glory of your God shall be yours. Does not your very heart sing as you try to realize how rich you are and how rich you shall be forever?

Now come back to this point—you are rich through Christ’s poverty. You have been lifted up so high because He was dragged down so low! You have been filled because He was emptied. You live because He died. As you think of your innumerable mercies, remember that there is not one of them but has the blood mark upon it. All your possessions have come to you through the Well-Beloved who impoverished Himself that you might be enriched.

This is the finishing stroke. The Apostle says “You know the *Grace* of our Lord Jesus Christ.” I have spoken to you about His being rich and becoming poor, and making you rich through His poverty. But the point that we must never forget is that it was Divine Grace that led Him to do this. He was under no compulsion, so far as His Father was concerned, to come from Heaven to redeem us from destruction and, as far as you and I were concerned, He was under no obligation to come and save us. Do you ask, “Why did He do it, then?” Ah, that is one of the things you will have to ask Him. I know of only one reason and that is, “His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins.” That quotation naturally suggests the next question, “But why did He love us?” You must ask Him that, also, and when you do ask Him that question, you must look up at Him and then you will see that He loved us because He is all Love.

II. You know His Grace, says the Apostle—His graciousness to us, His willingness to bless us, how He came, not by constraint, but entirely because of His own graciousness that He might save us. I am not going to enlarge further upon that topic, but to speak of SOME THINGS THAT ARE DUE BECAUSE OF WHAT WE KNOW. I want to use this knowledge as a hammer to strike home some nails.

If you know the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, what then, Beloved? First, *it is due to Him that you trust Him.* “Why,” says someone, “I thought you were preaching to saints.” So I am. “But that is the exhortation which you give to sinners.” Yes, that is quite true, for that is what sinners are bid to do—to trust in Jesus that they may be saved. But I

want to give the same exhortation to saints as to sinners. I know that we are trusting in Jesus if we are saved, but do we trust Him as He deserves to be trusted? He has given us the most convincing proof of His love that can possibly be conceived—how is it that we do not always rest in His love, feel quite confident about that love, lean our whole weight upon that love and live in the full conviction that that love is altogether our own? I mean this—do you not sometimes get into Doubting Castle? Have not some of you been fretting lately about some pecuniary trouble? Were you not worried, the other day, about some little domestic affair? Surely it is time that you fully trusted your Lord! If there is a wife who says to her husband, “I am afraid of this, and afraid of that,” he says to her, “But, my dear wife, can you not yet trust me? Have I not given you proofs enough of my love?”

Now, no earthly husband has ever given such proofs of love to his spouse as Jesus has given to us, so we ought to trust Him wholly, fully, constantly, unwaveringly with everything! It ought to be our habit to “steal away to Jesus” whatever happens to us—never to carry a burden for a minute, but to take it to His feet—never to worry, never to fret, never to mistrust, but since He was rich and for our sakes became poor, that He might make us rich, the very least we can do is to trust Him! It seems to me that not to do so is to insult Him—and He whispers to each dear child of His here, “After all that I have done for you, repose upon Me. Put your aching head upon My bosom. Exercise it no longer with a thousand anxious cares, but believe that I love you, died for you and that I will see you through it all and, therefore, leave it all to Me.” God help you to learn that first lesson—to trust in the Lord with all your heart!

Next, “you know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Therefore, secondly, *love Him*. “But I do love Him,” says one. Do you? “Yes,” you reply, “I do.” Well, suppose He were to come here at this moment and that He were to come to your pew and say to you, as He said to Peter, “Do you love Me?” would you answer, “Yes”? “Yes,” you reply, “I would say as Peter did, ‘Lord, You know all things. You know that I love You.’” Suppose He were then to say to you, “What have you done today to prove your love to Me?” What could you answer? Suppose He were to say, “I will take this day’s actions as a specimen of your love.” Would you be willing for Him to do so? If He said, “I will take yesterday’s actions,” I am afraid there are some here who would have to say, “Dear Master, do no such thing. We hope we do love You but, oh, give us Grace to love You more, for we cannot continue to live as we have done. Do help us, by Your Holy Spirit, to live after a different fashion.” Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I want your love for Jesus to be not merely in name, but to be as real as your love to your dearest ones! No, I want it to be a passion far more operative than the fondest love of a mother for her child or of a spouse for her husband! Do you so love Jesus? Why, compared with what Christ has done for you, what have you done for Christ? May we never cease to praise our mother’s love! Dear and blessed was the woman who bore us, nursed us and cared for us as no one else could have done! Yet this mortal life of ours would have been a curse to us if

Jesus had not come to redeem us from eternal death and shown us a greater love even than our mother's! Beloved, if you feel the love of your father and mother stirring in your heart—and I am sure you do if you are worthy of the name of a man—much more let the love of Jesus Christ fire and fill your soul! Some of you have children and for then you would willingly sacrifice everything. Well, we do not doubt your love to your wife and your child, but let your love to Jesus be quite as operative on your daily life as these loves and even more so! In the remembrance of Gethsemane and Golgotha, I claim your heart's best love for Christ, and I pray that His blessed Spirit may compel you to gladly yield it to Him!

But now, Beloved, I have to go a step further and say that if you know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ to you, I come to claim that in proof of your love, you *render to Him your daily service*. Paul was writing to tell the Corinthians that the poor Christians in Macedonia had made a very generous contribution towards the poor saints in Jerusalem. And He wanted the richer brethren in Corinth to give their share to help those in need. Instead of telling them that they ought to do this, he put it to them thus—"You know how freely Jesus Christ, though He was rich, became poor that you might be rich. Now, for His sake, act in the same spirit toward your needy Brothers and Sisters in Judea."

Let me explain how this principle affects me and every one of you, my dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ. It means this—praise Jesus for dying for you! Do not need anybody to urge you to be obedient to Jesus—spontaneous love deserves spontaneous love. Do not need to be *driven* to your duty and do not let it be *duty* so much as delight, even as Jesus said to His Father, "I delight to do Your will, O My God." You know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in all that He did—do all that you have to do with a like gracefulness of spontaneity, that is, do it without needing to be pressed to do it. No honey is so sweet as that which drops freely from the comb, and no service is so sweet to the Lord Jesus as that which a Believer spontaneously renders to Him.

Think of what you would like to do for Jesus. He thought long ago about what He would do for you and it was a great joy to Him to think of it. Now think what you can do for Jesus. You know what you sometimes do for a dear friend when a birthday is coming on—you plot, you plan, you say to yourself, "What shall my present be? What surprise can I arrange?" I want you, in some such fashion as that, to turn over in your mind what you can do for the Lord Jesus. Have you an alabaster box of precious ointment at home? Then bring it as your love-gift to Him—you surely would not give Christ your odds and ends, would you? "No," you say, "I will give Him the best that I have. I only wish it were a thousand times as good as it is." When Jesus became poor for your sakes, it cost Him all that He had—now do something for Him which will be costly to you, for He well deserves it. O our blessed Savior, we are not going to give You kisses and tears and words only. No, we will pinch ourselves, we will deny ourselves, we will plan and toil so that we may give You something that costs us our heart's deepest emotions, our mind's best thoughts and our body's sternest labor! Of all that we have on earth, we will choose the choicest and best for you, our dear Lord and Master.

You see, I am almost beginning to press you to this blessed service, but that is not what I intend to do—I am aiming at the very reverse of that. I do believe that the Lord Jesus delights to see His people thinking what they can do for Him, without any minister urging them to do it, without any circular from a society, or a collector calling at the door for their half-guinea. Do not imagine that just because you belong to such-and-such a church, you must do something for Christ. It is true that there is such a necessity, but you should put the matter in quite a different form from that—“May I have the privilege of doing something for Him who for my sake became poor? And if there is anything to be done that is more lowly than other service, less seen and reckoned to be less honorable than other service, is that the post for me?” Those who truly love Christ will gladly wash His feet and wipe them with the hairs of their head. They will not covet the higher work of anointing His head, but will be satisfied to be allowed to anoint His feet. Anything for Jesus—that shall be our motto. We know how freely He became poor for our sakes. Let us, with just such freeness, render ourselves up as living sacrifices unto God, which is our reasonable service.

I must add this one thing. “You know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you, through His poverty, might be rich.” Now *go and imitate Him as far as you can*. If you see anybody in need, be generous, for Christ was generous. If you meet a sinner, do not turn your back upon him, as a Pharisee might, but help him all you can, for Christ helped you all He could. If it should cost you a great deal of trouble to win that soul for Christ, gladly put yourself to that trouble because Christ took so much trouble to save you. A good Brother said to me, the other day, concerning a certain boy, that he was afraid we would never do much with him because he was of very corrupt origin. I said, “So were you.” “Ah,” he replied, “I do not quite mean it that way.” “No,” I said, “but I do mean it that way.” He or she who is a son or daughter of Adam had a corrupt origin—and as we all came from that source, we are all corrupt! Do not ever say of anybody, “That person is too bad for me to do anything with him.” It is the genius of Christianity to select the worst, first, and we should never regard any man as utterly hopeless until he is dead. As long as the breath is in his body, no matter though all the devils from Hell were also in him, there is enough power in the Lord Jesus Christ to make the whole troop of them flee—and it is for us to attack those devils in His name! Jesus Christ, having saved *us*, the salvation of other sinners *must* be possible.

I want you, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, wherever you are, to tell others about Him. “You know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,” but others do not know it! You have been made to know it in order that you may tell it to others. We have come nearly to the close of another Sabbath, so permit me to put a question or two by way of examination to you who profess to be Christ’s. Have you talked about Jesus Christ today? Have you spoken to anybody about His soul today? “I have been in the Bible class, Sir, studying the Word.” That is good, but did you,

today, come to close grips with anybody about his soul? I believe that is the best way to be soul-winners for all who cannot exercise the public ministry—and even for ministers it is the best way! When God really stirs us up to get a hold of men, we shall soon see them saved. I try to talk straight home to my hearers as far as I can, but I am conscious that the man who gets a hold of his fellow men, talks to them individually, tells them of their danger and pleads with them to trust in Jesus, is the man who is sure to be blessed to them! Have you done that? Some of you have children—have you ever prayed with them, one by one? “Oh, yes,” you reply. I am glad you can say that, dear Brother. But I am afraid there are some who cannot say it. Perhaps you have a fellow servant who is utterly godless—did you ever speak to her tenderly and affectionately about her soul?

We neglect the souls of others because we do not realize as we ought that Christ, though rich, for our sakes became poor. If we really knew this as we ought to know it, we would begin to care about other people for Christ’s sake. What a strange man was that Paul who wrote our text! After his conversion, he went all over the world, as far as he could, preaching Jesus Christ. They stoned him and put him in prison, but as soon as he got out of prison, he was preaching again! He had chains on his wrists and was taken as a prisoner to Rome, but he kept on preaching when he had the opportunity. Do you know why he did so? I believe it was because, one day, when he was riding to Damascus, something very extraordinary happened to him. Jesus Christ spoke to him out of Heaven and he fell to the ground. And when he got up, his whole being had received such a twist that he was very strange ever after!

Brothers and Sisters, I should like you tonight, if you never before had it, to get such a realizing view of Christ’s coming down from Heaven, lying in the manger among the horned oxen, living for nearly 30 years in obscurity and then, after His brief but wonderful public ministry, bearing all your sins in His own body on the tree! I should like you to have such a view of Him that, like Paul, you would receive such a twist as you would never get over as long as you live! I have sometimes felt that twist, as I have recalled the day in which I first saw the Lord—and then I felt as if I could do some extraordinary thing for Christ that would make men say, “What a fanatical fool that fellow is!” I should like to be thought a fanatical fool by all those who do not love the Lord Jesus Christ! And I am afraid, Brothers and Sisters, it is only because we love Christ so little that men treat us so well. I should like for us to feel that twist so strongly that, henceforth, we should know nothing “save Jesus Christ and Him Crucified,” and live for nothing else but Christ, so that people would say of us, “What strange men they are! They seem to be all on fire for Christ. The zeal of the Lord’s house seems to have eaten them right up.” That is the kind of man I want you to be and that is the sort of woman I want you to be—and if you really know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who was consumed with zeal for your salvation—it would be only fair that you, also, should be utterly consumed with a passion for His Glory! God grant that all of us may be so, from this time forth and forever!

If there is a sinner here who does not love this Jesus, who gave Himself for us, I will not say what Paul wrote, “Let Him be *anathema maranatha*,” that is, cursed at the coming of the Lord, but I will say this—remember, Sinner, that if the Grace of Jesus does not save you, the Justice of Jesus will destroy you! And if you are not saved by His first coming, you will be condemned at His second coming. And that may God forbid, for His mercy’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 CORINTHIANS 8.**

Although this is rather a practical than a spiritual chapter, I hope that we shall get profit out of it by the teaching of the Spirit of God who inspired Paul to write it. Paul was writing to the Church at Corinth to commend the Churches of Macedonia, that he might stir up the one Church by the example of the others. The saints at Jerusalem were starving because of a famine and it came into the mind of certain Gentile Churches to send help to the mother Church at Jerusalem. It was regarded as a very wonderful thing that Gentiles should be sending help to Jews. I hope it would not be thought wonderful now, but it was then. And Paul, who loved the saints at Corinth, and saw that they were a little backward in this matter, stirred them up to greater diligence. He did not like the Churches in Macedonia to go so far ahead of the Church in Corinth which was richer, more endowed with gifts and, therefore, he set to work to stimulate their generosity. Thus he begins—

Verse 1. *Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the Grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia.* That is a quaint old expression, “We do you to wit.” It means, “We would let you know, we would tell you, we would inform you of what the Macedonia saints have done.” And he does not at first say, “We would let you know of the liberality which the Macedonia Churches have shown,” but, “of the Grace of God bestowed on the Churches of Macedonia.” What we do for God, God’s Grace has first bestowed upon us! If there is any virtue, if there is any zeal, if there is any faith, if there is any love, it is the result of the Grace of God bestowed upon us! Always look upon things in that light, for then you will not grow proud. Give what you may, and do what you may—you may regard it as the effect of the Grace of God bestowed upon you.

2. *How that in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of the joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.* They were very poor people in Macedonia, but they loved God so much that they abounded in liberality. Considering how little they possessed, and how much they were tried and persecuted, they had been wonderfully generous.

3. *For to their power, I bear record, yes, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves.* They were willing to give even beyond their power! They gave up to the full limit of what they could do and then wished that they could give even more. And notice that “they were willing of themselves.” Paul had not to stir them up to do this, nor even to

mention the subject to them—“They were willing of themselves.” That is the best kind of service to God which a man ever does, that in which he is willing of himself. It is the slave who is flogged to his work—the child is willing of himself. Oh, that on the altar of God you and I may gladly place our offerings because we have been made willing of ourselves!

4. *Praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.* Paul did not have to beg them to give, but they begged him to take their gifts! And when the saints of God are in a right state, they come forward voluntarily, as Paul says that these Macedonian Christians did, “praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints” by going to Jerusalem and giving away this money where it was needed.

5, 6. *And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God. Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same Grace also.* Paul said, “Titus, do not let the Corinthians be behind the Macedonians in this matter. Go and show them how they may receive similar Grace.”

7. *Therefore, as you abound in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that you abound to this Grace also.* These Corinthians were an instructed people. They were so well taught that they were able to carry on an open meeting for years without a minister—and the natural consequences followed—they fell into sixes and seven, and there were divisions among them, so that Paul had to counsel them to have a minister. “I beseech you, brethren, you know the house of Stephanas that it is the first fruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints, that you submit yourselves unto such, and to everyone that helps with us, and labors.” They were a notable Church, people of standing among them. Paul admits all that, but he says, “Do not be behindhand in your liberality to the cause of God.”

8. *I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.* And, Christian men and women, whenever you see other Christians excelling you in any Grace, seek to catch up with them! Why should you be in the rear rank? You are to run with patience the race that is set before you, so do not be outstripped by your fellow runners. If God has given to one Christian much of any Grace, He can, if He pleases, give as much to you.

9. *For you know.* These are most precious words, worthy of being written in letters of gold—“You know.”

9. *The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you, through His poverty, might be rich.* “You know the wonderful story of how you are rich through Christ’s poverty. What a change it was for Him, from the riches of Heaven to the poverty of His Manhood here, and what a change it is for you from the poverty of your sin and ruin to the riches of His Grace! Now you know this—you do not need anybody to tell you about it, so imitate it—

distribute to the poor and especially to the poor saints, as you have the power and the opportunity.”

10. *And herein give my advice: for this is expedient for you who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago.* They had started a year ago, but the project had hung fire, as such things often do. Many a man is good at resolving and starting, but not so good at going on to the end.

11. *Now therefore perform the doing of it.* “Do not let your good resolves be buried, let them be turned into action! ‘Now therefore perform the doing of it.’” So I might say to who are here. “You have purposed, you have determined, you have resolved a great many times. ‘Now therefore perform the doing of it.’ If it is a good resolve, it will be best to carry it out at once.”

11, 12. *That as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which you have. For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man has and not according to that he has not.* This is how we should always act—see what we can do and do it—not wait till we can do twice as much. There is a great waste of holy effort and of holy giving because so many people are ashamed to do a little and, therefore, do nothing because they cannot do much. That is not the way for God’s children to act. With your willing mind do what you can and God will help you to do more!

13, 14. *For I mean not that other men be eased, and you burdened: but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality.* Paul would have the rich Church at Corinth give to the poor Church at Jerusalem for the Corinthians themselves might be in need some day, and then the Church at Jerusalem would in turn give to them. This is the Law of the Kingdom—if God prospers you, help another who is not being prospered just now—and then, one of these days, he may help you in your time of necessity.

15. *As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing left over; and he that had gathered little had no lack.* That was the law of the manna in the wilderness. Some people brought in a good deal, for they had a great many children, and so it was all eaten up. Some brought in a little, but God multiplied it, so that there was no lack. So, if in Providence God gives you a large supply of good things, divide it among a large number of needy ones. And if He gives you only a small measure, be content and do your best with it.

16. *But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you.* Titus thought of them as Paul did—they were like-minded in this as in many other matters.

17, 18. *For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you. And we have sent with him the Brother whose praise is in the Gospel throughout all the churches.* I do not know who “the Brother” was. There have been many guesses but perhaps none of them were right. You see that human praise, even in the Church, is not a very lasting thing. There was somebody whom all

Christians praised, yet nobody knows him now. So, if you get to be esteemed among men, you may be unknown, even as this good man is! But if you have the praise of God, *He* will never forget you!

19. *And not that only, but who was also chosen of the Churches to travel with us with this Grace.* Paul did not like handling the money at all. They had to press him to do it and then he sent Titus and somebody else to take charge of it and to keep a strict account so that they should never be blamed in the matter of this distribution. So, Beloved, see that you so serve God that even the devil cannot find fault with you! Be so exact, especially with what is given to God's cause, that no man shall ever even *think* that you have taken any of it to yourselves.

19-21. *Which is administered by us to the Glory of the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind: avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us: providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.* The Apostle is very particular and careful, and herein he sets an example to all of you who have anything to do with any work for God. Do not let it rest on yourselves alone—have others associated with you to share the responsibility and help you to look after it.

22, 23. *And we have sent with them our Brother, whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things, but not much more diligent, upon the great confidence which I have in you. Whether any do enquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellow helper concerning you.* “If anybody outside wants to know who Titus is, say that I have sent him to be the leader in this particular work. If you want to know who he is, he is ‘my partner and fellow helper concerning you.’” Well said, Paul!

23. *Or our brethren be enquired of, they are the messengers of the churches and the Glory of Christ.* This is the reply to any enquiry about the other brethren—they were probably poor men, humble men, plain preachers of the Word, yet Paul calls them “the Glory of Christ.” What a wonderful thing it is that any man should be the Glory of Christ! An honest, upright character. A holy gracious conversation brings Glory to Christ. Men say, “If that man is a follower of Christ, he does credit to his Master.” Dear Brothers and Sisters, let us think of this. And if we are not the messengers of the churches, we may be “the Glory of Christ.”

24. *Therefore show you to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf.*

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

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

OUR LORD'S VOLUNTARY POVERTY NO. 3380

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 1913.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
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“For you know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor; that you, through His poverty, might be rich.”
2 Corinthians 8:9.

THE Apostle was anxious to stir up the Corinthian Church to generosity. They were a Church of very great talents. They were an unusually gifted Church, so that they were able to maintain in their midst a form of worship which is not often maintained and could not conveniently become the general form in the Christian Church, namely, that a large proportion of the members spoke to edification, whereas in most other Churches there was no such abundance of spiritual gifts. They were in the midst of a city of polished inhabitants and it had pleased God to call in that city some of the ablest men. But they seem to have been far from taking the front rank in some respects. They needed to be exhorted to purge themselves from a sin which no Church had ever tolerated that had a ministry, and which only that Church would allow, because it was nobody's business to look after it—and so it was not looked after. This sin *was a great lack of generosity in giving*. Now, in order to excite the Church at Corinth, the Apostle uses as an argument, first of all, the great generosity of the far poorer church in Macedonia. He says that in the midst of their poverty, they gave, not only up to their power, but generously beyond it. It is right for us to stimulate the zeal of one Christian by the example of another Christian—and it is the bounden duty of all Believers so to walk that they may be worthy to be examples to the rest of the flock.

But even this argument is a poor one compared with that which the Apostle was more constantly using, namely, the example of Christ, the Church's great Head and Exemplar. He deals, indeed, an efficient blow at all selfishness when, leaving the Churches of Macedonia out of the question, he says, “You know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Oh, that blessed Master of ours! Surely He is useful to us in ten thousand ways! There is not a single part of Him—there is no position He takes, no action He performs, no word that drops from His lips, no thought of His heart,

no aspect of His matchless Character that is not serviceable to us, His people! Even in His poverty He becomes our Instructor, just as in His death He becomes our Savior. Without staying longer in the text, we shall, first of all, ask you to consider *the example presented to us*, contemplating it in its various phases. And then, secondly, let me, in few but earnest words, *urge you to follow His example* in acts of gratitude.

I. THE EXAMPLE PRESENTED TO US.

It is that of our Lord, of whom Paul said, "You know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." It seems, then, that Christ's coming from Heaven to earth to suffer for us is here called, "Grace." It was an act of Grace on His part—an act purely gratuitous! He was not bound to have done it. We did not deserve it at His hands. It was no foreseen merit of ours, or of any other kind which could have been potent to attract Him from the skies and drag Him to the manger and the tomb! But He came as an act of free mercy to undeserving sinners. It was Grace which was the source and fountain of His coming. That eternal Love of God, by which we were first chosen, was the same Love which sent the Savior to redeem the chosen. It was that Grace from which all Covenant mercies spring—the ancient wellhead of distinguishing Grace—which brought the Savior here! It was because He, being God, was Love. Because He, being God, was full of Grace and Truth, that He, therefore, left the realms above that He might lift us up to them by His coming down from them into the depths of our misery! "You know *the Grace* of our Lord Jesus Christ." We ought to perpetually gaze upon the Cross, I think, in the light of its being altogether an act of Grace on Christ's part—and the result of Grace towards us on the part of the Divine Father. Oh, you see nothing there, Sinners, towards you but Grace—

***"Tis mercy fills the Throne.
While wrath stands silent by."***

The wrath falls upon the Savior, but all that you have to see in Christ, today, is Grace, pure Grace—Grace to take away the sin which made Him bleed—Grace to accept the sinner who was guilty of His death. The Cross reveals to us Grace on the Throne of God, Grace at its culminating point, Grace triumphant and resplendent in the uttermost degree! Who would see Grace, let him behold a bleeding Savior bearing the griefs of men upon Himself and suffering in their place. "You know the *Grace* of our Lord Jesus Christ," the kindness, the bounty, the benevolence, the generosity, the compassion, the condescension, the tenderness, "the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ."

And when Paul had thus named the deed which the Savior did and labeled it with the title of, "the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," he follows it up by mentioning the heights from which the Savior descended—"*who though He was rich.*" It has been well observed that this little sentence is a clear proof that our Savior had an existence *before* He was born into

this world—that, in fact, He was Divine—for it is said that, “He was rich, and that He became poor.” Now, He never was rich *in this life*—never!

If it should be said that He was rich at one time with the Holy Spirit, as Unitarians have said in order to get rid of the force of this verse, then He never did become poor in that sense. There was no period of the Savior's life on earth in which it could be said that He was rich, but He became poor. It must, therefore, have been in a previous state of being that our Lord was rich—and I shall now ask your thoughts to go back to the time when Jesus Christ *was* rich. Poor are our words! They are but an accommodation of mortal speech to an immortal theme! “*He was rich.*” When we read the word, “rich,” it seems, somehow or other, to pall the description of what Jesus Christ was, for He was so infinitely more rich than anything the world knows by that description! His riches were vastly more wealthy than any of the gaudy wealth which the world can bring—which is but transient and corruptible wealth! He was rich. Yes, but He was something more than that. However, we will make such use of the term as we can.

Jesus was rich *in possession*. As God over all, having made all things, all things were His. He could have said, “The cattle on a thousand hills are Mine. Mine, the mines of gold and the secret treasuries of silver. Mine, the places where the diamonds sparkle and where the pearl emits its gentle ray. All things are Mine! A thousand stars glisten as My lamps and all the width of space, so full of the wonders of creation—all this is Mine!” He was rich *in service*. A thousand angels waited at His gates. He had but to will it and the strong-winged messengers flew upon His errands! They adored Him ceaselessly. Day without night they circled His Throne, rejoicing. Even when on earth, He said He could pray to His Father and He would send Him twelve legions of angels. How much more was this the case when He sat in the state of Heaven—and all these were the courtiers that waited before His Throne? He was rich *in honor*. No pompous courts of Solomon could ever compare with the courts of the Son of God! All glory centered in Him. He was “God over all blessed forever,” co-equal and co-eternal with the Father. To Him the perpetual song. To Him the never ceasing incense. To Him the golden harps, to Him the swell of Heaven's highest symphonies, for He was adored of all and exalted high above principalities and powers, and every name that is named! And He was rich *in love*, which is the best of all wealth! His Father loved Him. “This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” Eternally was that a Truth of God and, besides that, there were pure spirits of His own creating who loved Him with all the force of their being. He needed not our love to make Him rich! There was love enough in God for Him and if He had willed it, He could have made a thousand races of

nobler creatures than ourselves, all of whom would have loved Him with the deepest love!

He was rich, too, *in happiness*. We cannot conceive of the Savior knowing any sorrow, or grief, or need in Heaven. He had all that even He could wish for, if such language can be used towards the Infinite God. He was essentially and ineffably happiness, itself! Just as we believe, concerning the Most High God, that He is unruffled by a care and His soul undisturbed by a pang, so was it with the Glorious One who afterwards condescended to be crowned with thorns—and to be pierced with the spear for our sakes. “He was rich!” Oh, the word, as I have said before, is a poor miserable word! It is the best that Paul could find, but there is such a grandeur about Christ that if we say He was rich in all respects, rich in all conception and rich beyond imagination’s utmost stretch, rich beyond everything you and I will ever be able to conceive of—even when we got into the celestial state—so rich, so Infinite, so glorious, so Divine—this is what He was! “He was rich.”

And yet He considered us! And yet He stooped to us! Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, what an example for us to get the same Grace and generosity, so that if in any respect we, too, are made rich here, we, too, may be as willing to stoop as He was. But, alas, while our stoop is all so little, His stoop is all so great!

Then the Apostle goes on to say, “Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor.” Not that He was *made poor*. It was not an act of Providence that made Him so. He did not become bankrupt. He was not a King expelled from His dominions. He was not a fallen Sovereign to whom we give shelter and pity, but He “became poor.” That is, it was His own voluntary act! It was His own cheerful will to become poor! And now I cannot help saying that that word, “*poor*,” does not seem to me to be strong enough. It is the best, I suppose, our language can afford, but still, there never was poverty like His poverty! It is a word which does but skim the surface of the Savior’s condescension. He was poor. Well, He was poor *in the ordinary sense*. He was born of humble parents, He was not the son of a prince or a mighty one. He was reputed to be the carpenter’s son. When His mother swaddled Him, she laid Him in the manger. He was not like those who are born in marble halls and are wrapped in scarlet—He was a plebeian and He took a lowly place even in His birth. He is sent to Egypt—He becomes an early exile. Scarcely any poverty in the world is like the poverty of the poor emigrant who leaves his country either from lack of bread or from fear of life—and Jesus Christ and His mother going down to Egypt are the very picture of poverty! We are thankful if we have only a little cottage in our own land where we may dwell, but in Egypt the Son of God must tabernacle for awhile. And when He came back, He sought not His acquaintance among even the tradesmen or the middle classes, much less among the lofty and the proud in

spirit—He put upon Himself the smock frock of the country—“a garment without seam, woven from the top throughout”—and His intimate acquaintances were the fishermen of Galilee!

Was it not said of Him by David, “He has exalted One chosen out of the people”? And Christ was emphatically chosen out of the people. He was with them in all their toils and all their woes—so with them that none of them were more poor than He. “Foxes have holes,” He said, “and the birds of the air have nests, but I, the Son of Man, have not where to lay My head.” He was so poor that I never read He left a will about His worldly goods and chattels. All that He had of personal estate was just the garments He wore and those the soldiers parted among them—and there He was, naked, dead and indebted to charity! For a tomb, He had not even a sepulcher of His own—not a sorry six feet of earth in which His sleeping body might have rested in its own freehold—it was a *borrowed tomb* that gave the Savior a refuge. He thus became poor outwardly, but what was His poverty inwardly? He was poor *as to His friends*. Judas betrayed Him. Peter denied Him. All the disciples forsook Him and fled! He was poor *in servants*, for although He washed His disciples' feet, yet they washed not His! And when He came to the hour when human sympathy might have somewhat comforted Him, He had to say with melancholy pathos, “What? Could you not watch with Me one hour?” Oh, so poor has He become that there is not an eye to watch with Him in His lonely grief! So poor was He that the comforts which are left to the most abject were taken away from Him! No promise beamed to shed its light upon His soul. At one time, at any rate, no Presence of God made Him glad. He was forsaken of His Father and His God! “*Eloi, Eloi lama Sabachthani*,” indicated a poverty of soul quite as deep as that naked and mangled body indicated outward poverty.

He had lost all, or rather had given up all, laid aside everything—His crown of Glory exchanged for the thorns of shame. The imperial mantle of dominion cast aside that He might wear His own blood! No more adored, but spit upon! No longer revered, but despised and made the offscouring of men! No Throne, but a Cross! No golden cup, but a draught of wormwood and of gall! No light and brightness of excessive Glory, but the blackness of mid-day—midnight! No life and immortality, but, “It is finished,” and the giving up of the Ghost! “Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor.”

I wish it were in my power to go farther into this depth tonight, but neither my ability nor my time will serve me just now. Let your own meditations assist you to peer into the poverty of the Savior—such poverty, indeed, as you and I can never know, but, prompted by His example, let us not be ashamed to be poor! No, let us not, at the thought of being poor, feel any kind of fear about it! Let us rather rejoice that in this we

shall have fellowship with our Lord and if we serve Him we must be poor. If we are obedient to His will, we must make a sacrifice of worldly goods and prosperity. Let us take joyfully the spoiling of our goods. Let us, like the Master, count it all joy when we are thus stripped, for so shall we have fellowship with Him “who, though He was rich, yet for your sakes became poor.”

The Apostle next calls our attention to the *objectives* of this wonderful condescending stoop of our Lord, namely, *ourselves*. “*For your sakes* He became poor.” For the sake of the Corinthians. For the sake of us.

And oh, where could there be found more unworthy beneficiaries of this amazing love than we have been? In contemplating the love which I personally received from my Savior, although I wonder at it in itself, I have often thought that I could far better understand it if it had been given to someone else than when it is shed abroad in my own soul. I do not know how it is, but somehow the salvation of the vilest sinner that lives does not one half as much surprise me as my own—and I find it far more easy to believe in the genuine salvation of any man than at times to believe in my own. Why should He love us? Oh, there is an amount of unworthiness about each one of us which we cannot see in our fellows that makes it amazing that we should have been chosen! Well said the Apostle, “His great love wherewith He loved us when we were dead in trespasses and sins!” It is by His great love He loves us now we are alive, but it is still more wondrous love that He should spend His life-blood to buy our humanity when it was in its former state! None shall praise God more for His Grace than I will if I get the privilege to see Him face to face, for none will be more indebted to His distinguishing mercy! I suppose you will feel the same and will, each one, resolve in the contest of humility that none of you will yield to his fellow, but will each one lie the lowest and sing the loudest to the praise of the matchless Lover, this Heavenly Bridegroom of our souls! “*For your sakes* became poor.” Not a thorn in that crown for Himself, but for your sakes! No spit on those cheeks, no hair plucked from them, for Himself—but all for you! For you, the cruel lash, as it pitilessly furrowed those holy shoulders! For you, those drops of crimson sweat as they stained the cold earth! For you, each of those cruel nails! For you, for you, the spear that pierced His side! Oh, let each Christian here really seek to lay a claim to have a personal interest in the griefs and groans of Jesus! Sweet possessions! Oh, to treasure them! Richer than all jewels! Those drops of blood—far more priceless than rubies! Those falling tears more sparkling than diamonds! Treasure up the love of Jesus! Put it into your souls. Make a heart in your heart in which to treasure it! Count it to be the richest and most precious thing you can have, or can desire to have—the love of Jesus with all its sweetness and everlasting delight! “*For your sakes* He became poor.”

Well, now, if He did all this for the sake of us who are so unworthy, what ought you and I to do for His sake, who is so worthy? And if He emptied His great Self for us, who are as nothing, shall not we be ready to empty our little selves for Him, who is so great?

If He gave all to us, what less than all can we give to Him? And even when we have given all, we shall think it all too little for such a Lord and such a Friend! Does Jesus give Jesus, and shall not we give all of ourselves?

The Apostle tells us, however—to conclude the exposition of the verse and our contemplation of this great example—that *Christ had an objective in doing this*, and the objective was this—“That you, through His poverty, might be made rich.” I like the very phraseology, here, and think we should read it again...“That you, through His poverty, might be made rich.” A person joined this Church not long ago who had been a member of quite another denomination, in which the doctrine of the Second Advent, which we also hold, takes an infinitely more prominent place than we are ever likely to give to it, for it is the Gospel of their salvation. This woman, however, professed herself to have been converted to God, here, and she said, “I was always taught to trust in Christ Glorified, but now I come to see that my confidence must be in Christ Crucified.” This was what Paul preached and it is what we preach! I believe it is an error which is growing, that we are to be made rich through Christ Glorified. I grant you that we shall be, for we are made rich by Christ in *any* capacity, but the text says it is through His *poverty* that we shall be made rich. The brightest treasure that can come to the Christian comes to Him through Christ Crucified—we must take care in all our ideas of the Second Advent that we do not imagine the coming of a *temporal* Kingdom and a *temporal* Glory and go back to the beggarly elements of the Old Covenant—for if we do so we shall miss the true jewel, the *spiritual* treasure—the love of which is half dying out in the Christian Church! Christ in His poverty should be most commonly the object of our contemplation, for it is through that poverty that we shall be made rich.

Now, I want to ask you whether you are rich tonight? If Jesus Christ died for you, I am sure He has not missed His intention in so dying and, therefore, you are rich! But you say you are poor and you were grumbling only an hour ago to think that you were so poor. Come, now! Come now! Jesus Christ, though He was rich, became poor—shall He miss the design of that great renunciation? Shall His plan fail? It is not for a moment to be supposed! Well, then, He has made you rich. You cannot count your treasures, Christian! A catalog of them would be too long for you ever to get through it! You have no estate. You have no barn in which to store away your harvest. Perhaps there may be some of you

with little more belonging to you than the garments in which you have come into this sanctuary. But yet—you are rich! Think about this—

***“All things are yours, the gift of God,
The purchase of a Savior's blood!
This world is yours, and worlds to come!
Earth is your lodge and Heaven your home!”***

You have angels to be your protectors. You have Christ to be your Intercessor and your Friend! You have the Holy Spirit, Himself, to be your Comforter! The everlasting arms are underneath you. The Divine wings are above you. The Divine Glory is within you! Oh, what more could you desire? You shall have all the provisions that you need, for you shall dwell in the land and verily you shall be fed. Yes, Christ has made us rich in the highest possible sense of richness. He does not please to make many of His people rich in the common sense. As Luther says, He gives the husks to the hogs—the proper place for them—they can relish them and can make the best use of them. I doubt not that he was also right in what he said of the whole Turkish Empire, which God had given to the grand Turk who was the leading monarch of his day. He said, “It is only a bone for a dog.” So it is. All the kingdoms of this world are but so many bones which the Householder throws out to the dogs and lets them devour them as they may. Perhaps all the time the child is kept waiting—and he may be kept waiting a little while for his food because the hour is not yet come—the dog can eat when it wills, but the child must eat at the set time which the Father has appointed. Let us be thankful if God does not give us our portion *here*. It is one of the things to be dreaded—the having your portion in this life! It is said of some that they have their portion in this life—and our Lord said of the Pharisees—“Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.” Oh, let us pray God not to give us our reward here! If we have helped the poor and have only received ingratitude, let us be very thankful that it proves that our reward is not here! If we labor for Christ and are misrepresented, let us be thankful, for again it proves that our reward is not of men and in time, but is of God and for all eternity! To have our reward, here, and our portion from men is a thing to be deprecated with tears, cries and groans! God grant us to know our riches to be of a better sort than that which the worldling covets!

Well, if it is so, that Christ has made us rich, I hope it is not fiction or fancy to any of you. You are rich in your soul—you know you are! You are wealthy and the argument from this is that you should be devoted to your Master. If He has made you rich, serve Him! If He has enabled you to be contented, at ease and happy—if you have blessed enjoyment in your soul, if you are at peace with God through Jesus Christ—who should serve God as *you* should? Highly favored as you are, the very

stones would cry out against you if you were not generous in your Master's service and praise!

And this brings me to the last matter, which is, in a few words—

II. TO EXHORT YOU TO PRACTICALLY CARRY OUT THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST.

There have been some advanced Christians—I say not this of all—but there have been some advanced Christians who literally have been made able to carry out the example of the Savior. How should we honor the memory of such men as John Wesley, for instance? He might have been a fellow—as he was, indeed, of the University—and have had excellent compensation. “The Church,” so called, was open to him and, no doubt, a bishopric would soon have rewarded his exertions and his eloquence. But he lived through life purely to serve his Master according to his knowledge and conviction. And when an inventory was to be made of his plate, he had but two spoons, one at Bristol and one in London. And when he died, what had he to leave? His treasure had all gone before him into Heaven and he died in poverty, having served his God with all he had, and making that the aim of his life—to live with all he had wholly to his Master's service! And such have been the lives of some of our missionaries. They have cut themselves away from all the claims of kindred and have given themselves, like the old Roman heroes in battle, who stood upon the sword and consecrated themselves to God. They have given themselves up to live and to die with never a thought of gain in this world, no, never dreaming of possessing anything as long as they lived! Such was Apostolic life and such, I believe, would be more common in the Christian Church if a high degree of Divine Grace were granted. I do not think it is the duty of most of you, nor that it will ever fall to the lot of 99 out of a hundred of you, but there are some of you—and there ought to be more—who, being called of God to some special work, should feel that if you are rich, if you possess rank, if you possess standing in society, you will give up the most brilliant, earthly prospect for that yet more brilliant prospect of bearing the Cross and inheriting the crown!

I look forward, if God should ever send a revival of religion in England, not only to the time when the poor and the middle-classes shall find in their midst consecrated ministers, but when, from the very highest spheres of society, there will come to us men who might have worn the coronet, but who would rather proclaim the Gospel! Men who might have piled up their wealth until it became like Babel's tower, but who would rather become poor, that in their poverty they may make many rich! It is not given unto all thus to do, but this is the dictate of Christianity—and where it can be done absolutely and be carried out to the fullest extent, it brings much Glory to God!

Well, but the principle seems to me to be binding upon us all. I will venture to say—and I should not wonder that some of you will not like it to be said, that *I believe it is anti-Christian and unholy for any Christian to live with the objective of accumulating wealth*. You will say, “Are we not to strive all we can and to get all the money we can?” You may do so. You should do so. I cannot doubt but what, in so doing, you may do good service to the cause of God. But what I said was this, that to live *with the objective of accumulating wealth* is anti-Christian. There are thousands of men and women with whom that is the only thing they are living for—to save, save, save—and make a fortune! And when they die, what then? Well, then it will be in the newspapers that So-and-So died worth so much, and some will say, “Guess what worth he died with? It will be talked of all over the city, “Why, they paid probate duty on so much!” Yes! Well, now, if you had a steward—I will ask you a question—if you had a steward and that steward were to die—and you should hear that he died worth £100,000, what would you say? You would say, “Ah, I know whose money that was! He was only a steward and yet he died worth £100,000? I know where that money came from.” You would not want to ask the question, but you would say, “Ah, he was a thief, an old rogue!” I am not certain whether every man is not who does that—at least, unless he happens to occupy a very high and prominent position. A man says he is a steward. That is what he says, himself. We do not tell him so, but he says he is. He stands up and thanks God that he is a steward, but the old fellow has got some uncommonly heavy bags about him—more than a steward would have if he had handled his master's money properly!

To say that the most of you ought to spend all you earn would be simply ridiculous. To come into the pulpit and say to those of you who are in business and so on, that you ought to give all that you have to the cause of God every year would be, I think, most intolerable stupidity on my part! I do not say that at all! Let your children, by all manner of means, have that which they can lawfully claim of you. Make a fair provision if you are able to make it. Let your children be liberally educated. Let there be no stint in the house so that there should be complaints of need there. God has put you into a position and you may spend according to your station. What I mean to say is this—if you make it your objective in this world to live simply to get together a certain amount of money, and die and leave it—you are living with an anti-Christian objective and your spirit is apart from the spirit of your Lord Jesus Christ!

My Master did not make a fortune. There is none of you who will leave less than He left! We read some time ago of a bishop whose will was sworn to be under £150,000, and someone said, “He was a true successor of the Apostles, for he would be bound to say that if the Apostle

Paul's will could have been sworn to, it, too, would have been under £150,000." And I think it is very likely that it would!

Ah, but such an occurrence as that always provokes a sneer in the world. They say, "Oh, yes, yes, yes—this is a picture of making the best of both worlds!" But it is not the picture of the Savior, living wholly for the cause of God and the cause of truth, but quite the reverse! I would like to see you, my dear Friends who are poor, feeling that out of your poverty it is your privilege to give continually to Him who loved you and gave Himself for you, not casting the burden of God's work upon the few rich that may be among us, but every man honestly taking his share in the Church's burden, which, indeed, is not her burden, but her privilege and her delight! I would like to see you bring in your gifts to God's treasury, not because you are asked to do so, or prompted, or driven to it, but because you love to do it out of love to Him. Well, then, those of you who are prospered in business—and may there be more of you!—will always find that it will sweeten what is left to yourselves if the full and fair proportion is given to your Master. I am afraid you will not be likely to imperil yourselves, or bring yourselves to poverty by what you do for the cause of Christ. Sorry would I be if, by any extravagance or imprudence of that kind, such a thing would occur—but on the whole it is not a very likely thing—so that I need not guard you particularly much against it. But if you give to God, you shall find that if you give by shovelfuls, God will give it back to you in cartloads! And if you give cartloads, His wagons shall be driven to your door and He will bless you in proportion as you give to Him!

I have thus applied the principle to wealth, but it should also be applied to everything the Christian has. I hope some of you have a good reputation. There was a time when I had one, but preaching the Gospel very frequently brings upon you all sorts of misrepresentations. I remember pretty well the first stinging article I read in a newspaper concerning myself—as full of lies as an egg is full of meat—and I could not help wincing somewhat under it! But I soon learned the lesson that I could not afford to keep a reputation if I were a Christian minister—that I must be prepared to serve God with all my heart, soul and strength—and let man or devils say whatever they liked. I take no notice whatever of them, but go on serving God! And I count it a sweet thing to sing—

***"If on my face for Your dear name,
Shame and reproach shall be,
I'll hail reproach and welcome shame
If You will remember me."***

Now, there is a young man over yonder who thinks he is a Christian, but he has been laughed at by the other young fellows in the shop and he has half a mind to give up. What? What? When Jesus Christ, who was rich, yet for your sakes became poor, are you ashamed to be laughed at

by a few simpletons? And there is a young woman here who was placed, just now, in a family where they are very godless. She hardly likes to show her colors for Christ. Oh, my Sister, think of the Master and of the shame and the spitting that He endured for you—and let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus. Stoop, stoop, my Brother! Stoop, my Sister! The way to Heaven is downhill in a certain sense. The way to rise is to fall in your own esteem—and when you shall think yourself to be less than nothing, and your own reputation, and your own wealth, and everything you have to be all Christ's property—and you freely give it up to Him, then will you realize what it really is to be a Christian—but not till then!

Would to God some here were wholly devoted to the Master! I have been looking to see whether God would raise up among us some unusual spirits, some fiery souls, some consecrated men and women who have got the old heroic blood of ancient Christendom within their veins! May such yet arise and may each seek to follow where the Master leads the way to the praise and Glory of His Grace!

Now, there are some of you who have heard all this, but I have not addressed myself to you—and yet I meant you all the while—I mean even you who are unconverted. Think of the love of Jesus in coming in the flesh and may that sweet love be a sort of latchkey to your hearts with which Christ shall open them and let Himself in! If He has knocked and you have not opened, I trust He will open the door, Himself, by His own love—and may you be His tonight! If you so become His, be really His! You have served the devil—now serve Him! If you must serve Christ, do not serve Him with half your hearts—serve Him and no mistake. Give Him your whole soul. If He is worth having, He is worth having altogether and worth giving your whole soul. So may you do—and the Master shall have the praise evermore! Amen.

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

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

EXPECTED PROOF OF PROFESSED LOVE NO. 1522

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

***“Show you the proof of your love.”
2 Corinthians 8:24.***

IN every Believer's heart there is love to God, otherwise he cannot be a child of God! In every Christian's soul there is love to Jesus Christ. How could he be a Christian otherwise? As a consequence of this, in every Christian's bosom there is a love to the brotherhood—"We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren." In every Christian's breast there is also a love to all mankind. He practices that second great Commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." The spirit of God has cast out the demon of selfishness and, in proportion as that is the case, the man possesses the mind of Christ which is love. As all the Law is fulfilled in one word which is, "love," so the outcome of our holy faith is also contained in that one word, "love."

Oh that we were saturated with it! Where there is true love in the heart, it becomes a working principle. It does not lie dormant, but it *works*—works abundantly! It is a vital principle that where there is life there is movement and a measure of activity. It is a principle that grows and out of its growth there comes fruit. For these reasons and in these ways, true Believers give sure proofs of the love that is in their hearts. I wish to speak to you, at this time, by answering four questions.

I. First, WHAT IS THE EXCELLENCE OF THIS LOVE that we should be so anxious to prove it? This Christian love must have some great worth about it, or else we should not be exhorted by the Apostle once and again to prove that we have it. Remember, first, that true love to God and the saints in the Christian heart is Divine in its origin. We would never have loved God if He had not first loved us! And, unless His Holy Spirit had turned the stream of our affections in that direction, we would have run away from God and have hated God and we would neither have loved Him nor His people. It is the nature of the seed of the serpent to hate the Seed of the woman and as long as we are under condemnation and wrath and in our natural state, we are on the serpent's side and we war against that which is good.

"The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither, indeed, can be." If, therefore, we have even a *spark* of love to God, God must have given it to us! It is, therefore, a precious thing because it is of God and we ought to take heed that we assuredly possess it. And we also should endeavor to live so that others may be convinced that this Divine principle rules our spirits. As it is Divine in its origin, so it is surpassing in its energy, for true love to God exceeds all other love. Does

not Christ tell us that a man must love Him better than father or mother, or the dearest relative he has, or else he does not love Him at all?

Christ will not be put off with the leftovers of our heart. He must have our whole heart. All human affections which are natural and proper are to be held in subservience to this grand and master passion which is to set our soul on a blaze—love to God in Christ Jesus. He loves not Christ at all who does not love Him first and last. This affection, like Aaron's rod, must swallow up all others and our whole heart must belong to the Lord our God! We must take care that we give *proof* of an affection which is so surpassing in its energy, for surely, if it has such force, it must produce its own proof!

If it were some minor passion—some little narrow jet of flame that might light up a corner of our being—we might not be so particular about it. But if it is to fire our entire manhood, it must produce some effect or else we may well question whether we possess it. This love is absolutely vital in its necessity. If it can be proven that a man does *not* love God, love Christ and love His people, then the life of God does not dwell in him. Life and love are two words singularly alike and, when we get to the bottom and radical principle of the *spiritual* nature, we perceive that they are singularly bound up together insomuch that, "He that dwells in love dwells in God and God in him."

These are some of the Apostle John's great little words, which, in their miniature form, contain whole worlds of meaning. Beloved, we *must* love God, or else we are not in Christ! Hence the importance that the proofs of our love should be very distinct and unmistakable. We should make our *calling* and *election* sure—and those things can never be sure unless we have abundant proofs of our *love*. It is vital in its necessity. However great that love becomes and I have spoken of it as rising to a superlative degree, it is warranted by the facts of the case. Love to God—I will not spend a word in justifying it. Love to Christ—how can it be necessary to commend it to you?—

***"Love so amazing, so Divine,
Demands our soul, our life, our all."***

And it shall have it, too!

Do you not say so, my Brothers and Sisters? Do you not yield to this soft, yet mighty bond—soft as silk, yet strong as iron? It holds us fast! We cannot escape from it. Not love Christ? Not love His people? Not love the world of lost sinners? Oh, Sirs, surely we were, of all creatures, the most brutish if we were to dispute the necessity of love! "You know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you, through His poverty might be rich." Go and love Jesus Christ till men call you a fanatic! Go and love Him till you give all your goods to feed the poor! Go and love Him till you lie in a prison and the moss grows on your eyelids! Go and love Him till you burn to ashes at the stake and you have not loved Him one whit more than He deserves!

O our best Beloved, You, Yourself, warrant us in permitting our zeal for You to eat us up and, eaten up, we would be for Your Glory's sake! This

love to Christ has been, in all ages, very eminent in its achievements. Wherever love reigns in a Christian, it makes him strong. Faith laughs at impossibilities and cries, "It must be done!" But *love* performs the deed, for, "faith works by love." Love is the right hand of faith. What have not men done out of love to Christ? Truly, the time would fail me to tell of its exploits. What you shall do, dear Sister, if you become full of love to Jesus, will astonish you! And what you shall do, dear Brother, if the love of Christ burns through your soul, will far exceed what you have dreamed of as yet. Oh, for *more* love!

Let the martyrs tell you what poor suffering flesh and blood can do when love strengthens it! Let holy women that have debated and disputed and bled and died for Christ and in all their timidity and weakness made brave as lions for Christ tell what love has done! Let the walls of the Coliseum at Rome; let the arenas of hundreds of amphitheatres tell how bravely men have played the man—how bravely women have met death for Christ's sake! All that the Church needs is the Holy Spirit to baptize her into the love of Christ and nothing will be impossible to her!

Thus have I tried to commend this love and surely we ought to be able to prove that we have it. If we have any question as to whether we have it or not, let us find no rest, day or night, till the grand debate is ended! We **MUST** love Christ or perish! Oh, by the certainty that His saints shall see Him face to face and be like He, let us rise to something nobler in the form of love to Him than we have ever reached as yet! This is the love which we are to give proof of.

II. Secondly, WHAT IS THIS PROOF? The text says, "Show you to them and before the churches, the proof of your love." What proof shall we show? There are so many forms of action which would prove love to Christ that I cannot possibly go through them all, especially as each person, I believe, will give a different proof of his love. There is (to use a difficult word) an idiosyncrasy about each Believer. He is a man by himself and his love, if it is genuine, will take a form peculiar to himself in the proof which it gives. Certain proofs look towards God and the Lord Jesus. If you love Him, you will keep His Commandments and His Commandments are not grievous.

If you love Him, you will seek to honor Him—to spread the savor of His glorious name. If you love God in Christ Jesus, you will be anxious to extend His rule over the hearts of men. If you love God, you will long for communion with Him—you will not be satisfied to live for days without speaking with Him. If you love Him, you will grieve yourself when you grieve Him—your heart will smite you when you have gone astray. If you love God, you will long to be like He—you will strive after *holiness*. If you love God, He will reign over you—Christ will be your King. Your mind will be under subjection to Him. Your thoughts will be guided by Him. Your opinions will be taken from His Word. Your whole life will be seasoned by His Spirit which dwells in you. Do you not see that there are hundreds of ways in which you can show proof of your love towards God? Oh, that we may not be found lacking in any of these things!

We may show this love, in the next place, towards God's ministers. I cannot help mentioning them because the Apostle so distinctly, in this chapter, speaks of himself and his Brothers. And one special way of showing it is this—if they speak well of you, do not let them have cause to retract their holy boasts and have to say with tears, "I was deceived in these people." If any have brought you to Christ, be an honor to them and to the Gospel that they preach, because, dear Friends, the world turns round and however retired a minister may be, yet worldlings are sure to throw the inconsistencies of his people in his teeth. They say, "That is one of So-and-So's people! Look how he acts!" And our ministry is hindered and our hearts are grieved whenever those who profess to have been brought to Christ walk unworthily. Show us a proof of the love you often express to us as your servants in Christ Jesus by endeavoring so to walk that when we give our account we may do it with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable to you.

Next, show proofs of your love in reference to God's people. How can that be done? Some of you need to have this thing gone over with you because you have evidently forgotten it. If you are God's servants, you love His *people* and the first proof you should give is to go and join with them. Say, "Where is the list of their names kept? I will count it an honor to have my name enrolled." Certain of you say, "I should count it an honor, but I have hardly the courage to come forward." What? Have I been sitting these various days to see the timid ones and have you not *all* come? We will have another time for you, then, and try if we cannot get you right, for really, we are not so frightful as you think we are and you need not be timid about telling to a poor servant of Jesus Christ that you really love the name of his Master! He will be glad and so will you.

No, but you say you are half afraid of *yourself*! I wish you were altogether afraid of yourself. The more afraid of yourself the better, for you are good for nothing in yourself! But do not be afraid of trusting yourself with Jesus and when you have done so, then the very next thing is to become identified with the visible Church of Christ! If you say, "I love the Brethren," the Brethren may turn round and say, "Give us a proof of your love. Cast in your lot with us." Do as she did who, though she had been a heathen, nevertheless clung to one who worshipped the true God and said, "Where you go, I will go; and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people and your God my God."

And when you have joined the Church, then surely you should show a proof of your love by a hearty fellowship with the saints. We do not need you to put your name in the book and to be a professor and then sit in one of those pews up in the corner and come in and go out and never speak to anybody! I meet, even now, with some who say, "I have been at the Tabernacle for months and nobody has ever spoken to me." Well, I know that there are so many earnest Christians on the watch here to speak with strangers that if you have not been spoken to it must be your own fault! Perhaps you are some dreadfully stiff body and you have fright-

ened them. I do not know, but it may be so. There are some who look as if they said, "Do not come near me. I do not need any questions asked me."

We have some Brothers and Sisters who will break through your stiffness, though, I dare say. But if it is really so, I am very sorry for it and it need not be so any longer. Speak to somebody at this very service! I do not dislike to hear a low hum of godly conversation before service begins, though some people think it horrible. Neither do I deprecate a little lingering upon the steps and around the building—you are holding fellowship, one with another, and I like that it should be so, for we do not meet too often. It is no desecration of the Sabbath or of the place of worship for Christian people to speak with one another to edification.

When you join the Church, join it in earnest and converse much with the people of God! And by your hearty zeal show them a proof of your love. And then unite with them in all their service. The school needs Sunday school teachers. You love Christ, you say, and you love the young—show us a proof of your love! Come and help in that good work. There is something or other that you can do for Jesus and for His Church—do it and thus show us a proof of your love! Show the proof of your love by comforting the saints in affliction—by helping them, as much as you can, when they are in need—by defending their good name whenever you hear them railed at. Prove your love by suffering nobody to speak against them falsely when you are by. Stand up for them! Show them the proof of your love by bearing with their infirmities.

The Church is not perfect and if it were, it would not be perfect after you had joined it! You who have so many infirmities, yourself, should patiently bear with the infirmities of others. If the saints are not all you would like them to be, remember, nevertheless, that they are dear to the heart of Christ and He, perhaps, sees in them beauties which you would see, too, if you had more beauties yourself! Perhaps your power to find fault arises from your having so many faults yourself and if you were more sanctified and more like Christ, you would fix your eyes, as well, upon the beauties of their character as upon their defects. Show us the proof of your love! I am not speaking as though I did not see among you abundant proofs of your love—but I am speaking to some who, perhaps, as yet, have never realized their position of privilege in reference to Christ and to His people—and they have never let their hearts go out as they should go out towards those whom Christ has purchased with His precious blood.

Show us the proof of your love to the ungodly, too—to this great city of four millions! Show us the proof of your love by trying to snatch the firebrands from the flame. Be up and doing. Stand at the street corners, if you can, and preach Jesus Christ! Scatter the printed Gospel in every room to which you have access. Talk of Christ to your work people. Speak of Him to your companions. Endeavor to spread this potent all-heal—this cure for all manner of spiritual diseases—for otherwise, talk as you may, profess as you may—we shall have to say to you, "Show us the proof of your love."

I have only given you a sort of charcoal sketch of what might be the proof of your love—I have not drawn the picture or laid on the colors. Think, dear Friends, how you can give such proof at once.

III. But now, in the third place, WHY IS THIS PROOF CALLED FOR? Somebody says, “Why am I called upon to prove my love?” Do not grieve, even if I press it very hard upon you, for your case will be something like that of Simon Peter when he, too, was pressed exceedingly. Peter was grieved when his Master said to him the third time, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?” Now the Lord did not ask it because He doubted him, for He knew Peter’s heart. Peter’s appeal was a true one, “You know all things. You know that I love You.” Do not, therefore, resent it and say, “Why should I prove my love?” No, but just listen.

True love always longs to prove itself—it does not need a command to do it! It is waiting for an opportunity. It is so with your domestic life. You know that it is so! I need not give instances. What a pleasure it is to show love to those we love! In a far higher degree, what a delight it is to a Christian to do something for Jesus! If you have never done anything distinctly for Jesus, what sort of a child of God can you be? I love my Master’s service and I can truly say that I think that I would do *anything* for His people—but I am not quite so sure about that as I am about the feeling that I would do anything for *Him*. When I get a hold of something that is distinctly and undividedly for my Lord’s Glory, I am glad to do it!

To break an alabaster box of ointment upon His head is a rich delight—truly, it might have been given to the poor and have blessed the poor, but Jesus, Himself, is best! “It is a waste,” somebody murmurs. Yes, yes, but to be wasteful for Christ is the noblest economy! O hearts that love your Lord, never count the silver when you are spending for Jesus! Break the box! Pour out the ointment! The room will be filled with the perfume and it will not be wasted. Even if there were no nostrils to smell it, if only Jesus had the refreshment of it, it would be all the better!

I like to enter the glade of a forest where there are spots unseen by eyes of man and thickets of brush through which nobody but the red deer has ever passed! I delight to sit down by a little rippling brook upon a bank of thyme undesecrated by human foot and think, “This is God’s garden and every leaf waves for Him.” How dare the poet say that flowers which were born to blush unseen are wasting their fragrance on the desert air? Why, they are flowering for God and He delights in them and they are just the best used flowers in the world! Oh to be just such a flower as that at times and to feel that you have got away—away from the gardens where men may come and praise or offend and offer mercenary prizes for flowers and fruits—away where God sees you and delights in you! We should try to work for Jesus only. Proof is called for, not because Jesus doubts, but because He loves to please us by giving us opportunities of proving our love!

But one reason why we are called upon to prove our love is that it may become a blessing to other people. The Corinthians were to prove their love because the poor folks at Jerusalem were starving. It would be of no use for the Corinthians to sing a hymn about charity while the poor saints

at Jerusalem had not a loaf to eat. No, they must prove their love that it might be a benefit to others and that the influence of that love might spread to others, because the Apostle said, "If you Corinthians do not discharge your promise, those people at Macedonia will throw it in my teeth and do nothing, themselves, and, therefore, for the sake of the Churches in Macedonia, you must be generous."

So, Beloved, oftentimes one man, by serving his Master well, stirs up a whole regiment of other Christians who become ashamed to be doing so little! I may preach a great many sermons, Brothers and Sisters, but they will do very little good compared with what *your* sermons will do, if, as a Church, you live up to the mark as Christians! If, in holy love and concord and every Grace, you abound, other Churches will say, "Look at this Church!" Oh that you may be such saints that others may be encouraged in their work for Christ by you! *That* is why you are asked to prove your love!

You are asked to prove your love, for it is reasonable that you should do so. God did not love you and keep it to Himself and say, "My name is Love, but I will do nothing." No! He gave His Son from His bosom, His only Son, and that Son He gave to *die*. God is practical. That which He feels, He does—that which He speaks is done. We have many idle words, but the word and mind of God come out in deeds of Grace. Is it not right, therefore, that we should give practical proof of our love?

IV. Time fails me, or I would have dwelt on the fourth point, namely, WHO IT IS THAT CALLS FOR THIS PROOF OF OUR LOVE? I will leave out everybody else but One and say it is your Lord—your own dying, living Savior who says, "Show Me the proof of your love." I will tell you how He is saying it. Affliction has come into your house. There is a dear one dead and Jesus says, "Now will you kick against Me, or will you yield Me your treasure? Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me more than these dear ones? If so, you will part with them and not complain." "Mary, do you love Me better than mother, or sister, or friend? If so, you will bless Me when I take them away. Now is your time—show Me the proof of your love by bowing before My chastening and love Me still."

Our Lord only takes from us what He gave to us! Let us, therefore, bless His name! Bereaved one, that may be the proof of love to which He is calling you. Perhaps you have had a difference lately with one to whom you ought to be united in friendship and now your conscience is saying, "Christians ought to live in peace and love." But Satan is saying "*You* were not to blame. Do not humble yourself before such a proud person as your opponent." But my Lord and Master says to you, "Show Me the proof of your love. Forgive him for My sake even to 70 times seven. And if you have wronged him, confess the wrong and humble yourself for My sake. Because I washed My disciples' feet, show Me the proof of your love by washing one another's feet." Attend to that admonition, I pray you!

But possibly there are some here who have had in their minds the project of doing something unusual for Jesus, or the Church, or the poor, or for missions to the heathen. Satan has said, "You must not give as much

as that.” Jesus says, “I have prospered you—when others have failed in business I have taken care of you. Show Me the proof of your love.” Will you not hear His call? Do not hold back your hand and do not need anybody to persuade you, because that will spoil it all. It must be spontaneous! It must come from your *heart*, moved only by the Spirit of God, if you wish it to be accepted.

Perhaps I am addressing a young man who has been, for years, a member of the Church and it is crossing his mind, “What shall I do to show my love?” And, perhaps, it is his ambition to be a missionary in a distant land. Keep not yourself back, my dear young Brother! Should it rend a fond connection, or cost you your life, give Jesus such proof of your love as His Spirit suggests to you! Or is it that you ought to speak to people about their souls? The Lord will throw somebody in your way. Give a proof of your love by a holy bravery and speak right out for Jesus Christ and do not be ashamed. The Lord invites you to a closer fellowship with Himself, to come higher up the mount of God and to be more thoroughly consecrated. Then show Him the proof of your love!

I leave this with you. If you love Him, show it! If you do not love Him, tremble! I will not repeat what the Scripture says, as though it came from myself, but I would have you remember it. Paul says, “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha”—cursed with a curse at the coming of Christ. So it must be if you love not Christ. Oh, if you love Him, be inventive! Think of a new thing that nobody else ever did for Jesus! Strike out a fresh path. Deny yourselves comforts to have the comfort of proving your love, as His Spirit shall guide and help you. And to His name be praise evermore. Amen and Amen.

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A CHEERFUL GIVER IS BELOVED OF GOD

NO. 835

**DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 27, 1868,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“God loves a cheerful giver.”
2 Corinthians 9:7.***

I AM most anxious, dear Friends, to make full proof of my ministry, and in this one respect, especially, that I may address you upon all parts of God’s Word and not be found guilty of confining myself to one set of topics, for certainly this, although it might be pleasant, would not be profitable to you. I would rather, if I had my choice, constantly preach upon the doctrine of God’s everlasting and unchanging love. I should delight to dilate each Sunday and, indeed, in every sermon, upon the simple doctrine of the justification of the sinner in the sight of God by faith in Jesus Christ.

But there are other things in Scripture beside these. All things in Scripture are not placed there for our comfort. All are not promises. All are not words of cheer for feeble minds and disconsolate spirits. There are other words beside those of consolation—words of direction, words of precept. If we should shun these—if these never entered into the course of our ministry at all—some solemn disease might break out among the Church because a part of the “food convenient” for them had been withheld.

Therefore I think it is meet to speak to you upon this subject tonight, and all the more so because there is no collection. You are not asked to give anything, and I shall therefore feel myself the more at liberty to press upon you the instruction of this text. You will see that my simple object is to bring out the teaching of the Word of God to you, not with any ulterior purpose, but purely to promote that result which God Himself may intend to work by the Words before us! Words, remember, of undoubted Inspiration and therefore as worthy of all acceptance as any other sentence from the Divine mouth.

Brothers and Sisters, in the Church of God there are various forms of service. There are some to whom the gift is given of edifying others—these are bound with diligence to instruct their hearers and expound the Scriptures. To others it is given to evangelize—to break up fresh ground, to win the unconverted. These are bound never to stay their hand, but to sow the Seed both at morning and evening. Many in the Lord’s family are not enabled either to be the teachers of the Church, or the winners of souls, but they are called by the duties of a humble, quiet life, to adorn the doctrine of God their Savior in all things. Such as these should see to it that their conversation is always such as becomes the Gospel of Christ and befits the household of faith. And it should be their earnest prayer that what is preached by some may be illustrated by themselves in their daily walk and conversation.

A considerable portion of the Church of God is called to yet harder service, namely, that of suffering. God gets glory, still, out of the fire of affliction when His people sing His high praises upon their beds. He receives as

much honor from the sickbed as from the pulpit! And those of His servants who are called to lie in a hospital are as acceptable soldiers as those whom He commands to the front of the fray. We must all expect to take our turn in tribulation according to the purpose of God. When we are commanded to do so, we must take up our cross cheerfully and follow our Lord.

To all the Church, also, it is given, and to each member in his measure, to serve God by *giving*. Some are enabled, being made stewards of wealth, to give largely of their substance. They are bound to do so, but they should not give it merely as being bound, but feeling it to be their *privilege* to give whatever they can to Him who gave them their all, and who is their All. The poorest Christian is not exempted from this privilege. If he has but little, God accepts according to that which a man has, and not according to that which he has not.

And if he is so poor that he cannot even give the two mites which make a farthing, still he may give to God of his *time*. He may give to God of such ability as he has in the teaching of the young, in the distribution of the printed Word, or in some other form of service which shall come conveniently within his reach. But none must escape from being givers to God in *some* way, for we are all *receivers* and should be all dispensers. Give Him our prayers. Give Him our praises. Give Him such efforts as we can, but let us all be *givers*—and let us take heed to the text—and be *cheerful* givers, too.

You will notice that the Apostle Paul had been speaking about giving all through the chapter, but he now comes to speak of giving as it appears in the sight of God. And the great argument which he uses, the master-gun, is, “God *loves* a cheerful giver,” from which I learn that when we are speaking of Christian service, we ought always to view it in its aspect towards God. He had spoken of what the men at Achaia had thought of benevolence, and of what the members of other Churches might think of the Corinthians, since he had before boasted of them. But he recollects himself, and says that the true judgment of a good work is not what may be thought of it by the Church or by the world, but in what esteem *God* may hold it. “God,” he says, “loves a cheerful giver.” That is the point.

Beloved Hearer, you are a professed Christian. Do you serve in the Church after this model? You may ask what I mean. It is this. In coming up to the House of God do you come there that you may worship God? When you teach in the Sunday school, is it merely that you may take your share with your fellow Christians, or do you teach as unto God? You speak, my Brother, in God’s name—do you not sometimes find yourself preaching otherwise than as unto God? You engage in prayer in the Prayer Meeting, my dear Friend—do you ever raise the question in your mind, “I wonder whether my prayer is liked by those who listen to it?”

You forget that prayer is to be viewed as unto *God*, and that all the service of the Christian is not towards man, nor towards the Church, though it has its bearings in both of these directions—but its main bent and bearing is towards God, and to do everything as for the Most High is the most important of duties. To live in this world—

**“Careless, myself a dying man,
Of dying men’s esteem.”**

To ask myself *never* what Mr. So-and-So thinks of me, “Shall I be commended, or shall I meet with censure?” but to say, “As I serve my God and not my fellow men, what will the great Master say to me? What will He say of this, my service? How will it appear in His sight? Will it be gold, silver, precious stones, or will it, like wood, hay and stubble, be consumed in the fire?”

This is the true way in which to work and live! Note, then, before I come to the text to enter fully into its teaching, that whether it is service, or teaching, or suffering, or giving—the main point is to perform it as unto the Lord—and if the Church would see to this she would find her strength. She would serve God after a nobler and more acceptable manner, for He is a Spirit, and they that serve Him, serving Him in spirit and in truth, would serve Him more boldly, more abundantly, and more acceptably through Jesus Christ.

This is, then, upon the outside of the text. “God loves a cheerful giver.” We learn that as giving is a part of Christian service, the right way to do it is the way which God will, Himself, accept, and that that way is the giving *cheerfully*. “God loves a cheerful giver.” I do not mean to be very long upon any one point, but first shall notice very briefly what a cheerful giver is. Secondly, why the Lord loves such. And then, thirdly, will it be necessary to say even a word or two upon why we who are His people should be such?

I. First, WHAT IS MEANT BY A CHEERFUL GIVER? The rest of the verse tells us what is *not* meant, and so helps us to see what *is* intended. “Not grudgingly, or of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver.” “Not grudgingly,” not giving as though you wished you could avoid it and therefore giving as little as possible. Not counting the pennies and reckoning them to be as precious as drops of blood—but giving with ease, spontaneity, freeness, pleasure—this is a cheerful giver.

To be this, one must give *proportionately*, for cheerful givers reckon how much they should give—how much as good stewards they may be expected at their hands. He who has a large income gives grudgingly if he gives no more than one who has but a tenth as much. He who has but few expenses and lives at a small cost—if he gives no more than another man who has a large family and large expenses, cannot be said to give cheerfully. He evidently gives grudgingly if he does not give *proportionately*. Much has been said about giving a tenth of one’s income to the Lord. I think that is a Christian duty which none should, for a moment, question.

If it were a duty under the Jewish law, much more is it so, now, under the Christian dispensation. But it is a great mistake to suppose that the Jew only gave a tenth. He gave very, very, very much more than that! The tenth was the payment which he *must* make, but after that came all the free-will offerings, all the various gifts at different seasons of the year, so that, perhaps he gave a *third*—much more near that, certainly, than a tenth! And at this present day it is a strange thing that the followers of idols, such as the Hindus, give very nearly that proportion of their substance, and thus utterly shame the illiberality of many who profess to be followers of Jesus Christ!

I do not, however, like to lay down any rules for God’s people, for the Lord’s New Testament is not a great book of rules. It is not a book of the letter, for that kills. It is the book of the Spirit, which teaches us, rather,

the soul of liberality than the body of it. And instead of writing laws upon stones or paper, it writes laws upon the *heart*. Give, dear Friends, as you have purposed in your heart. And give proportionately as the Lord has prospered you—and do not make your estimate of what you ought to give by what will appear *respectable*—or by what is *expected* from you by other people. Give as in the sight of the Lord, as He loves a cheerful giver. And as a cheerful giver is a proportionate giver, take care that you, like a good steward, keep just accounts towards the great King.

But I have said that a cheerful giver is also a *willing* giver, one who does not need to be “bled,” as we sometimes say. He does not need that the knife should be constantly used upon him. He is not like the young grape which must be pressed and squeezed to get the wine out because it is not ripe—but a cluster bursting with invigorating juice! We ought to be like the honeycomb, dropping spontaneously with virgin honey, all too glad if we may but be accepted in our gifts through Him who is the Altar and who renders both the offerer and the offering acceptable unto God! We ought not to need to be preached at, to be exhorted and to be pressed by public appeals and private solicitations! It should be said of us as of the Church at Corinth, “Touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you.” Be a proportionate giver, then, and a willing giver.

A man who gives to God cheerfully has got beyond the serf-like, slavish spirit. The slave brings his pittance, which he is obliged to pay, and puts it down at the task-master’s feet and goes his way in misery. But the dear child, so pleased to give its Father what it can, places its little offering into the Father’s treasury, as much as possible unobserved of men, beholds the Father smile and goes its way rejoicing. You are not under the Law but under Grace! You are not, therefore, to *give* or to *do* anything to God as of compulsion, as though you heard the old Mosaic whip cracking in your ears. You are not to crouch before the Lord as the child of Hagar the bondwoman, fresh from Arabia and from the trembling of Sinai!

You are to advance cheerfully as one who has come to Mount Zion, as the child of promise—as Isaac, whose name is laughter—rejoicing that you are enabled, and favored, and privileged to do anything for Him who loved you to the death. The cheerful giver is one who gives very earnestly, and there is a way of giving earnestly, especially when the gift is that of your time or of your service. Some give God their time on the Lord’s Day—but they are half asleep. Some give Him their efforts in the school, or the classes, or street-preaching—but they never seem to throw their souls into their engagements. What the Church needs, nowadays, is more of cheerful, whole-hearted service.

Does it not make the flesh crawl on your bones to hear some men preach? A word today and another word tomorrow—the chilly discourse is spoken so softly, (when they might speak loudly enough, if they would), that you can see they have not stirred their souls with the theme that they wish to put into your souls. Under such preachers, congregations become “small by degrees and beautifully less,” because they are under the conviction that the preacher cannot have anything to say that he thinks worth saying, or, otherwise, he would speak out in clear, earnest tones. Oh, if all the ministers of Christ, and all the deacons, and elders, and

Sunday school teachers, and street-preachers, and city missionaries were all on fire—what different men they would be!

If the service were all cheerful service in the sense of being intense, full of force—the man's whole manhood being thrown into it—what bright and happy seasons of revival we might expect—for in this sense, "God loves a cheerful giver" who comes not to worship service to do duty, or because it is a matter of routine or the clock has struck and the people need him—but comes because he loves to tell of Jesus' love! He comes because he loves to try to win souls! He comes because he loves to declare the whole counsel of God! He comes because he loves to look those dear children in the face and pray with them! He comes because he loves to take those lads alone and teach them of the Savior who bled for sinners!

Where there is living soul-service there must be a blessing! But if we do not serve our Master cheerfully, and consequently do not do it *earnestly*, God will not love the service, and nothing will come of it. One thing I know, that a cheerful giver always wishes that he could give 10 times as much. A cheerful doer always wants to have more capacity for doing. A cheerful preacher always wishes that he had a thousand tongues, for not one should be silent. Beloved, do you ever remember wishing that for once you could get out of this dull common life and climb into the higher spiritual life? Did you ever read Henry Martyn's life? He was a polished scholar, a man of learning and repute and he gave up all for Christ to go to Persia and there to die without having seen a convert, perhaps, and yet content to live—content to die in far-off lands for his Master's sake!

Did you ever read of Brainerd, far away among the Indians, toiling on—and in his old age teaching a poor black child its letters, and thanking God that when he could not preach, he could yet teach the child its letters, and so do something for his dear Lord who had done so much for him? Yes, did you ever read and think of even St. Francis Xavier, papist as he was? Yet what a man! How consecrated, how zealous! With all his errors, and all his mistakes, and all his faults, yet passing over sea and land—penetrating forests and daring death a thousand times that he might spread abroad the poor misguided doctrines which he believed. As much as I hate his teaching, I admire his all but miraculous zeal!

When I think of some such men—when I would gladly censure their mistakes, I can only censure myself that I cannot even so much as think, or cannot do *more* than think of living such a life as they lived! O that we could learn the secret of entire consecration! O that we could receive a vehement panting and longing after the perfect dedication of ourselves unto our Lord and Master! Then we should make our everyday toil to be lustrous with the glory of holiness! Then we should burn like seraphs while we toiled here below as common men!

Then we should teach, and preach, and pray, and work, and give with such a spirit and such a Divine unction that the world would wonder from where we came, and where we had learned these sacred arts! It is *this* cheerfulness, *this* heartiness, *this* whole-heartedness, *this* intenseness, *this* fire of the soul which God loves! O that we may have it! O may we get it, for such doers and such givers God loves!

II. Secondly, WHY DOES GOD LOVE A CHEERFUL GIVER? This is not a sentence spoken to all sorts of men, remember. This was addressed to the members of a Christian Church. God loves them all, but He has spe-

cial complacency in those whom, by His Grace, He has taught to be cheerful givers. A cheerful giver who was not a Christian would not at all come under the statement here made. He would still be one with whom God is angry every day. It is of *saved* men, *Christian* men—men joined to the Christian Church—that it is said, “God loves a cheerful giver.”

Now observe, first, God loves a cheerful giver for He made the world on the plan of cheerful giving, and a great artist loves all that is consistent with his plan. I say God has made the whole world on this plan. I will show you. Look at the sun. What an orb of splendor! What a glorious creation of God! Why is it bright? Because it is giving away its light. Why is it glorious? Because it is scattering its beams on all sides. Imagine that it should say, “I will give no more light”—where would be its brightness? If it should say, “I will no more scatter my beams”—where would be its luster? It is in the magnificent generosity of that great father of the day that his glory consists! It is the grandest of orbs to us because it gives us so much of that vitalizing force which is heat, and light, and life.

Behold the moon, the fair queen of the night. Why do we rejoice in her? Because what light she receives from the sun she gives again to us! If she were not to give her light, who would speak of her? If she were a selfish orb, absorbing into herself all the sun’s rays. If she were an ungenerous circle bounding up and storing within herself every sunbeam, what would she be? We should not even know of her existence, probably, except when, as a black speck, she passed between us and some bright luminary. But it is because she scatters her beams over the poverty of midnight that we rejoice and thank God for her wealth of beauty! Even yonder twinkling stars which seem so small to us—do not their brightness and their radiance consist in their *giving*? “One star differs from another star in glory,” because one star differs from another star in what it is able to yield to *us*. So it is with the heavenly bodies.

Now let us turn, then, to terrestrial bodies. Look at this earth beneath our feet. What is its excellence but in that which it gives? There are parts of the earth sublimely solitary, such as the Great Sahara—such tracts of land give nothing, and what are they? Deserts. Who commends them? Go over that land once so blessed, Palestine, and tread the soil which yields so little—is it not thought to be accursed? And why? Because all the elements of fertility that are within it are unused and not brought forth for the good of man.

But where are the happy countries? Where are the countries where men rejoice to praise the fatherland? Are they not those fertile hills and plains which laugh with superabundant harvests given forth from earth’s stores that men may make merry and be glad? Which is the land most chosen of our race—the Beulah of the nations? Not the hoarding land! Not the thirsty land that will take in everything and give out nothing! Not the hungry soil which the farmer tills but which refuses the wheat sheaf and the barley mow!

Walk abroad in this world and think for a minute. Thousands of years ago, before our race was on this planet, it is probable that there were vast forests waving in the sunbeams—and what were they doing? Giving up themselves to fall and die, and why? Why, to form the vast stores which Mother Earth held in her cellars, till, at last, when man came he broke the lock and entered into possession of vast stores of coal which aid our arts

and sciences! Coal makes us warm and happy in the depths of winter so that we rejoice to see how that which was stored by generous Nature one day is given up tomorrow freely for our use!

Why, there is not a tree that grows but is giving forth perpetually! There is not a flower that blooms but its very sweetness lies in its shedding its fragrance in the air! All the rivers run into the sea, the sea feeds the clouds, the clouds empty out their treasures, the earth gives back the rain in fertility and so it is an endless chain of giving generosity! Generosity reigns supreme in Nature! There is nothing in this world but lives by giving except a covetous man, and such a man is a piece of grit in the machinery. He is out of gear with the universe. Man is a wheel running in the opposite direction to the wheels of God's great engine. He is a jibbing horse in the team. He is one that will not do what all the forces of the world are doing.

He is a monster! He is not fit for this world at all! He has not realized the motion of the spheres. He keeps not step with the march of the ages. He is out of date. He is out of place. He is out of God's order altogether. But the cheerful giver is marching to the music of the spheres. He is in order with God's great natural laws and God, therefore, loves him, since He sees His own work in him.

Observe, secondly, that God loves a cheerful giver because Divine Grace has placed such a man in order with the laws of redemption, as well as the laws of nature. And what are these? We who are called, "Calvinists," delight in asserting that the whole economy of the Gospel is that of Divine Grace. It is all of free Grace from first to last, and not in any measure or degree a matter of debt and reward. Salvation is not a thing to be earned and to be won by men, but is the result and exercise of the free Grace of God. If there is election, it is *free* election springing never from any goodness in us. If there is redemption, "thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift." If there is calling, if there is justification, if there is sanctification—everywhere we see the freeness of the work of the great Giver. Never is anything in God stinted, never churlish, never grudging. He gives liberally and withholds not in any good thing. God stands in the work of Grace as a wondrous Giver.

Now the Christian man, or the *professed* Christian man, who is no giver, or being a giver is not a cheerful giver, is out of order with the system which revolves around the Covenant of Grace and the Cross of Christ. He is out of tune with the blood and wounds of Jesus. He is out of order with the eternal purposes of the Most High. He is not running in the current of Divine Grace at all. He ought to be under the Law, though there, indeed, he comes not up to its letter—and as the spirit of the Gospel is all freeness, and Grace, and love, and bounty—the man is out of harmony with it and does not understand it at all. Because, then, the cheerful giver, made so by Divine Grace, keeps tune with redemption and nature after his own measure and calling, he is commended of the Lord.

Again, God loves a cheerful giver because He loves anything that makes His people happy. And well He understands that the spirit of self-denial—the spirit of love to others—is the surest source of happiness that can be found in the human breast! He who lives for himself must be wretched. He who can only rejoice in what he, himself, enjoys, has but narrow channels for his happiness. But he who delights to make *others* blessed, and who

delights to glorify *God*—and who can deny his own flesh and his own wishes if he may but honor his Master and bless the world—*he* it is who is the happy man! And as God delights in the happiness which is the result, so He delights in the cheerful giving which is the cause.

God delights in a cheerful giver, again, because in such a Believer he sees the work of His Spirit. It takes a great deal of Grace to make some men cheerful givers. With some the last part of their nature that ever gets sanctified is their pockets! The Grace of God works its way into the morality of their trade, and into the actions of the house, but they do not appear to recognize that their substance is to be as much consecrated as their hearts.

Beloved, I know there are some of the Lord's people who look upon all they have most sacredly as being not their own, and who, not as a theory, but as a matter of daily *practice*, make money for Christ and give money to Christ, and are never so happy as when they can do a little more than they were accustomed to do to advance His kingdom according to their ability. But, on the other hand, there are some of quite another temperament, in whom the Grace of God has to knock hard before it gets an answer! They know what they *ought* to do very well, but yet find the purse strings grow tight, and the fingers that are used for giving nearly paralyzed! And really, when they do give a shilling, it appears to be as great an effort of self-denial as when others, according to their proportion, have given pounds.

But the Lord loves not to see His people hugging this world so. He loves to see that they have outgrown the beggarly elements. That they are getting to love the *spiritual* above the carnal, to love *Him* above themselves, and to seek the treasures that are *above* and not the treasures which are on the earth. I am sure it grieves the Spirit of God when He sees the blood-bought as money-grasping as those who are of the world! It grieves the Spirit and He often withdraws His comforting influence when He sees His servants falling down to the dull, dead, brutish level of men of the world whose cry is, "What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and with what shall we be clothed?"

He would have His people seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness! He would have them delight themselves in the Lord, and not in the creatures which flesh and blood pine after. He would have them drink from purer streams than the muddy rivers of earth. He would have them covet after better riches than these Egyptian treasures which must perish in the using, and from which we must so soon be taken away.

But there is one reason why God loves a cheerful giver which I must dwell on at some length, namely, because He is a cheerful giver Himself. Man generally loves that which is like himself. We gratify ourselves in that way. Generally our affections go after an object that is somewhat congruous to our own character. Now the Lord is the most cheerful of all givers! I want you to think of that for a minute. "Who spared not His own Son"? Oh, what a Gift was that! Mothers, could you give your sons? Fathers, could you spare your children? Well, yes, perhaps you might for your country, but you could not for your *enemies*. But God, the cheerful Giver, spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, as says the Word.

And since then, what a cheerful Giver He has been! He has given without our asking. We did not ask Him to make the Covenant of Grace. We did not ask Him to elect us. We did not ask Him to redeem us. These things were done before we were born! We did not ask Him to call us by His Grace, for, alas, we did not know the value of that call, and we were dead in trespasses and sins! But He gave to us freely of His unsought but boundless love. Preeminent Grace came to us, outrunning all our desires, and all our wills, and all our prayers. He first made us pray. He gave us the spirit of supplication, or else we had never prayed! He gave us the will to come to Him, or else we should have remained afar off.

He was a cheerful Giver to us, then. And when we went to Him with broken hearts, how cheerfully did He give us pardon! How did He run and have compassion upon us, and fall upon our neck and kiss us! How cheerfully did He bring us to the banquet with music and with dancing, because His son that was dead was alive again, and He that was lost was found!—

***“Many days have passed since then,
Many changes have we seen,”***

but there has been no change in Him! He has been a cheerful Giver still! We have needed Grace every day, and He gives liberally and upbraids not. When we have been to Him and have asked for an egg, He has never given us a scorpion. We have asked for bread and He has never given us a stone, but He has given His Holy Spirit to us. Oh, the generosity of God in Providence to some of us! It is not long ago since we were poor enough, but He has been pleased to give us all we can desire.

There are some of you here who were on the bed of sickness and were wondering what would become of that little family of yours for which you were the only breadwinner. But God, the cheerful Giver, provided for you. He set you up again, and sent you once again in health and strength to your work. Others of you have passed through great straits, but still the everlasting arms have been underneath you. And though the young lions do lack and suffer hunger, yet you, having sought the Lord, have not needed any good thing. He is a cheerful Giver!

Ah, poor Sinners, you who are not saved, I wish you knew how glad God is to give His mercy! He is the most cheerful Giver in the universe! You must not think He will grudge you. If you come to Him for pardon of sin, God is ready abundantly to pardon you. If you seek His face you shall not have to clamor after Him as though He were deaf or unwilling to hear you. He will listen to the cries of the penitent! He will hearken to the desires of those who would forsake their sins and find Christ. If you will but trust the Lord Jesus, you shall find Him the most cheerful Giver and the kindest Friend that you have ever dreamed of.

Brothers and Sisters, we shall very soon find God to be a cheerful Giver. Some of our friends, this week, have found Him so. They asked, for they were very sick, that He would sustain them—and He made their bed in their sickness, and put underneath them His kind arms. And then they asked that He would give them an abundant entrance into the kingdom of His dear Son, and He did it. He helped them to bear their witness to His faithfulness. He set open before them the gates of pearl. He did not deny them the harps of gold, nor the Throne of Christ, Himself, but as a cheer-

ful Giver He welcomed His poor weary people to His own eternal banquet, and He made them sit at His own right hand!

So will He do with us, for He is a cheerful Giver—and so He likes His people to be—for in those who are like He, He sees Himself in miniature—as the sun sees itself in every drop of dew—as the skies are mirrored in every pool. O that God would grant us Grace to be more cheerful givers in the future than we have been in the past!

III. I shall close with only a sentence or two as to WHY WE WHO LOVE THE LORD, IN THIS HOUSE ESPECIALLY, SHOULD SEEK TO BE CHEERFUL GIVERS WHOM GOD LOVES. There are many reasons, but tonight we need not urge them all. One is that all we have we owe to Him. I have heard of one who failed in business, who, in his better times had helped some of his workmen into business and they had prospered.

It was said, “Oh, they will help him. He did them such good turns in his day of prosperity, they will help him.” I know not whether they did or not, but this I do know—that He who took us up when we were naked, for so we came into this world—He who took us up when we were more than naked—filthy and defiled—for so we became through our sin and through our original depravity—He who took us from off the dunghill, yes, from out of the fire itself—and made us what we are and wrapped us about with His righteousness and gave us of His mercy—He deserves all and more than all that we can give Him.

Oh, what shall we do for our Savior to praise Him? What shall we *not* do? Lord, as everything is due to You, take everything and let us make no reserve. Remember, dear Brothers and Sisters, continually, that you are saved—*you*, when you might have been damned—*you*, when you had no will at anytime to be saved! You are saved! Your sins are blotted out! The righteousness of Christ is your royal apparel. You are not only saved—the Holy Spirit dwells *in* you! You are a priest, you are a king unto God! You are an heir of Heaven! The blood imperial runs in your veins! You are one of the peerage of the skies, a prince of the blood! Oh, will you not live above the lives of others? Will you not seek by these high dignities, these priceless gifts and these astounding favors, to consecrate yourselves—spirit, soul, and body—to Him who is your Father, your Heaven, your God?

Brethren, you may well be anxious to be cheerful givers when you remember that the time for giving will soon be over. There is no giving in yonder skies. At least, God’s choice treasury, which is the poor man’s pocket, will not be held out for you to fill. There will be none of the sons of need there—no little feet cold for need of shoes—no little hands weak for need of bread. There will be no starving women and no hungry men. No meeting houses that need building. No missionaries that need sending forth. No ships that need to be chartered to bear them beyond the seas. No ministers of Christ standing in need of your aid. You will be beyond all such calls, then, and if there could be a regret in Heaven it would be that in Heaven these duties must forever cease. O give, then, while you still can as cheerful givers!

And, last of all, we have need of a giving God, and therefore let us be cheerful givers. Remember that story which Mrs. Stowe has so well written? I am afraid I cannot tell it again, certainly not in her words, but it is something to this effect. There was a merchant, says she, who had pros-

pered a great deal in business. He had built a house in the country, and he had enlarged it and had laid out his grounds at great expense. When he went to his office he was called upon by a collector for some society and he replied to his requests, "I really cannot afford to give anything. I have so many calls, I cannot do it."

Well, he was a man who had usually been very generous, and it touched his conscience a little afterwards to think that he should begin to stint in what he gave to his Lord. At night, when the wife and family had retired to rest, he sat by the fireside meditating, and he said to himself, "I really do not know whether I was wise to build this house. It has brought a deal of expense. New furniture is needed. I have been introduced into a new rank of society. Expenses have increased, the girls need more for clothes—everything is on a more lavish scale, and yet I have been stinting the Lord. I fear I have done amiss. I do not feel easy about it at all."

As he was so thinking it is supposed that he fell asleep, but if so it was well for him that he did so, for suddenly the door opened and there came into the room a very meek and lowly stranger. He advanced to him and said, "Sir, I have called upon you to ask your help for a society which sends the Gospel to the heathen. They are perishing, perishing for lack of knowledge. You are wealthy, will you give me help to send them the Word of Life?" He said, "You must excuse me, really. My expenses are so great and I must curtail. I am quite unable to give you anything. I must decline."

The stranger looked at him with a mournful glance and said, "Perhaps you think that the work is too far away, and you do not give because the money is to be sent beyond the seas. I will then tell you that there is a ragged school down a part of the city, near your house of business, and it is about to be shut up for lack of funds. And there are the poor little ragged children, the Arabs of your streets, ignorant of the right way—will you give me a subscription to that object?" The merchant was a little vexed to be asked again, and he said, "Forbear to trouble me. I cannot afford it. I cannot give you anything."

The stranger brushed a tear from his eyes, and he said, "Well, then, I must ask you at least for something for the Bible Society. That, you see, lies at the root of everything. It gives away the Word of God, and surely, if you cannot afford to give to the Missionary Society, or the Ragged School, you will give for the Word of God itself." "No," he said, "I have told you I cannot do it," and then—and then the aspect of the Stranger seemed to change, and though He still was meek and lowly, yet His Countenance became majestic! There was a glory in His face, and yet there were lines of grief, and He said, softly and very sternly, "Five years ago that little daughter of yours, with the fair ringlets, lay sick of the fever and you prayed in the bitterness of your soul that the darling of your heart might not be taken from you, but that you might be spared that heavy stroke. Who heard that prayer, and gave you back your child?"

The merchant covered his face with his hands, and felt ashamed. "Ten years ago," said the same voice, "you were in great difficulties. Bills were returned upon you. You were on the verge of bankruptcy. Your hair seemed as if it would turn gray with care. To whom did you apply in the hour of trouble, and who heard you, and who found you friends who tided

you over your difficulties when other houses were crashing, and wealthier men than you were failing on every side? Who did that for you?”

“Once more,” said the stranger, “fifteen years ago you felt the burden of your sins. You went up and down the world wringing your hands with fear, and crying, ‘God have mercy upon me!’ Your heart was overwhelmed within you. Who, in that hour, spoke the forgiving words which cancelled all your sins? Who took all your iniquities upon Himself?” The merchant sobbed aloud and trembled much when the voice said, “If you will never ask anything of Me again, I will never ask anything of you.” The man fell on his face before the august Visitor, and said, “Take all!”

Whether it were a dream or not, it is certain that that merchant became one of the Christian princes of America and gave to the cause of Christ as few had ever done before. “God loves a cheerful giver,” and you see His claims upon you! Go your way, merchants, and give largely as God gives to you. Go your way, you trades people, and scatter as you can, for God first gives you the means. Go your way, you working men and toiling women, and give according to your ability. Give, you rich, because you are rich, and give, you poor, because you cannot afford to get poorer, and you are likely to do so unless you offer God His portion.

But have you first given Him your *heart*? Have you put your *trust* in Jesus? If not, this sermon is not for you. But if your heart belongs to my Lord, and has been washed in His precious blood, let my text sink deep into your ears, and deeper, still, into your hearts—“God loves a cheerful giver!”

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THE UNSPEAKABLE GIFT

NO. 1550

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 25, 1880,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***"Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!"
2 Corinthians 9:15.***

PAUL had spoken of the liberality of the Corinthian Believers and he had endeavored to stir them up to a prudent preparation for displaying it. "Now, therefore," he said, "perform the doing of it, that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance, also, out of that which you have." He closes his exhortation by this remarkable sentence—"Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!"—intending, no doubt, to thereby give expression to his own hearty thankfulness and also to deliver a master stroke of argument for Christian liberality. Nothing can so excite God's people as to give to Him, as the remembrance of what God has given to them. "Freely you have received, freely give," is our Lord's own argument. Gospel Graces are best stimulated by Gospel motives.

It is wrong to appeal to Believers by reasons drawn from the Law of Works, for they are not under it. Children are to be ruled as children, not as oxen. Appeal should be made to renewed hearts by arguments distilled from the Law of love under which they live! Seeing God has loved them with an infinite love, this love has become the most mighty of forces within them—"The love of Christ constrains us." Nothing can move a man to complete consecration to God like the fact that He so loved us that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

The Gospel is founded upon giving and its spirit is giving. Buying and selling are unknown in spiritual things, unless we buy without money and without price. Payment is for the Law. Under the Gospel, everything is a gift. God gives us Jesus, gives us eternal life, gives us Grace and glory, gives us everything, in fact, and then, moved by love to Him, we give ourselves back to Him and to His people. As it is the glory of the sun that he gives light and heat to our world, so is it God's Glory that He gives mercy and peace to the sons of men. And, moreover, as the sun is the author of reflected heat and is all the more valued because his beams can be reflected, so is God glorified by that part of His goodness which we are able to impart to others. God is glorified in the thanksgiving which is excited by the gifts of His people to the poor, as well as by their personal thanksgivings for His own gifts. He gives to us and we thank Him. We give to others and they thank God for the kindness which He has inspired in us. Thus a round of thanksgiving *to God* is created by the spirit of giving which first of all displayed itself in the unspeakable gift of God! We are as

cups filled at the spring and from us the thirsty drink and praise the fountain!

Paul had been boasting of the liberality of the Corinthians and he somewhat feared that by their delay he might be made ashamed. He seemed almost alarmed lest he had said too much about their gifts. He could speak upon that subject and say all that should be said, but he felt that he could not describe the liberality of *God*. The gifts of the Corinthians were such as he could speak of, but when he thought of what God had given, he could only cry, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!" You can readily put down in black and white and count up the largest contributions of the most self-sacrificing Believers—but you cannot estimate the gift of God. You cannot estimate the value of God's own dear Son—you could certainly give no expression to any estimate you had formed if it were in the least degree worthy of the subject. The love which is seen in Jesus is indescribable, infinite, unspeakable.

During this meditation I desire to aid you, as the Holy Spirit shall aid me, for in my case the power to speak of this unspeakable gift must, itself, be a gift. I trust it shall be given me in the same hour in which I shall speak. We will first consider that Christ Jesus is the unspeakable gift—but we are not going to be silent because of this—for our second head is Christ Jesus is a gift to be very much spoken of! The unspeakable gift is to be forever spoken of by way of gratitude—"Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!"

I. First, then, the eternal Son of God given of God unto men, CHRIST JESUS IS THE UNSPEAKABLE GIFT and He is so in many ways. To begin with, no man can doctrinally lay down the whole meaning of the gift of Christ to men. The Church has produced thoughtful scholars whom it has called, "Divines," and described as "eminent theologians." From these teachers we have, no doubt, received much help in the exposition of the Word of God and yet if we put them all together they have never been able to unfold to us the entire meaning of the gift of the Son of God to men! The devout and studious have, themselves, cried out, "O the depths," but they have not pretended to fathom this abyss of mystery.

Certain teachers have fallen far short of the mark and have done great mischief by their low estimate of the unspeakable gift. What they have said may have been true, but their sin has been one of omission—omission where none should have been possible. They have said far too little about Christ and have seemed to be afraid of extolling Him too highly. In the estimation of such persons, the gift of the Savior has been simply a display of God's good will to the race and nothing more: Jesus was a Divine Philanthropist and nothing else according to their Gospel. This is to use other balances than those of the sanctuary and to give short weight to the great Householder! It is true that God commended His love to man by the death of His Son and none can say too much upon this point. But there is far more in the gift of Christ than mere goodwill. We are glad that these men admit the Divine Benevolence, but we wish they could see more than that—for that view of our Lord which sees in Him

only a display of benevolence to men does but dimly discern His Character and value. Certainly He is “unspeakable” by those who only think of Him after this fashion.

Others have spoken of Christ as a wonderful declaration of God’s opposition to moral evil. The death of Christ has been received by them as a vague expression of Divine Displeasure against sin, of course not dissociating it from His Benevolence towards men. Herein is truth, also, for how shall we ever see the purity of God more fully vindicated than in the exhibition of sin’s result in the mortal agony and death throes of our Divine Lord? Yet, if this is all that any man has to say, he has failed to comprehend the gift of God, for the great Father has done far more for men by the gift of His Son than merely to intimate the kindness of His Nature and the results of moral evil. We admit that in the death of His Son the Lord has declared His love to man and His hatred of sin, but He has done infinitely more—the Cross is not only a school but a hospital—the Crucifixion not only reveals man’s evil, but provides a remedy for it. Christ is not merely a lesson, but a gift—an unspeakable gift.

Some of our brethren dwell very much, perhaps none too much, upon the general aspect of Christ’s death towards all mankind. It is a grand fact that the human race is spared because Jesus died and that it is not only reprieved, but lifted up from degradation and put in a position to hear messages of mercy which, if believed, will bring salvation. The Lord Jesus is described in Scripture as “the Savior of all men, specially of them that believe.” His mission is glad tidings both to Israel and to all people—all of Adam’s seed are affected by His death. They do well who freely proclaim the common salvation—they cannot dwell too much upon its freeness, though I would have them not overlook its fullness and Sovereignty.

We like well to hear of the effect of the Incarnation and the Atonement upon the entire human family as placing it under a Mediator, but we would also hear of the special application of redemption and its actual *results*. No one can say too much of the great Redemption, the matchless Propitiation—yes, though one should speak with the tongues of men and of angels concerning Jesus Christ in His relation to the human family—he need not fear that he would magnify the Lord too loftily. The sinner’s Friend, the mighty Savior, the gracious Pardoner cannot be too much spoken of, for under that aspect He is truly indescribable! We delight, in addition to this, to speak of Christ’s special relationship to His own people and we lay a great emphasis upon the fact of His Substitution in their behalf.

We rejoice to speak of His bearing the sin of many, His being numbered with the transgressors, His being made sin for us, though He knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Our heart expands, our eyes overflow whenever we dilate upon His suretyship and consequent Substitution. His wondrous condescending love in taking our place—His standing in the sinner’s place that we might stand in His place and be accepted in the Beloved—this carries our heart away and we never weary of the theme! O Divine Doctrine! Full of consolation! Teeming with

highest hopes! Gladly would we preach forever the sublime Truth of God of the Substitution of our Lord for us!

Yet if this were our one theme we should still fail to express the unspeakable. We are apt to think that when we have laid down this doctrine clearly and distinctly and have admitted all that others have well said, that we have believed and taught all that can be known concerning the gift of Jesus Christ to men. But, Beloved, I am persuaded that it is not so. Beside the purpose of declaring benevolence and censuring sin, of lifting up the race and of effectually saving the chosen, there is yet *more* to be subserved by the Incarnation and Atonement. The purposes of God are manifold and a wheel is ever within a wheel with Him. I will not, at this time, even *try* to speak doctrinally beyond what I have already attempted, for we must stop somewhere and I will pause here, at the truth of His vicarious suffering—the gift is unspeakable when we have spoken our very best and so let this suffice.

I bid you peer over the brink upon which I would set you. Look down into this abyss of love. Be you sure of this, that this depth is unfathomable! It is idle to attempt a definition of *infinity* and, therefore, vain to hope to declare how wide, how high, how deep, how broad is the wondrous gift of God to the sons of men! Theology can speak on many themes and she has much to say on this, but her voice fails to speak the whole. From the pulpit, when occupied by a gracious man, the confession freely comes that the heralds of the Cross are not able to tell all that is hidden in Christ Jesus! The gift is unspeakable for another reason—no man can ever set forth the manner of this gift. The way and method of the giving are unknown, perhaps unknowable and, therefore, unspeakable.

Just think awhile. Do you understand and could you possibly explain the manner of the Father's giving the Only-Begotten to us? For Jesus Christ is not only the Father's Son, but He is God Himself, one with God! The gift of the Son is virtually God's giving Himself to men! There can be no separation between God the Son and God the Father for, says Christ, "I and My Father are One." "Believe Me," He says, "that I am in the Father and the Father in Me." Do you understand this? Is it not indescribable? Do not, therefore, be drawing hard and fast lines and speaking of Christ as suffering and of the Father as scarcely participating in the Sacrifice, for this may grow into grievous error! It has been laid down by Divines that God is impassable and not capable of any form of suffering. It may be so, but I fail to see Scriptural authority for the statement.

That God can do what He pleases I do believe and therefore He can suffer, too, if He so wills. To me a God who has no feelings is a great deal farther off from me than my Father who is in Heaven, who can be grieved by my sin and can feel for my sorrow. It may be true that Scripture only speaks after the manner of men, but then it is as a *man* that I understand it—and it does seem to me to reveal not only a living God, but a *feeling* God. Is God glorified by being petrified? Read Paul's words to the Ephesian elders when he speaks of "the Church of *God*, which He has purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28). The *blood of God*—is not that a

mistake? Certainly not, since Inspiration thus speaks. Sometimes expressions which are mistakes in logic may be more accurate descriptions than the best arranged sentences. The expression which looks to be a contradiction may better express the Truth of God than that which is verbally accurate.

Scripture is Infallible and yet it uses none of the red tape of systematic theology. We swim in mysteries when we speak of the Father and the Son. How, then, could God give the Son to die, He being one with Himself—shall any man explain it? Or, if he *could* explain the mystery, can he tell us what it cost the Father to give His Son? Can a mother tell us how it pains her heart to part with her child? Can any father tell us the anguish of losing his only-begotten? What must it be to give up your well-beloved son to be despised and spit upon, maltreated and murdered? No. You do not *know* what it is and, therefore, you cannot tell what it is! You that have been bereaved of your dearest—you know the pang which tears the heart—but you cannot express your loss to others. Your grief is inexpressible. Who shall tell what the Father felt when He did, as it were, cast the Glory of the Well-Beloved to the dogs by sending Him among the wicked husbandmen, who said, “This is the heir, let us kill Him”?

Who shall tell what the Eternal felt when the brightness of His Glory, the express image of His Person, was bound like a felon and accursed like a criminal? When He was mocked as an impostor and scourged as a transgressor, rejected as vile and slain as worthy of death? To see His Well-Beloved hung up like a thief and made to bear infinite agony—what thought the Father of this? True, “it pleased Jehovah to bruise Him. He has put Him to grief,” but not without great self-denial on the part of the great Father. All the agony of Abraham, when He unsheathed the knife to slay his son, was but a faint type of what it cost the Father when He gave the Only-Begotten that He might die for us!

A further sense of the unspeakableness of this gift will come over you if you attempt to measure our Lord’s sufferings when He was made sin for us. None can declare the greatness of His sacrifice. Think of the Glory of Christ throughout all ages at the right hand of God and remember that all this was laid aside! What a descent from Heaven’s majesty to Bethlehem’s manger—from the Throne of Jehovah to the breast of Mary! Think of the perfect Nature of Christ’s humanity and its consequent rest in God and yet He stooped out of His spirit’s peace to endure the contradiction of sinners against Himself! Think of His infinite perfections and boundless deservings and of the shameful contempt that was poured upon Him! The cruel asp of ingratitude stung Him and the serpent of malice bit Him—and all the while was He Lord of All.

Every step of His way of love is full of wonders! His becoming one with us according to the flesh is a great marvel. Imagine, if you can, of what it must mean that “the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.” Incarnation is but the first step, but of that first descent of love, who shall declare the mystery? And this was merely the beginning—He became a Man that He might go further and become man’s Substitute. Try, if you can, to con-

ceive of Incarnate God as having sin imputed to Him, transgression laid upon Him! Why, the very idea must have been horror to His perfect spirit! Imagine of Justice with its iron rod, bruising and pounding the innocent Son of God with vicarious griefs borne for us!—

***“Much we talk of Jesus’ love,
But how little is understood!
Of His sufferings, so intense,
Angels have no perfect sense.”***

“Your unknown sufferings,” says the Greek Liturgy and unknown they must forever be. O Jesus, what a price it was that You paid! What griefs they were to which You bowed Yourself till You were covered with a bloody sweat! O Lord Jesus, the brightest spirit before Your Throne who has dwelt with You ever since Your Ascension cannot tell us what You endured! Your groans are an unspeakable gift!

How was it that He died who is the Resurrection and the Life? And how was it He bore sin, even He who is none other than eternal Perfection? None of us can speak here, for He is the unspeakable gift. I ask you to follow me in another line of thought while I still talk upon the unspeakable. None can describe the gifts which have come to us through the gift of Christ. Think of what we have been delivered from—think awhile of what you were by nature and what you would have continued to have been had not Grace interposed—and what you would have become if Jesus had not been given to save the lost. Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, we are fallen already, but the full results of the Fall are not seen on earth. The ripe result of sin is gathered in the dark region where castaways dwell forever, finally banished from hope!

They dwell where the ring of the Sabbath bell is never heard, for they rest not day nor night. They are where the voice of Mercy can never enter, for this doleful knell tolls through that dreary land with awful tone, “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still.” And you and I might have been there, now, and shall be there yet, if Jesus Christ is not ours. Yes, and the brightest saints in Heaven, upon whom the eternal light has risen never to set, would have been now in the outer darkness, weeping and wailing and gnashing their teeth if it had not been for this unspeakable gift! The distance between the unfathomable depth of deserved woe and the unutterable height of infinite Grace and Glory, an angel’s wing cannot measure! Therefore it will always be impossible to tell the height and depth of this unspeakable gift.

But now think, for a while, what are the gifts which we enjoy at this hour. There is, first of all, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His Grace. We are washed, washed in the blood, clothed in the righteousness of the Son of God, adopted into the family of the Eternal and, “if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ”! There comes to us, by way of adoption, all the provision, nurture, education and paternal love which the heavenly Father gives to all the children of His family. Brothers and Sisters, I have not time to mention, one by one, all the Covenant blessings. All things are in the Covenant, whether things

present, or things to come, or life, or death—all things are yours and you are Christ's and Christ is God's—and all these things come to us through Christ. God spared not His own Son and, in giving Him to us, He has also freely given us all things.

Now, who is he that can speak of such a theme as this, for if he does but dwell upon the blessings which flow to us from Jesus Christ, he must be lost in wonder! Other gifts may amaze us, but this utterly overwhelms us! If the streams are fathomless, who shall find a plummet to measure the fountain? I preached last Lord's-Day night to a great congregation that had come for many miles and, being faint and thirsty, they emptied many buckets of water which were set for them. Their thirst consumed a great quantity, yet an observer might soon have known how much they drank. But who shall tell what the earth drinks in during a single thunder shower? Who shall measure the floods which roll down the great rivers? Who shall compute the volume of the sea? Yet all these are finite and may be reckoned up in order—our Lord Jesus Christ is Infinite. Of man's gifts to man we may readily make an estimate, but when you come to the gift of Christ, arithmetic is baffled and even imagination is outstripped.

Other themes we may hope to compass by study and careful speech, but before this we are dumb with astonishment. Boundless Grace, unutterable Mercy, Divine Love—these are heavenly things and tongues of clay can never fully declare them! Furthermore, the gift of God must always be unspeakable because when it is best realized, the effect it produces upon the emotions is so great that speech fails. I would not give much for the man who can at all times fluently talk about the love of God in Christ Jesus. When he feels most his obligations, his heart will check his lips! Utterance belongs not to the deepest emotion. Only believe in your heart that God has given Christ to you, and all that comes with Him, and you will rise from your bended knees weeping for joy! A sense of forgiven sin through the atoning Sacrifice will master you!

When Jesus bares His heart before you, can you speak? I will defy you to play the orator when love holds you beneath its spell! You will have a longing to tell the story, but an incapacity to fulfill your desire. Some feelings are too big for expression. The griefs that prattle are but small—great griefs are silent. Mercies which make us talk are common and no longer wondered at, but those which come with an unveiled Divinity about them are like Moses, too bright to look upon! A sense of Covenant Love binds a man to his place and makes him sit down like David before the Lord and bow his head and cry, "Why this to *me*? Is this according to the manner of man, O Lord God?" Yes, the gift must be unspeakable because the more it is appreciated the more are we silenced—the deeper our sense of its value the less is our power to impart it to others.

Power to speak of the love of Christ is not always to be taken as an evidence of true religion, nor is its absence a matter for alarm. I remember one dear lover of Christ who wished to join a certain Church but her testimony of experience was very slender. Indeed, she said too little to satisfy the Brothers who came to speak with her and they told her so. When,

bursting through all bonds she finally cried out, "I cannot speak for Him, but I could die for Him." Many are in the same plight and, in a measure, all true souls lie under the same difficulty. We could more easily die for Christ than hope to explain fully our sense of His dear love. He is a gift unspeakable! Heaven cannot match Him—how can earth describe Him? When this gift is best expressed, even when the Spirit of God helps men to speak upon it, they yet feel it to be unspeakable. When men sing like poets, or write like Apostles, they acknowledge that the wing of their thought cannot soar to the full height of this grand mystery—they have not even expressed what they have felt and they have not felt what they inwardly know they ought to have felt in connection with so Divine a theme.

He who before his fellow men has given the most vivid description of the love of God in Christ Jesus is the very man who best knows that it is inexpressible. You shall not be able to soar among the mysteries and bask in the eternal light of Jehovah's face and then come back and say, "I can declare it all to you." No, Paul said that, "he heard things which it were not lawful for a man to utter." Joys revealed in the innermost place of holy fellowship are not to be commonly published—we would mar them in the attempt at their utterance. You can often feel what you cannot possibly describe to those who most eagerly listen to you. Often my preaching of the love of Christ is, to my own mind, when I have done, as sad a failure as if I had gilded gold or enameled the lily.

I was one day in the ruins of Nero's palace and he who guided us there had a series of rods fitted in telescopic manner into one another. On the top of these was a candle and he held it high up to let us read the inscriptions on the arch of the overhead vault. We can do that with mortal things and so make men see them, but when we have done our best to describe the love of Christ, we have felt as though we had held aloft those silly rods with a farthing candle upon them to show the sun at noontime! God is very gracious to let His dear Son be seen at all through such poor narrow windows as we are. Poor, poor work is our best preaching concerning the adorable Lord Jesus! But this is one thing we can say with respect to Him from our very hearts—He has filled us to the fullest and satisfied us.

They said of Alexander that he had an ambition so vast that if his body had been as large as his soul, he would have stood with one foot on the sea and the other on the shore and would have grasped the east with his right hand and the west with his left. If our souls were thus boundless in desire, Christ's love could fill them! Nothing else contents a man, but with Jesus we are satisfied. Though a man were, like Solomon, to get to himself all the wisdom and the riches of the world, "Vanity of vanities" would be his verdict. But he who wins Christ and has Christ's love shed abroad in his heart has no vacant corner in his heart, no vacuum within his soul—Christ has filled him to running over. We can say, "filled with all the fullness of God," but as to *containing* the fullness of God, he that has the most of it knows how impossible a thing it is!

You may frame the fairest picture that man ever painted, but you cannot frame the Alps. Though his daring pencil should cover many a yard,

you may hang up the master's canvas upon your walls, but when you stand upon the mountain's brow and look over hill and vale and sea and shore, you dream not of frames and picture galleries, but leave the panorama in its own setting, or it cannot be encompassed by human invention. You may take the population of a city, a kingdom, or, if necessary, of the world and make a census thereof and set down the millions—but who shall take a census of the birds of Heaven, the insects which swarm the air, the fish which teem the sea, the stars which stud the sky and the sands which bound the main? All these things are countable by some sort of reckoning, but the love of Christ is Infinite! "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift." Thus have we dealt with the unspeakable. And we now feel, even more truly than when we began, that language fails us.

II. Let me have all your hearts for a few minutes while I now dwell on the other Truth of God, that CHRIST IS A GIFT OF GOD TO BE VERY MUCH SPOKEN OF. To be spoken of, first, by thanks to God. "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift." Brothers and Sisters, we do not thank as we ought for anything. We are not half as thankful as we ought to be. Luther was known to tell a story of two cardinals who were riding to the council of Constance. One of them stopped because he saw a shepherd sitting down in the meadow weeping. Dismounting, he tried to comfort him and asked him why he wept. The poor man was slow to answer, but being pressed he said, "Looking upon this toad I wept because I have never thanked God as I ought for making me a man possessed of reason and of excellent form and not a loathsome toad."

The cardinal was amazed as he saw the piety of the peasant and as he went away he exclaimed, "O St. Augustine! How truly did you say the unlearned rise and take Heaven by force and we, with all our learning, rise not above flesh and blood." Might not some of us faint under a like sense of ingratitude? Did you ever bless God for your creation, your reason, your continued life? I have known what it is to thank God with all my heart for being able to move my limbs and turn in bed. Perhaps you have always enjoyed good health—do you thank Him for that? To be out of the hospital, to be out of the lunatic asylum, to be out of prison, to be out of Hell—do we ever glorify God for these things? As for the unspeakable gift of *Christ*, who among us has ever worthily blessed the Lord on this account?

Brethren, if we have Jesus to be our salvation, when ought we to thank God for Him? Why, every morning when we awake! How long should we continue to praise God on this account? Till we go to sleep again! From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same His name is to be extolled. Let us praise God till sleep steepens our senses in a sweet forgetfulness. It is even pleasant to go on singing unto the Lord in the visions of our bed, as if the chords of grateful emotion vibrated after the hands of thought had ceased to play on them. It is good when even this wayward fancy of our dreams wanders towards the Well-Beloved, never rambling outside of holy ground. Let even the fairies of our night-dream sing hymns to Jesus and the cowslip bells of dream-land harbor imaginations of the

fair plant of renown. Oh, to get into such a state that we shall be always praising Him—praising and praising and praising and never ceasing!

When we become low in spirit, it will be a sad reflection if we have to acknowledge that in fairer weather we forgot our Beloved. Let us give double praise while we can. While we are in good spirits and happy in the Lord let us pour forth our hymns. Tamerlane said to the mighty Bajazet, when he had overcome him in battle and taken him for a prisoner, “Did you ever give God thanks for making you so great an emperor?” Bajazet confessed that he had never thought of that. “Then,” said Tamerlane, “it is no wonder that so ungrateful a man should be made a spectacle of misery.” Conscience will taunt us when we are sorrowful by saying, “You did not praise God when you were in health and now you are ill and hoarse and cannot lift up your voice! You did not praise Him for His unspeakable gift when you knew you had it and now you are full of doubts about it and Satan has you upon the hip—you well deserve all the sorrow that your mind shall feel.”

Therefore, Brothers and Sisters, let us praise the Lord. Let us vow today that, His Grace helping us, we will praise Him, praise Him, praise Him and praise Him again and again and again and again, as long as we have any being, for His unspeakable gift! We shall never get to the end of this work—the unspeakable gift is forever telling and telling, yet never shall it all be told. Help us, all that know His salvation! Help us, angels! Help us, all you coming ages! Help us, all you stars of light! But still the thing shall be unspeakable even to the end.

Next, let us show our gratitude to God in deeds of praise. “Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.” If we cannot speak it, let us try to do something that will show forth the praise of God. Actions speak more loudly than words. If our words have failed, let us try actions. And the first thing to do is to give yourself to your Lord. Come, Beloved, if God has given you Jesus Christ, give Him yourself! You are not your own, you are bought with a price! Why not present your bodies as living sacrifices? Don’t talk about it, but really do it—*live* for Him who died for you. Then, in consequence of having already given yourself, give of your substance to God and give freely. Give not the lame and the blind, but give the best of the flock. Let this be a great joy to you—not the payment of a tax, but the tribute of delighted love.

Give to God cheerfully, for He loves a cheerful giver. Buy Him the sweet cane with money and fill Him with the fat of your sacrifices. Nothing can be too good or great for our ever blessed Lord. Our loving Master will accept at our hands the alabaster box when we break it joyfully for His dear sake. Let deeds of holy consecration mark the whole of our lives, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased, when they are not brought as a price to purchase merit, but as a love token and tribute to His Grace. Think of this exhortation and carry it out abundantly—it shall turn to your temporal and eternal enrichment.

I am sure, however, that deeds of patience are among the thanks which best speak out our gratitude to God. Did it ever strike you that patience is

a noble sort of Psalmody? Perhaps you will see this truth if I tell you an anecdote. In the old church stories we read of one called Didymus, a famous preacher who brought many souls to Christ. He was blind and Didymus grieved greatly over the loss of his sight. Those who heard him perceived that his blindness gave a mournful tinge to his discourses. A certain godly man named Alexander went to him and spoke to him in private after this fashion—"Didymus," he said, "does not your blindness cause you great sorrow?" "Brother Alexander," he said, "it is my constant grief that I have lost the light. I can scarcely endure my existence because I am always in the dark." Then Alexander said to him, "You are doing a work which an angel might envy and you have the honor of an Apostle in speaking for Jesus Christ and will you fret because you have lost that which rats and mice and brute beasts have in common with men?"

This was not a very tender thing to say, but it strengthened Didymus patiently to endure his trial and to bless God for his unspeakable gift. What is there, after all, that we have not, if we have Christ? If you have lost everything but Christ, yet if you have Christ left, what have you lost? Why fret for pins when God gives pearls? Why grieve over the loss of a few pence when God has heaped upon us talents of gold? Submit in gracious joy to the Divine will and let your patience say, "I will thank God, I will thank God for His unspeakable gift!" Now, dear Friends, there is one way in which I want you to thank God and show your gratitude for Christ and that is by always holding a thankful creed. Believe nothing which would rob God of thanks, or Christ of Glory. I set great store by a sound creed in these evil days when the Gospel is but little valued by many. Hold a creed of which the top and bottom is this, "Grace, Grace, Grace—salvation all of Grace."

Whenever you hear a preacher, no matter who he may be, making out that salvation is not completely of the Grace of God, just say in your hearts, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift." Do not go an inch away from that standpoint. Salvation is altogether a gift—it is not of works, it is not of merit—it is of Grace and Grace alone. Turn away from the man who stutters when he says "Grace." He will never feed your soul. Hold a theology which magnifies Christ, a divinity which teaches that Christ is God's unspeakable gift! When a man gets to cutting down sin, paring down depravity and making little of future punishment, let him no longer preach to you. Some modern Divines whittle away the Gospel to the small end of nothing. They make our Divine Lord to be a sort of blessed nobody—they bring down salvation to mere savability, make certainties into probabilities and treat Truths of God as mere opinions.

When you see a preacher making the Gospel small by degrees and miserably less till there is not enough of it left to make soup for a sick grasshopper, get you gone! Such diminution and adulteration will not do for me—my heart cries, "Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift!" These gentlemen, you know, are highly cultivated and can tell us all about it. They have a theology which is suited to their educated reason. To them, Divine Grace can be weighed in scales and the Atonement in balances—

unless, indeed, both are as the drop of a bucket—not worthy of being mentioned at all. Every grand Truth of God with them is dwarfed and dwindled down into utter insignificance. The thought of the 19th century makes men the heirs of apes, while it declares their souls to be mortal and their sins to be trifles! Our Bibles are made to be mere human records and our hopes are treated as childish dreams! These pigmy thinkers shorten all things to their pigmy scale.

As for me, I believe in the colossal! A need deep as Hell and Grace as high as Heaven! I believe in a pit that is bottomless and in mercy above the heavens! I believe in an Infinite God and an Infinite Atonement, infinite love and infinite mercy, an Everlasting Covenant ordered in all things and sure, of which the substance and the seal is an Infinite Christ. Christ is all! Christ is unspeakable, the unspeakable gift of God! Hold to that, or you will not thank God as you should. Nor rest in a thoroughly sound creed, but try to bring others to accept God's unspeakable gift. You know how the birds stir up each other to sing? One bird in a cage will excite its fellow, who looks at him and seems to say, "You shall not outstrip me. I will sing with you." Then another joins the strain, saying, "I will sing with you," till all the little minstrels quiver with an ecstasy of song and form a choir of emulating songsters. Hark how the early morning of the spring is rendered musical by the full orchestra of birds!

One songster begins the tune and the rest hasten to swell the music! Let us be like these blessed birds. Let us try to lead our families to praise the Lord. Bless the Lord till you set the fashion and others bless Him with you! Seek out those who do not know the Lord Jesus Christ and tell them "the old, old story of Jesus and His love." Thus, if you cannot sing more yourself, nor praise God more yourself, you will have increased His praise by bringing in others to sing with you! See you to this and let this be, from now on, the motto of your lives. Write it over your doors! Emblazon it on the walls of your chambers! Let it hang over your bed by night, "THANKS BE UNTO GOD FOR HIS UNSPEAKABLE GIFT." O Holy Spirit, write this line of gratitude upon the tablets of our hearts. Amen.

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PRAISE FOR THE GIFT OF GIFTS

NO. 2247

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***“Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.”
2 Corinthians 9:15.***

IN the chapter from which my text is taken, Paul is stirring up the Christians at Corinth to be ready with liberal gifts for the poor saints at Jerusalem. He finishes by reminding them of a greater gift than any they could bring and, by this one short word of praise, “Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift,” he sets all their hearts a-singing! Let men give as liberally as they may, you can always proclaim the value of their gift. You can cast it up and reckon its worth, but God’s gift is unspeakable, unreckonable! You cannot fully estimate the value of what God gives. The Gospel is a Gospel of giving and forgiving. We may sum it up in those two words and, therefore, when the true spirit of it works upon the Christian, he *forgives* freely and he also *gives* freely. The large heart of God breeds large hearts in men and they who live upon His bounty are led by His Spirit to imitate that bounty according to their power.

However, I am not going, on the present occasion, to say anything upon the subject of liberality. I must get straight away to the text, hoping that we may really drink in the spirit of it and, out of full hearts, use the Apostle’s language with a more intense meaning than ever as we repeat his words—“Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.” I shall commence by saying that *salvation is altogether the gift of God* and, as such, is to be received by us freely. Then I shall try to show that *this gift is unspeakable*. And, in the third place, that *for this gift, thanks should be rendered to God*. Though it is unspeakable, yet we should speak our praise of it. In this way you will see, as of old, preachers used to say, the text naturally falls apart.

I. We begin with the thought that SALVATION IS ALTOGETHER THE GIFT OF GOD. Paul said, “Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.” Over and over again we have proclaimed that salvation is wholly of Grace—not of works nor of wages—but it is the gift of God’s great bounty to undeserving men! But as often as we have preached this Truth of God, we shall have to keep on doing so as long as there are men in the world who are self-righteous and, as long as there are minds in the world so slow to grasp the meaning of the word, “Grace,” that is, “free favor,” and as long

as there are memories that find it difficult to retain the idea of salvation being God's free gift!

Let us say simply and plainly that salvation must come to us as a gift from God, for salvation comes to us by the Lord Jesus and *what else could Jesus be?* The essence of salvation is the gift of God's Only-Begotten Son to die for us, that we might live through Him. I think you will agree with me that it is inconceivable that men should ever have merited that God should give His Only-Begotten Son to them. To give Christ to us, in any sense, must have been an act of Divine charity. But to give Him up to die on yonder cruel and bloody Cross—to yield Him up as a Sacrifice for sin must be a free favor—passing the limits of thought! It is not supposable that any man could deserve such love. It is plain that if man's sins needed a sacrifice, he did not deserve that a sacrifice should be found for him. The fact that he has a need proves his demerit and his guiltiness. He deserves to die—he may be rescued by Another dying for him—but he certainly cannot claim that the eternal God should take from His bosom His Only-Begotten and Well-Beloved Son and put Him to death! The more you look that thought in the face, the more you will reject the idea that, by any possible sorrow, or by any possible labor, or by any possible promise, a man could put himself into the position of *deserving* to have Christ to die for him! If Christ is to come to save sinners, it must be as a gift—a free gift of God. The argument, to my mind, is conclusive.

Besides that, over and over again, in God's Word, *we are told that salvation is not of works*. Although there are many who cling to the notion of man's works as a ground of salvation, yet as long as this Book stands and there are eyes to read it—it will bear witness against the idea of human merit—and it will speak out plainly for the doctrine that men are saved by faith, and not by works. Not only once, but often it is written, "The just shall live by faith." Moreover, we are told, "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by Grace." The very choice of the way of salvation by believing, rather than by works, is made by God on purpose that He might show that Grace is a gift. "Now to him that works is the reward not reckoned of Grace, but of debt: but to him that works not, but believes on Him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Faith is that virtue, that Grace, which is chosen to bring us salvation because it never takes any of the glory to itself. Faith is simply the hand that *takes*. When the beggar receives alms, he does not bless the hand that takes, but blesses the hand that *gives*—therefore we do not praise the faith that receives, but the God who gives the unspeakable gift! Faith is the eye that sees. When we see an object, we delight in the object, rather than in the eye that sees it—therefore do we glory, not in our faith, but in the salvation which God bestows! Faith is appointed as the porter to open the gate of salvation because that gate turns upon the hinges of Free Grace.

In the next place, be it always remembered that we cannot be saved by the merit of our own works because *holy works are, themselves, a gift*—the work of the Grace of God. If you have faith, joy and hope, who gave

them to you? These did not spring up spontaneously in your heart. They were sown there by the hand of Love. If you have lived a godly life for years. If you have been a diligent servant of the Church and of your God, in whose strength have you done it? Is there not One who works all our works in us? Could you work out your salvation with fear and trembling if God did not first work in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure? How can you, then, claim a reward which is, in itself, the gift of God? I think the ground is cut right away from those who would put confidence in human merit, when we show, first of all, that, in Scripture, salvation is clearly said to be, “not of works, lest any man should boast.” And, secondly, that even the good works of Believers are the *fruit* of a renewed life, for, “we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before *ordained* that we should walk in them.”—

***“All that I was, my sin, my guilt,
My death—was all my own.
All that I am, I owe to You,
My gracious God, alone.”***

Further, if salvation were not a free gift, *how else could a sinner get it?* I will pass over some of you who fancy that you are the best people in the world. It is sheer fancy, mark you, without any truth in it! But I will say nothing about you. There are, however, some of us who know that we were *not* the best people in the world—we who sinned against God and knew it—and who were broken into pieces under a sense of our guilt! I know, for one, that there would have been no hope of Heaven for *me* if salvation had not been a free gift of God to those who deserved it not! After ministering among you for nearly 37 years, I stand exactly where I stood when I first came to Christ—a poor sinner and nothing at all—but taking Christ as the free gift of God to me, as I took Him at first, when, yet but a lad, I fled to Him for salvation! Ask any of the people of God who have been abundant in service and constant in prayer, whether they deserve anything at the hand of God. And those who have most to be thankful for will tell you that they have nothing that they have not received! Ask these, whom God has honored to the conversion of many, whether they lay any *claim* to the Grace of God, whether they have any merit, and whether in their hand they dare bring a price and seek to buy of God His love—they will loathe the very thought! There is no way to Heaven for you and me, my Friends convinced of sin, unless all the way we are led by Grace—and unless salvation is the gift of God!

But, once more—*look at the privileges which come to us through salvation!* I cannot, as I value those privileges, conceive for a minute that they are purchasable, or that they come to us as the result of our works! They must be a gift—they are so many and so glorious as to be altogether outside the limit of our furthest search and beyond the height of our utmost reach! We cannot, by our efforts, compass any salvation of any sort! But if we could, it certainly would not be such a salvation as this! Let us look, then, at our privileges.

Here comes, first, “the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His Grace.” He that believes in Christ has no sin! His sin is blotted out. It has ceased to be. Christ has finished it and he is unto God as though he had never sinned. Can any sinner deserve that?—

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

Can any sinner bring a price that will purchase such a gift as that? No! Such mercy *must* be a gift.

Next, everyone that believes in Christ is justified and looked upon by God as being perfectly righteous. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to him and he is “accepted in the Beloved.” By this he becomes not only innocent, that is, pardoned, but he becomes praiseworthy before God. This is justification. Can any guilty man deserve that? Why, he is covered with sin, defiled from head to foot! Can he deserve to be arrayed in the sumptuous robe of the Divine Righteousness of Christ and, “be made the righteousness of God in Him”? It is inconceivable! Such a blessing must be the gift of infinite bounty, or it can never come to man.

Furthermore, Beloved, remember that “now we are the sons of God.” Can you realize that Truth of God? As others are not, Believers are the sons of God! He is their Father and the spirit of adoption breathes within their heart. They are the children of His family and come to Him as children come to a father, with loving confidence. Think of being made a son of God, a son of Him that made the heavens! A son of Him who is God over all, blessed forever! Can any man deserve *that*? Certainly not—this must also come as a gift!

Sonship leads on to heirship. “If children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.” My Brothers and Sisters, if you are a Believer, all things are yours—this world and the worlds to come! Could you ever deserve all that? Could such an inheritance have come to you through any merits of your own? No, it must be a gift! Look at it and the blaze of its splendor will strike blind all idea of merit!

Further than that, we are now made one with Christ. Oh, tell everywhere this wonder which God has worked for His people! It is not to be understood—it is an abyss too deep for a finite mind to fathom. Every Believer is truly united to Christ, “For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.” Every Believer is married to Christ and none of them shall ever be separated from Him. Seeing, then, that there is such a union between us and Christ, can you suppose that any man can have any claim to such a position apart from the Grace of God? By what merit, even of a perfect man, could we deserve to become one with Christ in an endless unity? Such a surpassing privilege is out of the line of purchase! It is, and can only be, the gift of God! Oneness with Christ cannot come to us in any other way.

Listen yet again. In consequence of our union with Christ, God the Holy Spirit dwells in every Believer! Our bodies are His Temple! God dwells in us and we dwell in God. Can we deserve that? Even a perfect keeping of the Law of God would not have brought to men the abiding of the Holy Spirit in them! It is a blessing that rises higher than the Law could ever reach, even if it *had* been kept.

Let me say, furthermore, that if you possess a blessed peace, as I trust you do, if you can say—

***“My heart is resting, O my God,
I will give thanks and sing!
My heart is at the secret Source
Of every precious thing!”***

That Divine peace must surely be the gift of God. If there is a great calm within your soul—an entire satisfaction with Christ your Lord—you never *deserved* that precious gift. It is the work of His Holy Spirit and must be His free gift.

And when you come to die, as you may—unless the Lord comes, as He will—the Grace that will enable you fearlessly to face the last enemy will not be yours by any right of your own. If you fall asleep, as I have seen many a Christian pass away, with songs of triumph, with the light of Heaven shining on your brow, almost in Glory while yet you are in your bed, why, you cannot deserve *that*! Such a deathbed must be the free gift of God’s almighty Grace! It cannot be earned by any merit! Indeed, it is just then that every thought of merit melts away and the soul hides itself in Christ, and triumphs there!

If this does not convince you, look once more. Let a window be opened in Heaven! See the long line of white-robed saints. Listen to their hallelujahs! Behold their endless, measureless delight! Did they deserve to come there? Did they come to their thrones and to their palms of victory by their own merits? Their answer is, “We have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb!” And from them all comes the harmonious anthem, “Non nobis, Domine”—“Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us; but unto Your name give Glory, for Your mercy and Your Truth’s sake.” From first to last, then, we see that salvation is all the gift of God. And what can be freer than a gift, or more glorious than the gift of God? No prize can approach it in excellence, no merit can be mentioned in the same hour. O my Brothers and Sisters, we are debtors, indeed, to the mercy of God! We have received much and there is more to follow, but it is all of Grace from first to last! We know but little yet at what a cost these gifts were purchased for us, but we shall know it better, by-and-by, as McCheyne so sweetly sings—

***“When this passing world is done,
When has sunk yon glaring sun;
When I stand with Christ in Glory,
Looking o’er life’s finished story,
Then, Lord, shall I fully know—
Not till then, how much I owe!***

***When I stand before the Throne,
Dressed in beauty not my own;
When I see You as You are,
Love You with unsinning heart;
Then, Lord, shall I fully know,
Not till then, how much I owe!"***

II. Now I would try to lead your thoughts in another direction as we consider that THIS GIFT IS UNSPEAKABLE. Do not think it means that we cannot speak about this gift. Ah, how many times have I, for one, spoken upon this gift during the last 40 years! I have spoken of little else! I heard of one who said, "I suppose Spurgeon is preaching that old story over again." Yes, that is what he is doing—and if he lives another 20 years and you come here, it will be "the old, old story" still, for there is nothing like it! It is inexhaustible—it is like an Artesian well that springs up forever and ever. We can speak about it, yet it is unspeakable! What do we mean, then, by saying it is unspeakable? Well, as I have said already, Christ Jesus our Lord is the Sum and Substance of salvation and of God's gift. O God, this gift of Yours is unspeakable and it includes all other gifts beside!—

***"You did not spare Your only Son,
But gave Him for a world undone,
And freely with that Blessed One—
You give all."***

Consider, first, that Christ is unspeakable *in His Person*. He is perfect Man and glorious God. No tongue of seraph, or of cherub can ever describe the full Nature of Him whose name is, "Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." This is He whom the Father gave "for us men, and for our sakes." He was the Creator of all things, for, "without Him was not anything made that was made," yet He was "made of flesh and dwelt among us." He fills all things by His Omnipresence, yet He came and tabernacled on the earth! This is that Jesus who was born of Mary, yet who lived before all worlds! He was that Word who "was in the beginning with God, and the Word was God." He is unspeakable! It is not possible to put into human language the Divine mystery of His sacred Being, truly Man and yet truly God. How great the wonder of it! Soul, God gave God for you! Do you hear it? To redeem you, O believing man, God gave Himself to be your Savior—surely, that is an unspeakable gift!

Christ is unspeakable, next, *in His condescension*. Can anyone measure or describe how far Christ stooped, when, from the Throne of Splendor, He came to a *manger* to be swaddled and lie where the horned oxen fed? Oh, what a stoop of condescension was that! The Infinite becomes an Infant! The Eternal is dandled on a woman's knee! He is there in the carpenter's shop, obedient to His parents! He is there in the Temple, sitting among the doctors, hearing them and asking them questions. He is there in poverty, crying, "The Son of Man has not where to lay His head." And He is there, thirsty, asking a sinful woman for a drink of water! It is unspeak-

able that He, before whom all the hosts of Heaven veiled their faces, should come here among men and among the poorest of the poor! That He who dwelt amidst the glory and the bliss of the Land of Light should deign to be a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief, passes human thought! Such a Savior is an unspeakable gift!

But if unspeakable so far, what shall I say of the fashion of Christ *in His death*? Beloved, I cannot speak adequately of Gethsemane and the bloody sweat, nor of the Judas kiss, nor of the traitorous flight of the disciples. It is unspeakable! That binding, scourging, plucking of the beard and spitting in the face! Man's tongue cannot utter the horror of it. I cannot truly tell you the weight of the false accusations, the slanders and the blasphemies that were heaped on Him! Nor would I wish to picture the old soldier's cloak flung over His bleeding shoulders and the crown of thorns, the buffeting, the mailed fists, and the shame and sorrow He endured as He was thrust out to execution. Do you wish to follow Him along the streets, where weeping women lifted up their hearts in tender sympathy for the Lord of Love about to die? If you do, it must be in silence, for words but feebly tell how much He bore on the way to the Cross—

***“Well might the sun in darkness hide,
And shut his glories in.
When God, the mighty Maker died
For man, the creature's sin.”***

Oh, it was terrible that HE should be nailed to the Cross! That HE should hang there to be ridiculed by all the mob of Jerusalem! The abjects flouted Him, the meanest thought Him meaner than themselves. Even dying thieves upbraided Him! His eyes are choked. They become dim with blood. He must die. He says, “It is finished!” He bows His head. The glorious Victim has yielded up His life to put away His people's sin. This is God's gift to you—Divine, unspeakable—O you sons of men!

But it is not all. Christ is unspeakable *in His Glory*. When we think of His Resurrection, of His ascending to Heaven and of His Glory at the right hand of God, words languish on our lips! But in every one of these positions, He is the gift of God to us—and when He shall come with all the Glory of the Father, He will still be to His people the *Theo-dora*, the gift of God, the great unspeakable benediction to the sons of men! I wish that the people of Christ had this aspect of the Lord's Glory more continually on their hearts, for though He seems to tarry, yet will He come again the second time, as He promised—

***“With that blessed hope before us,
Let no harp remain unstrung!
Let the mighty Advent chorus
Onward roll on every tongue.
Maranatha!
Come, Lord Jesus, quickly come!”***

To me, one of the most wonderful aspects of this gift is Christ *in His chosen*. All the Father gave Him, all for whom He died—these He will glorify with Himself and they shall be with Him where He is! Oh, what a sight

will that be when we shall see the King in His beauty and all His saints beautiful in His Glory, shining like so many stars around Him who is the Sun of them all! Then, indeed, shall we see what an unspeakable gift God gave to men, when, through that gift, He makes His saints all glorious, even as He predestined them, “to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn of many brethren.”

But we do not need to wait until we see His face to know His Glory! Brothers and Sisters, Christ is unspeakable as the gift of God *in the heart here*. “Oh,” you say, “I trust I have felt the love of God shed abroad in my heart!” I rejoice with you, but could you speak it? Often, when I have tried to preach the love to Christ, I have not been able to preach it rightly because I did not feel it as I ought. But more often, still, I have not been able to preach because I have felt it so much! I would gladly always preach in that manner and feel Christ’s love so much that I could speak it but a little. Oh, child of God, if you have known much of Christ, you have often had to weep out your joys instead of speaking them—to lay your finger on your mouth and be silent because you were overpowered by His Glory! See how it was with John—“When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead.” Why did you not preach, John? If John were here, tonight, He would say, “I could not preach—the splendor of the Lord made me dumb. I fell at His feet as dead.”

This is one reason why the gift of God is unspeakable, because, the more you know about it, the less you can say about it. Christ overpowers us! He makes us tongue-tied with His wondrous revelations. When He reveals Himself in full, we are like men that are blinded with excess of vision. Like Paul, on the Damascus road, we are forced to confess, “I could not see for the Glory of that Light.” We cannot speak of it fully. All the Apostles and Prophets and saints of God have been trying to speak out the love of God as manifested in Christ, but they have all failed! I say, with great reverence, that the Holy Spirit, Himself, seems to have labored for expression and, as He had to use human pens and mortal tongues, even *He* has never spoken to the fullest, the measure and value of God’s unspeakable gift! It is unspeakable to men by God, Himself! God can give it, but He cannot make us fully understand it. We have need to be like God, Himself, to comprehend the greatness of His gift when He gives us His Son!

Though we make constant effort, it is unspeakable, even *throughout a long life*. Do you ministers who have been a long time in one place, ever say to yourselves, “We shall run dry for subjects, by-and-by”? If you preach Christ, you will never run short! If you have preached 10,000 sermons about Christ, you have not yet left the shore—you are not out in the deep sea yet! Dive, my Brother! With splendor of thought, plunge into this great mystery of Free Grace and dying love! And when you have dived the deepest, you will perceive that you are as far off the bottom as when you first touched the surface! It is an endless theme—it is unspeakable!—

“Oh, could I speak the matchless worth,

***Oh, could I sound the glories forth
Which in my Savior shine!
I'd soar and touch the heavenly strings,
And vie with Gabriel while he sings
In notes almost Divine."***

But I can neither speak it nor sing it as I ought, yet would I finish Medley's hymn and say—

***"Well, the delightful day will come
When my dear Lord will bring me Home,
And I shall see His face!
Then with my Savior, Brother, Friend,
A blest eternity I'll spend,
Triumphant in His Grace."***

But, even then, Christ will still be *in Heaven forever* a gift unspeakable! Perhaps we shall have another talk together, Friends, on this subject when we get there. One good woman said to me, "We shall have more time in eternity than we have now," to which I replied, "I do not know whether there is any time in eternity. The words look like a contradiction." "Oh, but," she said, "I shall get a talk with you, anyhow. I have never had one yet." Well, I dare say we shall commune up there of these blessed things when we shall know more about them. As we are to be there forever and ever, we shall need some great subjects with which to keep up the conversation—what vaster theme can we have than this? Addison, in one of her verses, says—

***"But, oh! Eternity's too short
To utter half Your praise."***

And I have heard simpletons say that the couplet was very faulty! "You cannot make eternity short," they say. That shows the difference between a poet and a critic! A critic is a being all teeth, without any heart, while a poet is one who has much heart and who sometimes finds that human language is not sufficient to express his thoughts. We shall never have done with Christ in Heaven! Oh, my Lord, Your *Presence* will make my Heaven!—

***"Millions of years my wondering eyes,
Shall over Your beauties rove!
And endless ages I'll adore
The glories of Your love."***

This wondrous gift of God is an utterly inexhaustible, unspeakable subject!

III. Now, lastly, I come to this point, that FOR THIS GIFT THANKS SHOULD BE RENDERED. The text says, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift." By this the Apostle not only meant that he gave thanks for Christ, but he thus calls upon the Church and upon every individual Believer to join him in his praise. Here do I adopt his language and praise God on my own behalf, calling upon all of you who know the preciousness of Christ, the gift of God, to unite with me in thanksgiving! Let us as with one heart say it now, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift."

Some cannot say this, for they never think of the gift of God. You who never think of God, how can you thank God? There must be, “think,” at the bottom of, “thank.” Whenever we think, we ought to thank! But some never think and therefore never thank. Beloved Friend, what do you think? That Christ should die—is it nothing to you? That God “gave His Only-Begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Is that nothing to you? Let the question drop into your heart. Press it home upon yourself. Will you say that you have no share in this gift? Will you deliberately give up any hope you may have of ever partaking of the Grace of God? Are you determined, now, to say, “I do not care about Christ”? Well, you would hardly like to *say* that, but why do you practically *declare* this to be your intention, if you do not want to say it? Oh, that you might now so think of Christ as to trust Him at once and begin to raise this note of praise!

Some, on the other hand, do not thank God because they are always delaying. Have I not hearers here, tonight, who were here 10 years ago, and were rather more hopeful, then, than they are now? “There is plenty of time,” you say, but you do not say this about other matters! I admired the children, the other day, when the teacher said, “Dear Children, the weather is unsettled. You can go out next Wednesday, but do you not think it would be better to stop a month, so that we could go when the weather is more settled?” There was not a child that voted for stopping a month! All the hands went up for going next Wednesday! Now, imitate the children in that. Do not make it seem as if you were in a no hurry to be happy, for as he that believes in Christ has eternal life—to postpone having it is an unworthy as well as unwise thing to do! No, you will have it, I hope, at once! There is a man here who is going to be a very rich man when his old aunt dies. You do not wish that she should die, I am sure, but you sometimes wonder why some people are spared to be 90, do you not? You are very poor, now, and you wish that some of this money could come to you at once—you are not for putting *that* off! Why should you put off heavenly riches and eternal life? I beseech you to believe in Christ NOW—then you will be filled with thankfulness and joy.

Some cannot say, “Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift,” for they do not know whether they have it or not. They sometimes think that they have, but they more often fear that they have not. Never tolerate a doubt on this subject, I implore you. Get full assurance. “Lay hold on eternal life.” Get a grip of it. Know Christ! Trust Christ wholly and you have God’s Word for it—“He that hears My word, and believes on Him that sent Me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.” Then you can say, “Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.”

Now, dear Friends, let me ask you to join in this exercise. Let us first unitedly thank God for this gift. Put out of your mind the idea that you ought to thank Christ, but not thank the Father! It was the *Father* that gave Christ. Christ did not die to make His Father love us, as some say

that we preach. We have *always* preached the very opposite and we have quoted that verse of Kent!—

**“Twas not to make Jehovah’s love
Towards the sinner flame,
That Jesus, from His Throne above,
A suffering Man became.
‘Twas not the death which He endured,
Nor all the pangs He bore,
That God’s eternal love procured,
For God was love before.”**

He gave His Son because He already loved us! Christ is the exhibition of the Father’s love and the Revelation of Christ is made because of “the love of the Spirit.” Therefore, “Thanks be unto God”—the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit—“for His unspeakable gift.”

While you saved ones, every one of you, raise your note of gratitude, be very careful to *thank only God*. Do not be thinking by whose means you were converted, and begin to thank the servant instead of the Lord whom he serves! Let the man who was used as the instrument in God’s hand be told, for his comfort, of the blessing God sent you through him, but thank God, and thank *only God*, that you were led to lay hold of Christ who is His unspeakable gift! Moreover, *thank God spontaneously*. Look at the Apostle and imitate him. When he sounded this peal of praise, his mind was occupied, at the time, about the collection for the poor saints. But, collection or no collection, he will thank God for His unspeakable gift! I like to see thanks to God come up at what might be an untimely moment. When a man does not feel just as happy as he might be, and yet says, “Thank God,” it sounds refreshingly real. I like to hear such a bubbling up of praise as in the case of old Taylor, of New York, when he broke down in the middle of a sentence. Looking up at the people, he said, “There now! The nominative has lost its verb, but, hallelujah! I am on the way to Glory!” And then he went on again! Sometime we ought to do just like that. Take an opportunity, when there comes a little interval, just to say, “Whether this is in tune or not, I cannot help it—thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.”

Lastly, as you receive the precious gift, *thank God practically*. Thank God by doing something to *prove* your thanks! It is a poor gratitude which only effervesces in words, but skirts deeds of kindness. Real thankfulness will not be in word, only, but in deed, too—and so it will *prove* that it is in the Truth of God.

“Well, what could I do that would please God?” you ask. First, I should think you could look for His lost children. That is a sure way to please Him. Go, tonight, and see whether you cannot find one of the erring whom you might bring back to the fold. Would you not please a mother, if she had lost her baby, and you set to work to find it? We need to please God. Seek the lost ones and bring them in.

If you want to please God, next, succor His poor saints. If you know anything of them, help them. Do something for them for Christ’s sake. I

knew a woman who used to always relieve anybody that came to her door in the dress of a sailor. I do not think that half of those who came to her ever had been to sea at all, but, still, if they came to the door as sailors, she used to say, "Ah, my dear boy was a sailor. I have not seen him for years. He is lost somewhere at sea, but for dear Jack's sake, I always help every sailor that comes to my door." It is a right feeling, is it not? I remember, when I first came to London from my country charge, I used to think that if I came across a dog or a cat that came from Waterbeach, I would like to feed it. So, for the love of Christ, love Christ's poor people! Whenever you find them, say, "My Lord was poor, and so are you, and for His dear sake I will help you."

If you want to please God, next, bear with the evil ones. Do not lose your temper. I mean, by that, do not get angry with the unthankful and the evil. Let your anger be lost in praise for the unspeakable gift! Please God by bearing with evil men as He bears with you. But if you have a very bad temper, I hope that, in another sense, you may lose it and never find it any more.

And lastly, if you want to please God, watch, like the Thessalonians, "for His Son from Heaven." The Lord Jesus is coming again, in like manner as He departed, and there is no attitude with which God is more delighted in His saved people than with that of watching for the time when "unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time, without sin unto salvation."

Beloved, may God help you thus to magnify His Son and to Him shall be all the praise! Let us again lift up our glad hallelujah—"Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift." Amen.

Portion of Scripture Read before Sermon—2 Corinthians 9.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—534, 236, 428.

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GOD'S UNSPEAKABLE GIFT

NO. 2290

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“Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable Gift.”
2 Corinthians 9:15.

IF you will read, at home, the chapter from which our text is taken, you will find that Paul was stirring up the Corinthians to an act of liberality. He had boasted of what they would do, but he had just a little fear that they might fall behind and not quite come up to what he had promised on their behalf. He stirred them up to liberal *giving*, telling them that they who sowed liberally, should reap liberally, and they who sowed sparingly would reap sparingly. Once upon that theme of giving, the Apostle could not help speaking of another gift. He saw a track just off the main road and he felt that it led him straight away to his God and to his Savior. And so, while the ink was yet flowing in his pen, he began to write about it as though he would say, “I am not thinking now, my Brethren, so much of *your* gifts as I am of another gift—not so much of your gifts to the Lord’s poor people as of the Lord’s great Gift to you—*His* poor people. “Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable Gift.”

A person, who was collecting for some good objective, called upon a friend one day and, as he needed him to be very generous, pleaded hard with him. After a while, he seemed to quit the subject altogether, and he said, “I knew your father.” “Did you?” “Yes, and I called upon him about a certain business, just as I do upon you, and your father did not need any prompting. He said, ‘State the case,’ and as soon as the case was stated, he pulled out his purse and gave me ten times as much as I had expected to obtain from him.” You see, our friend was not exactly pleading with the son when he told that story, and yet I do not know how he could have pleaded better, for reverence for his father’s name and the desire not to seem to fall off from his father’s standard, were the very best arguments that could have been used with him!

So I admire the wisdom of Paul. When he would bring these Corinthians up to a high standard of liberality towards their poor Brethren in Judea, he says, as though it were only by the way, “Thanks be unto God, your Father and my Father, for His unspeakable Gift. Whatever you give, I can speak about, but what He gave surpasses all powers of speech! Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable Gift.”

Now, this text, tonight, gives me three things to speak of. The first is, *that Christ is a Gift*. And, secondly, that as a Gift, *Christ is unspeakable*. And, thirdly, that as a Gift unspeakable, *Christ calls forth praise to God from us*.

I. First, then, CHRIST IS A GIFT.

How often you hear people speak about Christ and His salvation as though they were the reward of *merit*—as though we did something by which to *win* his Divine favor! If they do not teach that salvation comes through our own merits, yet, according to them, it is the effect of our feelings and our experiences. Somehow or other, according to this common notion, we must get fit to receive God's Gift and thus, what comes to us is more our *due* than an alms of heavenly charity! I hesitate not to say that this teaching flies in the teeth of the entire Word of God. Everywhere in the Scriptures the great word is not merit, but GRACE—not deserving, but *receiving* freely of the great mercy of our God!

Our Lord Jesus must be a Gift to us if we are ever to possess Him. He could only come to us sons of men by way of a gift. *Consider the dignity of His Person* for a minute and then ask how it is conceivable that we could have deserved that such a Person as He should come here and live and die, that we might be saved! I can conceive of a man meriting this or that honor among his fellow men, but when I think of the Prince of Life, the Lord of Glory equal with the Father, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, very God of very God—and when I see Him giving Himself up to die for men, my very blood boils at the thought that we could *ever* have deserved that Sacrifice! One is indignant that human pride should dare to go the length of even *imagining* that a *life of perfection* could have deserved to be rewarded by the Gift of Christ!

No, my Brothers and Sisters, if we had kept God's Law without a flaw. If there had been no omission of duty, no commission of sin and we could have taken the compound merits of a *perfect* world and laid them at the feet of God, they could not have deserved that Christ should become Man—that Christ should live in poverty—that Christ should die in shame for man! There would have been no need of Christ's death if man had not sinned. But had there been a supposable need, Christ's Sacrifice could not have been *deserved* even if we had remained innocent, like our first parents in the Garden of Eden before the Fall! I am sure that none of you could, for a minute, tolerate the thought that any human merit could deserve the Incarnation of God upon this earth, the coming of the Divine Son in our nature into this world and His shameful death upon the Cross of Calvary.

But next, this will be very evident from *the nature of the work for which Christ was given*. It is clear from the Scriptures that He was given for the undeserving. He came into the world to save sinners. He took upon Himself, not our righteousness, for there was none for Him to take, but, as we read just now, "the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." The

prominent and paramount idea of Christ in the Scripture is that of a Priest offering sacrifice—but the Priest is for men who need atonement for their sins—the expiation, the sacrifice, the sin-offering, is for *guilty* men. How could Christ die on the Cross for *deserving* men? The idea is absurd! No bruises were required for those who needed not to be healed. There needed to be no chastisement of peace for those who deserved well of God. The very work of Christ in dying, “the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God,” implies that we were at a distance from God. It also implies our injustice and, consequently, our total inability to deserve such a Gift at God’s hand. No, no—a Savior is for *sinner*s—a dying Savior must be for those who deserved to die! Christ does not come, therefore, to us as *deserving* Him, but He is God’s unspeakable Gift!

And let us think of *the splendor of His Grace*, the lavish wealth of blessing which comes to us through Him. Know you not that as many of you as have believed in Christ are made to live with an everlasting life? There pulses in you, tonight, the life of eternity, the life of Heaven! You have begun to live the life that shall last forever and ever. Know you not that you have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit, adopted into the family of God? You are the children of the Most High. “Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.” Did you deserve this? *Could* you deserve this? Is it possible? Being adopted into the heavenly family, you have been justified—made just in the sight of God! And now you know that you are loved with an everlasting love, that you are predestinated to glorify God here, by being conformed to the image of His Son. And now you know that you are ordained by Divine decree to sit upon a throne which He has prepared for you, and to reign with Him forever and ever. Did you *deserve* this? Can it be conceived that *anything you have ever done* could have been rewarded with such extraordinary gifts as these?

A boy runs an errand for me, and I give him two pence, or, if I am generous, I give him sixpence. But if I were to give him a thousand pounds, he would not believe that it was a payment for his service—he would not think that possible! He would feel that the reward was far above anything that he had earned, that his service was quite unworthy of so great a gift—and he would conclude that if that great sum of money was really his, I must have given it to him out of pure generosity. He would never *dream* that he had *earned* it, even supposing that he had done his errand with all the diligence in the world! And no child of God, however much he has served his Lord, ever thinks that he deserves to be a child of God, that he deserves to be an heir of Heaven, that he deserves to be a priest and a king, to live forever at God’s right hand in untold blessedness! Oh, no, all this must be a gift—we could not have earned such a blessing as this!

You know that there are two things to make a gift—there cannot be a gift without, first of all, one to give it, and then another to receive it. Have you received Christ? It is essential, to make Him a Gift to you, that you

should accept Him. It is little enough that you should take into your empty hands the priceless treasure that God bestows. It is little enough that, like an empty cup, you should stand under the flowing spring and let the crystal stream flow in. But it is necessary in order to complete the Gift! I will not ask you to thank God for His unspeakable Gift unless, God having given, you also have received! You may receive Christ, oh, so freely! If salvation were to be *bought*—if it were to be *earned*—woe would be unto you! But being a Gift, nothing is more free! The poorest man in the world may accept a gift. A trembling hand may receive a gift. He that is a thief and a robber, yes, a murderer, doomed to die, may accept a gift, if it comes not of merit, or by way of reward, but entirely of the generosity of the bestower. Oh, what a glorious thing it is that you and I and all of us may receive God's unspeakable Gift!

Once received and accepted, Christ is ours. If a man has made a gift to me, I would not say anything that would hurt his feelings, but it is not his any more. If he has given it to me, it is mine. A person once handed over to me a house that was to belong to a certain part of the work that I had to conduct, and if I had taken possession of that house when it was given to me, it would have been mine. But I did not. The person died and though I held the deeds and writings, yet the gift was invalid by the law of mortmain. Had I taken possession when the house was handed to me, it would have been mine, but as the case stood, it was not mine. I must, if I had taken possession, have said to the person giving the house, "You must get out of it, or you must pay me rent, however nominal it may be, to acknowledge that this is really mine, and that you have given it over to me." But I could not have asked such a thing as that, or even dreamed of doing so and, therefore, the gift was void, and the house was not mine for the Lord's cause.

Now, dear Friend, if you accept the Gift that God gives, remember that it will be yours—Christ will be yours, eternal life will be yours! You will have the title deeds of your inheritance! You will stand possessed of it. But do not put that off till death, I pray you. No—take possession, *now*, of that Christ whom God gives over to you to be His Gift to you, and your possession forever!

And I will say one more thing. When once you receive this Gift, you will never lose it, "for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance," which means that God never regrets that He has given this unspeakable Gift. He will never say, "You must let Me have that back." If God has given you Christ, and you have accepted Him, He is yours forever! And this is the glory of this Divine Gift! A possession that I may lose is a very poor possession, after all. A suit at law may be brought against me and I may lose what I thought was mine. I would not like to have such a possession as that! I could not go to sleep at night through fear that I should lose it. But if God has given me Christ and I have taken Christ, He is mine! Death, nor Hell, nor anything else, shall ever be able to separate the soul

from Christ, or Christ from the soul that has accepted Him. It was well spoken, "Christ and a crust, yes. Christ and no crust would be better than all the world without Him." Oh, give me Christ, and let me die, sooner than let me live without Christ, for that cannot be truly called life which is without Him who is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life."

I know that some of you have been straining after *doing* something or *being* something in order to obtain God's unspeakable Gift. Will you have it? Will you have it for *nothing*? Do not insult God by bringing your poor wretched merits as the purchase-money for His free Gift of Christ! Come just as you are and freely take what He freely gives—and Christ is yours forever!

I was surprised, the other day, when I found that a poor soul in deep despair had obtained comfort from a sermon of mine, not upon the universal redemption of men, nor upon the free offer of salvation, but the man had laid hold of the sharp angular points of a sermon upon the Everlasting Covenant and upon the Doctrine of Election. When I heard of it, I saw how God can give a soul comfort simply by the exhibition of His Sovereign Grace. "It is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy." O Soul, if you will have Christ as a Gift, you may have Him tonight! You need not go home, first. You need not wait a moment. But if you will not have Him as a Gift, you will never have Him, for in no other way can Christ ever belong to you and me, except as God's Gift which we, by His Grace, are led freely to accept!

Thus much, and perhaps too much, considering our time, on the first point, that Christ is a Gift, the free Gift of God's Grace.

II. Now, in the second place, let us consider the fact that, AS A GIFT, CHRIST IS UNSPEAKABLE. "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable Gift," said the Apostle Paul—and so say we. "Why," asks one, "do you speak about Him, then?" Well, principally because He is unspeakable. By this time, after nearly 1900 years, if the theme we have to preach about were speakable, we should have exhausted it—but as it is unspeakable, a sea without a shore, an ocean without a bottom—we will keep on preaching for another 1900 years, if the Lord does not come—and we shall never get to the end of this theme, I am quite sure!

I heard of a minister who explained to one of his hearers what a trouble it was for him to get a sermon. "Oh," he said, "it takes me days, and makes my head ache, and I do not know what to do." "Sir," his friend replied, "if it is like that, I should think you must be near the bottom of the tub." And I should think so, too. But when we come to speak about Christ, we have an unspeakable subject! Here is a well springing up that overflows and we can speak forever upon this unspeakable theme!

How is it unspeakable? First, *he who spoke best of Christ declared that He was unspeakable*. Do you know anybody who spoke better of Christ than Paul did, Inspired as he was? What majestic sentences! What wonderful paragraphs you come across in Paul's writing, where he piles up his

words, mountain upon mountain, in order to glorify Christ! If anybody could have spoken Christ out from Alpha to Omega, and told all about Him, Paul was the man! And though he did not give up the blessed task, but lived and died at it, he declared that God's Gift was unspeakable, and I am sure it is so.

Next, *he who needs a Savior most, will tell you that Christ is God's unspeakable Gift.* You know that man. He sits down in the deep distress of his soul, with his hand to his heavy head, but he cannot lay his hand on his heavy heart. It would break his arm to try to hold that up! Laden with guilt and full of fears, he says, "There is no salvation for me but by Christ. Oh, that I could get Christ! Oh, that I could get Christ! It would be an unspeakable blessing if I could but believe in Christ." I know one who talked like this to his mother, the other night. "Why, John," she said, "you look very miserable! You look as if you had the whole world hanging on you." "Mother," he replied, "I could better bear the whole world with Christ than live without Him." When a man thus feels his need of Christ, he knows that Christ is God's unspeakable Gift!

When you receive Christ, you will find that *he who enjoys Him most feels Him to be an unspeakable Gift.* When we do not enjoy Christ much, we can talk like parrots about His charms, but when we get our souls full of Christ, generally we cannot talk at all about Him! The man who feels that Christ is his, that he is saved, and that Christ has filled him full of heavenly treasures and made him to possess all things—such a man as that—when he begins to try to talk about Christ, gets choked up. The tears are in his eyes. "Oh," he says, "let me go home, let me get alone and sit down, and quietly think this subject out, for it is altogether unspeakable." He who thinks that he could tell all that he knows about Christ may also conclude that he does not know much, for he who knows most of Him feels that He is God's unspeakable Gift.

And, Beloved, *he who has used Christ most and used Him longest will tell you this.* At first, Christ is everything to the new-born soul in one direction. By-and-by, He is everything in another direction and, in the end, Christ is everything in every direction! Tell me, my gray-headed Friend, what do you think of Christ? If you have known Him 50 years, at what is Christ best, Man? "Best?" you ask, "He is best at everything!" And so, indeed, He is. And to what use do you put Christ, my Brother, in the midst of the battle of life? Do you find Christ good as a helmet, breastplate, shoes, or belt? "Oh," you say, "He is good as a full armor. All I need, I find in Christ, yes, more than all." It would be impossible to tell all the uses to which Christ is put. You who have used Him most and longest will say, "He is unspeakably precious to us, for He has been good to us in sickness and in health, in poverty and in wealth, in joy and in depression. He is equally good everywhere! Oh, that we might still go on to know more of Him, for as God's great Gift to us He is unspeakable!"

Again, *the preacher who has preached Him most fully knows that Christ is unspeakable.* Ah, dear Friends! I do not suppose that you can understand the feeling that comes over me at times. I have sometimes had glorious liberty in preaching—I have felt like Naphtali, a hind let loose—and I have talked away of my Master to my own joy, and I think to yours, too. And then, when I have been on my way home, I have begun asking myself, “Now, how did you preach, after all?” And it has seemed to me a poor, miserable affair. I have said so little in honor of my Master compared with what I ought to have said, that I have felt half inclined to come back here and begin again—only the thought has often struck me—“You will do it worse if you go back, so that you had better leave it alone as it is.”

I know a man, an eminent painter, and a person sat for him 13 times for his portrait—and the artist could not catch the sitter's expression. I saw him throw his brush right into the middle of the painting and he said, “I give it up! I cannot do it.” That is how we sometimes feel with regard to our Master. Who can paint Him as He ought to be painted? We give it up! Go, Sir, and look at the sun, and then come back and paint the sun upon your canvas! And then go and look at Christ, and express Him by your speech. Nature, all nature together—

***“To make His beauties known,
Must mingle colors not her own.”***

He who preaches Christ most fully knows that He is unspeakable! You did well to sing just now the verse that I often repeat to myself concerning my own preaching—

***“Vexed, I try and try again,
Still my efforts all are vain!
Living tongues are dumb at best,
We must die to speak of Christ.”***

I have come so far and reached my last point. I wish that we had more time for such a glorious theme.

III. Now, thirdly, AS A GIFT UNSPEAKABLE, CHRIST CALLS FORTH PRAISE TO GOD FROM US. “Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable Gift.”

The Gift of Christ makes us view God with thankfulness. Never fall into the mistake that is often made by ignorant persons when they suppose that our Lord Jesus Christ came into the world to make God loving. No, no, no! Jesus Christ came into the world because God *was* loving and, in love to us, gave His Son, Jesus Christ, to die for us—

***“’Twas not to make Jehovah's love
Towards the sinner flame,
That Jesus, from His throne above,
A suffering Man became.
’Twas not the death which He endured,
Nor all the pangs He bore,
That God's eternal love procured,
For God was Love before,”***

and He so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son. God's unspeakable Gift is not the *cause* of His love, but the *fruit* of His love! Do not say, "Thanks be unto Christ for dying to placate the Father." No, no! "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable Gift." God *gave* His Son—and we adore the Giver—and bless His name. Once we thought of God with dread, but now that He has given us Jesus, we think of Him with thankfulness. We are glad that there is a God. It is no question with us whether there is a God or not! If there were no God, it were eternal ruin to us! But because there is a God, there is Heaven for us—no, our God is our Heaven, blessed be His name! Thus, we think of God with thankfulness.

And notice, next, that we ought *to express that thankfulness*. The Apostle says, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable Gift." But, Paul, what brought you to that topic? You were talking to these Corinthians about *giving*, not grudgingly, as of necessity, and so on. What brought you to the subject of God's unspeakable Gift? Paul answers, "It is impossible to say what brought me to this topic, for I am always at it. Whatever I am talking about, whatever business I have on hand, I am always thanking God for His unspeakable Gift." The Apostle broke out into that burst of praise because he could not help it! His soul was swelling with intense gratitude and he was obliged to cry out, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable Gift."

Dear Friends, praising God is never out of season and never out of place. You know that some of us who profess to be Christians are the most orderly and proper people in all the world—that is to say, we never intrude our religion upon other people. We can see a man for 20 years and yet never say a word to him about Christ. We do not have those dreadful people crying out, "Hallelujah," in the service, do we? We are so dreadfully proper! Besides that, we are dreadfully cold as well. Perhaps we should speak about Christ very imprudently and do some very rash things if we loved Him better, but we love Him so little that we become wonderfully prudent and wonderfully proper—and we and the world jog on together as if there were no difference between us! If a man does roll out an oath, now and then, we are very sorry, but we never rebuke him. Of course not! Ah, well, I wish that we could be at least as rash as one old man who was employed at a wharf unloading. He was weakly and sickly, and so they gave him less pay than others received, and he was quite content. But there was a stevedore who, one morning, swore at him, and the old man bowed his head and said nothing. The blasphemer swore, again, and the old man bowed his head again. At last the swearer said, "You old fool, what are you bowing to me for?" The good man replied, "I was not bowing to *you*, but you named the name of God, and I thought that I would pay Him reverence even if you did not." Well done, old man! Well done, old man! May every Christian here find some way of thanking God for His unspeakable Gift! The more the world curses, the more let us bless! We are to express our thanks as well as to feel grateful.

Our expression of thankfulness for God's unspeakable Gift would make *ourselves all the surer that Christ is ours*. A man who has received a gift and never looks at it, and never thanks the giver, will come, by degrees, to forget that he has it, or to forget the giver, and to forget how he came by it. Cultivate a grateful spirit when you think of what a Gift you have in Christ! Praise the Lord for Christ! Then you will need to praise Him, again, and when you have praised Him again, you will need to praise Him yet again—and the more you praise Him—the more sure you will be that He is really yours! Suppose that a man has a garden and that he knows it is his? He is quite sure it is his. And suppose that for 20 years he has always gathered all the fruit of the garden and lived upon it. Then nobody can question his right—he has the right of possession, the right of enjoyment. He received his garden as a gift and for the last 20 years he has thanked the giver of it. I am sure that his title is clear enough. Oh, how some of you would clear your titles if you praised God more! Your very praising and blessing Him would be a re-examination of your title deeds—and your confidence would grow to full assurance. You would not only know that you had received God's unspeakable Gift, but you would also know *why* you had received it!

Lastly, we are to wish for the spread of such thankfulness. If we are in the right frame of mind, we shall not only, ourselves, say, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable Gift," but we shall mean what Paul meant—let everybody else who has received this unspeakable Gift praise God for it! Brothers, let us thank God! Sisters, let us praise the Lord! I remember being at a Primitive Methodist meeting where they sang a hymn beginning—

***"Come, soldiers, can't you rise and tell
The wonders of Immanuel?
Yes, bless the Lord, we can rise and tell,
The wonders of Immanuel."***

There was a very lively chorus to the hymn and those Methodists did sing it, too! It ran like this—

***"All glory to the Lamb of God,
Who purchased us with atoning blood!
We soon shall pass over Jordan's flood,
And join the saved in Glory!"***

I learned a lesson in praise, the other morning. I think it was a little after five o'clock, when I was just waking, I heard a blackbird come and chirp a note or two close by my window. After a minute or two, a thrush also began to sing, and when the two together became fairly awake, they were not satisfied until they had aroused all the chaffinches, and goldfinches, and sparrows! So they chirped away and sang on until they awoke every bird near my house! What an oratorio of praise the bird musicians gave forth! They never had to look to their paper to see whether they kept to the score, but each one did keep to the score, and they rose higher and higher and higher in their exultant songs to the God of day

who had chased the night away and given them light, once more, in the morning!

Now I am the blackbird that would start the praise tonight. There are birds of all sorts here, of different colors, and varying plumages, and able to sing all manner of notes. Let us join together to give the Lord an evening song as those birds gave Him a morning song—and let this be the keynote—“Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable Gift!” Before I dismiss those who are not going to remain for the Communion, let us all sing—

***“Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,
Praise Him, all creatures here below!
Praise Him above, you heavenly host,
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.”***

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON. ISAIAH 53.

Mr. Moody was once asked whether his creed was in print. In his own prompt way, he replied, “Yes, Sir. You will find it in the 53rd Chapter of Isaiah.” A condensed Bible is in this chapter. You have the whole Gospel here.

Verse 1. *Who has believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?* Nobody ever does believe either Prophets or preachers except through the work of God’s Spirit and Grace. The Lord’s arm must be revealed, or else His Truth proclaimed by His servants will never be accepted. All the Prophets speak in these words of Isaiah, as if they all stood together, and lifted up this wail, “Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?”

2. *For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: He has no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.* This is Israel’s King, the long-promised Messiah! Yet when He comes to Bethlehem, see what “a tender plant” He is! Look at the house of David, almost extinct, and see what “a root out of a dry ground” is—

“The stem of Jesse’s rod.”

When Jesus comes before the sons of men, dressed in the garb of a peasant, a poor Man, a sorrowful Man, a Man who had not where to lay His head, notice how men say, by their actions, if not in words, “There is no beauty that we should desire Him.”

3. *He is despised and rejected of men; a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.* We rightly sing—

***“Rejected and despised of men,
Behold a Man of woe!
And grief His close companion still
Through all His life below!***

***We held Him as condemned of Heaven,
An outcast from His God,
While for our sins He groaned, He bled,
Beneath His Fathers rod.”***

His own people, yes, His own chosen ones, turned away from Him! And you and I did so till God's Grace changed our hearts and opened our eyes! But why was He “despised and rejected of men; a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief”? Why was the Prince of Israel such a suffering Man? He had no sin for which to be chastened. There was no evil in His Nature that needed to be fetched out with the rod of correction. Oh, no! The answer is very different—

4, 5. *Surely He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.* What a joyous note there is in that sorrowful line, “With His stripes we are healed”! Glory be to God, we are healed of our *soul-sickness*, cured of the disease of sin by this strange surgery, not by stripes upon ourselves, but by stripes upon our Lord!

6. *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, everyone, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.* The general sin of the race, the special sin of the individual—all gathered, heap upon heap, mountain upon mountain—and laid by God on Christ! We sometimes sing—

***“I lay my sins on Jesus,
The spotless Lamb of God.
He bears them all and frees us
From the accursed load.
I bring my guilt to Jesus,
To wash my crimson stains
White in His blood most precious,
Till not a spot remains,”***

and I will find no fault with that hymn. But the real laying of sin upon Jesus was effected by God, Himself—“The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”

7. *He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth.* He never pleaded for Himself. At the earthly judgment seat, He said not a word for Himself, so that even Pilate “marveled greatly.” Oh, the eloquence of that silence! Truly it was golden! Omnipotence restrained Omnipotence! Christ held Himself in as with bit and bridle. “As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth.”

8, 9. *He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare His generation? for He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of My people was He stricken. And He made His grave with*

the wicked, and with the rich in His death; because He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth. Therefore He was allowed to be buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathaea. He was no felon, whose body must be cast out to the kites and jackals, but “He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death; because He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth.”

10. *Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief: when You shall make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand.* Wicked men slew our Lord, and their crime was the blackest in the world's history, but, unconsciously, they were carrying out “the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.” “It pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief.” Christ died for others, but He lives, again, and through Him a godly seed shall live forever and ever—“When You shall make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.” He is made to prosper because He died.

11. *He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.* His death pangs were birth pangs—“the travail of His soul.” He sees the multitude that shall be born through His death, and He is content.

11. *By His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many.* Dear Hearer, will He justify you? Do you know Him? If you know Him so as to trust Him, He has justified you—you are a justified man tonight! “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” “By His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many.”

11. *For He shall bear their iniquities.* They kick against this doctrine nowadays. They cannot bear it, yet it is the very marrow of the Gospel—Christ bearing sin that was not His own, that we might be covered with a righteousness which is not our own, but comes from Him! Paul, by the Spirit, put this great Truth of God thus, “For He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”

12. *Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong; because He has poured out His soul unto death: and He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.* Thanks be unto God for this great Sacrifice!

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FORTS DEMOLISHED AND PRISONERS TAKEN NO. 1473

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 11, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”
2 Corinthians 10:5.***

THIS chapter presents the remarkable spectacle of a minister of the Gospel of Peace going forth to war! At first sight we wonder how the meek and gentle Paul should speak about warring and talk of pulling down strongholds and “having a readiness to revenge all disobedience.” The surprise is all the greater because he is going to war in the Church—a shepherd entering the fold with a sword! One would not so much marvel that he carried his weapons against the outside world, but on this occasion it is within the Church at Corinth that he is about to commence a campaign! Yet observe how earnestly he deprecates the conflict; how he beseeches them by the meekness and gentleness of Christ to spare him a task which was so unpleasant to his feelings as to deal sternly with those whom he would far rather have commended.

But the wonder ceases when we find that the shepherd fights only with grievous wolves and even in that conflict declares, “though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh.” Note, moreover, that his weapons are of a peculiar kind, “The weapons of our warfare are not carnal.” He is not about to assault his antagonists in the Church with bitter words of railing such as they used against him—he is not about to meet the philosophers with such philosophies and sophisms as those with which they assailed the Gospel! And neither is he coming forth with any kind of temporal weapon to inflict anything of injury upon the leaders in error—his weapons are of a very different sort. They are not carnal, but *spiritual*.

Trials under a Public Worship Act he knew nothing of. An appeal to Caesar upon *Church* matters never crossed his mind. For the Church of God ever to avail itself of force or compulsion in order to propagate its doctrines would be contrary to the spirit of Christianity! For the Christian bishop to become a soldier, or employ the secular arm would seem to be the very climax of contradiction! A warrior ambassador is a dream of folly! I remember a story which illustrates that absurdity. When a certain bishop-prince in the olden times went forth personally to battle and was taken prisoner, the Pope sent word to the king who had captured him that he was to set him at liberty at once, for he was a son of the Church.

The king, with considerable wit, sent back to the Pope the coat of armor which the bishop had worn on the field with this message, “This have we

found—know now whether it is your son’s coat or not.” And so we might send back, I think, to the nominal Church, the black and blood-stained gown of the Inquisition, the garb of the headsman and the hangman, the smoke-browned raiment of those who lit the Smithfield fires and even the parchments on which are written the Test and Corporation Acts and the Act of Uniformity and say, “Know now whether these are your sons’ coats or not.” Is the raiment of a man of war the vestment of a servant of the Lord? Are robes of legal authority the adornments of heralds of peace?

Jesus Christ did not thus array His Apostles when He sent them forth to war and not with such weapons did Paul arm himself when he entered the conflict. “The weapons of our warfare are not carnal.” Yet the spiritual weapons which can be wielded by the Christian minister and, indeed, by every Christian, are not to be despised, for while not fleshy, they are mighty through God! *God is in them! God is with those who use them!* The Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God; the arrows of the Truths of God which pierce the consciences of men; the weapon of all-prayer; the influence of the Holy Spirit—that Divine Power—such weapons as these are, by God’s power, made mighty to the overthrow of spiritual principalities and powers!

The Truth of God and holiness are the appointed engines for the pulling down of the castles of evil! Blessed is he who in every conflict for God takes heed to use no other weapons than those which the Lord has hung up in the tower of David built for an armory—where hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men! Those only can fight the Lord’s battles successfully who come to Him to be armed for the fight and reject all fleshy force. The *spiritual* shall be victorious, but others must fail!

The passage, if I were to confine it to its immediate connection, would represent Paul as dealing with those lofty ones who had usurped authority in the Church at Corinth; who denied his Apostleship and set themselves up as superior to him while they, themselves, preached error and led the people astray. Paul declared that when he came among them armed with the power with which God had clothed him, he would overthrow every proud opposition and convince them all of the Truth of God to their conversion or to their confusion. But I shall speak rather of a warfare carried on in individuals—a warfare in our own souls—for what is true of the triumphs of the Gospel in the masses is true because it gains the same conquest over individuals.

While I am speaking of the war of the Gospel against sin within the heart of man, may you who have never felt its power be praying that it may conquer even you. and may those who have experienced its sacred Omnipotence be pleading to be yet more completely subjugated to its sway—

**“Great King of Grace, our hearts subdue,
May we be led in triumph, too,
As willing captives to our Lord,
To sing the victories of His Word.”**

There are three things in the text worthy of our observation. The first is *fortresses demolished*, “casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God.” Secondly, *prisoners*

seized, “bringing into captivity every thought.” and thirdly, *prisoners led away captive*—for such is the force of the Greek, “bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ”—as if the captured ones were taken away and put under new service to the anointed Prince.

I. First, let us look at FORTRESSES DEMOLISHED. When the Gospel endeavors to penetrate the human heart it meets with earthworks of prejudice which men have cast up to screen their minds from the force of the Truth of God. Many things are opposed to the knowledge of God. The objective sought is that men may be brought to know God—to know who He is and what He is. To know their relation to Him as fallen men. To know His plan of restoration. To know Him in Christ Jesus and to know as to *love* Him, to *obey* Him and to become like He. This is the great objective for which the Gospel is sent into the world—that the knowledge of the Glory of God may cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

But men desire not the knowledge of God’s ways and shut up their hearts against the entrance of Divine Light by much evil reasoning and imaginations. Some are garrisoned against the knowledge of God by the feeling that *they do not need to know God*. The masses of our fellow countrymen are not so much *opposed* to the Gospel as *indifferent* to it. They pass by our places of worship and they see their neighbors entering and sometimes they say, “Who preaches there?” But, “*What* is preached there?” is a question seldom asked. Religious enquiry seems to be very dull at the present time. Time was when the announcement of evangelical doctrine excited universal attention, though at the same time almost universal opposition—that *opposition* was better than a state of stagnation like the present.

Men nowadays pass by the Cross as if a dying Savior were nothing to them. Graceless zealots, as they call them, may fight about their creeds—as for them—they have something more practical to think about. “What shall we eat? What shall we drink? And how shall we be clothed?” are far more important questions to them, than, “What must we do to be saved?” This entrenchment has to be carried and the Gospel *does* carry it by the power of the Holy Spirit, for it flashes conviction on the soul, creates alarm, awakens apprehension and so storms the stronghold of indifference and utterly demolishes it! When the Holy Spirit convicts a man of sin, of righteousness and of judgment to come, he is indifferent no longer!

We call him an, “enquirer,” and the name is correct, for he does enquire about the weightiest matters which concern eternity, God, Heaven, Hell and his own immortal destiny. He desires to know, at first, more than he is, at that time, capable of learning! He questions about high mysteries which are for *men* in Christ rather than for babies! But most of all, he wants to know, “How can I be at peace with God?” If the Holy Spirit does but apply to a man’s heart such a Truth of God as this—that he is already condemned because he has not believed in Christ—then indifference is as a bulging wall and as a tottering fence! Even If a man had no other sin, it is quite sufficient to condemn him forever, that he neglects his God and turns away from his Savior, for unbelief is an act of high treason against the Divine Majesty, plucking at the crown jewel of Jehovah’s truthfulness.

Hence “the wicked shall be turned into Hell with all the nations that forget God.” Lay this gun in a proper position and let it be fired by the Eternal Spirit against the indifference of the human heart and it soon casts down the wall of carelessness!

Then the sinner discovers that if he does not know his God, it were better for him that he had never been born! He finds out that if he does not know his Savior, he is doomed to endless woe and this makes him cry out in anguish of heart, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Among the other, “imagination,” with which man fortifies himself is the idea of many that *they know already*. Trained from their childhood in false doctrine, they hold fast to it and defy the Gospel to reach them. They are Christians by *birth*, they say, forgetting the Inspired Declaration, “that which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” Others make up their minds as to what the knowledge of God *ought* to be and, of course, they quarrel with God’s view of things. They fashion a god and a gospel after their own fond notions and then they dream that they have reached the summit of wisdom! They refuse to go to school to learn Christ and when He says, “Except you are converted and become as little children, you shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of God,” they turn from Him with disdain! They know quite enough and are resolved to learn no more.

A large proportion of our fellow men are in this condition and are perfectly content and satisfied to remain as they are. Graduates in the university of self-importance—full of ignorance and equally full of pride—they scarcely deign to give Christ a hearing and hardly go as far as the Athenians who said, “What will this babbler say?” Nothing shuts the heart more completely against the knowledge of God than the conceit that we already know and need no teaching from above! It is written of the true Church, “All your children shall be taught of the Lord,” but many are not such children, for they are wise in their own eyes and refuse instruction!

But, O Sirs, how the Holy Spirit casts down this imagination when He makes men feel that they are blind by nature and lets them know that the natural man understands not the things which are of God, for they are *spiritual* and must be *spiritually* discerned! A little heavenly Light suffices to reveal to men their darkness, for if they will but think, they must admit that if God deigns to teach us in the Scriptures, it must be because apart from them we are ignorant! There is no need of Revelation and the Bible is worthless; there is no need of an Incarnate Deity and Calvary is a superfluity if men already know God apart from the Lord Jesus and the Word by which He is pleased to reveal Himself! But let the Holy Spirit bring this home to a man’s heart and he begins to cry out against his own pride! He bemoans his own blindness and he is quite willing to become a fool that he may be wise, a child that he may sit at Jesus’ feet!

Another entrenchment, behind which many are securely hiding, is the idea that *if they do not know God they can find Him out without His help*. This is a very general notion, nowadays. Scientific thought is supposed to be the way for finding out God and the old Scripture is out of date which says, “Incline your ear, and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live.”

Plain truth is, in this wonderful century, of small account—men crave to be mystified by their own cogitations. Many glory in being too intellectual to receive anything as absolute certainty—they are not at all inclined to submit to the authority of a positive Revelation! God's Word is not accepted by them as final, but they judge it and believe what they like of it.

This is madness! I speak to those who believe in the Scriptures and I say if, indeed, there is a Revelation, it becomes us to be silent before it and accept it without dispute! The Lord knows what is better than we can ever know and if He has been pleased to speak plainly and solemnly His Word, it is ours to believe what He says because He says it! It may be all very well to prove that such-and-such a Revelation of God is consistent with reason, consistent with analogy, consistent with a thousand things—but the attitude which needs such argument is a spirit of rebellion against God! If there is a Revelation, every part of it is of authority and must be believed. Human thought is not the arbiter of Truth, but the Infallible Word is the end of all strife.

It is not ours to say what the Truth of God must be, or what we think it *should* be, or what we would *like* it to be—but reverently to sit down with open ears and willing heart to receive what God has spoken. If an astronomer were to refuse to examine the stars and teach an astronomy invented in his own brain, he would be an idiot! And those who treat theology in the same fashion are not much better! “Surely,” says one, “we ought to modify our beliefs by public opinion and the current of thought.” I say, “NO,” a thousand times! The Incorruptible Word of God lives and abides forever and is incapable of modification! To modify is to adulterate, nullify and render it of no effect, so that it becomes another gospel and, indeed, no Gospel.

The thought of tampering with the revealed Truth of God is vicious and ought not to be tolerated by any Christian for a second! The Gospel of Jesus Christ is not a thing which is to be molded according to the fashion of the period—it is “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever.” Whether the Greek philosophy rules or is exploded. Whether some more modern theory blazes up or smolders down is small concern of ours, for we are set to preach the one unvarying Gospel of Jesus Christ sent down with the Holy Spirit from Heaven! No man was ever led to a saving faith by our meeting him half way and consenting to his unbelief! No real faith was ever worked in man by his own thoughts and imaginations—he must receive the Gospel as a Revelation from God, or he cannot receive it at all.

Faith is a *supernatural* work wherever it is found and if we think that we can beget faith in ourselves or others by the use of the fleshy weapons of philosophy, we shall certainly be foiled! The Scriptures pressed home by the Holy Spirit are God's power unto salvation—not men's cogitations and imaginations! There is the Revealed Gospel—reject it at your own peril! There is Jehovah's Revelation of Himself to men—receive it or be damned! This is the ground to go upon if we would speak as the oracles of God. God grant that proud thinkers may come upon this ground and become Believers.

Here we are boldly met by some who say, "We do not need this doctrine which you call the 'knowledge of God.' *We already know of something better.* We tell you that your Gospel, about which you make such a fuss, is outworn and done with." Treat it so, Sirs, and perish, if you will, but as for us, we will mourn day and night over your unbelief. You will surely destroy your souls in rejecting the Divine Testimony, but in so doing you will prove that Word to be true which says that the Gospel is a savor of death unto death as well as of life unto life.

You know better, you say, but how can this be? Do you know God better than God knows Himself? Do you know more about His way of reconciling men to Himself than His own Messenger, the Lord Jesus Christ, knows? Do you profess to know better than the Eternal Spirit who inspired the Scriptures? It is to those Scriptures that we crave your reverent attention and not to any assertions of *ours*—we pray you will not reject them! I heard one say the other day that he never felt any desire to pray and never had prayed in all his life. And though I looked at him with sorrow, I could only say to him, "Dead men never cry. You are dead in sin and so have not the Divine breath. You have not been born again. You have not a new nature or a right spirit—if you had, you could not help praying and believing."

To me his statements were confirmations of Bible teaching concerning the real state of all unregenerate men. The Gospel, as we have said before, wherever it creates faith, begets it by its own power and by the power of the Eternal Spirit convincing men of the Truth of God and enlightening those whom the Lord our God has chosen. Now, where the Gospel comes, it undermines and overturns everything which opposes the Truth of God and makes a man feel that of God he knows nothing until the Lord reveals it to him.

Find a sinner made conscious of sin and you have found a man who does not know better than his God! Find a man with an awakened conscience and you have found a man who does not know better than his God! Find one who believes in Christ, sits at Jesus' feet and the more he learns the more surely have you found in him a man who does not know better than his God, but who still cries out to be taught more that he may possess to the fullest the knowledge of the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

There is yet another entrenchment behind which some hide themselves from the knowledge of God and that is, "I never can know. I do not know and I never can know. I despair of ever being able to know the Lord." In this despair the rebel entrenches himself as in a very cannon and becomes desperate in his resistance to the Gospel. Yet even this rampart is cast down by mighty Grace! When the Holy Spirit comes with the Word of reconciliation, the sinner catches at the idea of Atonement by a Substitute. He is charmed by the Truth of God, "I am lost in myself, but saved in Christ. I am in myself judged and condemned for sin, but in Christ I see my sin laid on Another and put away." He catches at that Truth, so simple, so sublime and as he believes it, he begins to know Him whom to know is eternal life!

The Spirit of God, as He shines with Divine Light into the soul, soon sweeps away the Egyptian darkness of despair and in the Light of God the man sees light! You see what my drift is? It is just this, that there are certain walls of reasoning, reckoning, thinking—our version calls them “imagination”—which are to be cast down and the Gospel does this when used by the Holy Spirit! Nor is this all, for with the walls, the battlements fall. Man, having devised the fortress of reasoning, erects towers of pride on them which the Apostle calls, “high things,” of which he says that the power of God casts down “every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God.”

These lofty castles are such as the following—“I have a noble nature within me. My instincts are towards right. I have not done much amiss. I am as good as my neighbor. I can overcome any temptation. I am persuaded that I can fight my own way into eternal happiness,” and all such vain ideas. Let but the Gospel come with power and all these citadels are laid low! Away they go, like Jericho’s old bulwarks, rocking and reeling till, in a cloud of dust, they thunder to their fall! In how many cases we have seen this to be so! Fine men have come into this place—men that knew a great deal better than anything they could find in the Bible—they have come in quite confident that nothing would ever change them!

These have sat down like ancient knights, mailed from head to foot, invulnerable to any shafts of ours—but the Blessed Spirit has found an arrow in some simple saying that we have gathered from God’s blessed Word, and, lo, the proud warriors have fallen in the dust! Convinced that they were ignorant and foolish, the formerly proud boasters have begun to cry, “What must we do to be saved?” And before long, being made champions of the faith, it has been their delight to humbly yield judgment, will and heart to the obedience of Christ! O that the Lord would thus storm the prejudices and self-conceits of all my unconverted hearers and sweep them away by His mighty love!

II. After a breach has been made and the city has been taken, PRISONERS ARE TAKEN. This is our second point. The text runs thus, “Bringing into captivity every thought.” The word translated, “thought,” has a very broad meaning, but its best explanation is that which is placed first in the lexicon, “everything which comes from the *mind*.” The mind is like a city and when it is captured, the inhabitants which swarm its streets are the thoughts—and these are taken prisoners. Look at the process which I will rapidly describe.

The Gospel comes with power to the heart of a man and he begins to fear the wrath of God and the judgment to come. Look how he trembles! Christ has captured his thoughts of self-security. He no more says, “Though I add drunkenness to thirst, it shall surely be well with me.” On the contrary, he cries, “I am guilty! I have broken God’s Law and I am condemned.” The Lord has captured his thoughts of self-righteousness. This is the man who yesterday boasted in himself that he was righteous! The pure and holy Law of God has come near his conscience and he feels guilty and, therefore, cries for mercy!

Now he begins to pray, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" And it is clear that his thoughts of independence; his ideas that he could do without God are made prisoners! His thoughts of pleasure in alienation from the Great Father are now slain, for he desires to draw near to the Most High. Look! A little hope begins to dawn! He hopes that there may be salvation for him. His thoughts of rebellious despair are led captive in fetters of iron. Praise the Lord! Watch him further. The Spirit of God encourages him and he comes to believe in Jesus—his self-trust is a prisoner. That Jesus died for sinners is a Truth of God which now he accepts and he casts himself upon it—his proud intellect is a captive and he gladly bows at the Redeemer's feet!

Listen to him as he sings, "I am forgiven! God assures me of it! I am justified because I have believed in Jesus! Oh, how I love His precious name." His inmost heart is captured—all the thoughts of his love are now subdued and the Savior whom he once despised, he now adores! Look how, with gratitude, he brings his alabaster box to break it and pour the sweet perfume on the Savior's feet! Jesus has won his heart! And Jesus holds it in a *willing* captivity and, therefore, the man consecrates himself to Christ—to live and to die for Him!

Thus the whole mind of the man, yes, the whole man, has thrown down its rebellious weapons and surrendered unconditionally to the conquering arm of the Lord Jesus! I dwell very briefly upon this point because I wish to enlarge upon the last.

III. These prisoners are to be LED AWAY INTO CAPTIVITY—"Bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." Monarchs of the olden times, such as the kings of Assyria and Babylon, when they subdued a country, removed the people a far distance away from their old haunts to find new homes. Now, when the Lord captivates the thoughts of our mind, He leads them away, conducting them to another reason altogether. The offspring of the mind He guides into the *spiritual* realm where they delight in the Lord and bow themselves before Him.

Let us look at this procession of captives led away to Grace, the triumph of the Conqueror to settle them down in another region under another King! From the highest to the lowest, all the faculties of the soul are made to pass under the yoke—I shall not attempt a list according to mental science, but mention them as they occur to me. He who, being made conscious of his sin, believes in Jesus Christ submits all the thoughts of his judgment and understanding to the obedience of Christ and this is a great point gained. Before, he put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, darkness for light and light for darkness—but now, when he is in difficulty about a moral question he asks his Lord!

Now, if pleasure tempts him, he judges whether it is sweet by the question whether it would be sweet to his Lord! Now, if a certain doctrine is stated, he weighs it not in the balances of his own thoughts, much less in the scales of popular opinion, but he asks, "What did my Master say? What would the Lord Jesus think of this?" He suspends his own judgment upon his Master's judgment. He does not say, "I am a law unto myself," but he says, "Christ is the Way and in His steps I desire to follow." Thus

his reason is led into captivity to the higher reason and understanding of his supreme Lord!

If there is a Truth of God which he does not know, he tries to learn it. If his Lord sets it before him as a lesson and if it is hidden from him, he is content not to know. His prayer is, "Lord, teach me, or else I shall never learn. I wish to have my understanding developed to the fullest, but let it be under Your sweet Light. Let my mind blossom and open all its flowers beneath the sunlight of Your Divine instruction." I know it is not so with some professed Christians, for they too often invent their own doctrines and think out their opinions apart from their Master. To think is admirable, but not if we mean, thereby, to supplement the teachings of Christ, or to improve upon them, or to accommodate them to popular theories in science and philosophy!

For my part, true science may say what it will and never lack for an attentive listener while I live—the more loudly it shall speak the better—if it will speak facts and not *theories*—if it will tell me what *God has done* and not what *man* has dreamed! All that true science ever can discover must tally with the Word of Revelation, for God speaks in Nature nothing but the same Truth as He has written in the Holy Scriptures. Let our wise men ransack earth to its center and climb to Heaven and make inquisition through every star—the testimony of universal Nature, if heard aright, shall never contradict the Inspired utterances of the Holy Spirit!

The evil is that the wise men add their own inferences to the facts as if they were of equal authority. What, then, is to be done? Shall we alter the deductions of the fallible or try to shape the declarations of the Infallible? The question is not difficult to answer! We are not to revise the statements of the Bible, but the inferences of the philosophers! When philosophy contradicts Revelation, what do I say? So much the worse for philosophy! In spite of the perpetual restlessness which I see in many who are forever mending that which is perfect in itself, my understanding is happy to delight in the Infallible testimonies of Jehovah! Let those fellows change—we shall not! Let them come *up* to us—verily, believers in God's Revelation will never go *down* to them, for that would be to be disloyal to our Master, Christ, whose teachings are too sacred for us to knowingly alter a letter of them!

Whatever others may do, it is the delight of those who have felt the overwhelming power of the Divine Spirit to find in Christ the wisdom with which their intellect is more than content. The same power of the Truth of God and of the Holy Spirit leads captive the will. My Lord Will-be-Will, as Bunyan describes him, is a very stout fellow. Some men think he is exceedingly obstinate, "I will and I will, and I will," and by no means can they be made to yield. In truth, the will has a wonderful power over all the faculties and rules them like a despot. It is boasted that the will of man is free, yet Luther was quite correct when he called it a slave! Never is it so much a slave as when it brags of its own liberty! Let the Spirit of God come into the heart and apply with power the Gospel of Jesus Christ—and the human will no longer glories in its freedom, but surrenders and is subjugated!

It still remains a will, but the will of God is supreme over it. Hear it describe itself—"Lord, this is my will, or what I want to be my will. 'Not as I will, but as You will.'" Look how the will wears its golden fetters and kisses them with happy lips, so glad to find true freedom in being subdued to the obedience of Christ! It is also very beautiful to see how human *hopes* are spell-bound by Divine Grace. These winged things were known to flutter no higher than the tainted atmosphere of this poor world—but now they find stronger pinions and soar aloft to things not seen as yet, eternal in the heavens! The man's *fears*, too, all nestled in the ruins of his sinful joys, were awakened by the voices of his fellow man. But now, ennobled by Divine Grace, they ascend into another sphere! They cover their faces with their wings before the Throne of God, while the man fears to grieve the Holy Spirit, fears to offend against the Father's love, fears to do *anything* which would dishonor the Savior. His joys and sorrows are now found where they never went before—he rejoices in the Lord and he sorrows after a godly sort.

His *memory* also now retains the precious things of Divine Truth, which once it rejected for the trifles of time! His *powers of meditation* and consideration keep within the circle of the Truth of God and holiness, finding green pastures there. This done, you shall see the same enthrallment cast over the Christian man's *desires and aspirations*. He has flung away his old ambitions and aspires to nobler things. He is not without his longings, but he longs for *heavenly* blessings. His wishes and desires to fly to Christ as doves to their windows. His affection, which is no longer set upon things upon the earth, but on things above, draws his desires upward. He pines for holiness, for usefulness, for the Glory of God! His own glory he discards and is willing to be of no repute so long as he may but make the name of Jesus famous among the sons of men!

I would to God, dear Brothers and Sisters, that this sacred vassalage would be more fully felt by every motion of the mind so that no desire would dare to wander even for a moment! The same blessed servitude binds the man's *plots and designs*. He still plans, but it is not for his own aggrandizement—his grandest design is to bring jewels to the crown of Christ! He now arranges his life with circumspection and with diligence—not with cunning and craftiness—for holiness is his policy and his scheme of life is *sanctity*. Does not this talk of mine sound rather like sarcasm to some who profess to be Christians? If it does, stand convicted, for it is not I that am wrong in this, but you—for every thought is to be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ! And even when we are thinking about common things or matters that have to do with business, we are to be serving our Lord, for, "every thought," not *some thought*, is to be bowed unto the obedience of Christ.

It is a wicked error to conceive that so much of our life ought to be religious and so much to be secular. A Christian's *whole* life is to be his religion and his religion is to saturate his whole life! You are as religiously to eat your meals as you eat at the Lord's Table! You are as religiously to speak the Truth of God in your parlor as you would in the pulpit! Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, it is all to be done to the Glory of

God! The great thought you are to have in opening your shops, in trading, in toiling, in furnishing your houses, in nursing your children and even in taking recreation, is still to be, "How can I glorify God in all this?" All, ALL, must be brought into captivity to Christ!

When a man yields himself to Jesus, he should comprehend his house, his money, his body, his time, his wife, his children—everything in the deed of surrender—for He who bought us with His precious blood did not buy us with a reserve and leave the devil a mortgage upon us! We are our Lord's unencumbered freehold forever! We are His own conquered portion which He took out of the hand of the Amorite with His sword and with His bow and, therefore, over the whole of our being He has an absolute and undivided right of property!

The renewed man's *love and hate* are both held captive by the power of Divine Grace. He loves Jesus truly and intensely. He hates sin with his whole soul. Indignation is a hard thing to tame, but to my mind it is a grand thing to see a man's anger made the servitor of Christ so that he only grows indignant when he wars with that which is mean, cruel, unjust, un-Christlike! Then he does well to be angry, for his anger is but virtue on fire! It is a fair sight to see Christ's sacred bands worn by our tastes which are so volatile and hard to constrain. Concerning tastes, it is never wise to dispute, but Jesus' love creates a delicacy of mind, a discernment of that which is tender and gentle, pure and heavenly—an abhorrence of that which is evil so that the Lord's redeemed become very *connoisseurs* in things moral and Divine.

The fancy, too—that impalpable cloud painted as by the setting sun, that will-of-the-wisp of the spirit—even this is impressed into royal service and made to wear the colors of Christ so that men even *dream* eternal life! When godly men give their imagination rein, even Pegasus bears a royal burden and in his flight from the actual to the imaginative he feels the golden bridle of the King's rule restraining and directing all his airy motions. Yes, the Holy Spirit wins an undisputed sway, "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." Do you not wish for this complete subjection, you to whom Jesus is God and Lord? I know you do and, what is more, I am sure you wish for the time when that which is worked in yourselves shall be accomplished in all mankind!

Christ's Gospel has not come into the world to be co-equal with other faiths and share a divided kingdom with differing creeds. False gods may stand face to face to each other in one Pantheon and be at peace, for they are all false together, but where Christ comes, Dagon must go down—not even the stump of him must stand! Truth is of necessity intolerant of falsehood! Love wars with hate and justice battles with wrong. Christ Jesus will be All in All and sit upon the Throne alone. May the day come in which obedience to Christ shall be universal! What a scene would present itself if every thought of every human being were in holy subjection to Christ! Not a poor woman would sing beneath her lowly roof of thatch without rendering holy adoration—while on the throne, neither queen nor prince would plan anything but what should be for the Glory of Jesus Christ!

No council chamber would know a policy which would be contrary to the Prince of Love, nor would the freest thinker think anything contrary to the thoughts of Jesus. The wild men of the plain would cease to forget the Lord and the civilized dwellers in cities would no longer cast off His fear. The common people, in multitudes, would seek Him and the nobles would study how to honor Him. How happy will the time be when all inventive genius shall own the sway of Jesus and man shall desire no more to fashion weapons of war, but only to design that which shall minister to the well-being of mankind! When art with pencil and chisel shall refrain from all which excites lascivious thoughts and perpetuates the memory of blood and slaughter, but shall bow at Jesus' feet to honor God by setting Nature's beauties before reverent eyes!

How glorious will it be when Learning, poring over its classic books, shall find in human wisdom trophies for the surer wisdom of Jesus! And when Study, searching by the midnight lamp, shall seek out the heights and depths of Divine Love! It charms me to think of every poet singing Divine songs for earth's great King, drinking no more from the Castellan fountain, but finding all their springs in God alone! Then, too, shall Music compose her most harmonious symphonies and pour forth her richest notes in worship of the redeeming Lord, while Eloquence, no longer declaiming in the defense of wrong, shall spend her force in the maintenance of peace and righteousness and in the extolling of the Lord! Dawn even now, auspicious day! Why does the night hang so heavy? Why bides the darkness around us for so many ages?

Great Captain of Salvation, You can achieve the victory! We have compassed this Jericho these many days, but still the walls have not fallen! Up, You mighty man of war, for You are such, and come to the battle and then the battlements of sin will fall. "The Lord is a man of war: Jehovah is His name." Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord! Awake as in the ancient days, in the generations of old! Are You not He that has cut Rahab and wounded the dragon? Because of truth and righteousness, ride forth in Your majesty! For peace on earth and glory to God in the highest, come forth in the glory of Your might with the everlasting Gospel, "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

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PEDIGREE

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

***“Are they Israelites? So am I.”
2 Corinthians 11:22.***

PAUL was proud of his extraction as a Jew. Taking this expression in its literal sense, I feel that he had much to be proud of. Judah's banner must not rank second among the nations. The nation of Israel is most ancient and most honorable. When as yet Greece and Rome were not known, God had brought forth His people out of Egypt “with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm,” and had cast out Amorite and Perizzite to make room for the vine which He had brought out of Egypt. Poets, statesmen, philosophers, divines had all come to ripeness and the fullness of strength in Judah's land, while as yet the other nations were sunken in barbarism. When our little island of the sea was just a mass of forests, with here and there, perhaps, a naked savage wandering through it, David was praising God on a ten-stringed instrument! We talk of Norman blood, but what is it compared with Jewish blood? We speak of the dignity of peers and nobles of our infant monarchy, but this ancient nation stretches its parents of nobility far back—right up to the days of “the Friend of God,” when he stood under the oak at Mamre!

The people of Israel were famous because of God's election. As a nation they deserve honor, but as the elect of God they must stand high in our esteem. One little stream of pure love and truth went wandering amidst the arid wastes of human depravity. The election of Grace fell mainly—I might almost say *entirely*—within the 12 tribes that sprang from the loins of Jacob in those early days. They were the conservators of the lamp of the Truth of God. Theirs were the oracles and grandest and best of all of them, “as concerning the flesh, Christ came.” Never despise the Jew when you remember that while our Savior was a Man, yet He was a Man of that peculiar type. Let us think of the Jew, Jehovah-Tsidkenu, the Son of Mary, and feel a sympathy forever with His flesh and blood.

Besides, the Jewish race has a history yet to come, marvelous and strange history whose lines are intertwined with all the threads of the history of other nations. I am not about to amuse you by any prophesying. This is not the place to desecrate the Sabbath with whimsical interpretations of Daniel, Ezekiel and the Revelation! But still, it is plain upon the very surface of Scripture that Israel shall yet be restored to grandeur as a nation, that the King of the Jews shall reign and that in all the splendors of the millennial age, the Jew, ingathered

with the fullness of the Gentile, shall have his full share. This much we know and in this much even we, the Gentiles, do unfeignedly rejoice. For the Son of David is He who has made both one and broken down the middle wall of separation between us—and henceforth there is neither Jew nor Gentile, bond nor free—but we are all one in Christ Jesus. However, were I here tonight as a convert to the Christian faith with Jewish blood within my veins, I would speak with no bated breath concerning it, nor wish to hide my pedigree, but count it the highest of all honors which could come to me after the flesh, that I sprang from the loins of Abraham, “the Friend of God.” I do not marvel that Paul was so jealous of it, or that he says, “Are they Israelites? So am I.” He was no bigot—remember, he was the Apostle of the Gentiles—it was he who constantly disclaimed all confidence in circumcision. It was he who withstood Peter to the face because he was to be blamed in this matter. It was he who, as with a battle-axe, was continually breaking down the barriers which divided Jew and Gentile. But yet, for all that, as a man, he was not ashamed to say, “Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I.”

I propose now, however, to take the text in another light. In a spiritual sense, all the Lord’s people are Israelites. “They are not all Israel, which are of Israel” after a carnal lineage, but all God’s people are the true Israel, the spiritual seed in whom the promises made to Abraham are this day fulfilled. I hope we can say, some of us, with a loud and emphatic utterance—and others with a humble whisper, “Are they Israelites? So am I,” thus putting in our claim to the privileges which belong to the people of God.

Let us accordingly spend a few minutes, first, in describing *a peculiar people*—Israelites. And then, secondly, in asserting *a personal claim*, saying, “So am I.”

I. This PECULIAR PEOPLE, called Israelites, I will describe in two ways. *The Israelites of God are like their father*, like Israel. And they are *like their ancestors*, like Israel.

First of all, they are *like their father*. All the Israel of God are in some respects like Jacob, who was surnamed Israel. [Mr. Spurgeon preached many Sermons on Jacob, among them being the following—#239, Volume 5—JACOB AND ESAU; #401, Volume 7—JACOB’S WAKING EXCLAMATION; #1401, Volume 24—JACOB WORSHIPPING ON HIS STAFF; #1544, Volume 26—MAHANAIM—OR, HOSTS OF ANGELS; #2116, Volume 35—THE UNCHANGING GOD CHEERING JACOB IN HIS CHANGE OF DWELLING PLACE; #2817, Volume 49—JACOB’S FEAR AND FAITH and #3010, Volume 52—JACOB’S MODEL PRAYER—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

They are so, for one reason, *because of their election*. What says the Scripture? “Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.” “The children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand,” it was said, “The elder shall serve the younger.” Jacob was God’s chosen one. He had set His love upon him and, before he was born, He had distinguished him as His elect one. Now that is a deep mystery and there are many who quibble at and question it. I am not here to answer them. The Book says so—let them quibble with the Book, not with me! That Doctrine, I know, is often used to discourage seeking souls and the great Truth of predestination is

set in contrast with the other Truth of free agency, as though the one contradicted the other. But, believe me, it is only our ignorance that makes us think the two things contradictory! “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out,” is just as true as Christ’s later declaration, “No man can come to Me, except the Father which has sent Me draws him.” It still stands true that “whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved,” though it is written, “I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion” and, “It is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy.” Let this be recognized as a Truth of God, then, by every true Israelite—that he is so *by reason of the choice of God*. We cannot say it was our choice—we dare not attribute our separation from the rest of mankind to anything in us by nature. We must lay our crown at the feet of Divine Sovereignty and bless that distinguishing, discriminating Grace which has made us differ from the rest of mankind! We are Israelites by *election*.

And you will observe that, very early in Jacob’s life, *he, too, made an election*. “Chosen of God before time began,” he chose his God’s inheritance in return. There stood the mess of pottage and there, unseen, was the birthright, the inheritance according to promise. Esau, hungry and profane, said, “I shall die of hunger, and then what good will this birthright do unto me?” And for a mess of pottage, which he chose, he rejects the heavenly heritage! Not so Jacob—what Esau sold, Jacob bought. He bought at a dearer price, however. Think, oh, think of that greater inheritance than a mere mess of lentils! At any rate, you have now before you a picture of what every true Israelite becomes by the work of God’s Grace in the heart. If you choose this world and neglect the world to come, you are Esau. You may be a child according to the flesh, but you are not a child according to promise. But if you from your heart can say, “I count the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt and for the love I bear His name, what was my gain I count my LOSS” then, dear Friend, this election, which you make, is a proof that God has made an election of you and that you are of the seed of Israel whom God has blessed. They turn from the pottage to take the portion—they leave earth to seek Heaven.

Then comes one feature in Jacob’s history which is common to all true Israelites. No sooner had Esau got his pottage and Jacob the blessing, than Esau sought to slay Jacob. There must be *a hatred between the child of the flesh and the child of the Spirit*. They slept together in the same womb, but they could not live together on the same earth without animosity against each other. Jacob must flee. He must leave his father’s house. He must go outside the camp. And this is your lot if you are an Israelite. The world will soon find you out and you will be a speckled bird—and the birds round about you will be against you. If any man suffers as a Christian, let him rejoice! And if you are a Christian, you will have to suffer as a Christian for Christ’s sake. You must bear reproach. And in obeying your Master’s Laws, you will come into conflict with the world’s customs and, consequently, will lose the world’s favor. So there

are Israelites and you are among them—and for the Truth of God’s sake you become an alien to your mother’s brethren.

Jacob, in leaving his father’s house, however, received a great blessing in which he is typical of all Israelites—namely, *the manifested Covenant made with himself personally*. He slept with a stone for his pillow, the hedges for his curtains, the heavens for his canopy—and as he slept, he dreamed that he saw a ladder, the foot thereof stood on the earth, but the top reached to Heaven. And at the top of it was the God of the Covenant who made a Covenant with His servant which He established and made fast forever. Beloved, if you are of God’s Israel, you have had some insight into the Covenant of Grace—you have seen it in the Person of Jesus Christ whose Humanity, like the ladder’s foot, stands here on earth, but whose Deity, like the ladder’s top, is lost amidst the blaze of God! You have seen, by the eyes of faith, the God who makes and keeps the promise in the Person of Jesus Christ, speaking to you and saying, “Certainly I will be with you, and I will bless you.” You must have had some such Revelation of God in Christ Jesus, or else I would have to question whether you are one of the Israelites at all—for they who know the Lord, know Him as their Covenant God and know him as David did when he said, “Although my house is not so with God, yet He has made with me an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things, and sure.”

To complete our little outline of Jacob’s history in which all the Israelites must follow him, I introduce you to Jacob at the brook of Jabbok. It was there that Jacob became Israel—the supplanter became a prevailing prince! Oh, it was a noble sight which the stars alone saw, when Jacob grasped the Angel! Bold hands, that of mortal that can grasp the Angel of God! And oh, it was nobler still when, having grasped Him, he was not content with using hands alone in that blessed struggle, but came to use feet and knees, and every bone and nerve and muscle! It was a matchless wrestling, then, when the Angel would have thrown the man, but the man would gladly throw the Angel! He played the man, indeed, then, when he said unto God, “I will not let You go except You bless me.” “I will not.” O God, can Your creature thus address You? Yes, when You have given us faith enough to utter such a word as that, You have given us full permission to speak even as we will unto You and, each one of us to say, “I will not let You go except You bless me.”

Now, if we are Israelites, we know something of *wrestling and prevailing prayer*. You are no Christian if you do not pray. A prayerless soul is a Christless soul. You have no inheritance among the people of God if you have never struggled with that Covenant Angel and come off the conqueror. Prayer is the indispensable mark of the true child of God. I know what you will tell me—you will tell me that you are so weak and feeble. Ah, Brother, in this you are like Jacob, who went from Peniel, halting on his thigh. It is not given to mortals to be altogether strong. You must feel your weakness. You may be mighty with God and yet He may make you weak with men. You may be too strong for the Angel and yet one touch of this Angel’s finger may cause your sinew to shrink so that you go halting to your grave. Ah, some of us have not merely had

one sinew shrunk, but very many—and whenever we try to run the heavenly race, we feel these shrunken sinews much injure our running. But still we are pursuing, and though lame, we shall yet take the prey. So, you see, in election, in the choosing of the inheritance rather than the pottage, in being hated by his brother, in being separated from his father's house, in entering into Covenant with God, in wrestling and even in weakness, Israel becomes the type of the true Israelite! And I hope, as I have been going over the history, some of you have said, "Are there any such persons in the world that are Israelites? Even so am I." I hope you have seen your own portrait, here, and have said, "The preacher has photographed my history—so am I."

Now we are going to give you another portrait of the Israelite, this time not taking the single man, Israel, but taking *the race Israel in their early history*. When Israel ceases to be a family and becomes a nation, we find it in the house of bondage, in what is very significantly called, "the iron furnace"—iron for strength and a furnace for heat! So is it with every Israelite. Every child of God is originally found in the bondage of sin. It gives us no effort to remember when we were the slaves of Satan. The scars of his whip are scarcely healed. When we see others sinning, we are glad to say, "Such were some of us, but we are washed. Oh, how lately did these arms wear the fetters and were these feet hampered with the chains! We are free now, but once we were slaves!"

Israel in due time was delivered—delivered in two ways—delivered by *blood* and by *power*. So is it with every child of God—*delivered by blood*. The blood of the lamb was sprinkled on the lintel and on the side posts, and while the Destroying Angel, swift to slay, went through the whole of Egypt and slew the first-born, He spared the first-born of Israel—not one of them fell dead. Oh yes, and we, too, through the precious blood of Jesus, which has been sprinkled upon us, we too are saved! Our Passover Lamb is slain for us—the sprinkling of His blood has made us safe—it speaks better things than the blood of Abel, for it speaks peace to us and gives us safety and deliverance. And, my Brothers and Sisters, we have been brought out with *power*, too! Power as great as that which worked plagues on the fields of Egypt and made Pharaoh's haughty heart yield! The might of the Holy Spirit, which has set us free, is as great as that which divided the Red Sea and made its waters stand "upright as a heap." Let Moses sing, but we will sing too! Let Miriam dash her joyous fingers against the timbrel and we will emulate her! We will sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, "for He has triumphed gloriously in our cause. He has set us free and brought us up out of the house of bondage, breaking the iron yoke from our necks." Thus we are like Israel.

Israel *went into the wilderness* and, I suppose we have all been there, at least all of us who are God's people find this world to be a wilderness to us. In the wilderness they were all covered by the pillar of cloud by day, and they were enlightened by the pillar of fire by night. And Divine Providence is our daily protection and our constant comfort. They went

out daily to gather manna. Brothers and Sisters, I suppose you find that you have need of daily Grace and that you cannot live upon bread alone, but you must have the Word which proceeds out of the mouth of God. You have learned to eat angles' food! The meat that drops from the skies is necessary to your life. The corn that grows in the furrow cannot feed your soul. Your body leans on that staff of life, but your soul needs more spiritual food such as Jesus Christ alone can give. Beloved, the children of Israel in the wilderness all looked to the same Tabernacle and there they saw one ministering priest offering incense and sacrifice by blood. And we stand tonight all looking to the same Savior, hoping—no, KNOWING—that we are all washed in the same precious blood! And as we see the smoke of His Sacrifice going up to God, we, as one undivided Israel, praise and bless His name!

You remember, too, that *all Israel under Joshua crossed the Jordan to the land of Canaan and won their heritage*. Each tribe had its portion and everyone was settled in his proper place. We are, so it were, standing upon Jordan's brink. Since last we met, some of our Beloved ones have crossed the stream, "and we are to the margin come." Nor does it trouble us, for Jordan is dry. The Ark of the Covenant stands in the middle of that river and makes it so dry that every child of God shall go through it dry shod! The trumpet sounds which bids us march to victory! The land that flows with milk and honey is before us—we have a portion fair in that blessed land. Let us go to Pisgah's top tonight if we cannot cross the Jordan just yet and, with Moses, "view the landscape over." There are the glittering lights of the habitations of the blessed. There are the groves of immortality where they wander. There are the rivers of joy at which they sit and the oceans of glory in which they bathe! Listen to their songs! Catch you not the strains that come from the celestial harps? Know you nothing of the harmonies? Have you never perceived their gracious melodies? Here is your portion, Beloved! All Israel came to the promised land and so shall we! And we shall then forever reign with Jesus, our blessed Jesus, who leads us in to possess the land!

So much, then, concerning Israel from the second picture. I trust some of us have been saying, while we have seen the picture and heard the history of Israel described, "Are they Israelites? So am I." I too was in Egypt. I too have had the blood sprinkled on me. I too have eaten of the Paschal Lamb. With loins girt about I have passed into the wilderness of separation, wandering my forty years up and down these arid plains of earth. I am looking for my heritage. I look to my great Leader, and I follow Him to victory and to peace!"

II. Having thus described the peculiar people, we stop a moment and notice A PERSONAL CLAIM—"So am I."

This is *a claim that needs proof*. The Apostle knew that his claim was indisputable, but there are a great many persons who say, "So am I," when they have no right to say it. When others come to the Lord's Table, they come there. When Believers in Christ are baptized, they are baptized, too, and they virtually say, "Whatever saints may be, such are we." Ah, it is one thing to pretend to be a noble in Christ's court, and

another thing to really be a peer in Heaven's realm! Your patent of spiritual nobility will serve your turn here among poor men who cannot investigate it, but remember! Remember! You will all be tried before you will be permitted to enter Heaven! See you not those scales in mysterious vision? I see them before my eyes—massive scales—and the weights of the sanctuary are put into one scale and each one of us must, before long, take our place in the other scale. Will it turn with us? Shall we be found good weight, or shall we leap into the air while the voice shall say, "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin—you are weighed in the balances, and are found wanting; your claims are disproved and your hopes destroyed forever"?

Beloved, let us not claim to be Christians if we are not! I warn any of you who make a profession of religion, especially if you are members of this Church, if your hearts are not right with God, shake off your profession as Paul shook off the viper from his hands! Nothing can be more detrimental to you, at the last, than to have had a name to live while you have been dead! Far better to honestly confess yourself a stranger from the commonwealth of Israel than to be an interloper among the saints of God, partaking of the children's bread while you are not a child and entering into the sanctuary of God where you have no right to stand! If we dare to say, "So am I," let us only say it after having searched ourselves as in the Presence of the great God and having said to Him, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Supposing that we have given good proof, I can only say that the claim in the text is one which *will yield us great joy*. When God's people are rejoicing most, what a satisfaction it is to me if I can say, "So am I!" Here stands one of the Lord's people and he cries, "My sins are forgiven through His precious blood. I am a pardoned sinner!" "So am I." "I am covered with Christ's righteousness, a garment all Divine bedecks me and I am accepted in the Beloved!" "So am I." "He has taken me into union with Himself and made me a member of His body. I am a member of Christ's mystical body!" Oh, can you say, "So am I"? Surely these three words will be enough to make Heaven begin below if, when the saints rejoice most in their standing and position before the Lord, you can say, "So am I." And you can certainly do so, dear Friend, in all the fullness of joy, if you can say with me—

***"A debtor to mercy alone,
Of Covenant Mercy I sing!
Nor fear with Christ's righteousness on,
My person and offering to bring.
The terrors of Law, and of God,
With me can have nothing to do—
My Savior's obedience and blood
Hide all my transgressions from view!"***

"This is the reason I trust Him wholly, trust Him only, trust Him simply, trust Him now and trust Him always." Oh, if you can say, "So do I," then

all the position which the saints of God hold belongs to you! All their enjoyments are your possessions! You may say, "Such am I."

Now I want to introduce you to a few little scenes, one after the other. I will suppose that we are all talking together about *the happiness of God's people*. One quotes the text, "Happy are you, O Israel. Who is like unto you, O people saved by the Lord?" and he expatiates thus, "God's people are a happy people, they find that godliness has the blessing of this life and of that which is to come. We can praise God all day and even in the night He is still with us, and we make the night watches vocal with His praise. We are a happy people." I hear a voice up in the corner of the room where we are sitting. Someone says faintly, "And so am I." Let us go and look. Why, here is a poor old woman who has been bed-ridden. "How long, Sister?" "Thirteen years." "Have you much to comfort you?" "Oh, very much! I have my Savior's Presence." "Have you had a good nurse and kind attendants, with plenty of temporal comforts?" "No, I have had none of those things. I am a poor pensioner of the parish. I have sometimes scarcely enough bread to eat." "Have you many pains?" "Yes, I am full of disease, racked from head to foot with sickness." "I thought you said just now, 'So am I! I am happy.'" "Oh, yes! I did say that and I will say it again, for, notwithstanding all my tribulations, my consolations abound through Jesus Christ and I can say—

***"Sweet affliction, sweet affliction
For it brings my Savior near"—***

"notwithstanding all my sufferings and my pains, and my having tossed to and fro till my bones have come through my skin, yet, if you say you are happy, 'So am I.'"

We are talking together again about *the riches of God's people*. I have been giving out a hymn in the little parlor, and we have been singing—

***"How vast the treasure we possess!
How rich Your bounty, King of Grace!
This world is ours, and worlds to come—
Earth is our lodge, and Heaven our home.
I would not change my blest estate
For all that earth calls good or great!
And while my faith can keep her hold,
I envy not the sinner's gold!"***

And I say, "We are rich and increased in goods, we have all we need, and we are thankful for it." And I hear a voice say, "So am I." Come here and show yourself! "I don't like to show myself in such respectable company as this." "Never mind, come here." "No," he says, "my clothes are too much out of repair for me to come before this present company. I have toiled and worked very hard, but now in my old age I cannot work much and the garb of poverty is the only one that I can wear. I eat my bread with my own tears and with much of the sweat of my brow—and I have nothing in the world I can call my own—and I never expect to own anything except that spot of ground in which my ashes shall be buried by charity. But if you say God's people are rich, so am I. I have got here the title-deeds of a mansion fair and of a heritage so rich that I would not barter it for the throne of the Caesar's or all the kingdoms of the earth."

While we are thus communing with one another, we turn from the happiness and the riches of God's people to speak about *their safety*. "All those who trust in Jesus Christ are saved. Their sins are all forgiven. They can never be condemned. Their feet are upon the rock. They shall be with Christ in Glory—they are saved!" And I hear a voice come from somewhere up there, "So am I." Now, whose voice is it? I think I remember hearing it before. It sounds like the voice of a dying man, like the voice of a man in pain—a rough voice, too, as if it belonged to some very uncouth body—who is it? It is the dying thief and he says, "You were singing about me just now—

***"The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day
And there have I, though vile as he,
Washed all my sins away!"***

"I am a dying thief, but I am saved! It is only a few minutes ago since I believed in Jesus, but I am saved! He who has served the Lord for 70 years cannot say more than that. He can say, after 70 years of service, 'I am a saved man,' and I can say, though Jesus only now turned His eyes upon me and said that He would remember me, I too am a saved man." So, you see, there are some things in which the very youngest Believer is placed on an equal footing with the very oldest—they are alike saved if they can each say, "So am I."

There may be somebody in this chapel, perhaps, who cannot read. Such people are getting scarce in London and if we use a long Latinized word in the sermon, that poor body says, "I cannot make out what he is talking about." But if I begin to talk about Jesus Christ and say, "All your children shall be taught of the Lord." If I begin to speak about experimental vital godliness within the heart and about union to Jesus Christ. If I say that all the Lord's people know something about His love—they are all taught in His Grace—I know you, my Friend, would say, "So am I. So am I. If there is any man here who says that he is a debtor to God's Grace, so am I. If there is any man who says that he owes more than others, so do I. If there is anyone here who claims to have had much sin forgiven and, therefore, to be much in debt to God's Grace, so am I. And if there is any man here who vows, when he gets to Heaven, that he will sing the Lord's praises with all his might, for he feels himself to be a very deep debtor to God, so am I. Dear Friend, I am not inclined to yield to you when it comes to the question of claiming the privilege of God's Israel, the privilege of nearness to His heart, of access with boldness in Christ Jesus, the privilege of prayer, the privilege of suffering, the privilege of service. If you say, 'I am entitled to these things,' I will put in my claim, and say, "So am I.""

And I do hope there are some poor trembling saints here who will be so tenacious of their privileges that though they are the very least in Israel, "less than the least of all saints," yet, since the mercies of God belong to the saints, as saints, and not as full-grown saints, or advanced saints, or well-taught saints, they will put in their plea and each one say, "So am I. So am I."

I was thinking, as I came here tonight, whether I would not even defy the very angels of God about this matter. There are spirits before the Throne of God—bright spirits that walk in white and sing His praises—and they are very happy, and they are full of joy. So am I! They wear white robes, they are clad in pure white linen. So am I! They stand secure in Jesus' love. And so am I! They sing of their election by His Grace. And so will I! They are there, and they see His face and sing His praise. And so will I! They know themselves to be loved by Him. So do I! And they drink of the river of His pleasures as they think of Him. So will I! Beloved Christian, in some respects you are on a par with the glorified spirit. You are as much pardoned as they are. You are as much justified as they are. You are as much one with Christ as they are. You are as much chosen of God as they are and you are, in one respect, as safe as they are—no, in some things you have the advantage! There are works which perfect saints above all holy angels cannot do, so let no one stop you in your glorying in Christ Jesus. But when they speak the most, say of yourselves through Grace, "So am I."

Oh, what a different tale we might have told tonight! Think of what a different story the preacher might have had to tell tonight. Oh, think—think—think—dear Hearer! There might have been heard the wailing of lost souls, gnashing their teeth and crying, "We are lost—lost—lost forever!" And you and I might have been saying, "And so am I." There might have come up a dolorous cry from the depths of Hell, "We are banished from God's Presence! The light of His love shines not on us! We are in the blackness of darkness forever!" You and I might have said, "So am I." But instead of that, He has plucked us from the miry Pit and set our feet upon a Rock, and made us sing His praise tonight and, with the brightest spirits, say, "So am I." Oh, how we ought to love Him! Now, tomorrow, if you go out into the world and you see a Christian badly beaten, and hear men jeeringly say, "There is a Christian"—step forward and say, "So am I." Tomorrow the devil will be tempting some of the Lord's people and you may, if you like, turn tail and run away. But come boldly forward and say, "So am I." Take your share with them! Some of us are workers for Christ. I wish you could each one say, "So am I." There are some who give their talent, their time, their substance, their whole heart to Jesus. I wish we could each one say, "So do I." Standing here, we have sometimes said that if Jesus Christ would tread on us. If He could make Himself one inch more lofty, we would be glad to be trodden as the mire in the street, for we have given ourselves unto Him as a burnt-offering, living and dying. May every Christian here feel, "So am I." Oh, prove your gratitude by your devotion and live as those who, having claimed privileges, are willing to take the responsibility connected with it!

Is there a lost and ruined sinner here? "Yes," says one, "I am." Jesus Christ came to save sinners. I am hanging on Him and trusting Him. I would that each one of you could say, "So am I." Sinner, you have no hope but in Jesus. Trusting Him, His saints are safe. Will you trust Him? God help you to trust Him at this very moment! Cast yourself where

millions have cast themselves before—upon the covenanted mercy of God in Christ—and as they leap up and cry, “We are saved,” you, too, may stand up and say, “So am I.” May the Lord bless us! May we be numbered with His Israel in the day when He comes to make up His jewels, for His name’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 81.**

Verse 1. *Sing aloud unto God our strength: make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob* In these days, the Psalms would have to be altered if they are to suit the dogmas of modern thought, for “the God of Jacob” is altogether rejected by those wondrous thinkers who think they know so much! The God of the New Testament, they say, is a very different Being from the God of the Old Testament. According to them, the Old Testament God is too stern—the New Testament God is far softer, quite effeminate, indeed, if they rightly describe Him. But we do not hesitate to say, over and over again that the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob—the Immutable and Unchangeable One—the God of Sinai, is as much our God as the God of Calvary! And so we delight “to make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob.”

2-6. *Take a Psalm, and bring here the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the Psaltery. Blow up the trumpet in the New Moon, in the time appointed on our solemn feast day. For this was a statute for Israel, and a Law of the God of Jacob. This He ordained in Joseph for a testimony, when He went out through the land of Egypt: where I heard a language that I understood not. I removed his shoulder from the burden: his hands were delivered from the pots.* Child of God, have you forgotten the time of your deliverance? God has not and here He reminds His people Israel of their deliverance out of Egypt. So He says concerning you, “I removed his shoulder from the burden: his hands were delivered from the pots.” Do you not remember the joy of that glad moment when the burden of sin was taken away from you and the pots of your own self-salvation lay broken at your feet? Glory be to Him who brought us out from that terrible house of bondage!

7. *You called in trouble, and I delivered you; I answered you in the secret place of thunder: I proved you at the waters of Meribah. Selah.* But how sadly did they stand the test! You and I, too, have not only received much mercy at the hands of God, but we also have had our testing times. We can look back to the waters of strife with deep regret that there we failed so sadly.

8-10. *Hear, O My people, and I will testify unto you: O Israel, if you will hearken unto Me; there shall no strange god be in you; neither shall you worship any strange god. I am the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt: open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.* What a wonderful verse this is! We have been so accustomed to hear the expression, “I am the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land

of Egypt,” followed by the Law. But here it is followed by a gracious encouragement to us to pray—“Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.” Whatever force the Law derived from that preface, this exhortation derives the same force and no child of God ought to forget that. He who delivered you from the burden of sin bids you open your mouth wide and He will fill it! And after your deliverance from guilt, do you not feel that you may well ask great things of such a gracious God?

11-15. *But My people would not hearken to My voice; and Israel would none of Me. So I gave them up unto their own heart lust: and they walked in their own counsels. Oh that My people had hearkened unto Me, and Israel had walked in My ways! I should soon have subdued the enemies, and turned My hands against their adversaries. The haters of the LORD should have submitted themselves unto Him: and their time should have endured forever.* Alas, poor Israel! Through what sufferings and captivities did you go because you would not trust in the Lord? And how often some of God’s children have had to go through years of sorrow and spiritual captivity because of their lack of close walking with their God and complete obedience to Him! May we learn from the sins of others and be helped to walk closely with our Master!

16. *He would have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied you.* If the Word of God does not seem to feed us as once it did, it will surely be because we have not hearkened to our Lord, or walked in His ways. May He give us Grace to render complete obedience to His holy will!—

***“So shall Your choicest gifts, O Lord,
Your faithful people bless,
For them shall earth its stores afford
And Heaven its happiness.”***

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

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THE THORN IN THE FLESH

NO. 1084

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 8, 1872
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And He said unto me, My Grace is sufficient for you: for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”
2 Corinthians 12:7, 8, 9.

MANY persons have a morbid desire to roll up the curtain and gaze upon the secret lives of eminent personages. Paragraphs detailing the private habits of public men are delicacies for such minds. Books stuffed with idle gossip and mere trash are sure of a wide circulation if they tell how princes ate, how warriors drank, how philosophers slept, or how senators arranged their hair. And now we are able to gratify curiosity and yet minister to edification—for we have unveiled before us a portion of the secret life of Paul, the great Apostle of the Gentiles.

We may not only see his bed-chamber, but learn the Apostle's visions! We may not only see his private infirmities, but learn the cause of them. Let us not, however, be actuated by so low a motive as mere curiosity while we gaze upon the open secret. Let us remember that the Apostle never intended to amuse the curious when he penned these words, but he wrote them for a practical purpose. Let us read them with a desire to be instructed by them and may the Holy Spirit teach us to profit.

This record was not sent to us merely that we should know that this eminent servant of Christ had abundant revelations or that he suffered a thorn in the flesh—it was written for our profit. One excellent end that may be answered by this narrative lies upon the very surface. We are plainly taught how mistaken we are when we set the eminent saints of the olden times upon a platform by themselves, as though they were a class of super-human beings. Because we fall so far short of them we excuse our indolence by conceiving *them* to be of a superior nature to ourselves so that we cannot be expected to attain to their degree of Divine Grace. We elevate them upon a niche out of the way so that they may not rebuke us, thus rendering them a homage which they never sought and denying them a usefulness which they always coveted.

As we never try to fly because we have no angelic wings, so we do not aspire to supreme holiness because we imagine that we have not Apostolic advantages. Indeed, this is a very injurious idea and must not be tolerated. What the ancient saints were, we may be! They were men of like passions with ourselves and therefore are most fit and practical examples for us. The Spirit of God which was in them is in all Believers and He is by

no means straitened! Their Savior is our Savior—His fullness is the fullness out of which all of us have received. Let us put far away from us every notion of separating the holy men of former days from ourselves, as if they were a saintly caste to be admired at a distance but not associated with as comrades.

They fought the common fight and won by the strength available to all Believers—let us esteem them as our Brethren—and with them pursue the sacred conflict in the name of the common Leader. Let us fix our eyes upon these companions of our warfare and, regarding them as a sympathetic cloud of witnesses, let us run as they ran that we may win as they won and may glorify God in our day and generation as they did in theirs!

Paul, my Brothers and Sisters, doubtless enjoyed more revelations than we have done but then he had a corresponding thorn in the flesh. He rises above us, but he sinks with us, also, and so encourages us to emulate his rising. He was a good man but he was *only* a man! He was a saint, but he had the infirmities of sinners! He is our Brother Paul, though he is “not a whit behind the very chief of the Apostles.” And as we read his experience this morning, I hope we shall be made to feel a fellowship with him and so be spurred on to imitate him.

I. Our text suggests to us, first of all, A DANGER to which the Apostle was exposed—“Lest I should be exalted above measure.” Upon that let us speak first. Here is a peril to which we are all exposed, more or less, but the Apostle Paul was especially liable to it because of his peculiar circumstances. He had been caught up into the third Heaven—secret things which had not been seen before were laid bare before his gaze. Nor were his eyes, alone, filled—his ears, also, were satisfied for he heard words which it was not possible for him to repeat and which, could he have repeated, it would not have been expedient for him even to whisper in the unpurified ears of mankind.

He had been taken into the innermost part of the third Heaven—into that secret Paradise where Christ dwells with His perfected saints! He had entered into the nearest communion with God possible to a man while yet in this life. Should he not feel somewhat exalted? Surely exultation must fill that man’s bosom who has been brought within the veil to see his God and to hear the unutterable harmonies! It was natural that he should be exalted and it was not unnatural that he should stand in danger of being exalted above measure! Devout exaltation very rapidly degenerates into self-exaltation. When God lifts us up, there is only one step further—namely our lifting up ourselves—and then we fall into serious mischief, indeed.

I wonder how many among us could bear to receive such revelations as Paul had? O God, You may well, in Your kindness, spare us such perilous favors! We have neither head nor heart to sustain so vast a load of blessing. Our little plant needs not a river to water its root—the gentle dew suffices—the flood might wash it away. How many has God blessed in the ministry for a little while, or, if not in the ministry, in some other form of service? But, alas, how soon have they swollen with conceit and have become too big for the world to hold them! Puffed up with vanity, the honor

put upon them has turned their brain and they have gone astray into gross folly, sheer vanity, or defiling sin.

Much branch and little root has brought down the tree! Wing without weight has made the bird the sport of the hurricane. Even Paul's boat, when it enjoyed so mighty a wind of Divine Revelation, was nearly upset and would have been totally wrecked had it not been for the Lord's casting in the sacred ballast of which we shall have to speak by-and-by, when we consider the preventative sorrow which saved Paul from being exalted above measure.

Now, observe, if *Paul* was in this danger, we cannot hope to be free from it for he was eminently a holy man, eminently a humble man, eminently a wise man, eminently an experienced man. Though specially favored, he was one to whom the highest privileges were not such novelties as to intoxicate him with vanity. He had enjoyed earthly honors—he had once been a highly esteemed Rabbi among his fellow countrymen and this did not elevate him with pride. He counted all his honors but loss for Christ's sake. He afterwards became a well-beloved Apostle of Jesus and the narrative of his works and sufferings, which you have in the preceding chapter is far too long for us to give you even a digest of, yet he does not seem to have been exalted thereby.

He achieved a thousand marvels of heroism and left them all behind him, pressing forward as though he had to the point done nothing! And when he had done all, he counted himself to be less than the least of all saints and the very chief of sinners! He was a man by no means childish and vain, but a man of great mind, deep comprehension and profound knowledge. He was not readily carried away by approbation or puffed up with self-esteem. If he knew much, yet he knew also that he knew only in part—and if his judgment was very acute, as it certainly was, yet he often cried, "Oh, the depths!" His was a splendid, well-balanced intellect sanctified by the Grace of God. Yet, for all that he was in danger of being exalted above measure—how much more likely, then, are we who have not his judgment, who have not his knowledge, have never occupied so lofty a station—and have never performed such mighty deeds? If so massive a pillar trembles, what peril surrounds poor reeds shaken of the wind?

Observe that in Paul's case the favor which threatened to intoxicate him with pride was one which did not operate in the common coarse way in which temptations to vanity usually assail mankind. The most of men who are exalted above measure are puffed up with the approbation of their fellow men—they love flattery, they court esteem—and admiring words are the very food of their souls! But Paul's gifts from Heaven were not things which were likely to excite the high esteem of his fellow men. It is probable that had he spoken to his fellow disciples and said, "I have enjoyed revelations," they would have doubted his statement or have attached but small importance to it. And had he spoken to the outside mass of Jews and heathens upon the subject, he would have become more than ever the subject of their ridicule.

What would have excited more the laughter of the Greek, or the sneer of the Roman, or the wrath of the Jew than to hear that Paul, the tent maker, had entered the invisible world and heard words which it was not

lawful for him to utter? Brothers and Sisters, you thus see that our Apostle was not tempted with the common, vulgar temptation of adulation and flattery. His soul would easily have risen superior to so gross an assault and he would have trod down the evil like the mire in the streets. No, the temptation was more subtle and more adapted to the noble caliber of the man. He was eminently a self-contained man, a man who had learned to think for himself and speak for himself and act for himself.

And now the temptation was that he should say within his own soul, "I have seen for myself and with these eyes as others have not. I am a seeing man among blind dotards. What do these grovelers know? What are they, compared with me? I am the favorite of Heaven. I have been indulged by the Eternal with an admission into His secret audience chamber! I am something more than the rest of the sons of men." Paul cared nothing either for the frown or the smile of men. He was superior to all that, but his temptation lay within himself and hence it was the more difficult to grapple with.

It may be, Brethren, that some of you, not having revelations, may possess a something within yourselves—a deep experience, a secret penetration into the marrow of the Divine Word—an intimate knowledge of some portion of Divine Truth. And though you would not care about the esteem of your fellow men, or be puffed up by praise, yet this personal consciousness that you have a something that others have not—this sense of superiority to them in some things may be to you a daily stumbling block—and create in you an overweening self-esteem.

Now, let us observe that although in Paul's particular form of it, this temptation to exaltation above measure may not be very common nowadays, yet, in some shape or other, it waylays the best of Christians. The common run of Christians—and they are very numerous—may not be tempted in this way. But the choice spirits, the elect out of the elect, the elite of the saints of God are most likely to be molested by this tendency to be exalted above measure through the abundance of gracious revelations.

Some real Christians have a constitutional tendency towards inordinate self-esteem. They never err through timidity, but they are very easily led into self-confidence. Every man loves the commendation of his fellow men—no man living is indifferent to it—

***"The proud to gain it toils on toils endure;
The modest shun it but to make it sure."***

It is vain for us to boast of not caring about it. We *do* care about it and our duty is to keep that propensity in check. He who thinks he is humble is probably the proudest man in the place. But there are some men in whom self-consciousness is so uppermost and so evidently powerful that you can see it in almost everything they do. It is their struggle, if they are Christians, to keep it down—but it will come up in the form of being very easily annoyed because they are overlooked in some good work—or in being easily irritated because they fancy that somebody is opposing them when that somebody never *thought* of them.

The too great prominence of the ego is the fault of many and the danger of all. Not a few have to battle with this all their lives and I should not wonder if they should be the persons who all their lives also will endure a thorn in the flesh. But there are others to whom the temptation comes in

a more refined fashion. They have more knowledge than those among whom they dwell. I mean more Scriptural knowledge, more real *spiritual* knowledge and a deeper inward experience. And when they hear the prattle of young beginners, or listen to the fearful blunders of many would-be great saints, they cannot help smiling to themselves and, almost as naturally, they cannot help saying, "Thank God I know better than that."

The temptation to be exalted above measure, in such a case, is near at hand. They have probably also enjoyed some success in sacred work while they have seen others idle, indifferent and consequently unsuccessful. Now, if God gives any man success in winning souls, I am certain that he will be lifted up to his own perdition unless a corresponding source of humiliation is opened at the same time. We must rejoice in spiritual success—it would be ungrateful not to do so—but we must be on our guard against boastfulness of spirit.

My dear Friend, if the Lord shall make you the spiritual parent of a score of souls, will you feel no exultation within your spirit as you shall see these arrows in the hands of a mighty man—these spiritual children of your youth? Will you feel no elevation of joy? Shall the father's heart never leap at the sight of his offspring? We must and will rejoice, none shall hinder us of this sacred gladness! But, mark well that here will be our danger! Among the flowers of gratitude will grow the hemlock of pride! While our thoughts of thankfulness, like angels, adore the Lord, the Satan of self-exaltation will come in among them.

It is most noteworthy that all the things of which we have spoken are, none of them, justifiable grounds for boasting, if such grounds can ever be. What if a Believer should have received more Divine illuminations than his fellow? Did not the Lord give them to him? Why should he boast as if he had not *received* the favors? Have his own reason, wit and effort worked these things? There are two beggars in the street. I give one a shilling and the other a penny—shall the man who obtains the shilling be proud and glory over his companion? If I give him the larger alms, irrespective of any consideration of merit but simply because I choose to do what I will with my own, shall he boast?

Yet thus foolish are we! Generally the fondest boasting in this world is excited by accidental circumstances. If there is a boy in the school who is conceited, it is not the lad who has worked hard and long at his studies and so obtained a distinguished position—no, the young boaster is generally a youthful genius who has great readiness at his tasks and is as lazy as he is gifted! You will not often find a man assume great airs who has achieved a great invention and blessed his fellow men by a valuable discovery. But lofty is the carriage of the brainless aristocrat who owes his position to the accident of his birth! If we must glory, let us wait till we can do so legitimately—the bounties of Sovereign Grace are prostituted when they become the subjects of pride. Shall Jesus, who had all things in Himself, be lowly and shall we, who owe all to His charity, be lifted up? God forbid.

Beloved, above all things it is dangerous for a Christian to be exalted above measure, for if he is he will rob God of His Glory and this is a high crime! The Lord has said, "I will not give My Glory to another." To give

God's Glory to graven images is bad, but to usurp it for *ourselves* is by no means better. I see no difference between the worship of a god of stone and the worship of a god of flesh. Self is as degrading an idol as Jugger-naut or Kalee. God will not honor that man who retains honor for himself. The meek He will exalt, the proud He will abase. Self-exaltation is equally evil to the Church with which the man associates and the more prominent he is, the more pestilent is his sin.

Suppose Paul to have been lifted up—he would have been of small use to the Gentile Church afterwards. He would have sought *himself* and not the things of Christ! And very soon Paul would have become an object of parties and the leader of a sect—the cry of, “I am of Paul,” would have been sweet music to him and he would in all ways have encouraged those who adopted it—and a schism would have been the result. Had he been exalted above measure, he might have become a rival rather than a servant of Jesus. He might have disdained his lowly office and have aspired to lord it over God's heritage. We might have heard of him as a right reverend father in God rather than as the servant of Jesus Christ and His Church.

It would have been bad for ungodly sinners, too, for a proud Paul would never have gone from city to city to be persecuted for preaching the Gospel. Proud preachers win not men's hearts. He who is exalted in himself will never exalt the Savior and he who does not exalt the Savior will never win the souls of men. It would have been worst of all for the Apostle, himself, for pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall. We should have had in Paul's history an awful instance of how men may be like Lucifer, Son of the Morning, for brightness and yet may fall like Lucifer, into the blackness of darkness forever.

If God had not taken Paul in hand, the danger with which he was surrounded would have been fatal to him. To God's Glory, to himself, to sinners, to the Gospel, to his own salvation it would have been a danger, indeed. Thus have I spoken upon the peril.

II. Now, secondly, let us consider THE PREVENTATIVE. Paul says, “There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.” Now, note every word here. First, he says, “There was given to me.” He reckoned his great trial to be a *gift*. It is well put. He does not say, “There was *inflicted* upon me a thorn in the flesh,” but, “There was *given* to me.” This is holy reckoning.

O child of God, among all the goods of your house, you have not one single article that is a better touch of Divine Love to you than your daily cross. You would gladly be rid of it, but you would lose your choicest treasure if it were withdrawn. Blessed be God for the crucible and the furnace! “There was given to me a thorn in the flesh,” Rich Grace bestowed the blessing. At first the Apostle may not have seen his thorn to be a gift, but afterwards, when experience had taught him patience, he came to look at that sharp, pricking, festering torment as a gift from his heavenly Father.

You, O tried one, will come to do the same one of these days. When the vessel first was launched upon the river and was about to cross the sea, it felt itself light and airy and ready to bound over the waves. It longed for a

voyage across the Atlantic that it might fly like a sea bird over the crest of the billows. But suddenly, to her sorrow, the gallant ship was stopped in her career and moored close by a bank of sand and shingle and men began to cast stones and earth into her. Then the boat murmured, "What? Am I to be weighed down and sunk low in the water with a cargo of mire and dirt? What a hindrance to my speed! I thought I could fly just now like a sea bird—am I to be weighted till I am like a log?"

It was even so, for had not the vessel been thus ballasted, she had soon been wrecked and had never reached the desired haven. That ballast was a gift, a gift as much as if it had been bars of gold or ingots of silver. So your trials, your troubles and your infirmities are gifts to you, O Believers, and you must regard them as such.

The Apostle says, "There was given to me a thorn." Note that—"a *thorn*." If the English word expresses the exact meaning—and I think it is pretty near it—you need not be at a loss to understand the simile. A thorn is but a little thing and indicates a painful, but not a killing trial—not a huge, crushing, overwhelming affliction, but a common matter—none the less painful, however, because common and insignificant. A thorn is a sharp thing which pricks, pierces, irritates, lacerates, festers and causes endless pain and inconvenience. And yet it is almost a *secret* thing—not very apparent to anyone but the sufferer.

Paul had a secret grief somewhere, I know not where, but near his heart, continually wherever he might be, irritating him—perpetually vexing him and wounding him. A thorn, a commonplace thing such as might grow in any field and fall to any man's lot. Thorns are plentiful enough and have been since Father Adam scattered the first handful of the seed. A thorn—nothing to make a man unbearable or give him the dignity of unusual sorrow. Some men boast about their great trials and there is something in feeling that you are a man greatly afflicted. But a *thorn* could not drive even this wretched satisfaction. It was not a sword in the bones, or a galling arrow in the loins, but only a thorn, about which little could be said.

Everyone knows, however, that a thorn is one of the most wretched intruders that can molest our foot or hand. Those pains which are despised because they are seldom fatal, are frequently the source of the most intense anguish—toothache, headache, earache—what greater miseries are known to mortals? And so with a thorn. It sounds like a nothing—"it can be easily removed with a needle"—so those say who feel it not and yet how it will fester! And if it remains in the flesh it will generate inconceivable torture. Such was Paul's trial—a secret smarting, incessantly irritating, something—we do not know what.

It was a thorn "in the flesh"—in the flesh. He was not tempted in the *spirit*—it was in the flesh. I suppose the evil had an intimate connection with his body. Many as the leaves of autumn have been the guesses of learned men as to what Paul's thorn in the flesh was. Almost every disease has had its advocates. I was particularly pleased to find that Rosenmuller thought it to be the gout [Brother Spurgeon suffered from severe gout]—but then other critics think it to be weak eyesight, stammering, or a hypochondriac tendency. Richard Baxter, who suffered from a very pain-

ful disorder which I need not mention, thought that the Apostle was his fellow sufferer. One Divine is of the opinion that Paul endured the earache and I generally find that each expositor has selected that particular thorn which had pierced his own bosom.

Now I believe that the Apostle did not tell us what his peculiar affliction was, that we may everyone feel that he had sympathy with us—that we may everyone believe that ours is no new grief. It was a trial mainly of the body and from the use of the term, “flesh,” rather than, “body,” it would seem that it excited in the sufferer some fleshly *temptation*. It may not be so, but still, the writer is so accustomed to associate with, “the flesh,” the idea of *sin*, that I think it no idle conjecture that some temptation which the good man considered he had effectually overcome, fell upon him by reason of his bodily ailment. It became, therefore, to him not merely a thorn in his flesh, but, “a messenger of Satan,” tempting him to an evil which he abhorred and which for many a day had been so trampled down by his nobler nature that he almost thought such a propensity extinct within him.

Then he adds, “The *messenger* of Satan.” Not Satan—it was not a great enough temptation for that. It was a “messenger of Satan”—one of Satan’s errand boys, nothing better—a suggestion from an *inferior* evil spirit. He does not set it down to the Great Master Spirit, but to a mere messenger of the Prince of Darkness. It was not intended by God that Satan should, on this occasion, come forth against Paul, for such an encounter might not have humbled him. It is a grand thing to fight Satan face to face and foot to foot—a stern joy fills a brave man’s heart when he feels that before him stands a foeman worthy of his steel!

A combat with the arch-enemy might not, therefore, have humbled Paul. But to be beset by a mean, sneaking devil—not a great, grand fiend, but a mere lackey of Hell and to be troubled and tormented by so mean an adversary—this was galling and humiliating to the last degree! It was, therefore, all the better for the purpose for which it was sent, namely to prevent his being lifted up. “What?” Paul seemed to say, “Am I to fight with such a contemptible temptation as this? Am I, who have built up the Church and seen the Lord and been caught up into the third Heaven—am I to do battle with this miserable, base, despicable propensity which I thought I had done with these 14 years ago?”

Yes, so it was, the Lord had sent “a messenger of Satan” to buffet him. And that word, “buffet.” Note that—to *cuff* him. That is it. Not to *fight* with him with the sword—that is manly, soldierly work—but to *buffet* him as masters used to cuff their slaves, or as schoolteachers box the ears of boys. Paul seems to feel the degradation of being buffeted. “I that would do battle with Satan and put on the helmet of hope, the breastplate of confidence and go forth against all the powers of Hell—am I to be *cuffed* as though I were a slave and chastened as though I were a boy? Must I be smitten by these vain and wretched temptations which even in my spiritual youth I was able to subdue?”

Every part of the process tended to lower him and it was intended to do so, lest he should be exalted above measure. You see, Brothers and Sisters, that this preventative was well adapted to work out its design, for as-

surely it would recall the Apostle from ecstasies and excitements and make him feel that he was in the body after all. He said once, "Whether in the body, or whether out of the body, I cannot tell," but when the thorn in the flesh was tearing him he soon settled that question! This made him feel he was a man, even as others. He had dreamed, perhaps, that he was growing very angelic, but now he feels intensely human. This made him feel he was only a man—though he was filled so full with God, still he was only a man—and could be filled as full with the devil, too, if deserted by Divine Grace.

This made him feel that he was a *weak* man, for he had to do battle with base temptations—temptations that seemed not worth fighting with. He had to be cuffed and buffeted in a small way, like a babe in Grace. This made him know that he was a man in danger and needed to fly to God for refuge—for here he was, ready to be exalted above measure even by Divine blessings—and ready to be provoked into sin by the mere buffetings of an evil spirit! From all this I gather that the worst trial a man may have may be the best possession he has in this world—that the messenger of Satan may be as good to him as his guardian angel!

It may be that it is well for us to be buffeted of Satan as ever it was to be caressed of the Lord Himself! It may be essential to our soul's salvation that we should do business not only on deep waters, but on waters that cast up mire and dirt. The worst form of trial may, nevertheless, be our best present portion. I perceive, also, that the worst and deepest experience may only be the necessary complement of the highest and the noblest. I mean it may be necessary that if we are lifted up we should be cast down. It may only be part and parcel of the cry, "Nearer my God to You, nearer to You" that we should have to groan out, also, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" The two fit into each other like the pieces of a puzzle—they rise and fall like the scales of a balance—and without its fellow, either of them might be ruinous to us.

Learn, also, that we must never envy other saints. If we hear Paul speak of his visions, let us recollect his thorn in the flesh. If we meet with a Brother who rejoices abundantly and whom God owns and blesses, let us not conclude that his pathway is all smooth. His roses have their thorns, his bees their stings. As for ourselves, let us never wish to be without our daily cross. The kite broke away from its string and instead of mounting to the stars it descended into the mire. The river grew weary of its restraining banks and longed to burst them, that it might rush on in the wild joy of freedom—down went the embankments, the river became a flood—and carried destruction and desolation wherever it rushed.

Unleash the coursers of the sun, and, lo, the earth is burned! Unbind the girdle of the elements and chaos reigns! Let us never desire to be rid of those restraints which God has seen fit to lay upon us—they are more necessary than we have ever dreamed of. Remember how the vine, when bound to the stake which upheld it, judged itself a martyr and longed to be free—but when it saw the wild vine at its feet, rotting in the dampness and pining amidst the heats and producing no fruit—it felt how necessary were its bonds if its clusters were ever to ripen. Be content, dear Brothers

and Sisters, to keep the thorn in the flesh if it saves you from being exalted above measure!

III. THE IMMEDIATE EFFECT OF THIS THORN UPON PAUL. First—it drove him to his knees. “For this thing I besought the Lord thrice.” Anything is a blessing which makes us pray. This thorn compelled Paul to cry unto God and, having commenced to pray, he resorted to prayer again and again. “I besought the Lord thrice.” It may be that this was the exact number of his special prayers on that point—it may, however, only intimate that he *often* cried to God for deliverance from this trouble. Yes, we may be lax in prayer when all things flow with even current, but we multiply prayers when trials increase.

In this way Paul was kept from being proud. The revelations now seemed forgotten, for the thorn in the flesh was the more prominent thing of the two. Now he would not speak about visions and could not, for, when his tongue was tempted to move upon that subject, the thorn began to prick his side again. A man does not need to tell pretty stories when his head is aching or when sharp pains are goading him. Paul was not allowed to dazzle himself with the brightness which God had set before him. His thoughts were turned in another direction, yes, blessedly turned to the Mercy Seat, where he could get no evil but must derive much profit.

He continued to pray till at last he received for an answer not the removal of the thorn, but the assurance, “My Grace is sufficient for you.” God will always honor our prayers. He will either pay us in silver or in gold—and sometimes it is a golden answer to prayer to deny us our request and give us the very opposite of what we seek! If you were to tell your child that you would grant him anything he asked for, you would not intend by that that you would give him a poisonous drug if someone should delude him into the idea that it would be useful to him. You would mean that you would give your child all that was really good for him.

God, therefore, knowing that this thorn in the flesh was a sacred medicine to Paul, would not take it away, even though most urgently requested to do so. Well does Ralph Erskine say of prayer—

***“I’m heard when answered soon or late,
Yes, heard when I no answer get.
Most kindly answered when refused
And treated well when harshly used.”***

So, though refused, Paul was answered for he got something *better* than the taking away of the thorn in the flesh—the result was that the Grace given him enabled him to bear the thorn and lifted him right above it—till he even rejoiced and gloried to think that he was permitted so to suffer. “Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”

This is a grand thing! Suppose any person here is very poor and he has prayed to the Lord many a time to raise him above need and at last God has said, “My Grace is sufficient for you”? What more can he need? My dear Brother, my dear Sister, rejoice in poverty and thank God that you are poor! If the Lord is the better glorified thereby, be grateful for your low estate and say, “I have the honor to be permitted to glorify God in poverty.” Perhaps it may be you are the subject of a painful bodily infirmity and you have prayed to have it removed—yet the Lord knows that your in-

firmity is for His glory and your good. Well, when He says, “My Grace is sufficient for you,” accept and bear the trial not only with resignation but with acquiescence! Wish not to change your estate. Your heavenly Father knows best!

IV. Now lastly, THE PERMANENT RESULT of this preventative upon Paul. For the present you see it kept him from being exalted, by making him pray and by leading him to receive more Grace—but *permanently* the remedy was very successful, for through the power of the Holy Spirit it kept him always humble. This thorn in the flesh made him humble in reference to his visions, for he became silent about them. Fourteen long years rolled away and the Apostle never told anybody that he had been caught up into the third Heaven.

I gather from the way in which he puts it here that he never mentioned it to a soul. This was singular. Why, if I were caught up into the third Heaven I should tell you of it the first time I had the chance of addressing you! And I guarantee that most here would not be long before they would impart to their friends the blessed secret. The thorn in the flesh must have had a powerful effect upon the Apostle’s mind when it led him to wrap up his treasure in his bosom and go through the world, nobody being any the wiser for all that he had seen. He was a humble man, indeed.

When he did tell it, it was dragged out of him. He told it for a purpose. It was only because the Corinthians had denied his Apostleship, and said, “What does he know concerning Divine things?” that he felt bound to vindicate his character—otherwise he would not have told it. Notice how modestly he speaks of it—in such a way that it does not leave the impression on your mind that he was an eminently honored man through receiving the revelation. The impression received, rather, is how weak it was of Paul to be exalted above measure and how gracious it was of God to give him the thorn in the flesh to keep him where he should be!

Observe that his way of telling the story is modest in its very form but it is especially humble in its spirit, for he takes us off from the idea of how gloriously God revealed Himself to Paul and makes us rather look at the weakness of the recipient of the revelation than at the great honor conferred by the revelation itself. It is no small matter when God sends a thorn in the flesh and it answers its end, for in some cases it does not. Without the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit thorns produce *evil* rather than good.

In many people their thorn in the flesh does not appear to have fulfilled any admirable design at all—it has created another vice instead of removing a temptation. We have known some whose poverty has made them envious. We have known others whose sickness has rendered them impatient and petulant and others, again, whose personal infirmity has rendered them perpetually fretful and rebellious against God. O, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus, let us labor against this with all our might and if God has been pleased to put a fetter upon us in any shape or fashion, let us ask Him not to allow us to make this the occasion for fresh folly, but, on the contrary, to bear the rod and learn its lessons! Pray that when we are afflicted we may grow in Grace and in likeness to our Lord Jesus and so bring more honor to His name.

Does not this teach us all the solemn duty of being content whatever our lot may be—content without the revelation if we are without the thorn—content with the thorn if we have the revelation—content without either revelation or thorn so long as we may but have a humble hope in Jesus Christ our Savior? O, Beloved, what a happy people God's people are and ought to be when everything turns for their good—when even the thorn that was a curse becomes to them a blessing—and out of the lion comes forth honey!

If the thorn is a blessing, what must the blessing itself, be? If the smarts of earth heal us, what will the joys of Heaven do for us? Let us be glad! Ours is a happy portion! Let us go on our way rejoicing that we are favored to possess Divine life and shoulder our cross cheerfully, for we shall soon, (ah, how soon!), wear our crown.

The last thought of all is, what a sad thing it must be not to be a Believer in Jesus Christ because thorns we *shall* have if we are not in Christ, but those thorns will not be blessings to us. I understand drinking bitter medicine if it is to make me well. But who would drink wormwood and gall with no good result to follow? I can understand toiling if a wage is in prospect, but I cannot see the sense of toiling when there is no reward for it. Now, you who love not God, your lives are not all flowers and sunshine. It is not all music and dancing with you now. I know you have your cares and troubles. You have your thorns in the flesh and perhaps a great many of them—and you have no Savior to run to.

You are like a ship in a storm and there is no harbor for you. You are as birds driven before the wind and you have no nests in which to shelter but must be driven forever before the blast of Jehovah's wrath. Consider this, I pray you—meditate upon your condition and prospects and when you have done so, may your heart cry out—"I would gladly have God to be my Friend!" Remember that He who sent Paul thorns for his good once wore a crown of thorns Himself for the salvation of sinners!

And if you will come and bow before Him as He wears that diadem and trust Him as the Son of God made flesh for sinners and bleeding and dying for them, you shall be saved this morning! Your sins, which are many, shall be forgiven you! And though I cannot promise you that you shall be without thorns as you live, I can promise you that your thorns shall be removed—they shall become to you a rich blessing which will be better, still. There is one thorn you shall never have if you believe in Jesus—the thorn of unforgiven sin—the fear of the wrath to come! You shall have the peace of God which passes understanding which shall keep your heart and mind by Christ Jesus. O, that some would trust in Jesus this morning! Go, Brothers and Sisters, and pray it may be so. The Lord grant it, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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STRENGTHENING WORDS FROM THE SAVIOR'S LIPS NO. 1287

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL, 2, 1876,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And He said unto me, My Grace is sufficient for you: for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”
2 Corinthians 12:9.

PAUL, when buffeted by the messenger of Satan, addressed his prayer to the Lord Jesus Christ and not, as he usually did, to the heavenly Father. This is a somewhat remarkable fact, but it is clear from the passage before us. He says, “For this thing I besought *the Lord* thrice,” and that *the Lord*, here, is the Lord Jesus is pretty clear from the fact that he says in the next verse, “that the power of *Christ* may rest upon me.” His prayer was not directed to God, absolutely considered, nor does he speak of the power of *God*, but his prayer was directed to the Lord Jesus Christ and it was the power of the Lord Jesus Christ which he desired to rest upon him. It is an Infallible proof of our Lord's divinity, that He may be addressed in prayer! And this is one instance, with several others, which show us that we may legitimately present our petitions, not only to the ever-blessed Father, but also to His Son Jesus Christ.

There seems to me to be a peculiar fitness in a prayer to Jesus when the temptation came from a messenger of Satan, because the Lord Jesus has endured the same temptation, Himself, and knows how to succor them that are tempted. Moreover, He has come to earth to destroy the works of the devil. In His lifetime He manifested peculiar power over unclean spirits and was constantly casting them out from those whom they tormented. It was one of His few rejoicing notes, “I saw Satan, like lightning, fall from Heaven.” It was by the name of Jesus that devils were expelled after Christ had risen into Glory. “Jesus I know,” said the spirits whom the sons of Sceva endeavored in vain to exorcise.

Devils felt the power of Jesus and, therefore, it was wise and natural that the Apostle Paul should, when buffeted of Satan, turn to Jesus and ask Him to bid the evil spirit depart from him. Is it not a little remarkable, also, that this prayer was not only addressed to Jesus, but was offered in much the same manner as the prayer of our Lord in the Garden? The Apostle prayed three times, even as our Lord did when He, too, was sorely buffeted by the powers of darkness. Paul's thrice-repeated cry was intensely earnest, for he, “*besought*” the Lord thrice.

And Paul, singularly enough, met with very much the same answer as his Master, for our Lord was not permitted to put aside the cup, (it could

not pass away from Him unless He drank it), but an angel appeared unto Him strengthening Him. And so, in Paul's case, the trial was not taken away from him, but he was strengthened by kind, assuring words and by being led to see that God would be glorified by his enduring the trial. I see, then, the Lord Jesus reflected in His servant Paul as in a mirror! I hear the three-times repeated prayer, I mark the cup standing unremoved and I see the strength imparted in the midst of weakness!

Our text fell from the lips of Jesus Christ, Himself, and if anything could make its language more sweet than it is in itself, it would be this fact, that He, Himself, delivered the words to His chosen Apostle. It is Jesus who says, in the words of the text, "*My* Grace is sufficient for you, *My* strength is made perfect in weakness." This Truth of God casts a soft, mellow light upon the words, helps us to interpret them and enables us to derive all the greater comfort from them. When Jesus speaks, a special charm surrounds each syllable.

The exact tense of the Greek words are not easy to translate into English. The Apostle does not merely tell us that his Lord said these words to him 14 years ago, but the tense connects the past with the present, as if he felt that the answer was not simply something past, but something which continued with him in its consoling power. The echoes of what his Lord had said were still sounding through his soul! I should not miss the Apostle's meaning if I read it, "He has been saying to me, 'My strength is sufficient for you.'" The words had an abiding effect upon the Apostle's mind, not merely for the time reconciling him to the particular trouble which had afflicted him, but cheering him for all the rest of his life—strengthening him in all future trials to glory in his infirmities and render praise to God.

It is a sweet thing to have a text of Scripture laid home to the heart for present uses, but when God the Holy Spirit so applies a promise that it abides in the heart for the term of one's natural life, then are we favored, indeed! Elijah's meat gave him strength for 40 days, but what is that meat which endures unto life eternal? What bread must that be which feeds me through the whole period of my pilgrimage? Here, then, we have before us food which Jesus Himself provides, so nutritive that His Spirit can cause us to remember the feast to our dying day! O Lord, feed us, now, and give us Grace to inwardly digest your gracious Word.

With this preface, which I beg you to remember during the discourse, since it indicates my line of thought, we now come to the text itself—a mass of diamonds, bright and precious! In the text we notice three things—first, *Grace all-sufficient*. Secondly, *strength perfected*. And, thirdly, *power indwelling*.

I. In the text, even the most superficial observer notices a promise of GRACE ALL-SUFFICIENT. In the case of our Lord Jesus, the Spirit so rested upon Him as to be sufficient for Him at all times. Never did the Spirit of God fail to uphold the Man, Christ Jesus, under the most arduous labors, the most terrible temptations and the most bitter suffering. Therefore He completed the work which His Father gave Him to do and in death He was able to exclaim, "It is finished." The Lord, here, assures His

chosen servant that it should be the same with him—"My Grace," said He, "is sufficient for you."

To bring out the full meaning of these few words, I will give you four readings of them. The first is a strictly grammatical one and is the first sense which they bear. Taking the word translated, *Grace*, to mean favor or love—for that, also, is included in the word charts—how does the passage run? "My favor is sufficient for you." Do not ask to be rid of your trouble, do not ask to have ease, comfort, or any other form of happiness—My favor is enough for you. Or, as good Dr. Dodge reads it, "*My Love is enough for you.*" "If you have little else that you desire, yet surely it is enough that you are My favored one, a chosen subject of My Grace. My love is enough for you."

What a delicious expression! You do not need an explanation. Repeat the words to yourselves and even now conceive that the Well-Beloved looks down on you, and whispers, "My love is enough for you." If you have been asking Him three times to deliver you from your present affliction, hear Him reply, "Why do you need to ask Me anymore? My love is enough for you." What do you say to that? Do you not answer, "Yes, Lord, indeed it is. If I am poor, if You will me to be poor, I am content to be severely tried, for Your love is enough for me. If I am sick, so long as You will come and visit me and reveal Your heart to me, I am satisfied, for Your love is enough for me. If I am persecuted, cast out and forsaken, cheerfully will I bear it, if a sense of Your love sustains me, for Your love is enough for me. Yes, and if I should be left so alone as to have no one to care for me in the whole world. If my father and my mother should forsake me and every friend should prove a Judas—"Your love is enough for me."

Do you catch the meaning, and do you see how Paul must have been comforted by it if he understood it in this primary and most natural sense? "O Paul, it is sufficient for you that I have made you to be a chosen vessel to bear My name among the Gentiles. It is enough for you that I have loved you from before the foundation of the world, that I redeemed you with My precious blood, that I called you when you were a blasphemer and injurious, that I changed your heart and made you love Me and that I have kept you to this day and will keep you, even, to the end by My inimitable love. My love is enough for you. Ask not to be set free from this buffeting. Ask not to be delivered from weakness and trial, for these will enable you the better to enjoy My favor and that is enough for you."

We will now read our text another way, keeping to our authorized version, but throwing the stress on the first word—"My Grace is sufficient for you." What Grace is this? Note who it is that promises. It is Jesus who speaks, therefore it is *mediatorial* Grace, the Grace given to Jesus Christ as the Covenant Head of His people, which is here intended. Think of it a minute. It is the Head speaking to the member and declaring that His Grace is enough for the whole body. The anointing oil has been poured upon the Head that it may go down the beard and descend to the garments and, lo, one poor member of the body is mourning and complaining, for it is fearful of being omitted in the plenteous anointing. But the

Head comforts it by saying, "*My* anointing is enough for you, since it is enough for all *My* members."

It is the Head, Christ, in whom all fullness dwells, speaking to one of the members of His mystical body and saying, "The Grace which God has given to Me without measure on behalf of all the members of *My* body is sufficient for you as well as for the rest of them." Beloved, seize the thought! The Lord has given to Christ all that the whole company of His people can possibly need—no, more than that—for, "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." And of His fullness have we all received, and Grace for Grace, and from that fullness we hope, continually, to draw forevermore. This is the Grace which is sufficient for us!

It greatly tends to help faith when you can see the relation that exists between the Redeemer and yourself, for Jesus is *your* Covenant Head, and God has been pleased to give Himself and all His infinite riches to the Lord Jesus Christ as your federal Representative. And as your Covenant Head, the Lord Jesus assures you that the stores laid up in Him on your behalf are sufficient for you. Can you limit the mediatorial power of Christ? Don't you know that God gives not the Spirit by measure unto Him? Be you, then, assured that Christ's Grace is sufficient for you!

I will read the text again and this time put the stress in the center. "*My* Grace *is sufficient* for you." It is *now* sufficient. You are buffeted by this evil spirit, but *My* Grace is sufficient for your present need. Paul, you have been beaten with rods, stoned, shipwrecked and in perils often—and in all these *My* Grace has been sufficient—and now I tell you this present trouble, though it is somewhat different in shape from the rest, is, nevertheless such as I am well able to meet. *My* Grace is sufficient for you in this, also.

The nearness of an object increases its apparent bulk and so the affliction under which we are at *present* laboring seems greater than any we have known before. Past trials appear, when we have passed them, to have been small things compared with present troubles and, therefore, the difficulty is to see the sufficiency of Grace for present and pressing afflictions. It is easy to believe in Grace for the past and the future, but to rest in it for the *immediate* necessity is true faith. Believer, it is *now* that Grace is sufficient! Even at this moment it *is* enough for you. Do not say this is a new trouble, or if you do say it, remember the Grace of God is always new!

Do not complain that some strange thing has happened to you, or if you do, remember blessings are provided in the Grace of God to meet your strange difficulties. Tremble not because the thorn in the flesh is so mysterious, for Grace is mysterious, too, and so mystery shall be met by mystery. At this moment and at all moments which shall ever occur between now and Glory, the Grace of God will be sufficient for you! This sufficiency is declared without any limiting words and, therefore, I understand the passage to mean that the Grace of our Lord Jesus is sufficient to uphold you, sufficient to strengthen you, sufficient to comfort you, sufficient to make your trouble useful to you, sufficient to enable you to triumph over

it, sufficient to bring you out of it, sufficient to bring you out of 10,000 like it, sufficient to bring you home to Heaven!

Whatever would be good for you, Christ's Grace is sufficient to bestow! Whatever would harm you, His Grace is sufficient to avert! Whatever you desire, His Grace is sufficient to give you if it is good for you. Whatever you would avoid, His Grace can shield you from it if so His wisdom shall dictate. O child of God, I wish it were possible to put into words this all-sufficiency, but it is not. Let me retract my speech—I am glad that it *cannot* be put into words, for if so, it would be *finite*. But since we never can express it, glory be to God, it is inexhaustible and our demands upon it can never be too great! Here let me press upon you the pleasing duty of taking home the promise, personally, at this moment, for no Believer here need be under any fear, since for him, also, at this very instant, the Grace of the Lord Jesus is sufficient!

In the last reading which I will give, I shall lay the emphasis upon the first and the last words—“*My* Grace is sufficient for *you*.” I have often read in Scripture of the holy laughter of Abraham, when he fell upon his face and laughed. But I do not know that I ever experienced that laughter till a few evenings ago, when this text came home to me with such sacred power as literally to cause me to laugh! I had been looking it through—looking at its original meaning and trying to fathom it, till at last I got hold of it this way—“*My* Grace,” says Jesus, “is sufficient for *you*,” and it looked almost as if it were meant to *ridicule my unbelief*! For surely the Grace of such a One as my Lord Jesus is, indeed, sufficient for so insignificant a being as I am!

It seemed to me as if some tiny fish, being very thirsty, was troubled with fear of drinking the river dry, and Father Thames said to him, “Poor little fish, my stream is sufficient for you.” I should think it is, and inconceivably more! My Lord seemed to say to me, “Poor little creature that you are, remember what Grace there is in Me and believe that it is all yours. Surely it is sufficient for you.” I replied, “Ah, my Lord, it is, indeed.” Put one mouse down in all the granaries of Egypt, when they were the fullest after seven years of plenty, and imagine that one mouse complaining that it might die of famine. “Cheer up,” says Pharaoh, “poor mouse, my granaries are sufficient for you.” Imagine a man standing on a mountain and saying, “I breathe so many cubic feet of air in a year. I am afraid that I shall ultimately inhale all the oxygen which surrounds the globe.”

Surely the earth on which the man would stand might reply, “My atmosphere is sufficient for you.” I should think it! Let him fill his lungs as full as ever he can, he will never breathe all the oxygen, nor will the fish drink up all the river, nor the mouse eat up all the stores in the granaries of Egypt! Does it not make unbelief seem altogether ridiculous, so that you laugh it out of the house and say, “Never come this way again, for with a mediatorial fullness to go to, with such a Redeemer to rest in, how dare I, for a moment, think that my needs cannot be supplied?” Our great Lord feeds all the fish of the sea and the birds of the air—and the cattle on the hills, and guides the stars, and upholds all things by the power of His

hand—how, then, can we be straitened for supplies, or be destitute of help?

If our needs were a thousand times larger than they are, they would not approach the vastness of His power to provide. The Father has committed all things into His hands. Doubt Him no more! Listen, and let Him speak to you—“*My* Grace is sufficient for *you*. What if you have little Grace, yet I have much—it is My Grace you have to look to, not your own, and My Grace will surely be sufficient for you.”

John Bunyan has the following passage which exactly expresses what I, myself, have experienced. He says that he was full of sadness and terror, but suddenly these words broke in upon him with great power, and three times together the words sounded in his ears, “My Grace is sufficient for you; My Grace is sufficient for you; My Grace is sufficient for you.” And “Oh! I thought,” says he, “that every word was a mighty word unto me, as, ‘*My*’ and, ‘*Grace*’ and, ‘*sufficient*’ and ‘*for you.*’ They were, then, and sometimes are still, far bigger than others are.”

He who knows, like the bee, how to suck honey from flowers, may well linger over each one of these words and drink in unutterable content—

***“Have we forgot the Almighty name
That formed the earth and sea?
And can an all-creating arm
Grow weary or decay?
Treasures of everlasting might
In our Jehovah dwell!
He gives the conquest to the weak,
And treads their foes to Hell.
Mere mortal power shall fade and die,
And youthful vigor cease—
But we that wait upon the Lord
Shall feel our strength increase.”***

II. Secondly, in the text we have STRENGTH PERFECTED—“For My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Now, running the parallel, still between Jesus and Paul, remember, Beloved, that it was so with our Lord Jesus Christ. He was strong as to His Deity—in Him dwelt all strength, for He is the mighty God—but how was His strength as Mediator made perfect? The Scripture says, “Perfect through suffering.” That is to say, the strength of Christ to save His people would never have been perfected if He had not taken upon Himself the weakness of human nature and if He had not, in that feeble nature, descended lower and lower in weakness. Had he saved Himself, He could not have saved us. But His giving up of all that He had made Him rich towards us. And His putting on of weakness made Him strong to redeem us.

O Incarnate God, You could not redeem till You were swaddled as a Babe in Bethlehem! No, You could not redeem till You were made to bear a Cross like a felon! No, You could not perfect redemption till You did hang, a ghastly corpse, upon a gallows! No, it was even essential that You should be laid in the grave! Your work was not fulfilled till three days and nights You did abide in the heart of the earth among the dead! The Lord Jesus could say—“My strength is made perfect in weakness.” This was to be realized in Paul and is to be fulfilled in all the saints. Of course the

strength of God is always perfect—we do not understand that anything is necessary to make perfect the Divine power—but the words fell from the lips of Jesus as our Mediator and Representative—and it is *His* strength which is made perfect in weakness.

In us this is true, first, because *the power of Jesus can only be perfectly revealed in His people by bearing them up, keeping them and sustaining them when they are in trouble*. Who knows the perfection of the strength of God till he sees how God can make poor puny creatures strong? Yonder is a timid, sickly woman who lives a life of agony. Almost every breath is a spasm and every pulse a pang. Each member of her body is subject to tortures of which others scarcely dream. But look at her cheerful patience! As much as possible, she conceals her pain that she may not distress others. You hear no mutter of complaint, but oftentimes she utters words as cheery as those which fall from persons in robust health. And when she *must* tell of her afflictions, she always speaks of them in such a tone that you feel she has accepted them at the Lord's hands with complete resignation and is willing to bear them as many years as the Lord may appoint.

I do not wonder when strong men say strong things, but I have often marveled when I have heard such heroic sentences from the weak and trembling. To hear the sorrowing comfort others when you would think *they* needed comfort, themselves! To mark their cheerfulness when, if you and I suffered half as much, we should have sunk to the earth—this is worthy of note! God's strength is perfectly revealed in the trials of the weak. When you see a man of God brought into poverty and yet, in that poverty, never repining. When you hear his character assailed by slander and yet he stands unmoved, like a rock amidst the waves. When you see the gracious man persecuted and driven from home and country for Christ's sake and yet he takes, joyfully, the spoiling of his goods and banishment and disgrace—then the strength of God is made perfect in the midst of weakness!

While the man of God suffers and is under necessities, distresses and infirmities, then it is that the power of God is seen. It was when tiny creatures made Pharaoh tremble that his magicians said, "This is the finger of God," and evermore God's greatest Glory comes from things weak and despised. This is equally true to the man, himself. *God's strength is made perfect to the saint's own apprehension when he is weak*. Brothers, if you have prospered in business all your lives and have had an easy path of it, I will tell you something—you do not know much about the strength of God. If you have been healthy all your lives and never suffered. If your families have never been visited by bereavements and if your spirits have never been cast down, you do not know much about the strength of God.

You may have read about it in books and it is well you should! You may have seen it in others and observation is useful. But a grain of experience is worth a pound of observation and you can only get knowledge of the power of God by an *experimental* acquaintance with your own weakness—and you will not be likely to get that except as you are led along the thorny, flinty way which most of God's saints have to travel—which is described by the word, "tribulation." Great tribulation brings out the great

strength of God! If you never feel inward conflicts and sinking of soul, you do not know much of the upholding power of God. But if you go down, down, into the depths of soul-anguish till the deep threatens to shut her mouth upon you—and then the Lord rides upon a cherub and does fly, yes, rides upon the wings of the wind and delivers your soul and catches you away to the third Heaven of delight—*then* you perceive the majesty of Divine Grace! Oh, there must be the weakness of man felt, recognized and mourned over, or else the strength of the Son of God will never be perfected in us!

Thus have I given you two meanings of the text. Others see the strength of God in our weakness and we, ourselves, discover it when our weakness is most manifest. I think the term, “made perfect,” also means *achieves its purpose*. Read it thus—“For My strength fully achieves its design in weakness.” Brothers and Sisters, God has not done for us what He means to do unless we have felt our own weaknesses. As long as a portion of strength remains, we are but partially sanctified. When our Lord has accomplished in us what He is aiming, the result will be to empty us out and to make us discover the utter vanity of *self*.

If the Lord ever takes you, like a dish, and turns you upside down and wipes you right out and sets you away on a shelf, *then* you will feel what He *means* you to feel—that is to say, you will feel as if you were waiting there for the Lord to take you down and use you and then, be sure, He will come, in due time, and use you for His honorable purposes, laying meat upon you for His hungry people and making you an ornament at His banquets of love. If you feel yourself to be a full dish, I will tell you what there is in you—you hold nothing but the slop and filthiness of depraved nature. The Lord will never use you till all that is poured out and you are wiped quite clean and put away with nothing of yourself remaining in you, wherein you may rejoice!

All the saints who are ready to go to Heaven feel themselves to be less than the least. But those professors who are, by no means, ready for Glory are highly self conscious and feel that there is a great deal in them which is very commendable. Those who enter Heaven carry nothing of self with them, neither will any of us enter there so long as we talk proudly of our attainments. Those who claim to possess “the higher life” have been heard to boast of their purity, but those who enjoy the highest life in Glory cry, “Not unto us! Not unto us be glory!” It is a mark of fitness for Heaven when self is dead and Grace, alone, reigns. The strength of God is never perfected till our *weakness* is perfected. When our weakness is consciously and thoroughly felt, then the strength of God has done its work in us.

There is yet another meaning. *The strength of God is most perfected or most glorified by its using our weaknesses*. Suppose the world had been converted to Christ by 12 emperors? The establishment of Christianity might have been readily accounted for without glorifying God. Imagine that Christianity had been forced upon men with the stern arguments which Mohammed placed in the hands of his first disciples—the glory would have redounded to human courage and not to the love of God. We

wonder not that the gods of the heathen were dashed to the ground when the scimitars were so sharp and were wielded by such ferocious warriors. But when we know that 12 humble fishermen, without arms or armor, without patronage or prestige, without science or sophistry overthrew colossal systems of error and set up the Cross of Christ in their place, we adoringly exclaim, "This is the finger of God!"

And so, the other day, when the Lord took a consecrated cobbler and sent him out to India, whatever work was done by William Carey was evidently seen to be of the Lord! If societies would send out distinguished scholars, it is thought by some that in all probability heathen intelligence would recognize abilities and genius and respect them. And, convinced by reasoning and influenced by talent, they would bow before superior Western culture! Yes, and so they would be converted by a conversion in which the Lord would not be glorified, but proud man would have the praise. In what way would that increase the Glory of God?

God uses weakness rather than strength and so His power is revealed. All that you have that is strong, my Brothers and Sisters, will be of small service in this matter, for the Lord will not exalt your strength and make you proud of your attainments. Your weakness and infirmities, in all probability, the Lord will see fit to use, for He delights to take the base things and the things that are despised and use them to achieve His purposes—that the excellency of the power may be all His own.

Let me notice, last of all, on this point, that all history shows that the *great strength of God has always been displayed and perpetuated in human weakness*. Brothers, what made Christ so strong? Was it not that He condescended to be so weak? And how did He win His victory? By His patience, by His suffering—that is to say, by those things wherein His human *weakness* appeared. Now, look at Christ mystical, namely, the Church. How has His Church ever been strong? Of course you reply, "By the strength of God!" I know it—but what has brought forth the strength of God so that it has been undeniably *manifest* and, consequently, operative upon mankind? Has it been the strength of the Church? No, but the *weakness* of the Church, for when men have seen Believers suffer and die, it is *then* that they have beheld the strength of God in His people!

The sufferings of the saints have been the victories of the Truth of God! The martyrs led the van! They suffered most and, consequently, are the champions of the elect army. The weakness which allowed of their being destitute, afflicted, tormented, has been the battle-axe and the weapons of war with which the Lord has procured conquest for the Gospel. When one of the pastors of a Church in London was put to death in Smithfield one early morning, before the frost was melted by the sun, there stood around the stake a number of young people who had been accustomed to listen to his teachings. Strange thing for young Believers to be up so very early to see their pastor burned to death! What do you think they were there for?

No idle curiosity could have brought them to such a spectacle! It is written that they went there *to learn the way*. Do you see? They saw him burn and came there with that intention—to learn the way to die for Christ, themselves! The church of Rome could do nothing with a people

who, from the weakness which compelled them to suffer, gathered strength to die triumphantly! The weakness of the martyr, as he suffered, revealed the strength of God in him—which held him fast to his principles while he was gradually consumed by the cruel flames. Had not men been poor worms, capable of being crushed and capable of agonizing the upholding Grace of God, they could never have been so conspicuously revealed. Blessed be the name of the Almighty! He displays His might in our weakness even as He shone forth in the midst of the burning bush.

He spoke, and lo, the heavens and the earth stood forth. A marvelous creation! But then there was nothing to oppose the fiat of His power—His all-powerful Word was not hampered by using weak instrumentalities. How, then, is God to show yet greater power? How shall Omnipotence or all kinds of power be seen? Why, Brothers and Sisters, He will not use His unfettered Word alone, but He will clog and encumber it by using infirm and weak instruments! He will, in the Kingdom of Grace, work by men compassed with infirmities—and achieve His purposes by agencies, in themselves, unfit for His ends—and then His power will be doubly seen!

The celebrated Quentin Matsys had to make a well-cover in iron one morning. He was a master in the art of fashioning the metal and could shape it as though it were so much wax. His fellow workmen were jealous and, therefore, they took from him the proper tools. And yet with his hammer he produced a matchless work of art! So the Lord, with instruments which lend Him no aid, but rather *hinder* Him, does greater works of Grace to His own Glory and honor. He takes us poor *nothings* who are weak as water and uses us to accomplish His designs! And this is His almightiness gloriously displayed!

Omnipotence, when it does what it wills by its bare Word is one thing, but when it takes weakness into league with it and performs its powerful deeds by means of *weakness*, it is quite another and by the weakness it doubly manifests itself.

III. The most blessed part of the text remains—POWER INDWELLING. Dr. Adam Clarke here furnishes us, on the last part of our text, a most useful observation, “Most gladly, therefore, will I glory in infirmity, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” Now mark, the Greek word here used, interpreted, “rest,” is the same word employed by John, when he says, “The Word was made flesh and,” as the Greek runs, “*tabernacled* among us and we beheld His Glory, the Glory as of the only begotten of the Father, all of Grace and Truth.”

The passage before us means just this, “I glory in infirmities that the power of Christ may tabernacle in me.” Just as the Shekinah light dwelt in the tent in the wilderness beneath the rough badger skins, so I glory to be a poor frail tent and tabernacle, that the Shekinah of Jesus Christ may dwell in my soul. Do you catch the thought? Is it not full of beauty? See, then, what he means—First, he puts the power of Christ in opposition to his own power because if he is not weak, then he has strength of his own. If, then, what he does is done by his own strength, there is no room for Christ's strength. That is clear, but if his own power is gone, there is space for the power of Christ. If my life is sustained by my own strength

and my good works are done in my own strength, then there is no room for Christ's strength. But the Apostle found that it was not so and, therefore, he said, "I glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may tabernacle in me."

But what is the power of Christ? Let the text I quoted tell you—"The Glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth." What power, then, was this which Paul expected to tabernacle in him but the power of Grace and the power of truth? It must be so, because God had said, "My *Grace* is sufficient for you." Paul catches at that promise and he cries, "this is the Truth of God and I rely upon it" and he, therefore, expects that the Grace of God and the faithfulness of God would tabernacle in him and shine forth within his soul. This is the power of Christ which he expected to rest upon him. What more could we desire?

What is the power of Christ? I answer next, it is Christly power—the kind of power which is conspicuous in the life of Jesus. There was a power in Christ peculiar to Himself, as all can see who read the New Testament—a power unique and altogether His own. You know what the power of Alexander was—it was a power to command men, inspire them with courage for great enterprises and keep them in good heart when called to endure hardships. You know what the power of Demosthenes was—it was the power of eloquence, the power to stir the patriotic Greeks, to break the fetters of the Macedonian. But what was the power of Jesus? It was power to *suffer*, power to be made *nothing* of, power to *descend* to the very depths for love of God and love of men. There lay His power—in those five conquering wounds, in that majestic mournful face, more marred than that of any man—in that great agonizing heart which sent forth sweat of blood when men were to be pleaded for before the Lord.

Love and patience were Christ's power! And even now these subdue the hearts of men and make Jesus the Sufferer to be Jesus the King. Therefore Paul says, "I glory in my infirmities that this same power may tabernacle in me. I triumph in weakness, in reproaches, in poverty, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake, that I may suffer, humble myself, be obedient and prove my love to God even as Jesus did. When I am weak then am I strong." He meant strong to prove his love by enduring the weaknesses and afflictions which he accepted for his Master's sake. What was this power of Christ? I answer again, it was a part of the "all power" which our Lord declared was given unto Him in Heaven and in earth—"Go you, therefore, and teach all nations."

Paul desired to have that power living in himself, for he knew right well that if he had to "go and teach all nations" he would have to suffer in so doing. And so he takes the suffering cheerfully, that he might have the power! Even as beneath the badger skins of the tabernacle, the Glory of the Lord shone forth, so the mighty converting power of Christ which dwelt in Paul was gloriously revealed while he endured reproaches and persecutions, sufferings and death for Jesus' sake. What was Christ's power again? I answer, to complete my sermon, His power lay in His weakness, His humiliation, His dependence upon God, His faith in God, His self-abnegation, His perfect consecration to the Father. And Paul says

that he was made to suffer and to be weak, that this same power to become nothing, that God might be glorified, might rest in him!

I have done when I say just this. Dear Brothers and Sisters, go home and never ask the Lord to make you strong in yourselves! Never ask Him to make you anybody or anything, but be content to be nothing and nobody! Next, ask that His power may have room in you and that all those who come near you may see what God can do by nothings and nobodies! Live with this desire, to glorify God! Sometimes when God honors us in His service, a great, "I" stands in the Lord's way. Tremble when you see a poor, weak preacher made useful in converting souls—then all the papers and magazines begin to blaze his name abroad! And silly Christians—for there are plenty of them—begin to talk him up as if he were a demigod and say such great things about him and describe him as wise, eloquent and great.

Thus they do all they can to *ruin* the good Brother! If the man is sensible, he will say, "Get you behind me, Satan, for you smell not of the things that are of God" and, if God gives him great Grace, he will retire more and more into the background and lie lower and lower before his God. But, if you once get a man to feel himself to be great and good, either a fall will happen, or else the power of God will withdraw from him—or in some other way the Lord will make His people feel that His Glory He will not give to another.

The best of men are flesh and blood and they have no power except as God lends them power. And He will make them know and feel this. Therefore, neither exalt others nor exalt yourselves, but beseech the Lord to make and keep you weakness itself, that in you, His power may be displayed. God grant it may be so, for Christ's sake. Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
2 Corinthians 11:5-24; 12:1-9.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—909, 681, 745.**

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“My Grace is sufficient for you.”
2 Corinthians 12:9.

LET no Christian imagine that he will ever have immunity from trouble while he continues in the body. Should you be favored with visions and Revelations of the Lord, caught up to the third Heaven, admitted into Paradise and privileged to hear things which it were not lawful for a man to utter, conclude not that you have escaped the rod—rather expect that such high privilege will need heavy affliction to balance it! If God has given you the great sail and the prosperous wind, He will also give you the heavy ballast to keep your keel deep in the stream. Do not expect, dear Brothers and Sisters, that because you have been strengthened in the faith, you will therefore be loosened from the burden of the flesh—neither because you may have been the means of strengthening others, that, therefore, trouble will be light for you. Even into your ship the deep waters may come. Think not that it is so water-tight that the billows will only dash against it. You may be called to feel heaviness—your faith may be all but staggered and your soul may have to cry out from the depths because of the slender strength you possess.

The Lord has such ways of chastising His children as to make them feel. We think, some of us, after we have suffered a certain amount of trouble, that we have been so conditioned to it we shall no longer be moved as we used to be. The Apostle Paul had been beaten with rods, tossed about in shipwrecks, yet he had suffered hunger and thirst and nakedness till he felt that, if any man had a right to glory after the flesh, he had. Still, even he found that the Lord had a way of getting at his heart and making it smart. He had thorns in the flesh, messengers of Satan that did most effectually buffet him. We, too, must have trials—briars of a kind that shall come right home to us and touch us in our bones and in our flesh.

Neither let us think, dear Friends, that even the privilege of the Mercy Seat will shield us from the rod. When chastened we run to prayer, but we shall not, therefore, escape the chastisement! Paul, an Apostle, prays. He who certainly must have understood “the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man,” beseeches the Lord three times, yet the thorn in the flesh was not blunted, much less removed! He still had to suffer as he had done before. Oh, how often we think we can use the Mercy Seat for our own lust! Is not prayer too sacred a thing for us to make a selfish use of it? When God gives us the key of His storehouse and bids us take what we will, shall we use even a single promise of His Word merely to pander

to our own desires and to enable us to escape from enduring hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ? If we thus misuse prayer, we may be excused for it, but we shall not be accepted in it. Even Paul is non-suited when he asks ease for the flesh. He gets no release from trouble. He gets something better, however, for the Lord says to Him, "My Grace is sufficient for you; for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Thus, Beloved, we must reckon upon the adversities that are sure to befall us. "In the world you shall have tribulation." This is one of the Divine shalls and wills. The Lord will chasten those whom He loves and His children shall suffer—you can be sure of that. It is as sure as any other thing in the world, "You *shall* have tribulation."

I. To those who have proved the truth of this declaration, the text will be peculiarly sweet. THERE ARE CERTAIN SORE VEXATIONS OF SPIRIT FOR WHICH GRACE IS THE ONLY BALM. The Lord does not say, "My Providence shall protect you." Nothing of the kind—Divine Grace is the remedy in this case and, I take it, this was because the Apostle was suffering in the very core and center of his being. There are many trials, the grief of which may be fully relieved by ordinary Providences—but these that come and wound a man to the quick—require Grace as their only effectual balm.

Past experience of Grace is of no avail in such a case. It is *present* Grace that is promised in the text and it is *present* Grace that is required. When we have sometimes been bowed down and walked in darkness, and seen no light, we have called to remembrance our song in the night and our spirit has made diligent search—but that very song has been turned into howling in the remembrance and all that we thought we felt, and thought we knew has vanished from before our eyes! I do not know how it has been with you, but there have been times with me when I could set no value upon my past experience. The devil has said it was all a delusion, my faith mere presumption, my hope mere excitement—and all my joys but the effusion of animal spirits. There will be a time when he will bid you look back and all the way will look like the Valley of the Shadow of Death. You cannot see one hopeful sign in it! And you turn over the books of experience and read them, and you think, "Well, my spot is not the spot of God's children, and my footprints do not seem to be at all like the footprints of the flock." I tell you, if you have ever done business in deep waters, you have found that anchors at home are of no use in a storm—and that the anchor which stood so well a year ago, if it is left at home on shore—is of no use to you now in the storm! It is *present* Grace, nothing but *present* Grace, that will do now! You have eaten all the cold meats and you have brought out from the cupboard every moldy crust you can find—and now your soul is reduced to the very last and faints within you. And now you must cry to your God in your trouble and get *present* Grace in this, your time of need!

And if past experience is of no use, *much less is past success*. Somebody might have touched the Apostle on the shoulder and have said, "Paul, Paul, Paul! Why must you feel the buffetings of Satan? Did you not establish the Church at Corinth, and plant churches throughout all Asia Minor? Who has served his God as faithfully as you have? Have you not been on many journeys, in perils by waters, in perils of robbers,

in perils by the sword, in watches and fasts? Have you not had the care of all the Churches? Has not your Master highly distinguished you and made you not a whit behind the very chief of the Apostles? What multitudes of spirits are now before the Throne of God that were born, under God, through your ministry! And what thousands are still on the road who call you their spiritual father and to whom you have been as a nursing mother in the faith!" If you had said this to the Apostle, he would have replied, "Yes, sometimes this might have comforted me. If it had been a question of my Apostleship, this would have been satisfactory. If the point in hand had been a question as to whether my ministry has been acknowledged of God, this would have been decisive. But I am touched in another place, now, and the wound is so deep, my sore is grievous. And my heart is so exceedingly heavy that no kindly thought of others, and no pleasant musings of my own bring me the slightest relief. O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me!" The Lord knows how to succor him and, therefore, He gave him that gracious assurance, "My Grace is sufficient for you."

I think it is well, dear Friends, to remember the Lord's past goodness, but we must not live on that—we must go and get fresh supplies from Heaven. Old manna, to this day, though it came from Heaven, will always breed worms and stink, if it is kept. There is no alteration in it from the days of Moses and it is the same at this moment. You must eat the manna as you get it and constantly go for more! The old manna will be of very little use to you. It is only on Sundays, when your soul is perfectly at rest and quiet—it is only at those sweet resting seasons, which the soul sometimes enjoys, that the remembrance of the past becomes very sweet. You must have daily present dispensations of manna from the Throne of God.

In such a case as this, to which the Apostle was brought, we feel sure that *the fact of his high office and eminent attainments of Grace* would not have been a sufficient consideration. Paul, who shall match you? So deep in knowledge and so ardent in zeal, you seem to have a seraph's spirit. So mighty in words and yet, so humble in your own esteem, you are surely a prince in Israel! Paul was not one of the young men, much less one of the babes in Grace. He says, "There are not many fathers," though certainly he, himself, was worthy to be called a Patriarch. Yet that fact would not comfort him. And, Brothers and Sisters, you may come to such hard pinches that your growth in Grace and the flourishing of your virtues will not afford so much as a drop of comfort to you—you will have to go to the Eternal Fountain to drink, for even these marble cisterns will have been broken and will hold no water.

Observe, further, Brothers and Sisters, that the Lord does not say, "*The consolation of your brethren shall be sufficient for you.*" Oh, how sweet it is to be comforted by our fellow Christians! Let those who will, walk in isolation—give me sweet communion, for to tell one's trial to a true Brother in Christ is often to lighten the weight, as if half of it were removed! Sometimes it is to be wholly relieved, for the words of some wise men in our Israel are, indeed, as balm that brings speedy healing to the wound. But there are wounds which the stranger intermeddles not

with, no, that even the dearest friend cannot touch! There are certain vexations of spirit and disquietudes of soul that mock human agency. I have had, sometimes, to converse with some members of the Church and I have never felt so much the littleness of my own power as when I have tried to comfort them and failed. I thought it was because I was but as a little child in experience and could not talk with them as a father in Israel might have done, whose years might have given him more wisdom. But I have found that even the fathers have failed and that years have not always sufficed to give sufficient knowledge to comfort the troubled conscience, or to remove the burden from the galled shoulder. No, there are cases that mock the ordinary practitioner and must be taken straight to the Great Physician, for the only thing that will survive the purpose is the Grace, the *present* Grace of an all-sufficient God!

I might prolong this catalog, but you who experimentally know the Truth of God will know from your own experience that there are trials and there are points in affliction where nothing can possibly console but the immediate outpouring and receiving of the Grace of God.

II. And now, Beloved, in the second place, let me say that SUFFICIENT GRACE IS A SURE BALM—that even for the most acute disorder, the most chronic disease—“Grace” is “sufficient.”

Do you not perceive that it just meets *the fear which trial excites*? What is the Christian’s fear when he is buffeted, tried and afflicted? I know him in his sober senses—he has a fear of sin. Listen to him. “I am afraid of being poor,” says he, “not because I dislike poverty, but I am afraid of my faith, lest I should murmur against God. I am not afraid of suffering,” he says, “if God sends it to me, I am willing to receive it. But I am afraid of my faith, lest the pangs should be too severe and I should doubt my God. I am not,” he says, “afraid of slander or of persecution. I have learned to rejoice in this, for so am I made a member of the goodly fellowship of the martyrs—but I *am* afraid lest I should deny my Lord, or be ashamed of Him, or prove an apostate, after all. As I look forward to the temptations of the world, the suggestions of Satan and the corruptions of the flesh which shall yet assail me, I am not afraid of their coming if I can but be guaranteed that they shall not cause me to sin”—for the only real wound the Christian gets is when he has sinned! Sufferings are only scars, flesh wounds—sins are the real wounds! We are never trampled on by Satan, however low our spirits may sink. It is only when we give way—capitulate in very terror and begin to be afraid—that Satan is really victorious. The battle of sin is the battle in which Satan gains the victory! But suffering, shame, distress, peril, nakedness and sword are no triumphs to Satan, for, “in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.”

You see then, Brothers and Sisters, *that Grace meets the danger because it deals with sin*. You are afraid that your patience will give out, so the Lord says, “My Grace shall operate upon your patience and make you endure.” You think your faith will fail, so the Lord says, “My Grace gave you your faith and My Grace, like oil secretly applied to the fire by One standing behind the wall, shall keep your faith burning while the devil pours on his floods to quench it. It was My Grace that first taught you to love My great name so, when persecuted, My Grace shall make

you love Me more. I have kept you from apostasy until now and, let what will come, My Grace, by which I guaranteed your final perseverance, shall be sufficient for you and you shall come out of all your trials and troubles like silver out of the furnace—not defiled—but cleansed and purified by the flames.” You see then, Brothers and Sisters, that this assurance does actually touch the fear which the Christian may ever have before his eyes—no, it does not merely touch the fear, but it absolutely touches all the real danger! It is as though the Lord should say to one of His servants who was standing alone, while thousands of his enemies were shooting at him with their arrows, “They shall shoot at you, but I have covered you with armor from head to foot.” Or it is as if you or I trembled at the thought of crossing the deep sea and the Lord had said, “The sea is deep, and you must cross it—but I will be by you and you shall go through it dry shod.” Or it is as if He said, “The fire is hot and you must walk through the midst of it. Those glowing coals your feet must know, but I will so cover you by My power that the flames nor coals shall not hurt you—you shall walk through the fire and not so much as the smell of it shall pass upon you.”

What does it matter how much we suffer if we have Grace to endure it? Put a Believer where you will, if his Master gives him Grace, he is in the best place he can be for security! I have heard Brethren sometimes say, “Such a minister is in great danger! His position is lofty, his head will be turned.” Ah, Brothers and Sisters, if he had had the keeping of his own head, it would have been turned long ago! And your head will turn even if you are on the ground if you have the keeping of it! But if God sets a man as high as the stars and if He kept him there, he would be able to sing, “You make my feet like hinds’ feet, and make me to stand on high places.” It is the Grace we have, not the position we occupy, that is the important matter! If a man had Grace enough, you might put him in the worst haunts of sin and he would be the better for being there!

Now, do not think I say what I do not know. Solomon saw hyssops grow on walls and cedars on Lebanon. However, I have seen cedars grow on walls and hyssops on Lebanon! I have seen the smallest Christians in the best places and the best Christians in the worst positions. I have seen, in the midst of the haunts of the harlot, Grace shining in all the purity and chastity of lovely womanhood. And in the haunt of the thief and of the burglar, God has been pleased to have some choice saint, that, for honesty, integrity and holy living might have been worthy to have walked in a bishop’s palace, or to have adorned the best Evangelical drawing room in England! Brethren, it is not the position that is the main thing! The best of men may grow in the worst places and some of the meekest of Believers may be found where there ought to have been the bravest. I will leave this point, therein, by repeating that whatever may be the trial of heart which a man may have to endure, this assurance just meets the case—“My Grace is sufficient for you.”

III. And, lastly, SHOULD NOT THE ASSURANCE THAT WE SHALL RECEIVE SUFFICIENT GRACE MAKE US EXCEEDINGLY GLAD?

“My Grace is sufficient for you”—what then? “Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities”—not only gladly, but, “most gladly.”

Nothing else will make you happy. The Grace of God comes to meet your case and now how happy you should be! Think about the sureness of this fact, that sufficient Grace will be ours! My dear Brothers and Sisters, I am not careful about *preaching* tonight, I merely talk right on about some things that you know and can testify. It has been so, has it not, in your experience? If there is one saint here who has an accusation to make against his Lord, let him speak! He might well say to you, "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? Which of you have I failed to succor? When have I violated My promise? You have been in the waters—were you drowned? You have passed through the fire—were you burned? What loss have you ever sustained by your troubles? Did I ever refuse to hear your cry when you called upon Me? When was it that, in the day of battle, I did not cover your head and that I left you as a prey to the destroyer?" My answer is—O Lord, You know all things and You know that Your servant's witness is—

***"When trouble, like a gloomy cloud,
Has gathered thick and thundered loud,
He near my soul has always stood,
His loving kindness, oh, how good!"***

And is not that your case, my Brother, my Sister in the Lord? I am sure it is! Well then, this ought to make you glad. "My Grace is sufficient for you," says the Lord. Your past experience proves it. Gladly, therefore, rejoice that you have an opportunity yet again of testing and trying the good Word of the Lord!

Again, *is not God's Grace sufficient for you in your present emergency?* Have you had some trouble today? I suppose you have had quite enough, too, for I never did find a day yet that had not enough trouble in it, and sufficient for the day is the evil thereof—well, but have you not had sufficient Grace today? Do you feel dull, heavy and gloomy in God's House of Prayer? Well, but there is Grace to be had and, therefore, looking to Him before you go to bed, you may still have another day to sing of the sufficient Grace which was given in the necessary hour! "Oh, but," you say, "it is not now! I can trust God for today, but there are clouds looming before me and I fear to enter them." Well, my dear Friend, if He is faithful to you today, add that to the fact that He was faithful yesterday! Is He not the same yesterday, today and forever? And ought you not at once to rejoice in Him? Furthermore, ask your Father and He shall tell you to turn to the records of Inspiration and they shall teach you! Were the righteous ever forsaken? And when did the Lord cast off His chosen? They have certainly been in quite as deep waters as you have ever known—you have not yet been brought to lose all that you have, to lose every child—not yet do you sit among the ashes and scrape yourself with a potsherd as Job did. And can you say, to the fullest extent, "They that walked in the streets did condemn me"? Not yet have you drunk of that cup and been baptized with the baptism of Him who said, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"—

"His way was much rougher and darker than yours"—

and yet your Lord triumphed! And all His people, in all ages, and under every circumstance, have triumphed in Him! If you could find one child of God who has been left, and if you could find one instance in which

God has been untrue to you, then it would be fair for you to be depressed in spirit—but until then, you should be most joyful!

Remember also, Brothers and Sisters, that *we would never know how sufficient Grace was if it were not for these troubles*—therefore we ought to be glad of all the lessons that assure us how ample and sufficient this Grace is! I know not whether all soldiers love the thought of war, but there are many who plead for a campaign. How many an officer of low rank has said, “There is no promotion, no hope of rising, no honors unless we have to fight. If we could run to the cannon’s mouth, there would be some hope that we might gain a promotion.” Men get few medals to hang upon their breasts who never know the smell of gunpowder. The brave days, as men call them, of Nelson and Trafalgar, have gone by—and we thank God for it—but still we do not expect to see such brave old veterans, the offspring of this age, as they who are still to be found lingering in our hospitals—the relics of our old campaigns. No, Brothers and Sisters, we must have trials if we are to get on. Young men do not become midshipmen altogether through going to the school at Greenwich and climbing the mast on dry land—they must go out to sea and be on deck in the storm! And if we are to be among the worthies, we must have stood side by side with King David! We must have gone down into the pit to slay the lion, or have lifted up the spear against the eight hundred as Adino did. Conflicts bring experience and experience brings that growth in Grace which is not to be attained by any other means!

Besides, Brothers and Sisters, *how is God’s Grace to be seen by other men in the world except by our trials?* Grace is given to keep us from sin, which is a great blessing. But what is the good of Grace except it is in the time when the trial comes? Certainly, the Grace that will not stand in the hour of temptation or affliction is a very spurious sort of Grace and we had better get rid of it, if we have it. When a godly woman’s child dies, the infidel husband sees the mother’s faith. When the ship goes down and is lost in the sea, the ungodly merchant understands the resignation of his fellow man. When pangs show through our body and ghastly death appears in view, people see the patience of the dying Christian. Our infirmities become the black velvet on which the diamond of God’s love glitters all the more brightly! Thank God I can suffer! Thank God I can be made the object of shame and contempt for, in this way, God shall be glorified! This shall be the wonder of many and to the praise of His own Grace—that so mean and so contemptible a thing was made the instrument of effecting His purpose!

I will say no more except to commend this assurance to you and ask you to take it home and lay it on your tongue. It will be like a wafer made with honey. Mind you have it for your breakfast tomorrow morning and let it be your constant daily meal—live on it—“My Grace is sufficient for *you*.” Let the word, “you,” come home to your heart, as though God spoke it to *you* and as if He had never spoken it to anyone else!

There are some of you to whom the text does not apply, except in this light—you have many sins—but if you trust Christ, His Grace is sufficient for you. You have been head over heels in the kennel of sin, but the power of His blood is sufficient to make you white. And even if you

have become a very prince and peer in the dominions of evil, the Grace of Christ is sufficient to wash you whiter than the driven snow! May the Lord add His blessing on these feeble rambling remarks, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ROMANS 3:9-27; 5:6-11; 8:1-32.**

Romans 3:9. *What then? Are we better than they?* The first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans contains so horrible an account of the manners of the Gentiles, the heathen of Paul's day, that it is one of the most painful chapters in Scripture to read. Not long ago, one of our missionaries out in China was attacked concerning the Bible on this very ground. One of the learned men said to him, "This Bible of yours cannot be as ancient as you say that it is, for it is quite clear that the next chapter of the Epistle to the Nomads must have been written by somebody who had been in China and who had seen the habits and ways of the people here." So accurate is the Holy Spirit, who knew right well what the ways and manners and secret vices of the heathen were, and still are! But the Jews said, "Ah, but this is a description of the Gentiles." So Paul replies, "What then? Are we better than they?"

9, 10. *No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentile, that they are all under sin; as it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one.* Then he selects passages out of different parts of Scripture to show what man is by nature.

11-18. *There is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that does good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulcher; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes.* These are all quotations from Old Testament Scriptures, from their own Psalmists and Prophets from whom Paul quotes to the Jews so that they might see what their own character was by nature.

19. *Now we know that what things soever the law says, it says to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.* The Law of God was given to the Jews and the descriptions which it gives must be descriptions of the Jews. "Therefore," says Paul, "as Gentile mouths have been already stopped by the descriptions of *their vices*, you also, the favored people of God, have your mouths stopped by the descriptions of yourselves taken from your own Prophets."

20. *Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh.* Whether Jew or Gentile—

20, 21. *Be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now.* Since man is lost, since man is guilty—

21-27. *The righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the Prophets: even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe:*

for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His Grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past through the forbearance of God, to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believes in Jesus. Where is boasting then? If salvation is given to the guilty and if all are guilty—if no one can claim exemption, and yet salvation is freely given—what then? Why, salvation must be purely by the Grace of God! So let Grace have all the honor. “Where is boasting then?”

27. *It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No: but by the law of faith.* The law of works sometimes aids boasting, for a man rejoices and glories in what he has done. Yet the law of works ought to stop our boasting because we are guilty in God’s sight. The law of faith stops our mouth because we are under obligation to God and do not dare to boast, seeing that we have nothing of good but what we have received from Him!

Romans 5:6. *For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.* What a wonderful sentence that is! Not, “Christ died for the saints,” not, “Christ died for righteous men,” but, “when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.”

7-9. *For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet perhaps for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.* What an argument this is for the final safety of Believers! If Christ died for us when we were enemies, surely He will give us, now that He has died for us and made us His friends, His reconciled subject—“Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.”

10. *For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.* There is a threefold argument here. We were enemies, yet God blessed us even then, so will He not bless us even more, now that we are reconciled to Him? When we were enemies, He reconciled us unto Himself. Having done that, will He not certainly save us? We were reconciled to God by the death of His Son—so much more shall we be saved by the life of the risen and glorified Jesus, which has almighty, irresistible power!

11. *And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.*

Romans 8:1. *There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus.* Observe that Paul writes “There is therefore,” for he is stating a Truth of God which is founded upon solid argument. “There is therefore now”—at this very day, at this very moment—“no condemnation”—none of any sort—none that will lie in the Court of Conscience or in the Court of King’s Bench above! “There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus.” Our forefathers

used to read this verse, "There is therefore now no damnation." One of the martyrs, being brought before a Popish bishop, heard the bishop say to him, "Dying in your heresy, you will be damned." "That I never shall be," answered the good man, "for there is therefore now no damnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." He had sought the very spirit of the text, for there is nothing that can condemn the man who is in Christ Jesus!

1. *Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* This is the distinctive mark of a man in Christ Jesus. He does not let the flesh govern him, but the Spirit. The spiritual nature has come to the front and the flesh must go to the back. The Spirit of the living God has entered into him and become the master-power of his life. He walks "not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

2. *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.* And nothing else can do that. Every man is, by nature, under bondage to that which Paul describes as "the law of sin and death." There is a law in our nature which is so powerful that even when we would do good, evil is present with us, and we cannot get away from that law except by introducing another, which is "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." Dr. Chalmers has a remarkable sermon upon it—*The Expulsive Power of a New Affection*—and it is this new affection for Christ which is the accompaniment of the new life in Christ, which expels the old forces that used to hold us under bondage to sin and death.

3, 4. *For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* The Law of God never made anybody holy and it never will do so. The Law says to a man, "This is what you ought to do and you will be condemned if you do not do it." That is quite true, but the Law supplies no power to enable us to do this! It says to the lame man, "You must walk," and to the blind man, "You must see," but it does not enable them either to walk or to see! On the contrary, our nature is such that when the Law issues its commands, there is a tendency in us at once to *disobey* them. There are some sins which we never would have thought of committing if we had not been commanded not to do them, so that the Law of God—not because of its own nature, but because of the *wickedness of our nature*, is weak and ineffectual for the producing of righteousness. But the Lord Jesus Christ has come, has lived and has died—died for us who are His people, and has put away our sins. Now we love Him! Now, being delivered from all condemnation, we love Him who has delivered us and this becomes the force by which we are inclined to holiness and led on further and further in a course, not merely of morality, but of holiness before God! What a blessed system this is, which saves the sinner from the love of sin, delivers a man from sinning, gives him a new nature and puts a right spirit within him!

5. *For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh.* Flesh cares for flesh. The man who is all body cares only for the body. The man whose mind is under subjection to his body, minds "the things of the flesh."

5. *But they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.* Where the Holy Spirit is supreme. Where the spiritual world has become predominant over the heart and life. There, men live for something nobler than the worldly man's trinity, "What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and how shall we be clothed?" The carnal life is only becoming to a beast, or a bird, or an insect. But when a man cares for his immortal spirit and lives for Divine and spiritual things, he has attained to the life that is life, indeed!

6, 7. *For to be carnally minded is death but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be.* As long as a man lives only for this present evil world, lives for self, lives under the domination of the flesh, he cannot really know God, or truly serve Him. Such a mind as his "is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be."

8. *So then they that are in the flesh.* That is, those who are under its condemnation and power—

8-10. *Cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if any men have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.* So that although Christ dwells in a man, he must not reckon that he will be free from suffering, pain and sickness, for the body has not yet risen from the dead and does not yet feel the full effect of regeneration. The soul is risen from the dead by regeneration and it, therefore, "is life because of righteousness." The body will, in due time, also share in the power of Christ's Spirit. The day draws near when we "shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

11, 12. *But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwells in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.* We have got nothing good out of the flesh at present, for it is not yet "delivered from the bondage of corruption," though it is to be delivered.

13. *For if you live after the flesh, you shall die.* For the flesh is to die.

13. But if you, through the Spirit do mortify. Or, kill—

13. *The deeds of the body, you shall live.* Shall a dying body, then, be my master? Shall the appetite for eating and drinking, or anything else that comes of the flesh, dominate my spirit? God forbid! Let death go to death—and the flesh is such. But the newly-given Spirit of God, the Spirit who has quickened us with immortal life shall rule and reign in us forevermore!

14-21. *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed anew. For the earnest*

expectation of the creature waits for the manifestation of the Son of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who has subjected the same in hope. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. We are part and parcel of creation and we shall draw it along with us. There shall be new heavens and a new earth. The curse shall be taken from the garden, thorns and thistles shall no longer grow there, and there shall be no killing or devouring in all God's holy mountain. The galling yoke, which we have laid on the whole of creation by our sin, shall be taken off it by our Redeemer!

22, 23. *For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves, also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit the redemption of our body. We groan in unison with a groaning creation and we shall not, at present, get altogether rid of our aches, pains and sicknesses.*

24-32. *For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man sees, why does he yet hope for? But if we hope for what we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. Likewise the Spirit also helps our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groans which cannot be uttered. And He that searches the heart knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified. What shall we say, then, to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"— 757, 729.

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

A PARADOX

NO. 2050

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 4TH, 1888,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON**

*“When I am weak, then am I strong.”
2 Corinthians 12:10.*

The expression is paradoxical and seems somewhat singular. Yet it was the experience of the Apostle Paul, a man of calm spirit. He was by no means fanciful—he was a wise man and far removed from a fanatic. It was the experience of one who was led of the Spirit of God and therefore it was a gracious experience—the experience of one who was a father in Israel, who could safely bid us to be imitators of him, even as he imitated the Lord Jesus Christ. And therefore it was a safe experience.

If we are weak, so was Paul. And if, like he, we are strong in our weakness, we shall be in the best of company. If the same things are seen in us which were worked in the Apostle of the Gentiles, we may join with him in glorying in infirmities because the power of Christ does rest upon us and we may count ourselves happy that with such a saint we can cry, “When I am weak, then am I strong.”

I. Perhaps I can expound the text best if I first TURN IT THE OTHER WAY AROUND and use it as a warning.

“When I am strong, then am I weak.” Perhaps, while thinking of the text thus turned inside out, we shall be getting light upon it to be used when we view it with the right side outwards and see that when we are weak, then we are strong. I am quite sure that some people think themselves very strong and are not so. Their proud consciousness of fancied strength is the indication of a terrible weakness. We have among us certain persons who think that they can do all that is needful for their own salvation whenever they please to do so. They can perform all sorts of good works, or at least quite enough to carry them to Heaven.

Their first idea is that they are to be saved by their own doings. And they really expect to be so saved. They may admit that they have a few faults and flaws in their character. But these are so trifling as to be hardly worth mentioning and God Almighty is too merciful to be very particular. Their lives have been excellent, their tempers amiable, their manners courteous, their spirit generous and they quite believe that by keeping on at the same pace they will win the prize—if they do not, who will? The ship of their character is in fine condition. They have no leaks which the pumps cannot keep down.

Their sails are not rent and they hope to sail into the haven of peace with a glorious cargo of merit, having an abundant entrance and hearing a loud, “Well done!” Ah, my Friend, that consciousness of legal strength is a mere delusion and it will have to be taken out of you. There is no going

to Heaven that way—by self and the works of self. Your error is a common one but it is fatal. I have seen many epitaphs of persons, placed by the mistaken kindness of friends upon their tombstones, which I felt sure would have been sufficient to shut them out of Heaven if they had been true. These departed worthies do not appear to have been sinners at all—their virtues were superlative, their faults non-existent.

Such wonderful people would appear from their epitaphs to have flown up to the gates of Heaven upon the wings of their own virtues and to have entered there without a passport of mercy, as citizens by their own right of the New Jerusalem. I wonder how they would behave themselves in Heaven, if they were really admitted there! All the rest are singing, “We have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb”—but these needed no washing and so they would be likely to strike up a little song by themselves and sing, “Our robes never needed washing. We kept them white as snow.”

What a discord that would create in the music of the skies! What a division of character and feeling would be found among celestials! I cannot see how there could be any harmony of sentiment among sinners saved by Divine Grace, and righteous ones who owed nothing to mercy, nothing to the atoning sacrifice.

No, my strong and virtuous Hearer, you are under a grave delusion. There is a great similarity between your talk and the talk of that religious individual who went up to the temple in our Savior’s days and standing before the thrice-holy God, dared to say, “God, I thank you that I am not as other men are.” He was not justified that day, nor will you be. A poor tax-gatherer, despised by himself and an outcast from his own people stood in the temple at the same time and all that he dared to say was, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” This unworthy sinner when to his house justified, while the other worthy person was not accepted.

If you think yourselves strong enough to procure Heaven by your own efforts, you are ignorantly insulting the Cross of Christ. You seem to insinuate that your virtues can avail you without Jesus. If you really mean this, there is no less venom of rebellion against God in your self-righteousness than in the outward vice of those who make no pretense to godliness. For you to put your works in the place of Jesus is a blasphemy against the Savior’s blood and righteousness. Why needed Christ to die if men could save themselves? Why need He bleed upon the Cross if your merits will suffice to gain you a place among the blessed? There is a fatal weakness in the claim of that man who thinks himself strong enough to force his own passage to the Throne of God. That weakness lies in the pride which insults the Crucified, the disloyalty which prefers itself to the royal Savior—

***“Perish the virtue, as it ought—abhorred,
And the fool with it who insults his Lord.”***

Listen to me a moment and quit your fancied strength—you, my Hearer, cannot keep the Law of God for you have already broken it. How can you preserve a crystal vase when you have already dashed it to atoms? You must now be saved by the merits and the strength of Another,

or not at all. For your own merit is out of the question through past failure. That strength of yours, upon which you dote so much, is perfect *weakness*. May the Lord show you this and make you faint at heart on that account. For then you shall be strong with real and saving strength! Now your imaginary strength is making you really weak and that boasted merit of yours is shutting you out from true righteousness.

He that is strong in the notion of merit is weak even to utter folly before the God of Truth. "Yes," we hear you reply, "there is a Gospel way of salvation. We know that there is, for you preach it continually. You tell us that men must repent and believe the Gospel. That they must be renewed in the spirit of their minds and must both overcome sin and follow after holiness." Yes, I do say all that. But what do you say to it? Is it really so that you find here a ground for your own strength? Do you say, "I feel that I can repent whenever I please and believe in Jesus when I choose?" Ah, then I must assure you that when you are strong in that way, you are weak.

I have never known anybody repent who gloried in his power to repent. I never knew a man heart-broken for sin who boasted that he could break his own heart when and where he pleased. "What?" cries one, "Surely I can believe in Jesus Christ when I please!" I have not denied that statement, have I? But I tell you that your notion of power to believe is your weakness. And I would rather by half hear you cry, with deep solemnity, "Oh, that God would give me faith! Lord, help my unbelief!" Your sense of inability to believe in Christ would be a far better token for good, in my judgment, than your present flippant talk about believing when you like. Men who are in earnest talk not so—whatever their strength may be, they find it little enough in the hour of need.

I beg to assure you that I have never known a man believe in Jesus who trusted that he could so believe. For his trust in his own believing kept him from trusting Jesus. But I have known many a poor, struggling soul lie at the foot of the Cross and say, "Lord, help me to look to Jesus and live." And God has helped him to give that look in which there is eternal life. While he has been praying, his prayer, yes, his weeping prayer, has had in it that very look to Jesus for which he was pleading. His sense of inability to believe has made him look to Jesus for believing and he has found it in Him.

You say that you can turn your heart towards God whenever you please. I am not going into any dispute with you about your assertion, nor the doctrine which is supposed to support you in your profession of strength. But I will say this—your idea of having personal strength, with which to purify and renew your own heart—your idea that you can create in yourself a right spirit—your idea that you can raise yourself from your death in sin—is to me a prophecy of much evil for yourself. Where *self* is conspicuous I see an omen of mischief. I see no good in this fine opinion of yourself. But if I heard you cry, "Create in me a clean heart, O God"—if I heard you say, "Lord, quicken me out of my death in sin"—if I saw you lying down before the Most High and praying, "Turn me and I shall be turned"—I should have a far brighter hope of you.

In your weakness you would become strong. But in your present strength, I am sure I see a great weakness, which is likely to be your ruin. O dear Hearts, your best friend does not lie within your own doors. Your hope for better things shines yonder at the right hand of God where the living Savior has all power given to Him in Heaven and earth. Sinner, if you grow no sweeter flowers than the dunghill of your own nature can nourish, you will die amid poisonous weeds. If you never drink of better water than the filthy well of your own heart will yield, you will perish of thirst, or of a deadly draught.

Another and a better helper than one born in your house must come this way. Help must be laid upon one that is mighty, exalted of the Lord out of the people, and endowed with Divine power and Godhead—for only such a Savior, infinitely good and great, can save a soul so lost as yours. When you get down, down, down, into utter weakness, then you will be strong, because then you will rest upon the Lord's salvation. But as you are strong in your thoughts of yourself you are kept from Jesus and are weakness itself.

So far I have spoken by way of warning to unconverted people. I desire now to say a word to those who profess to be Christians and, let us hope, are so. But they are, in a measure, erring in the same way as those to whom I have spoken. They are remarkably strong—at least in their own esteem they are very Samsons—although others fear that the Philistines will capture them. By this token may they know their own weakness—even by this—that they think themselves strong.

First, many are wonderfully strong as to *knowledge*. They know almost everything. If in any department they are a little short, they make up for it by knowing so much more in the other direction. If they are too narrow here, they overlap there. They are knowing men and need no man to tell them so. They are instructed in the faith from pole to pole—they know both that which is afar off and that which is near. An argument is a pleasure to them. They go into company where the eternal verities are denied and feel a delight in taking sides. They will sit where the vital simplicities of God's Word are set up like marks for boys to throw at. And they like the amusement, for it exercises their knowing faculty and gives them a chance of showing their mental power.

They are not children but quite able to think for themselves. They are not credulous but amazingly clear-headed and cultured. I have noticed these fine gentlemen have been the first to deny the faith and to fall into all manner of heresies. Do you wonder? Those who are so very sure are always the most uncertain. I could instance some that had such confidence in themselves that they would have argued with the very Fiend of Hell on any question for they felt that not even Satanic craft could conquer them. But at this present moment the Prince of Darkness holds them in his power. They hold no controversy with the devil now, for they are very largely agreed with him in assailing the Gospel of God's Grace.

They have gone entirely over to the denial of everything that is gracious and holy and Scriptural—and the main cause of their apostasy is their own invincible self-confidence. They were so strong that they became

weaker than others. O Brethren, when we are very wise in our own esteem we are bordering upon fools—even if we have not already entered into that company. When we tremblingly sit at Jesus' feet to learn everything afresh and fresh from Him, when we shudder at anything that questions His Deity, or lowers His sacrifice. When we shut up a book and cast it from us because we feel that it pollutes us with unbelief—then are we wise and strong.

When the Word of the Lord is enough, then are we in the way of wisdom and strength. The man of one book is proverbially a terrible man—but the man of ten thousand books, who can baffle all adversaries and foil all foes—shall soon lie wounded on the plain, if he is not slain outright. Let us take heed unto ourselves, that we fall not through being headstrong, or strong in the head, which is much the same thing.

Again—I have noticed some professedly Christian people wonderfully strong through experience. Their experience has been very extensive and the knowledge it has brought them they consider to be especially profound. Consequently they are not afraid of temptation for they feel that they are too wise to be entrapped. They are so experienced that things which young people ought not to think of, they can do with impunity—so they foolishly dream. They can go just so far and then stop, for they are fitted with the patent brakes of prudence. They are such good mountain climbers that they can stand on the edge of a precipice and look over and even hang over, without fear of their ever being giddy and falling over. Of course they would not advise other people to go quite so far as they may safely go.

But then, what is temptation to other men is no temptation to them. Their vessel is so tight and trim and they understand navigation so perfectly that they rather *like* a tempest than not, just to show how well their vessel can behave in a storm. Ah me, when you next read the list of wrecks you may expect to see the name of their ship among the castaways. Old birds may not be caught with chaff but they can be shot with a gun. No one is out of danger and no one is more in danger than the man who is carnally secure. Those who feel that their experience, be it what it may, only teaches them that the farther they can keep from temptation the better—these are in a better state.

When experience drives us to pray with emphasis the prayer, “Lead us not into temptation,” then it is working aright. In the idea of strength and wisdom lurks an awfully perilous weakness. But in a sense of personal weakness dwells a real strength. If you are extremely jealous, conscientious and watchful, many will tell you how weak you are. But you are, in reality, a strong man, because of your fear to encounter evil influences—in that fear lies one essential element of holy strength. But he that would rather brave temptation, because he feels so strong, shall find it may be to his everlasting sorrow, how great is his weakness.

He that shuns the appearance of evil because of conscious weakness, shall find therein his security and strength. Oh, let none of us, because we are getting gray, suppose that we are not vulnerable to sin! Let us not dream that because we have been Church members so many years, or

even because we have sustained a long and useful ministry, that we are therefore beyond gunshot of the enemy or without necessity to seek daily strength for daily duty. My Brethren, we cannot perform the smallest duty aright apart from the help of God.

Neither can we be secure against even the smallest sin, apart from the perpetual guard of Him that keeps Israel. If we, in our self-conceit, write ourselves down among the mightiest and forget our entire dependence upon heavenly Grace, we may be left to prove, by unhappy experience, that pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.

Let us note another point. I have known certain Christian people who thought themselves singularly strong in the matter of wisdom and prudence. They have been gifted with clear insight and a measure of shrewdness and have, therefore, felt that their judgment on most subjects was that of an umpire. Have you ever noticed that the raw material of a very grossly foolish person is a cautious individual? The cunning are the readiest dupes when craft is busy in taking its prey. So, too, a wise man is needed if there is to be exhibited the worst form of folly. If we were called upon to select a man who, as to his life as a whole, perpetrated the greatest folly, we should mention Solomon.

Yet he was the wisest of man. Yes, the cream of wisdom, when curdled, makes the worst of folly. Was ever man so insanely enthusiastic in vain pursuits as this master of all knowledge? Then, Brethren, whenever we feel sure of our own superior intelligence, let us suspect ourselves of weakness. Let the same fear come upon us when we feel sure about our way—so sure that we think we need not pray about it—or in any manner wait for Divine direction. Beware of those matters in which you think you cannot err. Men who have been wise in great difficulties have blundered fearfully where all was simple.

The Israelites thought that the men who came to them begging for a league of brotherhood could not deceive them. It must be safe to be on good terms with these interesting strangers. Why, look, their shoes are well-near worn from their feet and patched and clouted to the last degree! Their clothes, which we doubt not were new when they left their distant homes, are now threadbare and their bread which they took fresh from the oven, is stale with age. It is evident, upon the face of it, that they must have come from a very remote part of the world and therefore a treaty with them will not interfere with the Divine Command. There can be no need to pray about a case so clear.

Thus the Gibeonites deceived them, as we also shall be overreached when we are so exceeding sure of our course. Brethren, let us not be wise as to dispense with our heavenly Counselor and Guide. Would not that be the height of madness? It is a salutary thing to feel that your case requires you to trust the helm of your ship with the Divine Pilot. It is even a blessed thing to feel that you are shut up to faith and must by absolute trust in God throw the responsibility of your action upon Him. I will give you an instance. Abraham, the father of the faithful, is placed in a peculiar position. God has commanded him to take his son Isaac and offer him

for a sacrifice. Here is a terrible puzzle. Here was enough to stagger any human mind.

Surely it could not be right for a father to slay his son! How could it be wise to kill the son in whom all the promises of God were vested? The more you think of the case from a father's standpoint, the more it will perplex you. Abraham could not make anything out of it by his judgment but he met it all by faith. All that he could say to Isaac was, "My son, God will provide Himself a Lamb." He was thus saying to himself, "The Lord will get me out of this difficulty." He had no wisdom with which to conjecture how the affair would end—he had to cease from guessing and just trust in his God. Abraham made no mistake in this. Oh, that we could do the same!

Observe that same Abraham when he goes down to Egypt. His wife is exceedingly beautiful and he fears that the king of Egypt will kill him in order to obtain his wife. What will he do? I can see a great many ways in which he might have warded off that evil. He was not called upon to go to Egypt at all, if he thereby risked his wife's honor. Or, if he must go, he should have gone boldly, acknowledging his wife and trusting both her and himself with the Lord. Instead of that, the Patriarch begins by inducing Sarah to join with him in equivocation. "Say you are my sister." She was in some sense his sister. But it was using a word in a double sense for a deceitful purpose and it was a pitiful thing for Abraham to do.

Nor was it a prudent scheme after all—in fact it was the cause of the very trouble which it sought to prevent. Sarah would not have been taken away from Abraham at all if Pharaoh had known that she was his wife—so that the wise was snared by his own craftiness. The Lord graciously delivered him but in that very act left a root of bitterness behind to be his future plague. Pharaoh gave to him women servants and I doubt not among them was Hagar, who became the object of sin and the source of sorrow to the household. In the fancied strength of Abraham, by which he emulated the craft of other Orientals, he displayed his weakness.

But in the other case, where no wit or wisdom could assist him, he cast himself upon the Lord and in his weakness he behaved like the grand man that he really was. Brothers and Sisters, let us confess ourselves fools, that we may be wise. For otherwise we shall fall into that other condition, of professing ourselves wise and becoming fools. Let us ignore our wisdom, even if we have any. God alone is wise—he that trusts either his own heart or head is a fool. Lean not to your own understanding but lean wholly upon the Lord and so shall you be established.

Further, dear Friends, we shall often find that our strength will lie in patience—in extreme weakness which yields itself up to the will of God without the power or will to murmur. We sang in our hymn just now—

***"And when it seems no other chance or change
From grief can set me free,
Hope finds its strength in helplessness,
And, patient, waits on You."***

I am sure that in reference to power, either to do or to suffer rightly, we are *not* strong when we compliment ourselves upon our ability. And we

are strong when, under a sense of absolute inability, we depend wholly upon God.

That sermon preached in the glory of our oratory turned out to be mere husks for swine. While that discourse which we delivered in weakness, with a humble hope that God would use it, proved to be royal meat for the Lord's chosen. That work which you performed in the vigor of your unquestioned talent came to nothing—while that quiet act which you washed with your tears and perfumed with your prayers will live and yield you sheaves. Creature strength brings forth nothing which has life in it—only the seed which the Creator puts into the hand of our weakness will produce a harvest. It is well to *be nothing*—it is better still to be “less than nothing.” We ought to dread a sense of capacity, for it will render us incapable. But a sense of utter incapacity apart from God is a fit preparation for being used by the Lord.

“Unto them that have no might He increases strength.”

So it is in bearing as well as acting. If we say, concerning sickness, “I shall never be impatient. I can bear it like a stoic.” What of that? You will then have done no more than many have done before you, with no great gain to themselves or to others. But if, bowing your head before the Lord, you wait His sovereign will and say, “Lord help me. If your left hand shall smite me, let your right hand sustain me. I am willing to drink this bitter cup, saying, ‘Not as I will but as You will.’ Lord, help me!”—you shall bear up triumphantly and come out of the furnace refined, to the praise and the glory of your God.

When you fancy that you are strong to suffer, you will fail. But in conscious weakness you will be enabled to play the man. I have now done with the text, as I have turned it upside down. May God bless it to any here who feel high and mighty, by causing it to put them in their proper place.

II. Now, let us take our text THE RIGHT WAY UPWARDS. “When I am weak, then am I strong.” “When” and “then” are the two pivots of the text—the hinges upon which it turns.

“When I am weak.” What does that mean? It means when the Believer is consciously weak, when he painfully feels, and distinctly recognizes, that he is weak. Then he is strong. In Truth, we are always weak, whether we know it or not. But when we not only believe this to be the fact but see it to be the fact—then it is that we are strong. When it is forced home upon us that we are less than nothing and vanity—when our very soul echoes and re-echoes that word, “Without Me you can do nothing.”—then it is that we are strong.

When he is growingly weak. Yes, for he sees his own weakness more and more clearly as he advances—as he grows stronger in faith he is much more conscious of the weakness of the flesh. I talked about my weakness from this platform five-and-twenty years ago. But I stand here and tremble under it now to a far greater degree than I did in my younger and more vigorous time. I knew it three-and-thirty years ago when I first spoke to you but I did not know it as I know it now. I was then weak and I owned it—but I am now weak and groan about it almost involuntarily.

Yes, and I sometimes sing because of my weakness, learning to glory in my infirmities because the power of Christ does rest upon me.

When we are growingly weak, when we become weaker and weaker, when we seem to faint into a deeper swoon than ever as to our own strength till death is written upon every power that we once thought we had and we feel that we can do absolutely nothing apart from the Holy Spirit—then we are strong, indeed. We are strong, too, when we feel painfully weak. It is well when we mourn because we are so weak and cry out to ourselves, “My weakness, my weakness, woe unto me! When I would do good, evil is present with me. When I would rise to Heaven, the body of this death detains me. I would do great things for God but I have no might. Alas for my weakness!”

At such a time we are really rising and are bringing most glory to God. These are growing pains—agonies such as none know but the truly and growingly spiritual. A painful weakness is strength. It may seem a paradox, but it is true.

We are strong when we are contritely weak. When we confess that much of our weakness is our fault—a weakness which we ought to have overcome—even then we have in that weakness a real strength. The sort of weakness that makes a man say, “I cannot be any stronger, I am doing my best,” is not strength but folly. But that weakness which makes you lament your failures and deplore your shortcomings has in it a holy stimulus and force. That weakness which makes you dissatisfied with all you are and all you do is goading you on to better and stronger things. If you feel that even when most earnest you have not prayed as you could wish, there is evidently strength in your desires and your desires are prayers.

If after any service you pour forth showers of penitential tears because the service was imperfect, there is evidently a strong soul of obedience within you. When you can neither repent, nor believe, nor love as you wish to do, you are repenting, believing and loving with a strength which is more true than apparent. It is the will with which we act which is the strength of the action. And when the will is so powerful that it makes us mourn because we cannot find how to perform its bidding, then are we strong according to the Divine measurement of strength. Contrite weakness is spiritual strength.

When a man is thoroughly weak—not only partially but altogether weak—then is he strong. When apart from the Lord Jesus, he is utter weakness, and nothing more—then it is that he is strong. Let me persuade you to make a full confession of weakness to the Lord. Say, “Lord, I cannot do what I ought to do—I cannot do what I want to do—I cannot do what I used to do—I cannot do what other people do—I cannot do what I mean to do—I cannot do what I am sure I shall do—I cannot do what I feel impelled to do. And over this sinful weakness I mourn.” Then add, “Lord, I long to serve You perfectly, yet I cannot do it. Unless You help me I can do nothing aright. There will be no good in my actions, my words, my feelings, or my desires, unless You continue to fill me with Your own holy energy. Lord, help me! Lord, help me!”

Brothers and Sisters, you are strong while you plead in that fashion. You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you. And he will strengthen you, now that you are emptied of self. How true it is, “When I am weak, then am I strong!”

I have brought out the “when.” Now lend me your ears and hearts for just a minute, while I bring out the “then.” “Then am I strong.” When is that? Why, a man is strong when he is consciously weak—because now he has reached the truth. He really is weak. And if he does not know that he is so, he is under the influence of a falsehood. Now a lie is a thing of weakness. Lying strength is all fluff and foam—a mere appearance, a mockery, a delusion. Nothing hinders from getting the reality like contentment with a mere appearance. The true heart is heartily sick of shows and shams and it cries, “Lord, help me to get rid of these shadows! Help me to come to the Truth of God! Help me to deal with realities!”

When you are made to feel your utter weakness you are on sure ground of truth—unpleasant truth, no doubt, yet sure truth. You are now on safe ground touching fundamentals, and making sure work. What you now do will be soundly done. All the while that we keep building on a sandy made-up foundation we are piling up that which will, in all probability, come down even faster than we put it up. While the rotten rubbish remains on the spot, you cannot do anything worth doing. But if that accumulation can be carted away, there will seem to be a great hole but you will get down to the real bottom and get a foundation. And then what you build will be worth putting up because it will stand. Therefore, a man becomes strong when he is consciously weak, because he is on the truth and is not being flattered by false hopes.

Next, he will be strong because he will only go with a commission to support him. He will not be eager to run without being sent. He says within himself, when he proposes a service to himself, “No, I am too weak to undertake anything of my own head.” He will wait for a call. This is not the kind of man that will climb up into a pulpit and from a dizzy brain pour out nonsense. He will not crave to lead, for he feels that he needs much help even to follow. He feels himself too weak to set up for a master in Israel. This is not the kind of man that will venture into argument with skeptics for the fun or for the glory of the thing. Oh, no. He is too weak for that.

He says, “If I am called to defend the faith, I will do it in God’s strength, hoping that it will be given me in the same hour what I shall speak. If I am called to preach, I will preach and nobody shall stop me. For the Lord will be with my mouth.” But, you see, until the man is conscious of his own weakness, he will run without being sent. And there is nobody so weak as that man. No one so weak as the man who has no commission from God and no promise of help from Him. Such a man will be thinking of this and thinking of that and running for this, that and the other, because he has a lot of wasted energy which he wants to use somewhere or somehow. Could we once see him consciously weak we should hear him say, “Here am I, send me!” in answer to the question, “Whom shall I send?” Then he

would not go a warfare at his own charges but he would draw upon the all-sufficiency of God and find himself equal to every emergency.

The man who is consciously weak is strong, next, because of the holy caution that he will be sure to use. He will be on his guard because he does not feel able to cope with adversaries. He will ask for a convoy for his little boat for he is aware of pirates. If this weak man has to pass through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, depend upon it, he will carry in his hand the weapon of prayer, like a drawn sword. The man that has strength goes hurrying on over hedge and ditch and soon comes into mischief. But the consciously weak pilgrim keeps to the high-road and travels carefully. And hence he is strong.

Fear is a notably good housekeeper—she may not keep a luxurious table but she always locks the doors at night and takes care of all under her charge. Holy caution begets prudence. And prudence, by fostering vigor and crying for heavenly aid, becomes strength.

Moreover, when a man is weak, then is he strong because he is sure to pray and prayer is power. The man who laments his weakness is sure to cry to the strong for strength. The more his weakness presses on him, the more he will pray. When his own weakness becomes utter and entire and he is ready to perish then he turns unto his Lord and is made strong. The utterly weak cry out unto God as nobody else does. He is too weak to play at praying—he groans, he sighs, he weeps. In his abject weakness he prevails, as Jacob did.

Jacob wrestled all night. But now at last the angel has touched the hollow of his thigh and made his sinew shrink and he cannot wrestle any longer. What will he do now? He falls. And as he falls he grasps his antagonist and holds Him fast, crying, “I will not let You go except You bless me.” As much to say, “I cannot wrestle with You, I cannot try another fall. But I can and will hold You fast. The dead weight of my weakness makes me hold You as an anchor holds a ship. I will not let You go except You bless me.”

The weaker a man is in himself, the stronger he is in prayer. He makes use of his weakness as an appealing argument—“Lord, if I were strong, You might leave me. Do not leave me, for I am weakness itself. I am the feeblest child in all Your family, leave me not, neither forsake me. If You leave any, leave not your poor dying infant that can hardly wail out its griefs.” Weakness, as a plea with God in prayer, becomes a source of strength.

When we are weak we are strong, again, because then we are driven away from self to God. All strength is in God and it is well to come to the one solitary storehouse and source of might. There is no power apart from God. As long as you and I look to the creature we are looking to a cracked, broken cistern, that holds no water. But when we know that it is broken and that there is not a drop of water in it, then we hasten to the great Fountain. While we rest in any measure upon self or the creature, we are standing with one foot on the sand. But when we get away from human nature because we are too weak to have the least reliance upon self whatever—then we have both feet on the Rock and this is safe standing.

If you believe in the living God and if all your own existence is by believing, you live at a mighty rate. But if you believe in God in a measure and if, at the same time, you trust yourself in a measure, you are living at a dying rate and half the joy which is possible to you is lost. You are taking in bread with one hand and poison with the other—you are feeding your soul with substance and with shadow and that makes a sorry mixture. When the shadow is taken away and you have nothing but the substance—*then* are you strong, fed upon substantial meat.

Last of all, dear Friends, I believe that when a man is weak he becomes strong to a large extent because his weakness compels him to concentrate all his faculties. A sense of weakness brings out all the forces of a resolute spirit and leads him to call in All the energy within his reach. When I have preached to you in extreme weakness, as I have often done, when I have afterwards read the sermon I have been much more satisfied with it than I have been with others in which I felt more pleasure at the time.

God helps us most when we most need His help. And, besides that, the man himself is, by his weakness, forced to use himself right up. When a man feels himself to be rather a large vessel he puts in the tap somewhere near the top and only a small supply flows out to the people. But when he is, in his own feelings, like a poor little cask with only a small supply in it, he puts the tap right down at the bottom and permits all that is in the barrel to flow forth. Many a poor weak Brother who says all the little that he knows, give forth more instruction than the learned Divine who only favors his people with a small portion of his vast stores. When a man, in serving God, spends himself to the last farthing, he will often far more enrich his hearers than the man of ten talents who uses his resources with a prudent stinginess.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, it will often be a good thing for you to feel, "Now, God helping me, I must do my very utmost at this time. I have so little ability that every faculty within me must be wide awake and serve God at its best." Thus your weakness will arouse you and set you on fire, and, by the blessing of God, it will be the means of gaining you strength. Very well, then, let us pick up our tools and go to our work rejoicing, feeling—Well, I may be weaker, or I may be stronger in myself but my strength is in my God. If I should ever become stronger, then I must pray for a deeper sense of weakness, lest I become weak through my strength. And if I should ever become weaker than I am, then I must hope and believe that I am really becoming stronger in the Lord. Whether I am weak or strong, what does it matter? He who never fails and never changes will perfect His strength in my weakness and this is glory to me. Amen.

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A SERMON UPON ONE NOTHING BY ANOTHER NOTHING NO. 1458

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

***“Though I am nothing.”
2 Corinthians 12:11.***

THE Divine discipline had succeeded well with the Apostle Paul. There was danger of his being exalted above measure by the abundance of the Revelation which he received and, therefore, there was given him a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him—this trial fully answered its purpose and Paul remained a lowly-minded servant of Jesus Christ. His humility comes out in the incident before us. He was compelled to defend himself and prove his Apostleship and this he does very thoroughly but very modestly. In the midst of strong expressions of self-assertion, every one of them truthful and none of them exaggerated, his true humility is as manifest as if he had been unveiling his inward faults, or writing his, “Confessions.”

Augustine in his, “Retractations,” is no more humble than Paul in his self-vindication. It is easy for a man to use lowly expressions when he is writing about his own faults and the Grace of God which saved him from them, but it is not so easy to maintain the virgin blush of modesty when called in necessary self-defense to vindicate one’s own character and mention one’s own achievements. Indignation is generally awakened in such a case and humility creeps out of the way—the more amazing is it, then, to find Paul esteeming himself as *nothing*, even when answering the cruel depreciations of his opposers.

Read verse 11 and see the lowly heart of the man—“I have become a fool in boasting; you have compelled me. For I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing was I behind the most eminent Apostles, though I am nothing.” Beloved, when we have to take the same medicine, may it have as sure an effect upon us as it had upon Paul. If it should be necessary for us to be buffeted, or to endure a thorn in the flesh, may the affliction be as much sanctified to its end as it was in his case! Alas, I am afraid that some have many thorns in the flesh and yet are not humble. They have many buffetings and yet are lifted up and, what is worse still, they have never enjoyed a perilous abundance of Revelation to lift them up, but rather they have been surfeited with an abundance of that which is gross and earthy and yet they are not humble.

Though they have no good thing to glory in, they have exalted themselves above their brethren and have spoken harshly of them and to them and have been exceedingly high and haughty in all that they have done. Such persons may expect to be stopped in their boasting before long. May God grant that a little thorn may be enough for us; that one touch of the knife may suffice to let out our proud blood; that a little buffeting by the messenger of Satan may avail to prevent our being exalted above measure, for has not the Lord said, “Be you not as the

horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle”?

A little trial ought to suffice to ballast us, for I am sure we have nothing so abundant in the way of Revelations and spiritual attainments that we should feel inclined at all to boasting. It is a great shame if we have fallen into the danger which Paul escaped and have fallen into it without rhyme or reason. He who is proud about nothing is a fool in capitals. I desire to call your attention to the fact that although Paul was undoubtedly humble and the discipline of God had helped to keep him so, yet there is not a particle of cant in any of his expressions. There is no trace of the whine of hypocrites revealing, rather than concealing, their self-conceit. Humility has been well defined as having a just estimate of yourself. There is no humility in such self-depreciation as would lead you to deny what God has worked in you, or worked by you—that might be willful falsehood and certainly would be grievous error.

Falsehood is not a constituent element of anything that is gracious—we are not required to call five talents one in order to be humble. If we make a fair and just estimate of ourselves, we shall certainly discover nothing to boast about and we shall not, then, be likely to borrow from the lips of others words and confessions which do not accurately represent our character, or state our feelings and, ought not, therefore, to be employed by us. The mimicry of humility is a very common piece of masquerading. You shall find persons speaking in very lowly terms of themselves, but they do not expect you to believe them. A Brother who has called himself worldly in prayer, if you should tell him in private conversation that you were glad to hear his truthful description of himself, would not take it at all kindly, but would ask who and what are *you* that you should judge him! He would tell you he is as spiritual as you are and perhaps more so.

A monk, we remember, confessed that he was so great a sinner that he had broken all the commandments. But when afterwards one of his friends began to charge him with breaking first one commandment and then another, the hypocrite averted that he had not broken any one of them! Men are so little humble that when they smite on their breasts they may be still boasting in their hearts! Mock humility creeps around us, cringing and fawning, but every honest man loathes it and we may be sure that God loathes it, too. Now, if the Apostle had said that he was not an Apostle at all, that he had never suffered anything for Christ, or done anything to spread the Gospel, he would have been speaking, as some say, humbly. But this is a mistake—he would have been telling lies!

He, therefore, does nothing of the kind. He says that he is not a whit behind the very chief of the Apostles; speaks of his sufferings and his toils; told of the manifestations of Divine Grace to his soul and, yet, for all that, he finishes his detail of experience by saying, “Though I am nothing.” Brothers and Sisters, do not deny what God has done for you, or by you! Look at all of it and value it and bless the Lord for it! But still, when all is said and done you must, no, I trust you cheerfully will come back to this—“Though I am nothing”—speaking truthfully all the while and not using a good expression for a sort of religious fashion’s sake, but because it is deeply felt to be quite as true that you are nothing as it is true that God has blessed you!

I shall endeavor at this time, as the Spirit of God shall help me, to speak upon this very remarkable expression of the Apostle, "Though I am nothing." O, that both the preacher and his hearers may be able to enter into the spirit and soul of the text and make it all our own!

I. And first, we shall say of it that this was OTHER MEN'S ESTIMATE OF HIM. Everyone did not value the great Apostle as we do, but many spoke ill of him. Perhaps he meant, "though I am nothing *in the opinion of my detractors*." I hardly think he intended it, but still, he may have included that in its meaning. He may have meant, "I am not a whit behind the most eminent of the Apostles, though in the judgment of others I am nothing." I mention this point, first, because it may comfort any earnest servant of God who is faithfully serving his Master but finds himself undervalued and despised by those from whom he expected sympathy and help.

You may be starting in the Christian life as a young man full of zeal and fervor, but you dwell among a people who count you hot-headed and self-conceited and do their best to thwart you. You are like Joseph among his brothers and the archers sorely shoot at you. You are looked upon as a dreamer and a pretentious fool. Your companions are as rough to you as were David's brothers when he came down to the host—they charge you with pride and willfulness. Be comforted about this trial if you are, indeed, a true-hearted soldier of Jesus Christ, for if Paul heard that in the judgment of many his personal presence was weak and his speech was contemptible—and if many other eminent men have been frowned upon and misjudged—you need not wonder if the same thing happens to you! It is good for a man that he bears the yoke in his youth—bear it and profit by it!

The case is harder with older servants of God. After a long life of usefulness, Churches often forget all that a man was and did in his vigorous times and now that the elasticity of his mind has abated, they treat him with indifference. His ministry is now more solid and full of experimental teaching—an ungenerous race of hearers do not say that his preaching has become weighty, but they complain that the old gentleman is "very heavy" and they cannot endure his prosiness. The good old man, who deserves to be honored by his congregation, runs the risk of being elbowed out and reckoned as a worn-out nobody. You must not marvel, my dear Brother, if foolish lovers of novelty should so treat you! It is inexcusable and yet it is common. It wounds your heart and makes you wish to be gone to the better land, but do not let it too sorely vex you, for the same thing happened to him at whose feet you would be glad to sit—I mean the Apostle of the Gentiles—who, when he was "such an one as Paul the Aged," knew that to many he was nothing.

In following up the subject, we observe that Paul was nothing, first, *in the estimation of hatred*. His Jewish brethren, when he was, with them, the slave of their prejudices and an advocate of their principles, thought him some great one. He was a leader among them, a Pharisee among the Pharisees, a man deeply taught in rabbinical lore, a scholar to be gloried in, a zealot to be trusted! Then Paul was something! But when he went over to the hated sect and became a worshipper of the Nazarene, he was nothing! The bigot spat at the very mention of his name. He was an apostate, a worthless fellow, a madman, a nothing! He became an alien

and worse, a castaway and a curse. Such is, in a measure, the case when men become thoroughly and bravely followers of Jesus. The world's market price of them falls a hundred per cent.

If a scientific man is of infidel principles, he is cried up as an eminent thinker and discoverer. But should he be a true Christian and know 20 times as much as his fellows, he is a person of antiquated views and narrow notions. If a preacher proclaims novel heresies, then he is declared a man of advanced thought, a leader abreast of the times—though, indeed, there may be nothing in him but an affectation of singularity and lack of reverence for the Word of God! He who is content with the exceeding broadness of the Divine testimony and asks no greater liberty than that of the Truth of God, is, in certain quarters, reported to have narrowed his soul and to be possessed of but slender intellect.

Of course, it has always been so, but I think it is easier to call a man a fool than to prove him to be so and it is a great deal easier to boast of your own wonderful powers, the expansiveness of your mind and the great progress that you have made in thought, than it will be to convince really thoughtful and experienced men who walk with God that, after all, the new is better than the old and that the inventions of man's fancy are better than the doctrines of Divine Revelation! That is, however, the custom of men who, being short of arguments, seize upon the weapons of contempt. If you are not of their way of thinking you are not a thinker at all! If you will chime in with their notions, you are worthy of all honor! But if you differ from them, you must be nothing. Paul was marked at zero by the measurement of those who hated him.

He was also *nothing in the valuation of envy*. There arose, even in the Church of Christ, certain ones who loved pre-eminence and found the Apostle already in the highest place. False brethren claimed to be Apostles and, in order to maintain their pretensions, they questioned the Apostleship of Paul. They strove to rise by pulling down one who was superior to themselves. Who was Paul? they asked. He could write a weighty and powerful letter, but if you came to listen to him, his weak eyes, his short stature and his cramped resolve to know nothing but Christ crucified caused him to make a sorry figure as an orator! They, themselves, with enticing words and fair speeches, boasted that they far excelled him.

Where was the excellency of his words? Where was the depth of his wisdom? He was nothing and they sneered at him and exalted themselves. The Apostle knew all this and was by no means crushed, thereby, for he could stand even before envy. Ah, Brothers and Sisters, envy has a wonderful skill in the cruel arts of slander and detraction—if the envious cannot quench the sun, they can at least point to its spots, or raise a dust to blind men's eyes to its brightness! Many a hero of the Truth of God has been despised for the very reason which ought to have secured him honor. It is an unfortunate thing for some men, if they love their own ease, that they have risen to conspicuous usefulness, for in a middle place they might have been allowed to be something, but jealousy is now resolved to rate them as nothing.

If Paul had wanted to be comfortable and repose had been his objective, he had only to subside into the common ranks of the lukewarm

Laodiceans and then he would have been far less plucked at. Zeal and holiness, if they are accompanied with a measure of success, will secure a man that contempt among the envious which is the homage that evil hearts must, of necessity, pay to goodness. Again, the Apostle was, evidently, *nothing to those who desired that Christianity should make a fair show in the flesh*. Certain brethren had come among the Believers who brought with them human wisdom and thought to adorn the doctrine of Christ and cause the offense of the Cross to cease. Gnosticism was the “modern thought” of the Apostle’s age and of the era which followed it. It was a translation of the Gospel into the language of the schools and the evaporation of its true life and meaning in the process.

Our Apostle abhorred the wisdom of words. “We use,” says he, “great plainness of speech.” He tore the mask from off those half heathens who made the Cross of Christ of no effect by their philosophizing and, therefore, they retaliated by declaring that he was not a man of a great mind—that, in fact he was nothing! Other teachers arose who were opposed to the philosophical way, but they must take the way of tradition and ritualism, declaring that men must be circumcised, or else their faith in Christ would be of no avail. Such persons dwelt much upon the observance of holy days and months and so on, and thus stirred up the spirit of the Apostle till he came forth and cried, “I, Paul, say unto you, that if you are circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing! By the deeds of the Law shall no flesh be justified.”

By declaring the plain Gospel of salvation by Grace through faith, he laid the axe at the root of all ritualism, as he had before done at the root of all rationalism. Straightway the high churchmen discovered that Paul was nothing! He might have decorated the Gospel with learning and made it palatable to the Greeks, or he might have cramped it with tradition and made it agreeable to the Jews, but he scorned to do either. When Peter went a little in the Jewish direction, Paul “withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed” and, therefore, some cried up Cephas, but cried down Paul and, according to their account, he was just nothing.

May the Lord grant to all of us who preach the Gospel a willingness to be lightly esteemed! May the Lord give us all Divine Grace to be fools in the estimation of modern wise men! May we have enough backbone of holy firmness to be conservative of the old Truth and to be careless of the ridicule of the worldly wise. May we have enough loyalty to Christ to be willing to be despised for His sake! May we be man enough not to care one atom whether we are in honor or dishonor, so long as our conscience is clear that we have faithfully preached Jesus Christ and Him crucified! The day shall come when he who has borne the most disgrace for Christ will be esteemed the happiest and most honored man alive—and when he who was counted the greatest fool for Christ shall be acknowledged to be among the wisest of men and shall shine as the stars forever and ever.

Will we not cheerfully consent to be nothing for His sake who made Himself of no reputation for our sakes? Will we not, with John, rejoice that He must increase and that we must decrease? It is our joy to see Him All in All and if any shame or contempt borne by us could lift up His name but one hair’s breadth, we would rejoice with joy unspeakable.

After all, what is man's opinion? The balances are not those of the sanctuary and the weights are not those of justice. The verdict of earth will be reversed by the judgment of Heaven, for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God! When any measure of injustice grieves us, we should console ourselves with the remembrance that so persecuted they the Prophets that were before us and yet the Prophets have lost no real honor! They also despised our Master and yet His Throne has lost none of its Glory.

Thus have we discussed a meaning which some have seen in the text and if it is not the first sense of it, at any rate it is a truth which may be profitably remembered.

II. But now, secondly, we have here in the words of the Apostle HIS OWN ESTIMATE OF HIMSELF. "Though I am nothing." Our first observation upon the Apostle's valuation of himself is that it is *a very great correction upon his original estimate of himself*, for in former days he carried a high sail and would by no means lower his flag to any man. When he was on the road to Damascus to hunt the saints, he was on first-class terms with himself and thought that he was doing God a great service. He was somebody then, both good and great, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the Law, a Pharisee. You might have ridden many a mile to find his equal. Saul was like his namesake of old, head and shoulders above all others. But *Paul* was of quite a different stature—short and even diminutive. I refer, of course, to his height in his own esteem, He would not, then, have claimed that he was nothing, for he was a student of the Law and a great deal more besides.

This corrected estimate very much resulted from the enlightenment which he received at his conversion. What a flood of light does the Lord pour in upon a man's soul when he brings him to Himself! At first it almost blinds him, so that like Paul, he admits, "I could not see for the brightness of that light." It was so in my own case. I had often been down into the cellar of my heart and I rather admired the purity and order of the place. It seemed to me to be festooned and decorated and it boasted a good share of vegetation and a considerable life of its own. A dim, flickering light sufficed to show me, as I thought, that it was by no means a very foul place, but rather the reverse! I could not be so vain as to say that I thought it absolutely *perfect* in cleanliness and beauty, but still, it was as well as could be expected and far better than the most of other hearts.

Now, it was ordained that this flattering illusion should be dispelled. One day, as I went into this vault, there came one with a larger candle than I had been known to carry and what I saw surprised me beyond measure! I saw that the festoons which I imagined to be special decorations were huge cobwebs heavy with dust! The vegetation, too, I saw was all blanched and much of it a noxious growth, while the life which I had somewhat boasted of, I was ashamed to look upon or even to think of! That candle shining in the cellar of my soul had worked a melancholy change in my thoughts of myself and foolishly I resolved never to permit so bright a light to enter there, again, as if to *hide* the evil was to remove it!

But things could not remain as they were, for one day there came Another who did me a worse, yet better turn, for He descended into my

cellar and removed certain shutters which had long excluded the light of day. When next I entered the vault I was ready to swoon for very flight, for a *dunghill* was sweetness to it—it was the concentration of abominations! There were all manner of creeping things, loathsome and polluting! I was ready to die at the sight. But, to tell the truth, I did not, even then, see it all, for the window was still so much covered over with thick cobwebs and filth that the whole of the light did not enter. Yes, I fear I have not even yet seen all the pollution of my nature, but I thank God I have seen enough to make me cry to Him who is able to cleanse! Hercules turned a river into the Augean stable and purified it and my Lord Jesus has, with His own blood, purged my nature—but this I know, I am nothing—less than nothing in my natural state.

I have but given you a parable of what the Apostle saw in himself when the Law came with its condemning power into his soul. During those three days in which the scales were on his eyes and he was blind, not seeing the sun for a season, he turned all his sight within and saw himself. Then great Saul dwarfed into little Paul and the learned rabbi shriveled into a poor Brother who was glad to receive humble Ananias and to learn from him what he was yet to do. He who hectored over the Church of God now meekly arose and was baptized, calling upon the name of the Lord. Three days of glorious light, so bright that it made him blind, had corrected his estimate of himself—and it was in memory of that lesson and of all that he had learned subsequently that he said, “Though I am nothing.”

Beloved Friends, *the force of that estimate had increased by a growing belief in the Doctrines of Grace.* If you wish to find the free will of man very much extolled, you must not read in the Epistles of Paul. If any of you desire to write an essay upon the dignity of human nature, or to preach a sermon upon the glory which still remains in man despite his fallen state—the recuperative power of human nature despite its disease—you will gain little help from our Apostle! I could refer you to certain modern Divines for a good deal of stuff of that kind, but the Apostle of the Gentiles does not deal in that material. His indictment against humanity in the first chapter of Romans is as terrible as it is true. “Dead in trespasses and sins” is his description of man’s condition—Sovereign Grace is his only remedy!

He tells us of being born again and of being newly created by the work of God. He tells us of justification by faith through Grace by the righteousness of Jesus Christ, but he has not a word to say of human power or merit. If ever a man could say, “Grace! Grace!” and *did* say it and kept on saying it most distinctly, it was the Apostle Paul! In proportion as he learned the fullness, freeness, richness and sovereignty of Divine Grace did he see, side by side with it, the nakedness, the filthiness, the *nothingness* of man and so he who could best glory in the Grace of God thought less and less of himself and said, “Though I am nothing.”

In addition to this *his own internal experience had very much helped him to feel that he was nothing*, for he had experienced great spiritual struggles. “Oh, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” was not once or twice his cry, but he often felt the law of his old nature struggling against the law of his mind and he lived

in lifelong conflict with the evil which he saw within himself, therefore feeling daily that salvation must be of Grace alone and that he himself was nothing and less than nothing.

Beloved, I feel sure that when the Apostle said that he was nothing, he meant that he was *nothing in comparison with his Lord*. He had seen the Glory of His Master up yonder in Heaven and he had preached that Glory among the sons of men and, as for himself, he could not find any figure to represent his own insignificance. The smallest of figures was too large for him. He dared not describe himself by the figure *one* and so he put down a *zero* and declared, "I am *nothing*." When a man's heart is filled with adoring reverence of the Redeemer, he shrinks into nothing and feels a kind of self-annihilation passing over his spirit. And, if you have never seen the Lord, but only heard of Him, you may aim at humility, but when your eyes see Him, then will you *have* it, for you will abhor yourself in dust and ashes. Our Apostle had in the fullest sense seen the Lord and, for that reason, with emphasis, he cried, "Though I am nothing."

He meant, next, that he was *nothing to boast of*—that albeit he had been a night and a day in the deep and had been stoned and had been beaten with rods, and had been a faithful sufferer for Christ—albeit that he had preached the Gospel in the regions beyond, not building upon another man's foundation, yet in all these he saw nothing whatever of which he could boast, but he was still nothing. I remember well a talkative Christian who supposed herself to possess very remarkable attainments, very much of the same character as those who swarmed around us a few months ago, people who were of very superfine hot-pressed quality. I wish them every blessing, but I am not at all enamored of their pretensions, wonderful as they are.

Now, this superior person was talking of the marvelous things which she had felt, known and done. She was, if not quite perfect, in remarkable danger of becoming so! She turned to an aged Christian in the company and said, "But you, dear Brother, do not say a word." Now, you know there are individuals who *say* little, who *think* all the more and our old friend was one of them, but still remained silent. "Come," she said, "have you no religious experience?" The old man said very quietly, "I never had any to *boast* about." That remark I heartily endorsed! If we attain to the highest experience and rise very near to God and conquer open sin we shall still have to look within and say, "I am nothing." Boasting is a sure sign of *failure* wherever it is found—even a giant like Goliath had hardly done boasting before he fell beneath the sling and stone of a ruddy youth!

Restrain every feeling of pride! No, chase it from your soul, for it is foolish and will lead to further folly. It is a noxious insect which will corrupt whatever it lights upon, gaudy though its wings may be. King Herod was soon eaten of worms when he began to be blown up with pride. Where there is the most precious Grace, there is always a jewel-case of humility to keep it in. Gilded wood may float, but an ingot of gold will sink. Diotrophes was a nobody and loved the pre-eminence. Paul was not a whit behind the chief of the Apostles, yet he said, "Though I am nothing." If we reach the Apostle's point of conscious nothingness we had better stop there, for there is no place safer and happier and none more consistent with the facts of the case! Those who are lowly, are excellent,

but pride is pestilent. The possession of Grace secures a measure of self-deprecation and in proportion as that Grace increases, the thermometer of self-estimation will fall. Below zero is the proper point for us—for in truth we are less than the least of all the saints!

The Apostle meant, next, that he was *nothing to trust in*. “Though I am nothing.” We begin our Christian life by trusting in Christ, alone, and we shall continue so to trust as to His merit. But we are very apt to get wrong in other matters. We begin with a sense of being very weak and foolish and we look to Jesus only for strength and guidance. But after a while we think ourselves growing into deeply experienced and well-instructed Christians and the temptation is to lean somewhat to our own understanding and stability. All this comes of evil and will lead to further evil. I recollect well a person asking a Brother of my acquaintance to lend him a certain sum of money. This my friend was willing to do, but the man added, “You know you can trust me. I have been a Christian now 35 years and I am past temptation.”

My friend, like a wise man, buttoned his pocket very quietly and said he must decline to make him a loan. He had intended to do so till that vainglorious speech was made. That boaster failed the next day and was discovered to have been an arrant rogue! Whenever a man says, “I am past temptation,” he reveals the pride of his heart! And whenever any of us even *dream* of such a thing about ourselves, we have need to tremble for fear that some terrible fall is near. Yet that thought does come across us, though we do not utter it—we half think in our hearts that those inexperienced young men may go wrong, but that we who are middle-aged men are not so likely to be overthrown. Yet grievous sins in Churches are as common among the more advanced as among the young.

Most, if not all, of the great falls recorded in the Bible happened to middle-aged and old people! Think of the drunkenness of Noah and of Lot and the sin of Reuben, Judah, David and Peter and you will see that these were not hot-headed boys, but experienced men who should have acted better. We must come to this—I am nothing—I am strong in the Lord when He strengthens me, but I am as weak as an infant without His aid. I may know a great many things as the Lord continues to teach me, but if His Grace were removed I should be as foolish and ignorant as when I first came into His school. “In me, that is, in my flesh, there dwells no good thing.” Within my nature there is no stay for my confidence. I am nothing to trust in.

“Though I am nothing,” again, means this—I *am nothing worth considering*—as if he said, “If there is any good thing for me to do, I never calculate whether I shall be a loser by it or a gainer, for I am not worth taking into the account. If Christ’s kingdom will but come, it does not matter whether Paul lives or Paul dies. I am nothing in comparison with His Glory.” I think he meant this, also—“I am of small consequence. Christ’s kingdom will go on without me. Souls will be won without me. His Glory will be promoted in the world even if I am no more alive to work for His cause. I do not count myself to be a person of such consequence to His Church that the Lord needs me. He may *use* me, but if He does not use me, He will use somebody else. I am but a pen and He can produce many such. If He does not write with one, He can write with

another—I am nothing. If I am now a trumpet in His hand, He can blow through another if He chooses to lay me aside, for rams' horns are common enough and the walls of Jericho will not stand for lack of them." I think that was what he meant by, "Though I am nothing."

I pray God we may make a low estimate of ourselves and never dream ourselves to be essential to God's cause. I shall yet spend a few minutes more in speaking of our own estimate of ourselves, dear Brothers and Sisters, and may we all be made, by Divine Grace, to say "Though I am nothing." I will tell you why I wish that we may come to this. It is because it will be exceedingly beneficial to us if, with deep sincerity, we feel that we are nothing. It will prevent pride and that which will prevent pride is worth a fortune. It will prevent our being mortified, as we sometimes are, because notice is not taken of us when we have done something that we thought was greatly praiseworthy. If we say, "Though I am nothing," we do not expect people to talk much about a *nothing*, nor do we wish them to do so—we are glad to get into the shade and if we do not receive a single word of commendation we are content to have worked for the Lord in quietness.

No man will look for honor among his fellows when he acknowledges that he is nothing! This humility will also prevent severe censures of others. We are all very handy at picking holes in our Brethren's coats, but when we are *nothing* we shall draw back our hand and say, "It does not become a nothing and a nobody to be finding fault with other people." I sometimes wish that those who criticize ministers would think of this. I do not believe that a public person can nowadays say five plain words which some critic or other will not misunderstand or misrepresent. I wish they would try to speak or write themselves and see whether others could not pull *them* to pieces quite as readily! You will be greatly helped in avoiding censoriousness if you have a lowly view of yourself so as to say—"Though I am nothing."

This will also help you to avoid all self-seeking. Why should you seek your own praise if you are nothing? There is no good in seeking for great things for a nothing! If you are nothing, you will keep your motives clear. You will seek the Glory of God and not your own. If you are nothing, self-denial will become very easy to you. You will be willing to be a doormat to God's temple for His saints to wipe their feet upon if you can be more serviceable there than in any other capacity. A man who feels himself to be nothing will be easily contented. He who is nothing does not need a thousand a year to maintain his dignity. He who is nothing, having food and raiment, is content. It would be a pity to spend a great deal upon nothing so he that is nothing thanks God for what he has and eats his bread and drinks his cup of water and blesses God that he has all that and Jesus Christ, too!

Mr. Somebody needs a large estate and a heap of money and when he has that, Mr. Somebody need much more and is never satisfied. Then, too, he has so many calls that he cannot afford to give anything away, while he who is nothing has his weekly tithe to bring, for he feels himself to be nothing but a steward and must use his Master's goods faithfully. He who knows himself to be nothing is also full of gratitude. If you catch him alone, you will find the tears in his eyes and if you question him, he will tell you that he was weeping to think that God should ever have

loved *him*, for he is such a nobody. He was wondering at his election, marveling that Eternal Love should have pitched upon *him*. He was wondering at redemption, admiring that the Lord Jesus Christ should have shed His blood for *him*! He was wondering at effectual calling, amazed that the Holy Spirit should ever have called *him*. He was wondering at the persevering love of God, that the Lord's mercy should have endured his ill manners so long. He was wondering that there should be a Heaven for him, wondering that there should be eternal life for Him. "Though I am nothing," he says, "yet Infinite Grace is mine!"

How can there be all this for a nobody? Great God, how good You are! Is not all this a sweet commendation of a lowly spirit? He that lives in the Valley of Humiliation, among the lilies, dwells where the birds sing all day and the gazelles and the does of the field lie down in peace! Now, I finish with this one thought. When the Apostle says, "*Though* I am nothing," that word shows that there was a fact in the background. He had been telling us that he was once caught up into the third Heaven and had enjoyed a special Revelation of Christ. Yes, beloved Believers, we have had our banqueting days when the banner over us was love. We have been very near the Beloved and we have been made to drink the spiced wine of His pomegranate and He has manifested Himself to us as He does not unto the world. All this you know, and I, also, know it, "though I am nothing."

In addition to this, "the Lord has done great things for us, whereof we are glad," by enabling us to serve His cause. If we have not been stoned and scourged, yet we have borne something for Christ and borne it cheerfully. If we cannot emulate the Apostle in abundance of service, yet the Lord has not left us without fruit unto His Glory and this we are right glad of, though we heartily add, "though I am nothing." We can also believingly say—"though I am nothing," yet the Spirit of God dwells in me. "Though I am nothing," the Spirit of God uses me! I want you not to forget the background of mercy which sets out this poor noticing and make it look all the less, albeit that it makes it all the sweeter for it to be so little. Oh, yes, and there is a Heaven for me and there is eternal life for me and there are the three Persons of the Divine Trinity sworn to save me! And Heaven and earth may pass away, but I shall never perish, neither shall any pluck me out of Jesus' hands, "though I am nothing." His angels are commissioned to keep me, and He, Himself, in Covenant, has given His oath and promise to preserve me, "though I am nothing."

"Though I am nothing." Does it not make your soul laugh with inexpressible delight to think that you shall wear a crown of life that fades not away and that your hands shall strike the strings of a harp which shall pour forth immortal melody though you are nothing? My heart dances while I feel that the pearly gates, the streets of gold, the goodly company of angels and the assembly of the firstborn are for me, "though I am nothing"! Dearly Beloved, go away with "Though I am nothing" in your mouths, but yet say, "Yet has He loved me with an everlasting love and because He has set His love upon me, He will deliver me and set me on high! Since I was precious in His sight I have been honorable and He has loved me and He gave more than Egypt and Ethiopia for me, 'though I am nothing.'"

The Lord bless you and if there is a sinner here who is somebody, may the Lord turn him into nobody! But if there is a nobody here, may the Lord bless him, for he is the sort of man that Jesus saves! O Soul, you must be *nothing* if God is to save you! You must come down from your high horse! You must give up your trust in works and ceremonies and natural goodness and be *nothing*! And when you are nothing, then will Jesus Christ be All in All to you! He is a full Christ for empty sinners. He gives life to dead sinners, healing to sick sinners and clothing to naked sinners! But if you are full and rich and lively in yourselves, you may go your way—He will have nothing to do with you.

If you are nothing. If you are clean emptied out and stripped and done for, ground to powder, crushed, and rendered helpless, you are of those for whom Jesus shed His precious blood! Come, trust in Him and find eternal life!

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
2 Corinthians 11:13-33; 12:1-12.**

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—625, 627.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:

BELOVED FRIENDS—Yesterday I was gladdened by a telegram from our well-beloved deacon, Mr. Murrell. “All going well. Tabernacle crowded each service. All friends united and hearty, expecting great results this February.” This was more precious to me than a banknote for a large amount! I have no greater joy than to hear that the Lord blesses the work at home. For myself, as you desire to hear frequently of my welfare, I can only say that the weather here is variable and I have varied with it, but yet I am greatly refreshed and in a fair way to recover strength. I still lean heavily upon my staff and can only totter a short distance, but my spirits are revived and my mind is regaining its tone. Pray for me daily, as I also do for you with all my heart.

Your loving friend,

C.H. SPURGEON

Mentone, February 11, 1879

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

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

THE PROOF OF OUR MINISTRY

NO. 1788

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 29, 1884,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Since you seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, who is not weak towards you, but is mighty in you. For though He was crucified in weakness, yet He lives by the power of God. For we, also, are weak in Him, but we shall live with Him by the power of God toward you. Examine yourselves, as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know, yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you— unless you are reprobates?”
2 Corinthians 13:3, 4.

The Apostle had much joy in being the founder, the father and the fosterer of so many Churches, but this joy brought with it constant and heavy trial. Care pressed heavily upon him, for he mentions it as the crown and crush of all his burdens—“That which comes upon me daily, the care of all the Churches.” He was not simply as a father among them, but he was as a nurse, continually on the watch and, in all tenderness, anxious for her little ones. He was deeply grieved when he saw anything wrong, lest he should have labored in vain, and should see any perish who appeared to be hopeful converts. He always had in his mind’s eye the account which he would have to give at the last—and his prayer was that he might render that account with joy and not with grief, for he adds, “That is unprofitable for you.” His whole soul went after the people of his charge and his heart sank within him when he observed prominent sin among them.

The Corinthian Church was enriched with many gifts, but impoverished by slender Grace. This Church had elected to conduct its arrangements upon the principle of everybody speaking who had something to say. Moreover, it chose to be a Church without rule and order, not caring to appoint officers who would be shepherds of the flock. That Church seems to have been a frequent trial to the Apostle and, after writing to them once very earnestly, he wrote to them a second time with equal tenderness and energy—and then he said he would have to visit them in person—and when he did come, he would, by discipline among them, make them know that Christ would not endure sin in His Church. Whatever they had to say about Paul, personally, he meant to be faithful to God and to the Truth of God—and he was sure that the power of God would be with him to support him in the work of reformation.

He writes in a sorrowful strain and yet one cannot help seeing how calm and judicious he is—how deliberately he enquires into evidence and

how impartially he judges the case. He had an intense desire to do the right thing and, therefore, passion and prejudice did not operate upon him. In this particular text he shows the high qualities of moral courage, inflexible justice, loving tenderness and wise prudence—proving himself to be a fit leader of the host. On account of Paul's having put his finger upon the mischief that was among them, the Corinthians turned round upon him and disparaged him—his letters might be weighty and powerful, but his personal presence was weak. And his speech—well, it was contemptible! They even questioned whether he was an Apostle at all!

Had he lived with Christ? Had he sat at Jesus' feet? No—it was apparent to everybody that his conversion took place *after* the departure of the Lord and you could never be quite sure that he had been *supernaturally* called as he said he had been. Thus they murmured among themselves. From this ordeal, Paul does not shrink for a moment, but he answers all their evil speeches in the language before us.

First, notice that he exhibits *God's chosen method of operation* in the Church by His appointed servants. This is a very interesting feature in the text. Secondly, he shows them what was *the sure proof of power*. And then, thirdly, he turns the tables upon those who had examined him and bids them give *the needed proof of themselves*—“Examine yourselves; prove yourselves; know you not, yourselves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, unless you are reprobates?”

I. The Apostle Paul teaches us in these verses THE LORD'S CHOSEN METHOD OF OPERATION. The rebellious Corinthians had spoken ill of the Apostle as lacking in power—his personal presence was not commanding, his speech was not fascinating, and so forth. Paul does not deny the charge, nor endeavor to exalt himself, but he glories in his infirmities because the power of God rests upon him! He admits anything they may have to say about his deficiency in natural dignity and elocution, but he declares the general principle of *power in weakness*, by which the Lord conducts the matters of the Gospel dispensation.

Power in weakness is the great secret of the Gospel mode of working! Life, born of death, is the life of our souls—a life which would never have been in us at all if it had not been for the most cruel death on record—when men crucified the ever-blessed Lord. The Apostle says, in verse four, “Though He was crucified in weakness, yet He lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, but we shall live with Him by the power of God toward you.” That is to say, our Lord Jesus Christ accomplished His mighty purpose by becoming weak—through His weakness He became able to suffer and to die—in order to save us from the thralldom of sin.

It was necessary that the Infinite should lay aside His power and become an Infant, that He who rules over all things should become, Himself, obedient unto death! That He who wore the royal robe of Sovereignty should be found in fashion as a man! He made Himself of no reputation and took upon Himself the form of a Servant and fulfilled the Divine Law. Yes, more, inasmuch as a great sacrifice must be offered for sin, a death was required—but it was not possible that God, regarded as God purely and simply, should die—therefore Jesus stooped to our weakness and by

weakness received the power to die, if I may call it so—that He, by that death, redeem us! By assuming our weakness He gained the power to act as our Substitute and put away our sin by the Sacrifice of Himself.

I am not aware of any other passage of Scripture where weakness is, in so many words, ascribed to the Lord Jesus Christ. This makes the text the more striking! Remember that there was resident within His complex Person a boundless power which He could at once exert. He occasionally permitted some outgoings of that power to let men see that His subjection was voluntary. He said of His life, “No man takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself.” Yet He was so weak that another was called in to bear His Cross. He cried, “I thirst!” He appealed to His God, saying, “Why have You forsaken Me?” And He was brought into the dust of death. He only spoke to those who came to take Him and they fell backward—a word would have brought Him 12 legions of angels! Truly did He say to Pilate, “You could have no power at all against Me, except it were given you from above.”

Yet as a voluntary captive He was bound—and as a willing Substitute He died—“He saved others, Himself He could not save.” Even on the Cross He displayed abundant evidence that He possessed inherent Omnipotence, for before He gave up the ghost, the midday sun veiled its face and traveled on in tenfold night! The veil which hid the Holy of Holies was torn in two as by giant hands! The rocks were split; the earth shook, the dead arose—to let men see that He who died in weakness was none other than the Son of God! He used His weakness as the instrument of His strength by which He became almighty to redeem!

Now, you perceive that this weakness of Christ is the way in which He exerts a wondrous power among men. Because of His being obedient to death, even the death of the Cross, “God also has highly exalted Him and given Him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth.” Because He died in weakness, He has become mighty to save by the putting away of sin. Has He not already finished transgression, made an end of sin and brought in everlasting righteousness? By this sign He conquered—the ensign of His bloody Cross is the seal of victory! It is Himself wounded, Himself hung up as a malefactor, Himself dead as a victim on the altar before the most high God—it is Himself thus slain which is His power to pardon and to save!

You know, Brothers and Sisters, that our Lord’s power over our hearts comes by His great love and the matchless manner of His showing it. Stooping so low to save such unworthy ones, He conquers our hearts! His dying love has begotten living love within us. It sends a spear into the heart of sin that Jesus yielded His heart for our sakes. This nails up the hands and feet of our rebellious lusts, to think that Jesus was crucified for us! This leads us in golden fetters, the happy captives of His mighty Grace, when we behold how His love stooped to the curse for us! The weakness of Christ is stronger in its power over our hearts than all His strength could have been. It is by *weakness* that Christ has achieved His mighty purpose! Today He has left His weakness on the Cross and gone

upward to His Throne—and there He sits clothed with a Glory born of His weakness! The eyes of my faith even now behold Him! I am glad I do not see Him more clearly, otherwise I must cease to speak to you and fall at His feet as dead, so great is His majesty, so glorious is His exaltation! That glory in our esteem has sprung out of His weakness, His sorrow, His death. Your brightest coronet, O Christ, is fashioned from the crown of thorns! You are more lovely, now, than You ever were before! The marks of Your passion have made You altogether lovely in the eyes of Your people!

Why did Paul interject this teaching? It was to show us that this great principle runs through all God's work in the saving of men. He does not save men, today, by the strength of His ministers, but by their *weakness*! And it is not the power of the Gospel, judged after the manner of the flesh, that is to conquer nations, but, as in our Lord's case, the victory is to be won by *weakness*! Look at Paul, himself—he came among these Corinthian people and, I dare say, when they were first converted they felt like the Galatians—that they would pluck out their own eyes and give them to him! But after a while, although he was very faithful, they turned against him, and said he was no orator, he had no great force of conception, or majesty of diction!

The Apostle was willing enough to admit that he was devoid of such showy gifts. Though you and I, at a distance, think very greatly of Paul, and very rightly so, yet among those cavilers he was lightly esteemed. He did not give himself the lofty airs of the great teachers of the day and, therefore, foolish persons despised him. Some liked Apollos better and others preferred Cephas—and thus they formed parties—agreeing in opposing Paul, but agreeing on nothing else. Paul was willing to lose all personal honor, though, in truth, not a whit behind the chief of the Apostles. He said, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." He cheerfully sank, that His Lord might be exalted!

Moreover, in those days there was a great liking among the people, especially those who thought themselves educated, for the Greek philosophers. They said to one another, "Have you studied Solon? Have you accepted the teaching of Socrates? Have you drunk in the doctrines of the divine Plato? That is the man! In him there is depth of reasoning and breadth of thought! As for this Paul, he does not seem to care for the great masters of thought." "No," says Paul, "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." They looked for philosophy and did not get it—and he did not mean they should. "But at least," they said, "what he has to say ought to be delivered with all the graces of oratory, after the best manner of the schools." "No," says Paul, "my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom—that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

If he had power among them, he determined that it should be the power of the Holy Spirit and no other power. The charms of oratory are but a poor and fickle force! Tricks of language are a wretched sort of witchcraft! Instead of the colored flames of fancy, Paul would let into their minds the

pure white light of the Truth of God as it shines from the Cross! Those things which were looked upon in those days as the chief instruments of power by which orators swayed human minds, Paul deliberately renounced and relied on higher forces! He kept to the preaching of the Cross, which was to them that perish, foolishness—but to the saved, the power of God! He put forward that side of the Gospel which was most objectionable, so that to the Jews it was a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness! He did this of design, for so the Lord always works, making His Divine Power more glorious in the absence of that which is thought to be power among men!

The Apostle, as a Jew, was full of ceremonial teaching which was very powerful with Jews, but to this he died. As a man, he was well and deeply educated in philosophy, but to that he also died, knowing nothing but the Cross and the scandal thereof. As his Master saved men by His weakness on the Cross, so did He save men by His Word spoken in the apparent weakness of Paul! And yet, again, I believe the Apostle meant this—that though he might have come among them, if he had liked, and said, “I am an Apostle! I have supreme power over Churches. Out of this Church I shall eject offenders without any question, for I am among you as your spiritual director!” But he never used such authority. On the contrary, he was the servant of all, patient to the last degree, gentle, humble, condescending, unselfish, fully consecrated. If any one was grieved, Paul was grieved *with* him! If any suffered trial, Paul was tried! He might have said, as His Master did, “I am among you as he that serves.”

He did, after the Divine example, continually wash the saints’ feet. His was a humble manner, for he sought nothing of them but that he might lead them in the way of holiness and maintain peace in their midst. He was no lord over God’s heritage, but the most humble of them all. He hoped all things, endured all things, believed all things for the sake of those entrusted to his charge. Thus he was a power among them—his evident self-sacrifice made him have more influence at Corinth than all their proud leaders of division! By laying aside authority, he became mighty to influence them for good. By God’s Grace, I, too, desire to practice this lesson to perfection.

All of you, my Brothers, who desire to be useful, must learn that in self-sinking, your usefulness will be found. Do not seek to be great—try to grow less and less. He who becomes least is greatest of all. The way to rise in the peerage of the Church is to go *down*! Do not take what you have a right to take. Do not covet the position which you feel you might righteously assume—take the lowest place, do the meanest service—be willing to be *anything* or *nothing* so that God is glorified. Be ready to be stuck in any corner, or stowed away in any lumber room, if such should be the will of God. And then the probability is that you will be largely and honorably used. The way to success in the Kingdom is by a constant sense of personal unworthiness and weakness. “When I am weak, then am I strong.”

By death with Christ, we come to live with Him! By being crucified with Him, we reign! By perfect self-surrender we obtain all things! He that saves his life shall lose it, but he that loses it for Christ’s sake shall find it

both here and hereafter! I think you see the Apostle's drift and how completely he answered all objections against himself grounded upon his apparent unimportance and weakness. It only remains for us to meet all such charges against ourselves in the same satisfactory manner!

II. I come, in the next place, to a very important matter and that is THE SURE PROOF OF POWER—the indisputable evidence of any minister's call from God to preach the Gospel. Notice the Apostle says, "Since you seek a proof of *Christ speaking in me*." He did not care about what they thought of his own speaking—they might throw that to the dogs if they liked—but he was greatly concerned that they could think lightly of the Lord Jesus who spoke in Him! If Christ speaks by any one of us, it will ill become us to see Him despised and feel no sorrow. Brother, never care about your own speaking—but if it is really so that the Lord Jesus bears witness to this generation through you—then do not allow Him to be rejected without entering your solemn protest.

A little further on, the Apostle declares that even the power of the living Christ is the power of God. Our Lord Jesus kept nothing to Himself but His weakness through which He was crucified, for He lives by the power of God! Such must be the power of every Christian worker—we are weak with Him—but we shall live with Him by the power of God towards those whom we bless. It was said, the other day, "It is a wonderful power which a certain man possesses—we see no cause to account for it." That man will not be true to himself or his Lord if he ascribes that power to his own personal acquirements, for if it is true power, it comes from that Spirit who distributes to every man according to His will. Power belongs to *God*—and that is the case even when He puts a measure of it upon men! Let that be understood once and for all.

Then, says Paul, "If you need a proof of Christ's speaking in me with power, look at yourselves." Paul says to his own Corinthian converts, "You are our Epistle!" If anybody enquires whether Paul can write, he does not exhibit his *hand* or his *pen*—he points to their *lives*—Epistles "written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God." Beloved, you who are our flocks are the evidences of our being good shepherds! You are God's husbandry and the test of how far *our* husbandry has been the *Lord's* husbandry must be found in your fruitfulness! If you want to know whether Christ has spoken in me, I reply, "Since you seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to youward is not weak, but is mighty in you, examine yourselves." Our witness is in your hearts! The mighty power of the Word of Christ has been proved within the arena of your experience, for it has moved you powerfully, influenced you wonderfully, and changed you supernaturally!

What is more, it still works in you, for Christ is in you, "unless you are reprobates." Jesus abides in you and the proof of our ministry is the effect it has had and still is having upon your minds. To put it more correctly, the proof that Christ really does speak by us is that He has worked, in you, by that speaking, after such a fashion as proves the doctrine to be Divine! Your souls are the seals of Christ's power! Standing here, this morning, while yet the trumpets of joy have hardly ceased their silver

sound, loving you and blessing God for many of you who are the fruit of my labors, I feel upon my heart the burden of the Lord! In vain is all our mutual content in each other unless in very deed the Gospel of God is confirmed and glorified in us! I feel compelled to say to you, Beloved, that if the outside world demands a proof of my call from God, I must refer them to you for it—you to whom God has spoken by me must be the witnesses whether it is of God or not—and if you fail me, my commission will have lost its seal! The *imprimatur* which establishes our right to our holy office will be found in the influence of the Gospel upon your character.

Listen, then, a moment with such sympathy with me as your love will inspire. If you seek any proof of Christ speaking by me, you have it, first, in your own *conversion*, many of you. You will have no doubt of the minister's call if his testimony has brought you life in Christ. After I had heard a poor plain man preach the Gospel and had been brought to the Savior's feet by his testimony, if I had been met outside by a High Churchman who thought that a common working man had no right to preach, I would have had small patience with him! Suppose he had said to me, when I was just converted, "The man is not qualified to preach. He has never been to Oxford or Cambridge. He has never been ordained. God cannot have sent him"? I would have smiled at such nonsense, for I was sure God sent him, since by his means I had been brought up out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay!

You never doubt the validity of the orders—that, I think, is the cant phrase—of the man who has led you to the Savior. How could you? Whatever he may be to others, he is to you, assuredly, a messenger of mercy, a servant of the living God. "Give God the praise," they said to the man whose eyes had been opened by Jesus, "*we* know that this man is a sinner." "Ah," said the shrewd, ready-witted man, "whether he is a sinner or not, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." Was there any answer to that fact? In later days, when the chief priests and scribes saw the man that was healed standing with Peter and John, they could say nothing against them! The conversion proves that he, by whose means it was worked, was sent by God! If I have been made useful to any of you, do not let me lose the reward of seeing you walk as those who are truly alive from the dead. Do not be fickle and unsteady, but continue in the faith grounded and settled, for he that endures to the end, the same shall be saved.

Further, God proves that He has sent a man by the *comfort* which he gives to true Believers by his ministry. The servant of God expounds the exceedingly great and precious promises. He describes the Covenant of Grace. He pictures the adorable Person of the Divine Lord. He bears testimony to the faithfulness of God and to the inward operation of the Holy Spirit—and in all this he ministers good cheer to the saints. Now, has it not happened to you while this has been done that your hearts have leaped within you? Have you not come into this place burdened and while Jesus has been speaking to you, have you not lost your load? Do not many of you go on from week to week with merry hearts because of the Word of the Lord which comes to you full of consolation? Well, then,

whether it is I or any other preacher of the Word of God—if by our speaking, the Lord strengthens your weak hands and confirms your feeble knees—He points us out to you as messengers of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter! Oh, the riches of Divine consolation! Have you tasted them? Then there is no disputing against taste—of all arguments, that of *experience* is the most conclusive.

Further, when Christ, speaking in His servants, brings to us *correction*, it is an equal proof that it is of the Lord. You did not know it, but you had lived in the omission of a certain duty—the Light of God dashed into your soul by the hearing of the Word of God as to that omission—and with that Light came love—so that you wept over your sin and ceased from it at once. Surely that was a proof of Christ’s speaking in the minister! Have you not, sometimes, felt your hearts turned inside out, as if the spirit of burning were searching and purging you? Was not that of the Lord? Dagon sat upright enough in his own temple while he was left alone, but the Ark of God was brought in and, by-and-by, Dagon had to go down! There was a great crash—the Lord’s Ark had struck him—and only the stump of Dagon was left!

Has it not been so with you through the preaching of the Word? We must all confess that Christ’s voice has been like a winnowing fan to drive away our chaff. His Truth has blown through us like a strong northern blast and it has swept down the withered leaves of our fancies, conceits and self-reliances. Our cry has been, “We all fade as a leaf and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away!” We have stood bare and leafless before God and, thereby, we have been prepared for another spring to clothe us with a fresher and more enduring verdure. That use of the Word of God for correction becomes a definite answer to the question, “What is the proof of Christ speaking in us?”

Then, dear Friends, the general *conduct and conversation* of members of a Church must always be the best recommendation of the ministry which feeds them. My heart sinks within me when I hear of those who have been numbered with us, have shared our love and esteem and yet have behaved inconsistently. Is this to be laid at *my* door? I confess I cannot help blaming myself and growing sad. Did I not hear of an earnest Temperance man in public, drinking in private? Is this the fruit of my ministry? Ah me! Did I hear of another professor whose household is a scene of constant strife? Did I observe coldness and indifference creeping over others? Did I find a Brother censorious and bitter? Is this the result of my labor? I could weep and it breaks my heart!

Do we hear of some that they are not upright and truthful in their dealings? Do people say, “These are members of Spurgeon’s Church”? I do not blame the world for saying so! It is only just that men should estimate our ministry by its results. We cannot help such judgments, nor do we repine at them. You are either our joy and crown, or else our sorrow and dishonor! You must estimate whether a man farms well by the crops which he raises. True, you cannot condemn him if a few thorns and thistles spring up in the hedgerows, because those things are so natural to the soil that they are there in no time. But if the acres are *covered* with this-

bles; if there is a preponderance of weeds, everybody says, "This is wretched farming!" Farmers may make a great outcry about new machinery and artificial manures, but if there is no harvest, it is still poor work.

Oh, dear Sirs, by the love you bear to us, who labor for Christ among you, let your conversation be such as becomes the Gospel of Christ! I cannot say this in words so emphatically as I desire to do. I should like to coin my heart in order to pass it round to you in living medallions, bearing each one this inscription—"For Jesus' sake, be holy." Unless you are a holy people, it were better for me that I had never been born! Unless you follow Christ and exhibit His spirit wherever you dwell, what is the good of all our preaching? We might as well have stood upon a mountain and whistled to the wind as have pleaded with you unto tears! Unless there is a purity of life and a holiness of conversation in you as a Church, I shall have sown dead seed.

I think I can faithfully say that there is holiness among you, but oh, watch and pray that you enter not into temptation! Let each one among you be upon his guard lest in some evil hour you should bring dishonor upon the cause you love—upon the Christ by whom you live! Men do not read the Bible, but they read *us*—let us give them a good version of the Scriptures in our lives! They will not study our doctrinal opinions, but they will examine our practical examples—and if we are not what we ought to be, we wound the Savior afresh, stab at the heart of His Gospel—and impede the progress of His Kingdom. Oh, blessed Master, the faults of Your disciples are no faults of Yours, and yet the world lays them all on You! You are all holiness and goodness and yet You have to bear blame for Your erring followers! Truly, my Brothers, those of us who work for the great Master need not be at all surprised if we, too, have to take our share of the dishonor brought upon us by thoughtless or untruthful men. If Judas sins, John grieves—it must be so. God set to our ministry this attesting seal—that you may be a peculiar people, zealous for good works!

Again, dear Friends, whenever the Word of God comes to your heart so that you *consecrate* yourselves wholly unto God and go forth and live the life of dedication, then you give proof of Christ speaking in us! When your zeal burns, when your hearts bleed for the perishing, when you speak by the power of the Holy Spirit who has filled you, when you go forth and work wonders by instructing the ignorant, impressing the careless and guiding the wanderers to Christ, then, again, I can say, "Do you seek a proof of Christ speaking by me? *You* are my witnesses inasmuch as by our words you have been stirred up to speak in the power of the Holy Spirit for the winning of souls."

There is one more operation of God's Word about which I can speak with very great comfort to myself, and that is the operation of the Word of God in the *completion* of the Christian character and in the display of it in the last hours of Christian men and women. I have come down many times from the sick chamber of those members of this Church who are now in Heaven and I have done so with faith confirmed and joy increased! Those beloved ones have given me more strength and assurance than I ever derived from the study of the ablest works in my library! They were,

sometimes, very poor, but I remember well the glory of the little room wherein they were disrobing for the Beatific Vision. Their heavenly serenity, varied with bursts of triumphant joy, has driven all my fears away! Some have been wasted with disease and shackled with pain till it seemed *impossible* that an original thought could have come from them—and yet their speech has been fresh and new—an inspired utterance far excelling poetry!

They only spoke what they were seeing, what they were enjoying, for the jeweled gates were set open to them and they peered within and then turned round and told us a little of what they saw! It has been a glorious thing to find none of them trembling, none confused, none wavering. No dying man has looked me in the face and said, “Sir, you did not preach a religion which a man can die with. You taught me doctrines which are not substantial enough for the dying hour.” No, I feel even now their death grips, as they have clasped my hand and told me of their overflowing joy! They have said to me, “Bless the Lord that ever I stepped into the Tabernacle to hear of Justification by Faith, of the Divine Substitution, of Atonement made by blood and of a faithful God who casts not away His people!”

Such expressions I have heard from those upon the borders of Immanuel’s land. These are our seals and the tokens that Christ has spoken by us! Go and speak, my Beloved Brothers in the ministry here, today, with great confidence, for I doubt not you have the same assuring proofs! You that teach in the school, or in any way set forth Christ, be sure that God will confirm His own truth with signs following. He keeps an office open for setting the royal stamp on all Truth that is earnestly proclaimed—proclaimed in *weakness*—but with true evidences of power, because mighty in those who believe it!

I hope you will bear with me in thus speaking of what has so plain a relation to myself, but truly, these many years God has worked among us great marvels of Grace—and I am overwhelmed when I imagine, even for a moment, what we would do if the Spirit of God were to withdraw. You will not turn your backs in the day of battle, will you? God will help you and keep you steadfast in the faith once delivered to the saints and He will help you to be a holy people, walking in your integrity, will He not? May He make all our people to be holy, for if not, I shall have to go back to Him with many cries, for God will have humbled me among you and I shall have to bewail those who have sinned! Alas for a ministry so publicly known if it is publicly dishonored! Alas for the people of the living God if traitors cause them disquietude! O Church in this Tabernacle, “hold that fast which you have, that no man take your crown”!

III. To each one of us there is A NEEDED PROOF OF OURSELVES. Hence the text says, “Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith.” It is something to have our ministry attested, but it is much more to have your *salvation* attested. Dear fellow Believers, observe that you can *know* whether you are saved or not—assurance, yes, *full* assurance is within your grasp—but it is only to be obtained by a simple faith and by a sincere and thorough examination of yourselves. Observe, the Apostle says,

“examine yourselves.” Therefore you are not to take it for granted that you are saved—if you do, you may be sadly mistaken. “Examine yourselves.”

In London, years ago, every shop had its sign and they had a saying that the house which had the sign of the sun in a certain street was darker than any other—all their sun was outside—it had the sun for a sign but no sign of the sun! So there are some who have Grace for their sign, but no sign of Grace! God grant we may not be such. To have a name to live is a wretched thing if we are really dead. In such a case we are nothing but living lies, devout deceits, bastard professors—in a word—“reprobates.” To pretend to be other than what we are in the sight of the heart-searching God is despicable and damnable! The Spirit of God, by the mouth of the Apostle, bids us, “examine ourselves.”

Of course we are to examine our lives, but He goes further and says, “Examine *yourselves*.” Sin within will ruin even if it is not seen in act. Of course we are to examine our doctrines, but even more we are to examine *ourselves*. Heart error is more deadly than head error. Self-examination has not to do with garments but with the man, himself. Yes, you prayed very prettily, but was that prayer out of *yourself*? Yes, Sir, it was an admirable sermon and apparently very earnest, but is it your *soul’s* utterance, or only a parrot lesson? “Examine yourselves,” your own persons, as in the Presence of the Most High!

Supposing you have done this, then do it again, for the next sentence is, “Test yourselves.” Pry deeper! Thrust the lances in further! You have already given yourself a good sifting—take a finer sieve and go to work again! You have already been in the crucible—go in again and become as silver tried in a furnace of earth purified seven times! A man cannot make too sure work about his own salvation. “Oh, but,” someone says, “I never doubted my own safety.” Remember—

**“Who never doubted of his state,
He may, perhaps he may, too late.”**

One stands up and has the impudence to say, “I never sin.” Sit down, Sir! Do not *dream* that you are among *fools*—we know better! You may hold your fond conceit if you please, but meanwhile we pray for you—may the Lord open your eyes to see the sin in you, for pride is blinding you, its scales are upon your eyes! “In many things we offend all.” “Enter not into judgment with your servant: for in your sight shall no man living be justified.” What man is he that does good and sins not? We must again and again examine ourselves!

But can we not be certain of our safety? Yes, we can—but only certain because we have not shunned the most rigorous self-examinations. If you do not test yourself, you may sit down and say, “Oh, I am all right.” Yes, but you may be fostering within your spirit a peace which will end in your final ruin—and you may never open your eyes to your deception till you lift them up in Hell! Be ready to be searched. It is well when a man likes a heart-searching ministry, when He says, “Cut deep, Sir! Do not spare me! If I am a hypocrite, let me know it.” I like a man whose prayer is, “Lord, let me know the worst of myself, that I may be upright before You. Search me and try me, and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the

way everlasting.” This is what we need! This is the age of shams—sham preaching, sham hearing and sham professors—we must strive after *realities*. There are such things as common graces which will not save and, worse still, such things as counterfeit graces which will destroy. Therefore, let us see to it that we first examine and then *prove* ourselves.

And what is to be the point of search? “Whether you are in the faith.” Whether what you believe is true and whether you truly believe it! Whether your faith is the faith of God’s elect—the faith that is of the operation of the Spirit of God—or mere nominal, notional, temporary faith. “Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith.” Dwell mostly on this point, “Do you not know, yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless you are reprobates?” Is Jesus Christ in you? “I know all about Him.” Yes, but is He *in* you? “I read of Him.” Read on, but is He *in* you? Come, Friends, let us, each one, put this question to himself, “Is Jesus formed and living in my heart?”—

“There is life in a look at the Crucified One.”

But you have not looked at Him unless He has come to live in you—the first glance of the eye that sends the soul to Christ also sends Christ to the soul! That man is not in Christ who has not Christ in him. Do you have to go a long way to get at Christ? Then you may well tremble, for with true saints Christ is at home, formed in them, the hope of Glory! Unless you are counterfeits to be rejected and thrown away as slag of the furnace, Christ is in you at this very moment! This is very heart-searching—let it search your hearts.

Within a short time and none of us knows how soon, our Lord will come! Quick ears can hear the rolling of His chariots. Perhaps before that, you and I may be called away. Are we ready? I do not often enter this place without being told, “So-and-So is gone.” I cannot help looking upon this vast congregation as moving along in procession to the tomb—I am also, myself, marching with you. We are all going together and we shall meet together at the Judgment Seat of Christ. I would not have you say in that day, “We came to hear you and you did us no good, for you tickled our ears and tried to play the orator.”

I never did anything of the sort! I declare before the living God I never thought of such a thing! I have strived to strike straight at your hearts and consciences. You shall not say that of me either here or hereafter! But when we meet in the judgment you will say, “It was power in weakness. Christ spoke in you, we were converted, comforted and sanctified by Him.” Ah, we shall meet, Brothers and Sisters, we shall meet on the other side of Jordan, in the land of the hereafter, in the city of the blessed—we shall meet and sing together to the praise and glory of His Grace, wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved!

The Lord be with you all for His name’s sake! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—

2 Corinthians 12:13:1-6.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—178, 119 (PART II), 639.

SELF-EXAMINATION

NO. 218

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, OCTOBER 10, 1858,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith; prove your own selves. Know you not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except you be reprobates.”
2 Corinthians 13:5.***

I HAD intended to address you this morning from the third title given to our blessed Redeemer, in the verse we have considered twice before—“Wonderful, Counselor, *the mighty God*.” But owing to excruciating pain and continual sickness, I have been unable to gather my thoughts together and therefore I feel constrained to address you on a subject which has often been upon my heart and not infrequently upon my lips and concerning which, I dare say, I have admonished a very large proportion of this audience before. You will find the text in the thirteenth chapter of the second Epistle to the Corinthians, at the fifth verse—“*Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith; prove your own selves. Know you not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except you be reprobates?*”—a solemn text that we cannot preach too impressively, or too frequently meditate upon.

The Corinthians were the critics of the Apostles’ age. They took to themselves great credit for skill in learning and in language and as most men do who are wise in their own esteem, they made a wrong use of their wisdom and learning—they began to criticize the Apostle Paul. They criticized his style. “His letters,” they said, “are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak and his speech contemptible.” No, not content with that, they went so far as to deny his Apostleship and for once in his life, the Apostle Paul found himself compelled to “become a fool in glorying. For,” says he, “you have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chief Apostles, though I am nothing.” The Apostle wrote two letters to them—in both he is compelled to upbraid them while he defends himself and when he had fully disarmed his opponents and wrested the sword of their criticism out of their hands he pointed it at their own breasts, saying, “Examine yourselves.” You have disputed my doctrine. Examine whether *you* are in the faith. You have made me prove my Apostleship. Prove your own selves.

Use the powers which you have been so wrongfully exercising upon me for a little season upon your own characters.

And now, my dear Friends, the fault of the Corinthians is the fault of the present age. Let not anyone of you, as he goes out of the House of God say unto his neighbor, "How did you like the preacher? What did you think of the sermon this morning?" Is that the question you should ask as you retire from God's House? Do you come here to judge God's servants? I know it is but a small thing unto us to be judged of man's judgment—our judgment is of the Lord our God—to our own Master we shall stand or fall. But O men, you should ask a question more profitable unto yourselves than this! You should say, "Did not such-and-such a speech strike me? Did not that exactly consort with my condition? Was that not a rebuke that I deserve, a word of reproof or of exhortation? Let me take unto myself that which I have heard and let me not judge the *preacher*, for He is God's messenger to my soul—I came up here to be judged of God's Word and not to judge God's Word myself." But since there is in all our hearts a great backwardness to self-examination, I shall lay out *myself* for a few minutes this morning earnestly to exhort myself and all of you, to examine ourselves whether we are in the faith.

First, I shall *expound my text*. Secondly, I shall *enforce it*. And thirdly, I shall try and help you to *carry it into practice* here and on the spot.

I. First, I shall EXPOUND MY TEXT. Though in truth it needs no exposition, for it is very simple, *yet* by studying it and pondering it, our hearts may become more deeply affected with its touching appeal. "Examine yourselves." Who does not understand that word? And yet, by a few suggestions you may know its meaning more perfectly.

"Examine." That is a *scholastic idea*. A boy has been to school a certain time and his master puts him through his paces—questions him, to see whether he has made any progress—whether he knows anything. Christian, catechize your heart. Question it, to see whether it has been growing in grace—question it, to see if it knows anything of vital godliness or not. Examine it—pass your heart through a stern examination as to what it knows and what it does not know by the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

Again—it is a *military idea*. "Examine yourselves," or renew yourselves. Go through the rank and file of your actions and examine all your motives. Just as the captain on review day is not content with merely surveying the men from a distance, but must look at all their accoutrements, so do you look well to yourselves. Examine yourselves with the most scrupulous care.

And once again, this is a *legal idea*. "Examine yourselves." You have seen the witness in the box, when the lawyer has been examining him, or as we have it, cross-examining him. Now, mark—never was there a rogue

less trustworthy or more deceitful than your own heart. And as when you are cross-examining a dishonest person—one that has ulterior motives to serve—you set traps for him to try and find him out in a lie—so do with your own heart. Question it backward and forward, this way and that way. For if there is a loophole for escape, if there is any pretense for self-deception, rest assured your treacherous heart will be ready enough to avail itself of it.

And yet once more—this is a *traveler's idea*. I find in the original, it has this meaning—“Go right through yourselves.” As a traveler who has to write a book upon a country is not content to go round its borders merely, but goes, as it were, from Dan to Beersheba, right through the country. He climbs the hilltop, where he bathes his forehead in the sunshine. He goes down into the deep valleys, where he can only see the blue sky like a strip between the lofty summits of the mountains. He is not content to gaze upon the broad river unless he traces it to the spring from where it rises. He will not be satisfied with viewing the products of the surface of the earth, but he must discover the minerals that lie within its deep.

Now, do the same with your heart. “Examine yourselves.” Go right through yourselves from the beginning to the end. Stand not only on the mountains of your public character, but go into the deep valleys of your private life. Be not content to sail on the broad river of your outward actions, but go follow back the narrow rill till you discover your secret motive. Look not only at your performance, which is but the product of the soil, but dig into your heart and examine the vital principle. “Examine yourselves.” This is a very big word—a word that needs thinking over. And I am afraid there are very few, if any of us, who ever come up to the full weight of this solemn exhortation—“Examine yourselves.”

There is another word you will see a little further on, if you will kindly look at the text. “*Prove* your own selves.” That means more than self-examination—let me try to show the difference between the two. A man is about to buy a horse. He examines it. He looks at it. He thinks that possibly he may find out some flaw and therefore he carefully examines it. But after he has examined it, if he is a prudent man, he says to the person of whom he is about to buy it—“I must prove this horse—will you let me have it for a week, for a month, or for some given time, that I may prove the animal before I actually invest in him?”

You see, there is more in proof than in examination. It is a deeper word and goes to the very root and quick of the matter. I saw but yesterday an illustration of this. A ship, before she is launched, is examined—when launched she is carefully looked at. And yet before she is allowed to go far out to sea, she takes a trial trip. She is proved and tried and when she has roughed it a little and it has been discovered that she will obey the

helm, that the engines will work correctly and that all is in right order, she goes out on her long voyages.

Now, “prove yourselves.” Do not merely sit in your closet and look at yourselves alone, but go out into this busy world and see what kind of piety you have. Remember, many a man’s religion will stand examination that will not stand proof. We may sit at home and look at our religion and say, “Well, I think this will do!” It is like cotton prints that you can buy in sundry shops—they are warranted fast colors and so they seem when you look at them, but they are not washable when you get them home. There is many a man’s religion like that. It is good enough to look at and it has got the “warranted” stamped upon it. But when it comes out into actual daily life, the colors soon begin to run and the man discovers that the thing was not what he took it to be.

You know in Scripture we have an account of certain very foolish men that would not go to a great supper but, foolish as they were, there was one of them who said, “I have bought a yoke of oxen and I go to prove them.” Thus he had at least worldly wisdom enough to prove his oxen. So do you prove yourselves. Try to plow in the furrows of duty—see whether you can be accustomed to the yoke of Gospel servitude. Be not ashamed to put yourselves through your paces. Try yourself in the furnace of daily life, lest haply the mere examination of the chamber should detect you to be a cheat and you should after all prove to be a castaway. “Examine yourselves; prove your own selves.”

There is a sentence which I omitted, namely, this one—“Examine yourselves, *whether you are in the faith.*” “Oh,” says one, “You may examine me whether I am in the faith. I am an orthodox Christian, fully up to the standard, good genuine weight. There is no fear whatever of my coming up to the mark and going a little beyond it, too.” Ah, but my Friend, that is not the question! I would have you orthodox, for a man who is heterodox in his opinions will most liked be heterodox in his actions. But the question now is not whether you believe the Truth of God—but whether you are *in* the Truth of God! Just to give you an illustration of what I mean—there is the ark. And a number of men around it. “Ah,” says one, “I believe that ark will swim.” “Oh,” says another, “I believe that ark is made of gopher-wood and is strong from stem to stern. I am quite sure that ark will float, come what may. I am a firm believer in that ark.”

Yes, but when the rain descended and the flood came, it was not believing the ark as a matter of fact—it was being *in* the ark that saved men and only those that were in it escaped in that dread day of deluge. So there may be some of you that say of the Gospel of Christ, “I believe it to be of a particular character,” and you may be quite correct in your judgment. You may say, “I think it to be that which honors God and casts down the pride

of man.” Herein, too, you may think quite right. But mark, it is not having an orthodox faith, but it is being *in* the faith, being *in* Christ, taking refuge *in* Him as in the ark, for he that only has the faith as a thing *ab extra* and without being *in* the faith, shall perish in the day of God’s anger.

But he that lives by faith, he who feels that faith operates upon him and is to him a living principle. He who realizes that faith is his dwelling place, that there he can abide, that it is the very atmosphere he breathes and the very girdle of his loins to strengthen him—such a man is in the faith. But, we repeat again, all the orthodoxy in the world, apart from its effect upon the heart as a vital principle, will not save a man. “Examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith; prove your own selves.”

“Know you not your own selves?” If you do not, you have neglected your proper study. What avails all else that you do know, if you know not yourself? You have been roaming abroad, while the richest treasure was lying at home. You have been busying yourself with irrelevant affairs, while the main business has been neglected and ruined. “Know you not your own selves?” And especially know you not this fact, that Jesus Christ must be in your heart, formed and living there, or else you are reprobates? That is, you are worthless persons, vain pretenders, spurious professors. Your religion is but a vanity and a show. “Reprobate silver shall men call you, because the Lord has rejected you.”

Now, what is it to have Jesus Christ in you? The Roman Catholic hangs a crucifix on his bosom. True Christians carry the cross in their hearts. And a cross inside the heart, my Friends, is one of the sweetest cures for a crosses on the back. If you have a cross in your heart—Christ crucified in you, the hope of glory—all the cross of this world’s troubles will seem to you light enough and you will easily be able to sustain them. Christ in the heart means Christ *believed* in, Christ *beloved*, Christ *trusted*, Christ *espoused*, Christ *communed* with, Christ as our daily food and ourselves as the temple and palace wherein Jesus Christ daily walks. Ah, there are many here that are total strangers to the meaning of this phrase. They do not know what it is to have Jesus Christ *in* them. Though you know a little about Christ on Calvary, you know nothing about Christ in the heart. Now, remember, that Christ on Calvary will save no man unless Christ is in the heart. The Son of Mary, born in the manger, will not save a soul unless He is also born in your hearts and lives there—your joy, your strength and your consolation. “Know you not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except you be reprobates?”

II. The second point was to ENFORCE THE TEXT. I have proved it. Now I am to enforce it. And here is the tug of war. May the Spirit of the living God drive the sword in up to its very hilt this morning, that now the power

of God may be felt in every heart, searching and trying the reins. “Examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith.”

“Examine yourselves,” first, *because it is a matter of the very highest importance*. Small tradesmen may take coppers over the counter without much examination. But when it comes to gold, they will ring it well for they could not afford to lose a sovereign out of their little gains. And if it comes to a five pound note there is an anxious holding it up to the window to see if the watermark is there and whether all is correct, for it might be ruin to the man if he lost a sum so large. Ah, but, merchants and tradesmen, if you are deceived in the matter of your own souls, you are deceived, indeed. Look well to the title deeds of your estate. Look well to your life insurance policies and to all the business that you do. But, remember, all the gold and silver you have are but as the rack and scum of the furnace compared with the matter now in hand. It is your *soul*, your own soul, your never dying SOUL! Will you risk that?

In times of panic, men will scarcely trust their fellows. I would to God there was a panic this day, so that no man would trust himself. You may trust your fellows far more safely than you may trust yourselves. Will you think, Brothers and Sisters, what your soul is? “The *life* is more than meat and the body than raiment.” But the soul is as much more to be accounted of than the body, as the body is more important than the raiment. Here are my clothes—let me be robbed of my garments. If my body is secure, what does it matter? And as for my body, what is it, after all, but the rag that enshrines and covers my soul? Let that be sick, let that become like a worn-out vesture, I can afford to lose my body. But, O God, I cannot afford to have my *soul* cast into Hell! What a frightful hazard is that which you and I are running, if we do not examine ourselves! It is an everlasting hazard. It is a hazard of Heaven or of Hell, of God’s eternal favor, or of His everlasting curse. Well might the Apostle say, “Examine yourselves.”

Again—“Examine yourselves,” *because if you make a mistake you can never rectify it, except in this world*. A bankrupt may have lost a fortune once and yet may make another. But make bankruptcy—spiritual bankruptcy—in this life and you will never have an opportunity to trade again for Heaven. A great general may lose one battle but with skill and courage he may retrieve his honor by winning another. But get defeated in the battle of this life and you can no more gird on your armor, you are defeated forever—the day is lost and there is no hope of your being able to gain it again, or so much as to make the attempt. Now or never, Man! Remember that. Your soul’s eternal state hangs on the turn of today. Loiter your time away, waste your abilities, take your religion at second hand—of your

priest, of your minister, or of your friend—and in the next world you shall everlastingly rue the error, but you shall have no hope of amending it—

**“Fixed is their everlasting state,
Could man repent, ‘tis then too late.
There are no acts of pardon passed
In the cold grave, to which we haste;
But darkness, death and long despair,
Reign in eternal silence there.”**

“Examine yourselves,” again, *because many have been mistaken*. That is a matter which I will undertake to affirm upon my own authority, certain that each one of you can confirm it by your own observation. How many in this world think themselves to be godly when they are not? You have in the circle of your own friends persons making a profession of whom you often stand in astonishment and wonder how they dare to do it. Friend, if others have been mistaken, may not you be, too? If some here and there fall into an error, may not you also do the same? Are you better than they? No, in no way. You may be mistaken also. Methinks I see the rocks on which many souls have been lost—the rocks of presumption and the siren song of self-confidence entices you on to those rocks this morning. Stay, mariner, stay, I beseech you! Let yonder bleached bones keep you back. Many have been lost, many are lost now and are wailing at this present hour their everlasting ruin and their loss is to be traced to nothing more than this—that they never examined themselves whether they were in the faith.

And here let me appeal to each person now present. Do not tell me that you are an old Church member. I am glad to hear it. But still, I beseech you, examine yourself, for a man may be a professor of religion thirty or forty years and yet there may come a trial when his religion shall snap after all and prove to be a rotten branch of the forest. Tell me not you are a deacon—that you may be and yet you may be damnably deceived. Yes, and whisper not to me that you are a minister. My Brethren in the ministry—we may lay aside our cassocks to wear belts of flames in Hell. We may go from our pulpit having preached to others what we never knew ourselves and have to join the everlasting wailings of souls we have helped to delude. May God save us from such a doom as that! But let no man fold his arms and say, “I need not examine myself.” For there is not a man here, or anywhere, who has not good cause to test and try himself today.

Furthermore—examine yourselves, because *God will examine you*. In the hand of God there is the scale and the balance. You shall not be taken into Heaven for what you profess to be. But you shall be weighed—everyone of you put into the scale. What a moment will that be with me and with you when we are in God’s great scale! Surely were it not for faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and for a certainty that we shall be clothed in His

righteousness at last, we might all tremble at the thought of ever being there—lest we should have to come out of the scale with this verdict, “Tekel,”—(“Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin”)—“you are weighed in the balances and are found wanting.” God will not take His gold and silver by *appearance*, but every vessel must be purified in the fire. We must each one of us pass through a most searching test and scrutiny. Beloved, if our hearts condemn us, how much more shall God condemn us? If we are afraid to examine ourselves, how can we not tremble at the thought of the dread searching of God? Some of you feel that you are condemned this very day by a poor creature like myself—how much more, then, shall you be condemned when God, robed in thunder, shall summon you and all your fellows to the last infallible judgment? Oh, may God help us now to examine ourselves!

And I have yet one more reason to give. Examine yourselves, my dear Friends, *because if you are in doubt now, the speediest way to get rid of your doubts and fears is by self-examination.* I believe that many persons are always doubting their eternal condition because they do not examine themselves. Self-examination is the safest cure for one half the doubts and fears that vex God’s people. Look at the captain over yonder. He is in his ship and he says to the sailors, “You must sail very warily and carefully and be upon your watch, for to tell you the truth, I do not know where I am. I do not exactly know my latitude and longitude and there may be rocks very close ahead and we may soon have the ship broken up.” He goes down into the cabin, he searches the charts, he takes an inspection of the heavens, he comes up again and he says, “Hoist every sail and go along as merrily as you please. I have discovered where we are. The water is deep and there is a wide sea room. There is no need for you to be in any trouble, searching has satisfied me.”

And how happy will it be with you, if, after having searched yourself you can say, “I know in whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him.” Why, then you will go along merrily and joyfully because the search has had a good result. And what if it should have a bad result? Better that you should find it out *now* than find it out too late. One of the prayers I often pray and desire to pray as long as I live, is this—“Lord, let me know the worst of my case. If I have been living in a false comfort, Lord, rend it away. Let me know just what I am and where I am and rather let me think too harshly of my condition before You, than think too securely and so be ruined by presumption.” May that be a prayer of each heart and be heard in Heaven!

III. And now, how ARE YOU TO SEARCH YOURSELVES? I am to try and help you, though it must be very briefly.

First, if you would examine yourselves, *begin with your public life*. Are you dishonest? Can you steal? Can you swear? Are you given to drunkenness, uncleanness, blasphemy, taking God's name in vain and violation of His Holy Day? Make short work with yourself. There will be no need to go into any further tests. "He that does these things has no inheritance in the kingdom of God." You are reprobate. The wrath of God abides on you. Your state is fearful. You are accursed now and unless you repent you must be accursed forever.

And yet, Christian, in spite of your many sins, can you say, "By the grace of God I am what I am. But I seek to live a righteous, godly and sober life in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation"? Remember Professor, by your works you shall be judged at last. Your works cannot save you, but they can prove that you are saved—or if they are evil works, they can prove that you are not saved at all. And here I must say everyone of us has good cause to tremble, for our outward acts are not what we would have them to be. Let us go to our houses and fall upon our face and cry again, "God be merciful to me a sinner." And let us seek for more grace that henceforth our lives may be more consistent and more in accordance with the spirit of Christ.

Again—another set of tests—*private tests*. *How about your private life?* Do you live without prayer, without searching the Scriptures? Do you live without thoughts of God? Can you live as an habitual stranger to the Most High, having no love to Him and no fear of Him? If so, I make short work of the matter—you are "in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity." But if you are right at heart, you will be able to say, "I could not live without prayer. I have to weep over my prayers, but still I should weep ten times more if I did not pray. I do love God's Word, it is my meditation all the day. I love His people. I love His House. And I can say that my hands are often lifted upward towards Him. And when my heart is busy with this world's affairs, it is often going up to His Throne." A good sign, Christian, a good sign for you. If you can go through this test, you may hope that all is well.

But go a little deeper. Have you ever wept over your lost condition? Have you ever bemoaned your lost estate before God? Have you ever tried to save yourself and found it a failure? And have you been driven to rely simply, wholly and entirely on Christ? If so, then you have passed the test well enough.

And have you now faith in Christ—a faith that makes you love Him? A faith that enables you to trust Him in the dark hour? Can you say of a truth that you have a secret affection towards the Most High—that you love His Son, that your desire is after His ways, that you feel the influence

of the Divine Spirit and seek every day to experience the fellowship of the Holy Spirit more and more?

And lastly, can you say that Jesus Christ is *in* you? If not, you are reprobate. Sharp though that word is, you are a reprobate. But if Jesus Christ is in your heart, though your heart sometimes is so dark that you can scarcely tell He is there, you are accepted in the Beloved and you may “rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

I intended to have enlarged. But it is impossible for me to go further. I must therefore dismiss you with a sacred blessing.

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TWO CHOICE BENEDICTIONS

NO. 3371

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 1913.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 26, 1867.

“Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, on this wise you shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The Lord bless you, and keep you: the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace. And they shall put My name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them.”
Numbers 6:23-27.

“The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.”
2 Corinthians 13:14.

IT seemed to me that as this was the last of the Thursday evenings of the dying year and I should no more meet some of you who only come here on Thursday evenings during this year, it would be well for us to close the year as our Master closed His life on earth, with a benediction—and, oh, it will be a rich enjoyment in the year to come if, by God’s Grace, we shall be able to grasp and make our very own the precious things which are here presented to the whole redeemed family of the living God! I shall begin, therefore, first of all with—

I. THE AARONIC BLESSING.

This was pronounced at the close of the public tabernacle service when the people were about to separate, the one from the others. It is said by the Rabbis to have been only spoken at the morning sacrifice, but not in the evening because, say some, the old faith of the few gave them the early blessing. But it remained for Christ to come in the eventide of the world, at the end of time, to give us the evening blessing, the blessing of the great, eternal, evening Sacrifice.

It is worthy of notice that the word, Jehovah, which is put in capital letters in our English version, occurs three times—three blessings—and each time the word has a different accent in the original Hebrew. And the Rabbis, although they did not know the meaning of it, or pretended not to know, yet all agree that there is some significant mystery therein. The word would not be accented thus differently unless there were some dif-

ferent shade of meaning intended. I believe we have here the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. “The Lord bless you and keep you.” Is that the blessing of the Father? “The Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you.” Is that the blessing of the Son? “The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.” Is that the blessing of the great forgiving Holy Spirit? I think it is very likely. At any rate, this three-fold blessing from the Jehovah, whose name is mentioned three times, may direct our thoughts to the glorious Trinity, the Trinity in Unity, whom we cannot understand, but on whom our faith rests and in whom our love finds delight and repose!

Let us look at these three blessings. “*The Lord bless you and keep you.*” When we bless God there is nothing more than well-saying and well-wishing. But when God blesses us, it is well-doing! We cannot bless God in the sense of giving to Him so as to add to His riches or to His Glory, for He is the infinitely great, the inconceivably glorious and nothing that we can do can add to Him. We can only bless Him by expressing our thanks to Him, paying to Him our reverent love. “The Lord lives, and blessed be my Rock.” “Blessed be the name of the Lord from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same.” But when God blesses us, I say, it is well-doing! He blesses us in our very creation and much more in our new creation. It is a blessed thing to be born, but a much more blessed thing to be born-again! He blesses us in our food—but much more in giving us Christ who is the Bread to keep alive and nourish our soul’s best life! We are blessed in being clothed, but infinitely more blessed in being wrapped about in the Righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ! It is a blessing to be a member of a kind, loving, happy family—but it is an unspeakable blessing to be a member of the family of Christ and adopted into the family of God!

What a blessing it is, my Brothers and Sisters, to have sin pardoned, to have righteousness imputed, to have sanctification worked in us—in short, to enjoy all the privileges and benedictions of the New Covenant! Now, I think some of us can say, “God has blessed us, oh, how richly.” Blessed us sometimes when we did not perceive the blessing, for many of God’s mercies come, as it were, in at the back door of our house. We do not see the mercies, and when we do, we are too often ungrateful and forget them. What blessings we have received in trouble—in deliverance from trouble—in sustaining us in it! Oh, what blessings have we not had? Some of you, perhaps, have had very remarkable mercies during the year. Now, while the blessing is pronounced, “The Lord bless you,” let your reply be, “The Lord has blessed me!” This will encourage you to expect that He will continue to do the same. And what blessings, my dear Friends, may we hope will be in store for us during the coming year? Many troubles, I have no doubt, are in store for us. If we were to have a

telescope here this evening and we could look through it and see the future, those would be very foolish who looked! He would be the wise man who said—

**“This will set my heart at rest—
What my God appoints is best.”**

For if that telescope were here and you were trying to look through it, you would be sure to breathe on the glass with your hot breath—and in your anxiety you would see nothing but clouds and darkness—whereas, very likely, there would be nothing of the sort there. Leave that matter with your God! The future, though it may possibly have trial and trouble, will still be blessed if you are God’s servant. One thing there is of which you can be quite confident—He has said, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” Another thing will also be fulfilled, “As your days, so shall your strength be.” You are very poor, are you? Yet, at any rate, none can rob you of this assurance—“Your bread shall be given you: your water shall be sure.” If you are fearing many trials, this promise is your special fortifying—“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned: neither shall the flame kindle upon you.” You have God’s word for it, “Fear you not, for I am with you: be not dismayed, for I am your God.” If, during the next year, it is appointed unto you to die, you may still say, “Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.” “The Lord bless you.” As I say that to each Believer here, knowing that the Lord will so bless you, may your soul look forward, not with dread, but with hope! “The Lord bless you” was the wish of the priest under the old Law, and it is always the Nature of God to confirm what He bids His servants desire. “The Lord bless you.”

Now, observe the blessing which is said to spring out of that, “The Lord bless you, *and keep you.*” And no small mercy it is to be kept by God! Where would we be if He did not keep us in a moral and spiritual point of view, yes, and in a natural point of view, too? It is God that keeps our lives from death and our bodies from perishing. Perhaps, during the past year, some of you have been kept when in storms at sea, or when you have been upon a railway, or when you have passed through places infected with disease. It is no small privilege to hear the Lord say, “He will give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways: they shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone.” The Lord has blessed us and kept us in that sense during the past year. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, what a privilege to be kept from falling into sin! He is ill-kept who is his own keeper! He is worse kept who has his brother for his keeper! But he is splendidly kept who has God to be his shield on his right hand, his glory and his defense.

During the past year we have seen some high professors put out like candles and the foul odor of their fall has filled the Church with nausea and depression. We have known some who were like bright stars who have turned out to be only meteors—and their once dazzling brilliance has suddenly died out in greater gloom. Why are we still kept? We have had enough temptation to cast us down! Enough tinder here, inside our hearts, to have made a great blaze! How is it we are still unburned and walking in the paths of righteousness?

Must we not say, “The Lord has blessed us and kept us”? Let us, then, without reserve, commit our souls to Him for the future. Let us not fancy that we shall not fall. Oh, that is a thought that is very apt to twine itself around us like a serpent! “I am not so giddy as some people! I am not at all likely to do what some young people have done and get into this sin, and that sin. I have had so much experience, I shall be able to stand!” That is the very man that is likely to fall! We are never so weak as when we think we are strong, and never so strong as when we know we are weak and look out of ourselves to our God! Distrust self, then. There would not be such a supplication as, “The Lord bless you and keep you,” if you did not need keeping. Trust in God for your help. If you fear temptation, let this be your prayer, “Lead us not into temptation,” and if you trust in God, you will pray, “Deliver us from evil.” You will be tempted during the year that is soon coming, but He will, with the temptation, make also a way of escape. He will not allow you to be tempted above what you are able to bear! You shall go through the wilderness leaning on your Beloved and you shall not slip, though the way is ever so smooth, nor trip, though the road is ever so rough. You shall be upheld, for God is able to hold up in perfect safety those who stay themselves upon Him. “The Lord bless you and keep you.” Holy Father, we breathe the prayer to You as we read this blessing! Pronounce it upon us now by the mouth of Your own dear Son, and let us now and until life’s latest hour be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation!

Now, take the next blessing bestowed, through Aaron, upon the people. “*The Lord make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you.*” I understand by the expression, “The Lord make His face to shine upon you,” His being completely reconciled to us. As they would say in the Hebrew, a man’s face frowned, his countenance fell, when he was at enmity or angry with another. But when he was his friend and genial towards him, then his face revealed it, it began to beam or shine! Now, this is the blessing of our Lord Jesus Christ! It is through Him that God’s face is made to shine upon us. The Lord would have no favorable regard towards a sinner as such while his sins still lay upon him because of impenitence and lack of faith. The Lord’s love might come to him as an elect

creature, but viewing him merely as a sinner, he would be the subject of Divine disapprobation!

But when the sinner is washed in the blood of Christ, when the sinner is justified through the righteousness of Jesus, then the Lord looks upon him with pleasure. That very man who was an heir of wrath becomes a child of love! and he who would have been driven from God's Presence with, "Depart, you cursed," is established in Christ's heart with "Come, you blessed." Now, dear Friends, I hope many of us have already received, during the past year, this great blessing, "The Lord make His face to shine upon you." Don't you feel that you have, tonight, to look up to God and do not feel any fear? You know that He is not frowning upon you! He is reconciled unto you—you are reconciled unto Him. You may say, "Behold, O God, our shield, and look upon the face of Your anointed." And you are persuaded that as God looks upon Christ, and upon you in Christ, you are well-beloved in Him. Well now, as it has been, so it shall be, for if God once makes His face to shine in the sense of His favor, He never takes that favor away! You may not see it. You may think He is angry with you and, in another sense, He may be, but legally, and so far as concerns the Law and its power of condemnation, there is not a single thought of anger in the mind, or feeling of displeasure in the heart of God towards any one of those who rest in Jesus!

You are accepted in the Beloved. God sees no sin in Jacob, neither iniquity in Israel. As He looks upon them in His Son, He sees them without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.

"*The Lord make His face to shine upon you.*" Well, and what springs out of that? Why this, "*and be gracious unto you.*" Because God is thus favorable towards us through His dear Son, Divine Grace comes to us. And what a great, all-comprehending word is that! Grace! It has many meanings and includes a whole universe of blessing! Grace—it is the free and undeserved favor of God! Grace—it is the mighty operation of that favor, effectually working in them that believe! Grace—it is that which enlightens us to see our lost estate—that which leads us to see the All-Sufficiency of Christ! Grace—this works faith in us, gives us love to God! Grace creates our hope, carries on the work within our souls and completes it, too! Grace—it is a term so comprehensive that I would need the whole of this evening, yes, and longer, too, to enumerate the mighty catalog comprised and packed, as it were, in this golden casket of the word, Grace! "The Lord be gracious unto you." Well, now, Beloved, He has been gracious to us in the past. Oh, the Grace of God to me!—

***"Oh, to Grace how great a debtor,
Daily I'm constrained to be!"***

Can you say the same? Look at what a sinner you have been and yet how favored! Look at your backslidings! Look at your ingratitude and yet His mercy does not cease—

“Oh, to Grace how great a debtor!”

Let your hearts say it, if your lips do not. And now, Beloved, He will be gracious to you in the future as He has been in the past. Every mercy received is a pledge of mercies yet to come! He knew what He was doing when He began with us and, therefore, He will not leave off. If He had meant to destroy us, He would not have shown us such things as these. The great Master Worker would not have built the house so far if He did not mean to finish it. All His previous Grace and glory will be wasted and evaporate if He should not complete His redeeming work. Therefore, I am sure that after advancing so far with His glorious purpose, He will finish it and, if necessary, in the teeth of men and devils! He has begun and His right arm, which always goes with His Grace, will surely carry it through to the end. “The Lord make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you.”

But now, thirdly, *“The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.”* Is this the voice of the Holy Spirit? Whether it is so or not, does not greatly matter to us tonight. “The Lord lift up His countenance upon you.” Does not this mean, “The Lord give you a conscious, a delightful sense of His favor”? Wishing to see a difference—I will not insist upon it—wishing to see a difference, I put the second blessing as meaning God’s being reconciled. But the third blessing as meaning God manifesting that reconciliation and giving His children the enjoyment of His favor. Now, God’s people do not always have this—it is not always sunshine. “The evening and the morning were the first day,” and there is evening as well as morning in the day of God’s people. God always loves His people, but His people do not always know it. Because of their sins, they do not always enjoy it. Oh, what a blessing it is when the Holy Spirit sheds abroad the love of God in the soul—when we can say, “Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.” When we get out of these mists and fogs and can see the sun once more shining clear and bright, Beloved, it is Heaven on earth! It is the true ante-past of Heaven above, when the Lord lifts up His countenance upon you! I have no doubt the original allusion is to a father whose child has done wrong and he says, “Now, Sir, get out of my sight, you have grieved and vexed me. You shall not see my face.” The child goes upstairs to bed—anywhere out of his father’s sight. And after a while, when the father hears he has been penitent and sees his tears, he smiles again upon him, gives him a kiss and presses him to his heart. May God the Holy Spirit give us just that! May everyone of us have it!

We have, some of us, had it during the past year. We grieve to confess that we did backslide, but when we returned again, we found Him just as willing to receive us as at the first and He lifted up His countenance upon us once again! We said, "Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation," and He did so! We asked Him to take away His wrath from us, and we found that "His anger is but for a moment." When weeping came to us for a night, joy appeared in the morning. It will be just the same with us during the next year. If we transgress and repent, and return to Him, we have an actual promise that He will forgive us. Now, what says the text? "The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace." There is no peace like the peace which we have with God, and no peace with God like that which comes from a sense of His assured love! And belief in Christ for the pardon of sin gives us the blessing of non-condemnation. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord." But this sense of non-condemnation may sometimes be destroyed through weakness of faith. We may be brought very low and our peace may be disturbed, but when we come back to the Cross, and look once more to Him who died there, He is our peace and we see in Him that our peace is made with God—and then our peace becomes like a river, and our righteousness like the waves of the sea! I think it would be impossible for me to describe peace. You must feel it to know it. Peace with God is like that clear shining we sometimes see after a heavy shower of rain. With the thunder and lightning it seemed as if Heaven would be torn in pieces and all the earth shaken, and then, suddenly, it is all over and the sun shines forth! There is a rainbow with its many colors on the clouds, and all the flowers lift up their drooping heads, each one loaded with a gleaming benediction—and all the earth fragrant and smiling and seeming to steam forth the incense of gratitude! Now, after the storm of the conviction of sin, when the Spirit of God comes, it is as quiet and peaceful as that. And after a storm of trouble—and I know what that means—after a hurricane of trial, we can take all our distresses and cares and lay them down at God's feet and feel that we need not care about them anymore!

But if my Father did not undertake them, I would not, for I cannot. He has promised He will, if I cast my cares upon Him. You sometimes walk out of this place when God has blessed your soul and feel, "Now, I do not know what may happen, and really I do not care what does. My heart is resting on my God—I have left it all to Him and I am sure it will be right, whatever may come." Like Jonah, you may lose your gourd, but you cannot lose your God! You may see dark weather before you, but still you can go to Him who cannot fail you—and there shall your soul have repose. Now, that is the peace of God which passes all understanding and,

therefore, it must surpass all expression. The peace of God which can only be known by the man who enjoys it—a peace which the world does not give and cannot destroy, but which Heaven, itself, can work in the soul! Now, may we have this blessing, “The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.”

If we stopped here tonight and went no further, provided we got these blessings and fed upon them, it would be quite enough. Let me just read that text again clearly. “The Lord bless”—now the next word is the very pith of it, and let it be read now to each one of you, my good Sisters and Brothers, you who are young in years and young in Divine Grace, never mind who it is, so long as you are resting upon Christ—Jesus, the great High Priest, speaks from the eternal Glory and He says, “The Lord bless *you*.” “Oh, but I do not deserve it!” Just so, but, “the Lord Bless *you*.” “I am so unworthy, I am so backsliding!” Yes, but the Lord Jesus Christ knows all, covers all. We will read it, then, “The Lord Bless *you—you*, and keep *you*: the Lord make His face to shine upon *you*, and be gracious unto *you*: the Lord lift up His countenance upon *you*, and give *you* peace.” Oh, have you got that worked into your very hearts? It will be like a bundle of myrrh that you may keep in your bosom and it will sweeten your soul the whole year round, making you to know that you are blessed in and of the Lord who made Heaven and earth!

Now, I shall ask your attention for a little while to the second blessing, that spoken in God’s name by the Apostle Paul, in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians. “The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.” Here we have—

II. THE NEW TESTAMENT BENEDICTION.

This second blessing is precisely like the first as to its essence and substance. But there is some little difference as to the expression and circumstance. The first thing that strikes me in reading it through, as it almost always does when I pronounce it, is this—you notice *it begins with the Lord Jesus Christ*. The Lord Jesus is the Second Person of the blessed Divine Unity—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—but this benediction begins with the Son of God. Why is that? In the order of Doctrine and fact, all infinite blessings begin with the Father. He is the Fountainhead of Creation. He is the Fountain, Christ the channel and the Holy Spirit produces the grand results. Father first, Son next, Spirit third. But in the order of experience—the order in which the blessing comes—it is always the Son first. “No man comes unto the Father but by Me.” Not the Father first, but the Son first! What a sinner learns to comfort him first is not that the Father loves Him. No. He learns first of all that Jesus Christ died for sinners because God loves Him—and so he puts his trust in Him. The first thing a poor Believer gets, then, is Grace through Jesus Christ. After

that, perhaps, he may sometimes think that God the Father has no love towards him, but as he begins to read his Bible and to experience more of Divine Grace in his heart, he finds that God the Father is full of love. So, then, he goes on and gets the love of God the Father. And when he knows this, perhaps he often wonders what communion may be of, and fellowship. And when he hears some of those delightful hymns which we sing at the Lord's Supper, he thinks he shall never get to them—to talk with God, to have communion with Christ—but, by-and-by, as the Lord leads him on, from being a babe, he grows to be a man and he gets into communion with the Holy Spirit. Babes in Grace know “the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.” But as they grow they discover “the love of God our Father.” And as they grow still more, they come to “the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.” The three things are put in the order of experience, not in the order of fact, nor the order of Doctrine.

Having noticed that, just observe the three blessings as they come. “*The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” You know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, “though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might be made rich.” You know His great poverty—you know His great Grace which brought Him from yonder starry heavens to lie in a manger, to live in obscurity for 30 years and to die upon the Cross in pains that cannot be told. Now, Grace comes to us through Christ and, therefore, it is said, “by His Grace.” He is the golden pipe through which it all flows. Believing in Him, we receive the mercy of God! Coming through Him to the Mercy Seat, we obtain unnumbered favors by virtue of our union with Him. As the branch derives sap and then fruit from the vine, we derive Grace from Him. He is to us the channel of all the good gifts of our heavenly Father. “May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be with you all.*” Be with you all—it is not in the singular—it is not to each one. It is, “with you *all,*” because the genius of the Gospel is expansive. You notice the Redeemer's prayer. It is not *My* Father. No, but “*our* Father which are in Heaven ” And the Gospel's benediction, though it is personal—blessed be God for that—yet it is also expansive—“be with you *all.*” We are to think of all our Brothers and Sisters. When we get a blessing, we are to look upon ourselves as part of the Divine family. When we come together to break bread, we do not come, each one alone—though it would be the Lord's Supper if only one man were there—but we come there in humble fellowship, one with the other! “Eat, drink you all, of this,” said Christ. “Take, eat, this is My body.” He would have all His disciples come there and partake. And so with this blessing of the Grace of Jesus Christ—may it be with you all!

Has it been with us all during the past year? There are not so many here tonight as usual. May I, therefore, put the question to each one per-

sonally? Has it been with you—and you—and you? Have you, my Hearers, known daily the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ? Have you stood by faith at the foot of the Cross and felt that you rested your all on Him? If so, I know you possess His Grace. He it is who has given you power to trust Him wholly and absolutely. All the Grace there is in His great heart and mind belongs to you!—

***“Plenteous Grace with Him is found,
Grace to cover all our sins.
May the healing streams abound,
Make and keep us pure within.”***

May it be with you all!

Next comes *“the love of the Father.”* It is from the love of God that everything blessed and blessing springs. We must not imagine that Jesus Christ died to induce His Father to love us—a very foolish and pernicious idea that! God the Eternal Father always loved His people and Christ has removed the sin which restrained the shinings of the most glorious manifestations of that love—but He loved before Christ died. You know you can boast—

***“’Twas not to make the Father’s love
Towards His people sure,
That Jesus came from realms above!
’Twas not the pangs He bore
That God’s eternal love procured,
For God was Love before.”***

That fountain sprung up eternally! It was a well that needed no digging. Oh, dear Friends, I trust we know what the love of God means. Has it not been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, which is given unto us? We shall know it in years to come, for where it once takes possession it never departs. Once in Christ, in Christ forever! In Christ’s love you have begun a banquet which will never end. “May the love of God be with you all,” is meant for all God’s people. But is that love present with all? If you have not tasted God’s love, you do not know what life, true life, means. The richest, the most celestial, the most transporting joy that mortal mind can know is a full assurance of the love of God! Dear Hearer, do you love Christ? Can you answer the question, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?” Then, if you have love for Christ, pure and true love and trust, if it is the fruit of God’s love to you, then be of good cheer! May the love of the Father be with you all your days!

Then comes *“the communion of the Holy Ghost.”* A very ugly word that—“Ghost.” A better translation of the original Greek word would be, “Spirit.” “Holy Spirit,” and I sometimes wish that we always called Him by that name. It is far more expressive. The word, “ghost,” bears such a strange and weird meaning, now, that it were better in this connection entirely to abandon it! The word, “communion,” means not only the Holy

Spirit coming to us and having converse with us, but communion means copartnership. When the Churches in Macedonia made a collection for the poor Church in Judea, Paul called the collection, “communion,” because by means of giving money to the Church in Judea they had a fellowship, something like having all things common—that is the perfection of fellowship!

Now, the Holy Spirit, if I may use the expression, has all things common with God’s people. He gives to them all things. “He shall lead you into truth.” What the Spirit knows and teaches us, we are able to bear. He knows the mind of God. He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. He gives us to participate in all that He possesses. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of peace. He gives us peace. He is the Spirit of holiness and sanctification—rather, He is the Spirit of light—He kindles light in our souls. He is a sacred fire. He baptized the Church in fire. Everything that the Holy Spirit is and has, He is and has for the Church of God and in common with the Church of God! Now, what an unspeakable blessing this is, to enter into a sacred copartnership with God the Holy Spirit! To talk with Him, to live with Him, to feast with Him, to have Him to be ours and for us to be His! Now, may such a communion as this be with us! I question whether we have ever got up to the fullness of this.

I think I told you the other evening the story of a good woman who was a little distressed in her mind and who, in reading the passage, “Your Maker is your Husband,” said, “Now, I won’t be distressed any longer. When my husband was alive, I took care to live up to my income and now I will take care to live up to my heavenly Husband’s income.” Oh, I wish to get hold of living up to God’s income, for all He has is given to His people! What rich lives we would have if we were to participate in all that He has! We would be continually feeling His power in our souls. Have we done this? May each one of you say, “Lord, give me to know the communion of the Holy Spirit all my days, until I shall be taken up to dwell where You reveal Yourself without a veil between!”

Now, in closing, you see the difference between the two benedictions is this—the second blessing is really *exhibited*, the first a little veiled—something like Moses, when his face was too bright for the people to look upon, he put a veil upon his face. So the blessing Aaron pronounced is not so distinct or clear as the Apostolic blessing. Note, again, that the blessings in the second benediction are *deeper*—they are traced up to their source in the Triune Godhead, “Grace, love and communion.” The one is a deep, the other a great deep. Note, yet again, that they are wider. The blessings of the Old Testament are individual and personal—to

“you.” The blessings in the New Testament are to the Corinthian Church and to all the Churches—“with you all.”

In the first case there was a confirmation and in the second case there is one also—“Amen,” which is the Divine confirmation of this benediction.

But I notice in the Apostolic benediction there is one thing which there is not in the first, namely, *the communion*, that is, the privilege—the privilege which comes to a child of God in this age of bliss when Christ is fully revealed. Did you ever notice that when John was born, an angel appeared to his father, Zacharias, to announce that Christ was come? No sooner did that bell begin to ring to tell that Christ was coming, than what happened? The greatest blessing was about to be pronounced and, therefore, the smaller blessing had to be silenced. When Zacharias came out, he was expected to bless the people, but what did he do? He could not speak a word—he was speechless and he beckoned with his hand—and that morning the assembly went home without the benediction! The priest could not pronounce it. Now, I dare say they said one to another, “What a strange thing it was. We always had that benediction before, ‘The Lord bless you, and keep you,’ but this morning the priest could not speak a word.” You and I know what that means. We must stop that one because there is a better coming! God seemed, as it were, to give notice to His people, “I am about to hush the voice of Aaron because Melchisedec is coming. I am about to stop the sound of the symbolic, because the real Priest is coming. I am about to hush the voice of Zacharias because the Son of God is now to appear and declare that the fullest blessing of Jehovah will rest upon His people.”

Now, let us go our separate ways tonight, guided home, I trust, safely and rightly. And let us feed upon and make our soul’s bread the two precious texts that have been before us. And I am not afraid but that you will be like those who went out to gather the manna—you shall each have enough! He who needs much shall have in abundance and he who requires little shall have no lack. Let us close by singing the blessing and go our way to turn all life into a song of gratitude for God’s rich benedictions! Amen.

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

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