

THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL OF THE BLESSED GOD

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AT CAMDEN ROAD CHAPEL.

*“According to the glorious Gospel of the blessed God,
which was committed to my trust.”
1 Timothy 1:11.*

THIS verse occurs just after a long list of sins which the Apostle declares to be contrary to sound doctrine, from which we gather that one test of sound doctrine is its opposition to every form of sin. That doctrine which in any way palliates sin may be popular, but is not sound doctrine. Those who talk much of their soundness but yet, by their lives, betray the rottenness of their hearts, need far rather to be ashamed of their hypocrisy than to be proud of their orthodoxy.

The Apostle offers, in the verse before us, another standard by which to test the doctrines which we hear. He tells us that sound doctrine is always evangelical—“sound doctrine according to the glorious Gospel.” Any doctrine which sets up the will or the merit of man, any doctrine which exalts priest-craft and ceremonies, any doctrine, in fact, which does not put salvation upon the sole footing of free Grace, is unsound.

These two points are absolutely necessary in every teaching which professes to come from God. It must commend and foster holiness of life and, at the same time, it must, beyond all question, be a declaration of Divine Grace and mercy through the Mediator. Our Apostle was, by the drift of his letter, led incidentally to make mention of the Gospel. And then, in a moment, taking to himself wings of fire, he mounts into a transport of praise, and calls it “the glorious Gospel of the blessed God.” Such is his mode of writing generally, that if he comes across a favorite thought, he is away at a tangent from the subject that he was aiming, and does not return until his ardent spirit cools again!

In this case, before he was aware, his soul made him like the chariots of Amminadab! His glowing heart poured forth the warmest eulogy upon that hidden treasure, that pearl of immense price which he prized beyond all price and guarded with a sacred jealousy of care. I think I see the radiant countenance of the Apostle of the Lord, as with flashing eyes he dictates the words, “The glorious Gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.”

Our subject affords us a fine ocean but our time is short, our boat is small, and the atmosphere is so hot and heavy that scarcely a breath of air is to be had, and therefore I will keep to one straightforward track and not distract you with many topics. To open up the text in all its length and breadth would be fit exercise for the loftiest intellect, but we must be content with a few experimental and practical remarks, and may the Lord enable us to weave them into a heart-searching discourse.

I. In the first place, then, Paul praises the Gospel to the utmost by calling it “the glorious Gospel of the blessed God.” HAVE WE EXPERIENCED

ITS EXCELLENCE? It is necessary to ask the question even in this congregation, for even to great multitudes who attend our Houses of Prayer, the Gospel is a dry, uninteresting subject. They hear the Word because it is their duty. They sit in the pew because custom requires an outward respect to religion—but they never *dream* of the Gospel having anything glorious in it—anything that can stir the heart or make the pulse beat at a faster rate. The sermon is slow, the service is dull, the whole affair is a weariness to which nothing but propriety makes men submit.

Some people do their religion as a matter of necessity—as a horse drags a wagon—but if that necessity of respectability did not exist they would be as glad to escape from it as the horse is to leave the shafts and to miss the rumbling of the wheels. It is necessary, then, to ask the question, and I shall put it before you in three or four ways. Paul calls the sacred message of mercy the Gospel. Has it been the Gospel to us?

The word is plain and I hardly need remind you that it means—“good news.” Now, has the Gospel been “good news” to us? Has it ever been “news” to you? “We have heard it so often,” says one, “that we cannot expect it to be news to us. We were trained by godly parents. We were taken to Sunday school. We have learned the Gospel from our youth up—it cannot be news to us.” Let me say to you, then, that you *do not know* the Word of Reconciliation unless it has been, and still is, news to you.

To every man who is ever saved by the Gospel, it comes as a piece of news as novel, fresh, and startling as if he had never heard it before. The letter may be old, but the inward meaning is as new as though the ink were not yet dry in the pen of Revelation. I confess to have been tutored in piety, put into my cradle by prayerful hands, and lulled to sleep by songs concerning Jesus.

But after having heard the Gospel continually, precept upon precept, here much and there much, yet when the Word of the Lord came to me with power, it was as new as if I had lived among the unvisited tribes of central Africa, and had never heard the tidings of the cleansing fountain filled with blood from the Savior’s veins! The Gospel in its spirit and power always wears the dew of its youth—it glitters with morning’s freshness—its strength and its glory abide forever!

Ah, my dear Hearer, if you have ever felt your guilt, if you have been burdened under a sense of it, if you have looked into your own heart to find some good thing and been bitterly disappointed. If you have gone up and down through the world to try this and that scheme of getting relief and found them all fail you like dry wells in the desert which mock the traveler—the Gospel will be a sweet piece of news to your heart that there is here present salvation in the Savior! It is a most refreshing novelty to hear the voice of Jesus say, “Come unto Me and rest.”

Though you have heard the invitation outwardly thousands of times, yet Jesus’ own voice, when He speaks to your *heart*, will be as surprisingly fresh to you as if these dumb walls should suddenly find a tongue and reveal the mysteries which have been hidden from the foundation of the world. To every Believer the Gospel comes as news from the land beyond the river—God’s mind revealed by God’s Spirit to His chosen. It is *good news*, too.

Now, has the Gospel ever been experimentally good to you, my Hearer? Good in the best sense? Good emphatically? Good without any mixture of evil? The Gospel is just that to those who know it—is it so to you? Have

you ever been deeply sensible of your overwhelming debt to the justice of God and then gladly received the gracious information that your debts are all discharged? Have you trembled beneath the thunder-charged cloud of Jehovah's wrath which was ready to pour forth its tempest upon you, and have you heard the gentle voice of Mercy saying, "I have blotted out, as a cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins"?

Have you ever known what it is to be fully absolved, to stand before God without fear, accepted in the Beloved, received as a dear child, covered with the righteousness of Christ? If so, the Gospel has been "good," indeed, to you. Grasping it by the hand of faith and feeling the power of it in your soul, you count it to be the best tidings that ever came from God to man! I shall now ask you earnestly to answer my question as in the sight of God. Let no man escape from this most vital enquiry! Has that which Paul calls the Gospel, proved itself to be Gospel to *you*?

Did it ever make your heart leap, just as some highly gratifying information excites and charms you? Has it ever seemed to you an all-important thing? If not, you know not what the Gospel means. O let my anxious questions tenderly quicken you to be concerned about your soul's affairs and to seek unto the Lord Jesus for eternal life! Paul, having called the message of mercy "the Gospel," then adds an adjective—"the glorious Gospel"—and a glorious Gospel it is for a thousand reasons! It is glorious in its antiquity, for before the beams of the first morning drove away primeval shades, this Gospel of our salvation was ordained in the mind of the Eternal!

It is glorious because it is everlasting—when all things shall have passed away as the hoarfrost of the morning dissolves before the rising sun, this Gospel shall still exist in all its power and Grace! It is glorious because it reveals the glory of God more fully than all the universe beside. Not all the innumerable worlds that God has ever fashioned, though they speak to us in loftiest eloquence from their celestial spheres, can proclaim to us the Character of our heavenly Father as the Gospel does. "The heavens are telling the glory of God!"

But the Gospel which tells of *Jesus* has a sweeter and a clearer speech! The poet talks of the great and wide sea where the almighty form mirrors itself in tempest. So, indeed, the finger of God may mirror itself, but a thousand oceans could not mirror the Infinite Himself—the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the only molten lookingglass in which Jehovah can be seen! In Jesus we see not only God's train, such as Moses saw when he beheld the skirts of Jehovah's robe in the cleft of the rock, but the *whole* of God is revealed in the Gospel of Jesus so that our Lord could say, "He that has seen Me, has seen the Father."

If the Lord is glorious in holiness, the Gospel reveals Him. Is His right hand glorious in power? So the Gospel speaks of Him. Is the Lord the God of love? Is not this the genius of the Gospel? The Gospel is glorious because every attribute of Deity is manifested in it with unrivalled splendor. But I desire to come home to your consciences by asking, Is the Gospel to you a *glorious* Gospel? Beloved Friends, we may know our state very much by what answer we shall give to that question.

The Gospel, seen with these eyes and heard with these external ears, will be like the Lord Himself, "A root out of a dry ground, having no form nor comeliness." But the Gospel *understood* by the renewed *heart*, will be

quite a different thing. Oh, it will be a glorious Gospel, indeed, if you are raised up in newness of life to enjoy the blessings which it brings to you!

So, I beseech you, answer the question! And to help you, let me remind the people of God how glorious the Gospel has been to them. Do you remember the day when the Gospel carried your heart by storm? Can you ever forget when the great battering ram of the Truth of God began to beat against the gates of Mansoul? Do you remember how you strengthened the posts and bars, and stood out against the Gospel, resolving not to yield? You were at times compelled to weep under impressions, but you wiped away your transient tears—your emotion was “as the morning cloud, and as the early dew.”

But eternal Love would not relinquish its gracious assaults, for it was determined to save. Providence and Grace together besieged the city of your soul and brought Divine artillery to bear upon it. You were straight-away shut up till—as it was with Samaria, so it was with you—there was a great famine in your soul. Do you remember how, Sunday after Sunday every sermon was a fresh assault from the hosts of Heaven—a new blow from the celestial battering ram?

How often, when the gates of your prejudice were dashed to shivers, did you set up fresh barricades! Your heart trembled beneath the terrible strokes of justice, but, by the help of Satan, your depraved heart managed to secure the gates a little longer with iron clamps of *pride*, and bronze bars of *insensibility*—till at last, one blessed day—do you remember it?—one blessed day the Gospel battering ram gave the effectual blow of Divine Grace, the gates flew wide open, and in rode the Prince of Peace, Immanuel, like a conqueror, riding in the chariots of salvation!

Our will was subdued, our affections were overcome, our whole soul was brought into subjection to the sway of Mercy. Jesus was *glorious* in our eyes that day, “the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely.” That day of days we have registered upon the tablets of our heart! It was the true coronation day of Jesus in us, and our birthday for eternity!

When our glorious Lord entered into our souls wearing His vesture dipped in blood, pardoning and blessing in the plenitude of His Grace, then the bells of our heart rang merry peals! The streamers of our joy floated in the fragrant air! The streets of our soul were strewn with roses! The fountains of our love ran with rich red wine, and our soul was as full of bliss as a heart could be this side of Heaven! For salvation had come to our house, and Mercy’s ring had deigned to visit us!

Oh, the sweet perfume of the spikenard, when, for the first time, the King sat at our table to sup with us! How the savor of His Presence filled every chamber of our inner man! That day when Grace redeemed us from our fears, the Gospel was a glorious Gospel, indeed! Ah, dear Hearer, you stood in the crowded aisle to hear the sermon, but you did not grow weary! The lips of the preacher refreshed you, for the Truth of God dropped like sweet smelling myrrh. You could have gone over hedge and ditch to hear the Gospel at that season of first love! No matter how roughly it might have been served up by the preacher, you rolled the bread of Heaven under your tongue as a sweet morsel, for it was the Gospel of your salvation!

Christian, I will refresh your memory further. Do not forget the after conquests of that Gospel. If you have made any advance in the Divine life,

it has been by the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ applied by the Holy Spirit. We make mistakes sometimes, for, having begun in the Spirit we hope to be made perfect in the flesh. I mean that frequently we try to battle with our inbred sins by smiting them with *legal* reasoning. No Believer ever conquered sin by being afraid of the punishment of it—this is a weapon fit only for sons of the bondwoman.

It is the blood of Jesus which is the conquering weapon in the holy war against natural corruption. “They overcame by the blood of the Lamb.” Knowing that I am dead to sin and risen with Christ, it is in the power of resurrection life that I wrestle against the old man and overcome him. Beloved, remember that you are always weak when you get away from the Cross. Remember that it is only as a sinner saved by blood that you can hope to make any advance in sanctification. Do not attempt to flog yourself into Divine Grace—the new life must not be touched with the whip of bondage. Go to the Cross for motive and energy as to holiness.

Look to Jesus in the Gospel as you did in the beginning of your new life. Know yourself to be saved in Him and then go forth to battle temptation with the Gospel as the standard of your lifelong warfare. If any of you have tried to make war with sin apart from the Captain of your salvation, you have either been wounded to your hurt already, or you *will* be. But if Judah’s Lion shall go up before you, and you follow with the Gospel as your war cry, your victory is sure and you shall have another wreath to lay at the feet of Jesus and His glorious Gospel!

Beloved, let me say that all true saints have found it to be a glorious Gospel from its comforting us in our darkest hours. We are not without our troubles, for which we should be *grateful*—they are flinty rocks which flow with oil. The roots of our soul might take too firm a hold upon this poor clay soil if they were not toughened by affliction. This is not our rest. It is polluted and our sorrows are useful because they remind us of this.

But what has such power to calm the troubled spirit as the Gospel? Go to the Lord Jesus, you daughters of grief! Know and understand once more your union with Him, and your acceptance in Him, and you will re-pine no more! You will bow your shoulder and cheerfully take up your cross when you have found out in your hour of need that the Gospel has a glorious power to sustain those who are ready to sink.

Did you ever perceive the glory of the Gospel in its power to resist the attacks of the great enemy? The soul has been beleaguered by a thousand temptations. Satan has howled, and all the fiends of Hell have joined in horrible chorus, and your own poor distracted thoughts have said, “I shall perish notwithstanding all my high enjoyments and confidence.” Have you never gathered, as John Bunyan would picture it, all your forces to the top of the wall to sling the great stones against the enemy? Have you not felt that the castle would be taken, till, as a last resort, you ran up the blood-red flag of the Cross, seized the sword of the Spirit, and went to the rampart determined to hold the wall against the enemy?

Then when the scaling ladder touched the wall and the foe leaped on the bulwarks, you dashed him down again, in the name of Jesus by the power of the Cross, and as often as he came up, so often did you hurl him down again, always overcoming in the power of the Gospel! You kept your ground against temptation from without, and corruption from within by the energy which the Gospel of Jesus Christ alone could give you!

One point may help us to see the glory of the Gospel, namely, that it has saved us from tremendous ills. The ills which are to come upon the unbeliever—who shall describe them? If a spirit could cross the bridgeless gulf which parts us from the land of darkness and the shadow of death, if he could tell us what are the pangs unutterable which are endured by guilty souls, then might we say, “Glorious, indeed, is that Gospel which can lift us from the gates of Hell, and preserve us from going down to the pit.”

Think, my Brothers and Sisters, of what the joys are for which the Gospel is preparing us! It is by the Holy Spirit, through the preaching of the Word, that we are ripening for those joys which “eye has not seen,” and which “ear has not heard.” Meetness for Heaven will not come to us by the Law, but by the Gospel. Not so much as one of the celestials came there by the deeds of the flesh, but altogether by the Sovereign Grace of God revealed to them in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. A glorious Gospel it is, for it brings its disciples to Glory!

Let me ask you whether it is glorious to you at this hour? I think I can say it is to me. I wish it were in my power to make it more glorious in my ministry, but it is glorious to my own heart. After some years of experience the Christian comes to know better than he did at first how much the Gospel suits him. He finds that its simplicity suits his bewilderment. Its Grace suits his sinfulness. Its power is suitable to his weakness. Its comfort is suitable to his despondency. And the older he grows the more he loves the Gospel of the Grace of God. Give it up? Ah, never! We will hold Christ the more firmly because men despise Him. To whom or where should we go if we should turn aside from our Lord Jesus?

Now, dear Hearers, before I leave this point, I want to put it to you again with much loving solicitude. Is the Gospel glorious to you? Remember, if it is not, there can be no hope for you. There is no way of salvation except by the good news that, “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.” And if that news should sound in your ears as a dry, dull thing, rest assured you are *not* on the way to Heaven, for the Gospel to every saved soul is sweeter than the sound of the best earthly music. Is it so to you?

God is pleased today to put up before your eyes the white flag of mercy, calling you to come to Jesus and live. But remember, if you do not yield to it He will run up the red flag of threatening, and then the black flag of execution will not be far off! Perhaps some of you have been suffering under bodily disease—take that as a warning. When our vessels of war would stop a suspicious vessel, they fire a shot over her bow as a warning. If she does not haul to, perhaps they give another. And if no notice is taken of this, the gunners go to their business in real earnest, and woe to the offender! Your affliction is the Gospel’s warning gun. Pause awhile, I beseech you. Ask the Lord in mercy to look upon you that you may be saved!

As I think upon some of you here who are not saved, I feel something like the boy I read of yesterday in the newspapers. Last week there were two lads on the great rocks of Lundy Island, in the Bristol Channel, looking for seagull eggs. One of them went far down the cliff and lost his footing, and when his brother, hearing a faint voice, looked down, he saw him clinging to a jutting crag and striving in vain to find a place for his feet.

There stood the anxious brother, alarmed and paralyzed with dread, quite unable to help the younger one in so much peril below—who soon relaxed his hold and was dashed to pieces far beneath. I feel somewhat like that alarmed brother. Only there is this happy difference—I can hope for you, and bid you hope for yourselves! You are clinging now, perhaps, to some false hope and striving to find a rest where rest is not to be found. But the strong-winged Angel of the everlasting Gospel is just underneath you this morning, crying, “Drop now! Simply drop into My arms. I will take you and bear you aloft in safety.” That angel is the Angel of the Covenant, the Lord Jesus Christ. You must be dashed to pieces forever unless you rest in Him! Cast yourself upon Him, I pray you, and then, as you are carried in safety far off from every fear, you will magnify the Grace of God and extol the glorious Gospel!

I must leave that point and observe that Paul recognized the Gospel as being the Gospel of *God*. Here arises another enquiry by which we may know whether we are saved or not. Has the Gospel been the Gospel of God to you, my Friends? It is easy to receive the Gospel as the Gospel of “my minister.” I am afraid there is a good deal of that sort of thing among us. We have great faith in our religious teachers, and very properly so, if we have received benefit from them.

But if the Gospel only comes to us as the Gospel of such-and-such a preacher, it will not save us! It must come distinctly and directly as *God’s* Gospel, and we must receive it as such. It is in solemn silence of the mind our privilege to hear the voice of God speaking to us and to receive the Truth of God in the love of it as coming with Divine authority directly from God. Remember that all religion which is not the work of the Holy Spirit in the *heart* will have to be unraveled, let it be woven ever so cunningly.

We may build, as our little children do, on the seashore, our sand houses, and we may pile them up very quickly, too. And we may be very pleased with them—but they will all come down as the tide of time advances! Only that which God the Holy Spirit builds upon the foundation of Christ’s finished work will stand the test of time and eternity. How is it with you? If the Spirit of Christ is not in you, you are dead.

If the Gospel, itself, should come to you in a sort of power, but only because of the pathos of the preacher, or the eloquent manner of his speech—it has not brought eternal life to you! If the Gospel is, indeed, the Gospel of God to us, it will exalt God in our estimation. The Father we shall love and adore, having chosen us to eternal life. The Son we shall love with warmest affection, having redeemed us with His precious blood. The Holy Spirit we shall constantly reverence, and we shall cherish Him as dwelling a welcome guest within these bodies of ours.

By this we may tell whether we have received the Truth of God, by its bringing us consciously into connection with God. Does God dwell in you, my Hearer? If not, you will not dwell where God is. You must know the Holy Spirit—not as an *influence* to be poured out as some pray—but as *dwelling within you*, resting in your *heart*. I put that as a very important question, but I will not pause over it, for I have to close our first head by noticing that the Gospel was to Paul the “Gospel of the blessed God.” I believe William Knibb used to read this passage, “The Gospel of the *happy* God,” and it was not a mistake—it is the very gist of the matter.

“The Gospel of the happy God.” Have you ever considered how happy God must be? How supremely happy? No care, no sorrow can ever pass

across His infinite mind! He is serenely blessed evermore. Now, when a man is miserable, and of a miserable turn of mind, he as naturally makes people miserable as a foul fountain pours out foul water. But when a good man is superlatively happy, he imparts happiness. A happy face attracts many of us, and a happy temperament, a quiet mind, a serene disposition—why, a man who has these—inevitably tries to make others happy!

And it is, I suppose, because God is infinitely happy that He delights in the happiness of His creatures. The fabled gods of the heathen were vexed with all sorts of ambition, longing, and craving which they could not gratify, or which, when gratified, only made them crave more. Consequently they are pictured as revengeful and cruel, delighting in the miseries of men. But our God is so perfectly blessed that He has no motive for causing needless sorrow to His creatures! He has all perfection within Himself, and, consequently He delights to make us happy.

How much satisfaction does God find in the happiness of creatures that are devoid of intellect? You may have seen, sometimes, when the sea is going down, a little fringe at the edge of the wave which looks like mist. But if you were to examine it carefully, you would find that there were countless multitudes of very tiny shrimp, all leaping up and casting themselves into all manner of forms of intense delight! Look again at the gnats, as you walk in your gardens in the summer's evenings—how they dance up and down—these little mirthful beings are all exhibiting to us the perfect blessedness that God would have to be manifested by *all* His creatures!

He would have His people supremely blest. He would have every vessel of mercy full to the brim with the oil of joy. And the way to make us so is to give us the Gospel! The Gospel is sent, to use our Savior's words, "that His joy may be in us, and that our joy may be full." We enjoy Heaven upon earth as we sit at the feast of fat things on earth. Just imagine what will be our glory when the Gospel of the blessed God shall have turned out all our sin! When we shall swim in the Gospel as the fish swims in the sea! When the Gospel shall become our element in the next world! Oh, the happiness of the creatures that are full of the Gospel spirit before the Throne of God!

Dear Hearer, did the Gospel ever come to you in that shape? I am afraid that to most people the Gospel is a bondage because they do not know it in very deed. I am afraid that to many, Gospel emotion is a sort of spasm—they are satisfied with the Truth of God sometimes, but at other times, when they feel they must have a treat, they go into the world for it. Where you get your treats, there your heart is! Whatever it is that gives you the most happiness, *that* is the master of your spirit. The Christian feels that he can sing with old Mason—

***"I need not go abroad for joys,
I have a feast at home.
My sighs are tamed into songs,
My heart has ceased to roam.
Down from above the blessed Dove
Is come into my breast,
To witness God's eternal love,
And give my spirit rest.
My God, I'll praise You while I live,
And praise You when I die;
And praise You when I rise again,
And to eternity."***

The religion of the genuine Christian is calculated to impart perfect delight. The truly regenerated man desires to have more and more of it so that his soul may be baptized in heavenly joy. "The Gospel of the happy God," also means the Gospel of the God whom we must bless in return. As being happy, He makes us happy. So we, being happy, desire to ascribe to Him all the glory of our happiness.

Now, is the Gospel to you, my dear young Friend over there, the Gospel of a God whom you bless with all your heart because He has sent it to you, and made you willing to receive it? If so, you are saved. But if now no emotions of sincere gratitude stir the depths of your soul, then the Gospel has been to you no more than a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.

II. The Apostle says, "The glorious Gospel of the blessed God, which is committed to my trust." DO YOU RECOGNIZE YOUR RESPONSIBILITY? Paul speaks not here of himself, alone. He might have said, "which is committed to the trust of every Believer in Christ." The Gospel is a priceless treasure and the Believers are the bankers of it. It is committed to our trust as men commit business to their agents.

First, we are bound to believe it *all*. Take heed of receiving a divided and maimed Gospel! It has been said that "only half the truth is a lie" and so it is. Most of the ill reports which distress the world have truth at the foundation of them, but they become false through the exaggeration of one part and the omission of the next. It should be the duty of every enlightened Christian to labor to master the whole compass of Truth so far as possible.

I suppose none but the Infinite mind can know all the lengths and breadths of the Truth of God, but still we should not be warped by education, nor be kept from receiving it by prejudice. We should strive against all partiality. And it should be, whenever we open this Book, one of our prayers, "Open my eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Your Law." We must pray to have a mind like molten metal, ready to be run into the mold of the Truth. To have a soul like the photographer's sensitive plate, ready to receive the light-writing of God at once, so that His Truth may be there in its entirety.

We must plead with the Holy Spirit for Grace to be willing to give up the most cherished dogma, the most flesh-pleasing form of teaching when we find it to be contrary to Scripture. To sit at Jesus' feet and learn of Him is the life-business of the Christian in this house of his pilgrimage. The Gospel is, in this sense, committed to our trust for we are to lay it up in our hearts. But someone demands, "How am I to know *which* is the Gospel?" You may know it by searching the Scriptures. "But one sect says this, and another sect says the reverse!"

What have *you* to do with the *sects*? Read the Book of God for yourself! "But some men do read it and arrive at one opinion, and some maintain the opposite, and thus they contradict themselves, and yet are equally right." Who told you that? That is impossible! Men cannot be equally *right* when they *contradict* each other! There is a Truth of God and there is a falsehood. If yes is true, no is false. It may be true that good men have held different opinions. But are you responsible for what *they* may have held, or are you to gather that because they were good, personally, therefore everything they believed was true?

No! This Book is plain enough. It is no nose of wax that everybody may shape to what form he likes. There is something taught here plainly and

positively, and if a man will but give his mind to it, by God's Grace he may find it out. I do not believe that this Book is so dark and mysterious as some suppose. And even if it is, the Holy Spirit who wrote it still *lives*, and the Author always knows His own meaning—you have only to go to Him in prayer, and He will tell you what it means.

You will not become infallible! I trust you will not think yourself to be so, but you will learn doctrines which are *infallibly true*, and upon which you may put down your foot and say, "Now I know this, and am not to be duped out of it." It is a grand thing to have the Truth of God burnt into you, as with a hot iron, so that there is no getting it out of you.

The priest, when he took away the Testament from the boy, thought he had done the work. "But," said the boy, "Sir, what will you do with the 26 chapters which I learned by heart? You cannot take them away." Yet memory might fail, and, as the lad grew into an old man, he might forget the 26 chapters. But suppose they changed his *heart* and made him a new creature in Christ—there would be no getting *that* away—even though Satan himself should attempt the task! Seek to carry out the sacred trust committed to you by believing it, and believing it *all*. Search the Word to find out what the Gospel is, and endeavor to receive it into your inmost heart that it may be in your heart's core forever.

Next, as good stewards we must maintain the cause of Truth against all comers. "Never get into religious controversies," says one. That is to say, being interpreted, be a Christian soldier but let your sword rust in its scabbard and sneak into Heaven like a coward! Such advice I cannot endorse! If God has called you by His Truth, maintain the Truth which has been the means of your salvation. We are not to be pugnacious—always contending for every notion of our own—but where we have learned the Truth of the Holy Spirit, we are not tamely to see that standard torn down which our fathers upheld at peril of their blood.

This is an age in which the Truth of God must be maintained zealously, vehemently, continually. Playing fast and loose as many do, believing *this* today and *that* tomorrow, is the sure mark of children of wrath. And having received the Truth, to hold fast to the very form of it, as Paul bids Timothy to do, is one of the duties of heirs of Heaven. Stand fast for Truth, and may God give the victory to the faithful. We must believe the Gospel and maintain it, for it is committed to our trust.

It seems to me, however, that the most of us may best fulfill our responsibility to the Gospel by adorning it in our lives, Men give jewels to those whom they love, and so, if we love the Gospel, let our virtues be the jewels which shall display our love. A servant girl may adorn the Gospel. She goes to a place of worship and perhaps her irreligious mistress may object to her going. I remember Mr. Jay telling a story of such a case, where the master and mistress had forbidden the girl to attend a Dissenting place of worship.

She pleaded very hard, and at last determined to leave the house. The master said to his wife, "Well, you see our servant is a very excellent servant. We never had such an industrious girl as she is. Everything in the house is kept so orderly, and she is so obedient, and so on. Now, she does not interfere with our consciences, it is a pity we should interfere with hers. Wherever she goes, it certainly does her no hurt—why not let her go?" In the next conversation the wife said, "I really think, Husband, that our servant gets so much good where she goes, that we had better go and

hear for ourselves.” And they were soon members of the very same Church which they had thought so lightly of at the first!

Now we can each of us, in our station, do that. We are not all called to preach in these boxes called pulpits, but we may preach more conveniently and much more powerfully behind the counter or in the drawing room, or in the parlor, or in the field, or wherever else Providence may have placed us. Let us endeavor to make men mark what kind of Gospel we believe. Only a few weeks ago a missionary in China took his gun to go up one of the rivers of the interior to shoot wild ducks, and, as he went along in the boat he shot at some ducks, and down they fell.

Unfortunately they did not happen to be wild fowl, but tame ducks belonging to some of the neighbors. The owner was miles away but the boat was drawn up to the side of the river and the missionary went about, carefully endeavoring to find out the owner of the ducks, for he could not rest until he had paid for the damage he had ignorantly done. The owner was much surprised. He had been so accustomed to having people shoot his ducks and never saying a word about it that he could not understand the honesty of the man of God.

And he told others until crowds of Chinese gathered round and stared at the missionary as if he had dropped from the moon—a man so extremely honest as not to be willing to take away ducks when he had killed them! They listened to the Gospel with attention and observed that the teaching must be good which made people so conscientious as the missionary had been. I should not wonder but what that little incident did more for the Gospel than the preaching of twenty sermons might have done without it! So let it be with us! Let us so act in every position that we shall adorn the Gospel which is committed to our trust.

Lastly, it is committed to our trust, if we have received it, that we may spread it—spread it personally by telling it abroad. If more could preach the Gospel it would be well. We have in all our congregations young men who are hard at work—at this very moment I do not doubt but what we have a hundred preaching in the street—perhaps more. But I have sometimes regretted that so few of the wealthier men enter into such labor. We could wish to see the men of ten talents preaching—the men of large abilities consecrating themselves to Christ.

Many of our young members are more useful at literary institutions than in the Church. Other useful occupations are all very well in their way, but I wish we could get the strength of our men spent more in the preaching of the Gospel. The first business of a Christian is his Christianity. All the rest, his patriotism even, must be kept subservient to that, for Heaven is more his country than England is, and Jesus Christ is rather his King than any of the kings of earth. “Seek you first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.”

I would ask young men now present, who love the Lord, whether they really are doing for the cause of God what they ought to do. Whether they could not do something more by way of making manifest in every place the savor of Jesus Christ’s name. My Sisters, your voices are exceedingly sweet, but we like to hear them better *anywhere* than from a pulpit. But still you have your sphere—do you occupy it for Christ? The Christian woman’s first call is to serve Jesus in the family. Next to that to serve Christ in her neighborhood. Are you doing so? The “glorious Gospel of the blessed God” is as much committed to your trust, Christian woman, as if

there were not another Christian under Heaven—how would it fare if it were so? If all other Christians died, would you have done by the Gospel what it might demand of you? All the zeal and industry of 10,000 others cannot touch your personal responsibility as a Christian.

I have to ask you, this morning, to help me to spread the glorious Gospel. Some years ago, having done my utmost to preach the Word with my own mouth, I found that running up and down throughout the country preaching 10 or 12 times a week, I was still able to do but very little. I thought if I found other tongues and set them talking, found other brains and set them thinking, I might, perhaps, do more for the cause of my blessed Master. One young man was thrown in my way who was educated for me by an esteemed brother for the Christian ministry. And when he was greatly owned of God as preacher, the desire to assist students grew within my heart,

The Pastor's College, for which I ask your contributions this morning, has grown to be a power for good. We have had for some successive years between 80 and 90 Brothers in training for the ministry. The whole of the support for them is found by the gifts of God's people which they voluntarily send, without being waited upon by any collector, or asked for annual subscriptions. I have nothing to depend upon but the Providence of God which directs the generosity of His people. Sometimes my funds run rather short, but never so short that I am really in need, for when the treasury is scantily furnished, we call the young men together and pray about it, and many a time we have had as distinct answers to prayer as though God had stretched his hand out of Heaven to give the needed money!

Some 5,000 pounds a year are spent in this way, which God always sends when it is needed. We have built several places of worship. We have formed and founded several fresh Churches. We have evangelized the darkest districts of London and the country—and our men are now to be found in Australia, on the rock of St. Helena, in Southern Africa, in America—and all quarters of the earth. God has been pleased to bless them and has given them souls for their hire, and we shall be glad if you feel moved to give towards their maintenance.

Before I dismiss you, I would like to press home to each one the question, "Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? Has the Gospel become a glorious Gospel to you?" I do not know you as I know my own people, but when I look along my galleries I mourn over those who have been hearing the word 10 years and are the same as if they never heard it. I suppose there are some of you in the same case, and my esteemed brother, Mr. Tucker, must cast his eye around the gallery, and the area, and see many who have grown Gospel-hardened.

It is a horrible thing to think of! The same sun that melts wax hardens clay, and to some hearts the Gospel becomes the savor of death unto death. If nothing comes of this morning's service but making everyone enquire how it is with his own soul. If it shall only constrain you to go to your solitary chamber and shut the door and pray, "O Lord, let me know this glorious Gospel! I have not understood it up till now, for it has not been glorious to me. Do make it so to me this day, that I may be saved," my heart will be very glad if such shall be the case.

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I WAS BEFORE NO. 1574

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

***“Who was before a blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious.”
1 Timothy 1:13.***

I AM not going to dwell, at this time, upon the special items of the text as to what Paul was before his conversion because none of us have been exactly as he was. We have all gone astray like lost sheep, but each one of us has taken a distinct course from all the rest. You might have to describe your transgressions in very different words from those used by the Apostle because yours have been a different form of guilt from his. Paul said of himself that he, “was before a blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious.” Saul of Tarsus was a blasphemer. He does not say that he was an unbeliever and an objector, but he uses a very strong word, though not too strong, and says that he was a blasphemer.

He was a down-right, thorough-going blasphemer who also caused others to blaspheme. From blasphemy, which is a sin of the lips, Saul proceeded to persecution, which is a sin of the hands. Hating Christ, he hated His people, too. He was also injurious, which I think Bengel considers to mean that he was a despiser. That eminent critic says, “blasphemy was his sin towards God, persecution was his sin towards the Church and despising was his sin in his own heart.” He was injurious—that is, he did all he could to damage the cause of Christ and, thereby, injured himself. He kicked against the pricks and by doing so injured his own conscience. Having sinned thus grievously, Paul makes a full confession of his guilt in order that he may magnify the Divine Grace which saved, even, the chief of sinners.

Note here, before we come to the special purpose we have in view, that godly men never think or speak lightly of their sins. When they know that they are forgiven, they repent of their iniquities even more heartily than before. They never infer the lightness of sin from the freeness of Grace, but quite the contrary—and you shall find it as one trait in the character of every true penitent that he is rather inclined to blacken himself than to whitewash his transgressions. He sometimes speaks of himself in terms which others think must be exaggerated, though to him and, indeed, to God, they are simply true.

You have probably read biographies of John Bunyan in which the biographer says that Bunyan labored under a morbid conscientiousness and accused himself of a degree of sin of which he was not guilty. Exactly so, in the view of the *biographer*, but not so in the view of John Bunyan, who, startled into sensitiveness of conscience, could not find words strong enough to express all his reprobation of himself. Job once said, “I abhor myself.” That is a very strong expression but, when he saw his own sin in the Presence of God, the man of whom the Lord said unto Satan, “There is

none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that fears God and eschews evil," the man against whom the devil, himself, could not bring an accusation, yet says that when he saw God, the brightness of the Divine Holiness made him so conscious of his sin that he exclaimed, "Now my eye sees You, I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes."

Those who have seen the exceeding sinfulness of sin by the light of the Holy Spirit and who have been made truly penitent are the last persons to speak lightly of evil! They dwell upon their own criminality with many terms to set forth how greatly they have felt it. We will consider the case of Paul for just a minute or two because it is a type and pattern of the work of God's Grace in other Believers. He tells us in the 16th verse of this chapter, "For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting." He was a model convert, a typical instance of Divine long-suffering, a pattern and specimen of all who believe on Christ and all conversions are, to a large extent, similar to that which transformed the blaspheming, persecuting, despising Saul of Tarsus into the great Apostle of the Gentiles!

Now, notice when he is describing his own past life how he dwells upon it with painful minuteness. He is not speaking before God in private, as Job was in the words we have quoted, else I can conceive that he would paint his sin in still darker colors. But he is answering for himself before king Agrippa, touching the things of which he had been accused by the Jews and you will see that he puts his offense against Christ and His Church in as strong a light as he very well could. His enemies have no such accusation to bring against him as that which he voluntarily makes against himself! First, he says in the 10th verse of the 26th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, which we read just now, "Many of the saints did I shut up in prison."

Those whom he shut up in prison were *saints*. To imprison the guilty is no fault, but to maltreat and shut up holy men was, indeed, blameworthy. He confessed that they were saints, saintly persons, but he committed them to prison for that very reason, because they were Christians and, therefore, their saintly lives did not protect them from his malice, but made them so much the more objects of his cruel hatred. He says that he hunted the saints—and not merely a few of them, but, "Many of the saints did I shut up in prison." He lays stress upon the word, "many"—not half-a-dozen here and there—but scores and hundreds suffered through him and his persecuting band. He crowded the prisons with the followers of Jesus Christ! "He that touches you touches the apple of His eye," says the Lord of Hosts when addressing captive Zion.

One touch of a saint of God injuriously given will be painful to the Lord—how much more, then, when there are many such touches and when he whose hand has done the evil deed has to confess—"Many of the saints did I shut up in prison"? We may be quite sure that he did this because they were Christians, for the 9th verse puts it thus, "I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." It was Jesus of Nazareth he was aiming at, though his blows

were directed against His followers. It was because the name of Jesus was named upon these people that they were put in prison!

Now, this is no small sin—to persecute holy men, to imprison many of them and to do so simply because they believed in Jesus Christ. The Apostle felt that this put exceeding bitterness into the gall of his transgression—that he had lifted up unholy hands against the members of Christ’s body and through them had wounded their ever-glorious Head. More than this, he did not merely put them in prison, but, he says, “Many of the saints did I shut up in prison.” Some persons in prison have had a measure of liberty, as Joseph had, but Saul took care that these Believers should be *shut up*—that they should have no liberty at all! He put them into the common jails, locked them up and made their feet fast in the stocks, causing them to suffer even as he and his companion, Silas, afterwards did in the prison at Philippi.

Continuing the summary of his evil against the servants of the Lord, he says, “I was not content with their imprisonment, but I was eager for their death. When they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. When the Sanhedrim wanted a vote I, young Saul, was there to give my maiden vote against Stephen or any other saint. If the chief priests wanted a knife to cut the Christians’ throats with, there was I ready to do the deed. If they needed one who would drag them away to prison and to death, there stood I, the eager messenger, only too glad if I might lay hands upon them, believing that I was, thereby, doing God service.”

“No,” he says, “that is not all. I often punished them in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme.” This, indeed, was a very horrible part of Saul’s sinfulness. To destroy their bodies was bad enough, but to destroy their souls if that were possible—to compel them to blaspheme, to speak evil of that name which they confessed to be their joy and their hope—surely that was the worst form that persecution could assume! He forced them under torture to renounce the Christ whom their hearts loved! As it were, he was not content to kill them, but he must damn them, if it were possible, too. “I compelled them to blaspheme.” This was a dreadful sin and Paul mentions it as such. He does not extenuate his crime, nor attempt to find excuses for his conduct.

And then he adds, once more, that he did all this wickedness with the greatest possible enthusiasm—“And being exceedingly mad against them,” like a raging madman in his fits, like a violent maniac who cannot be held in—seized with frenzy, tearing right and left, finding no rest unless he could be harrying and worrying the sheep like a bloody wolf, as he was to the sheep of Christ’s flock. “Being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.” He scattered them far and wide and then sought to get authority that even when they were in exile they might not be beyond his reach!

Saul seems to have grown proficient in the science of persecution and to have become a very master in the cruel art of crushing the people of God. We do not learn this from James, or John, or any of the other Apostles. Who tells us of all this? Who makes out this long, black catalog of crimes of which the man who committed them might well be ashamed?

Why, Paul himself! It is Paul himself that puts it so and I would that, in like manner, the worst character you could have, my Brother, might come from your own lips. "Let another man praise you and not your own mouth; a stranger and not your own lips." But, when there is an accusation that must be made against you, be you the first to make it with tears of repentance before the living God!

I think I have thus, from the example of Paul before Agrippa, justified the expression with which I started—that true penitents do not seek to extenuate or diminish the sin which has been forgiven them, but they acknowledge how great it is and set it forth in all its enormity as it appears before their enlightened eyes. Now, I want you, dear Friends, who know the Lord, to follow me in a very simple way, rather by your emotions than by anything else. I want the text of my sermon to be, "I was." The Apostle tells us what he was—what he was before conversion. Now, I want you to think what *you* were before the Grace of God met with you and changed you.

I do not know that I shall help you much to remember the details of your sin, for pretty near the last time I stood here, I did that when we spoke of Peter from the words—"When he thought thereon, he wept," [*Fountain of Repentant Tears*—Sermon #2735, Volume 47—Read July 14, 1901—Preached October 24, 1880.] but I want you to see seven very profitable inferences which will arise out of an impartial retrospect of your life before conversion.

I. The first, I think, will be that IF WE THINK OF WHAT WE WERE, IT WILL EXCITE IN US ADORING GRATITUDE. Paul was full of gratitude, for he thanked Christ Jesus that He counted him faithful, putting him into the ministry. He is so glad of the favor of God that when he comes to the 17th verse he must put down his pen while he sings, "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen." If, then, you and I look back upon what we were before the Lord saved us, we, too, shall be full of adoring gratitude as we think of even the *least* of all the favors that He has bestowed upon us!

"I am not worthy," said the Patriarch, Jacob, when he was returning to his country at the command of God—"I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which You have shown unto Your servant." And we can, each one, say the same. Is it not a wonderful thing that you who were—I will not say what—you know what you were and God knows! Isn't it wonderful, I say, that you should be a teacher of others? That you should be permitted to stand up and speak of pardon bought with blood? That you should be allowed to talk of holiness though your lips used to speak of any other theme but that?

Isn't it wonderful that you should be allowed to extol the Christ for whom you had no words of praise a little while ago, for whom, indeed, you had only words of contempt and scorn? Paul was astonished to think that he was put into the ministry! And when I look back upon my own life before I knew the Lord, I am amazed that I should ever stand here, seeing that for so long I refused my Lord's love and put aside His favors and

would have none of them! Ah, I did not know what would happen to me one day. Little did I think then that I should ever stand here to—

***“Tell to sinners round,
What a dear Savior
I have found.”***

But it does fill me with gratitude which makes me bow before God in thankful adoration to think that He should have looked on me and to know that, “unto me,” as well as unto Paul, “is this Grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

I ask you, dear Friends, to remember this gratitude in the reception of every blessing. When you enjoy Church privileges; when you come to the Communion Table, think, “Here comes one to sit with the children of God who once was like a dog outside the house.” When you stand up and praise the Lord, think, “And I, too, am permitted to offer the sacrifice of praise—I, who once sang the praises of Bacchus or of Venus—rather than of Christ Jesus!” When you draw near to God in prayer and know that He hears you, too—when you have power in prayer and prevail with the Most High and come back with your hands full of blessings that have been obtained at the Throne of Grace, you may well say, “What shameful things these hands once did when I rendered my members instruments of unrighteousness—and now they are loaded down with the bounties of a gracious God!”

Oh, do bless His name! If you do not, the stones in the street will begin to cry out against some of you! Oh, if your heart does not leap at the very sound of the name of Jesus, surely you cannot possess a heart at all! Such a change, such a wondrous, matchless change has passed upon you that if you do not praise the Lord today and tomorrow and as long as you have any being, what shall be said of your ungrateful silence? “I was”—I was before—all that I ought not to have been, but Grace has changed me and unto the God of Grace be all the glory! Do not all of you who love the Lord unite with me in this utterance of adoring gratitude?

II. A second very blessed inference (we can only speak briefly upon each one) is that A SENSE OF WHAT WE WERE SHOULD SUSTAIN IN US VERY DEEP HUMILITY. It did so in the case of the Apostle Paul and I would refer you to his expression of it in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, the 15th chapter and the 9th verse, where he says, “I am the least of the Apostles, that am not meet to be called an Apostle because I persecuted the church of God.” When He was compelled to glory in what he was through the Grace given to him, he said that he supposed he was not a whit behind the very chief Apostles, yet he here says of himself that he was not worthy to be called an Apostle because before his conversion he persecuted the saints of God!

Now, dear Brothers and Sisters, if we have been a little while converted and have united with the Church of God and the Lord has given us a little work to do, we may be tempted to think, “Now, I am somebody! Really, I am not now quite the humble dependent that I used to be. I am getting to be of some service to my Lord and Master and I am of some importance in His Church.” Ah, that is the way many Christians get into sad mischief.

“Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.” You must always strive *against* that kind of spirit and one way to avoid it is to remember what you *were in your unregenerate state*. There are some who might say, “I am a minister of the Gospel, but I am not worthy to be called a minister because of the sins that I committed before my conversion. I am a member of the Church of Christ, but I am scarcely worthy to be called a member because I was a blasphemer, or a Sabbath-breaker, or profane, unchaste, or dishonest.”

Remember what you were and let your spiritual advancements never lead you to unspiritual pride and self-conceit for, “everyone that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord.” I have heard of a good man in Germany who used to rescue poor, destitute boys from the streets and he always had them photographed in their rags and filth just as he found them. And then, years afterwards, when they were clothed and washed and educated and their characters began to develop, if they grew proud he would show them what they were and try to teach them what they would have likely been it had not been for his charity. If you are inclined to lift up your head and boast what a great man you are, now—just look at the likeness of what you were before the Lord made you a new creature in Christ Jesus!

Oh, who can tell what that likeness would have been but for the interpositions of Divine Grace? I think you would say what the Scotsman said to Rowland Hill when he called to see the good man in his study. He sat and looked at him. And Rowland Hill’s face, you know, if you have seen his portrait, is one to be remembered—there is a peculiar comic look about it. So the Scotsman said, in answer to the question, “What are you looking at?” “I have been studying the lines of your face.” “And what do you make out of them?” said Mr. Hill. “Why, that if the Grace of God had not made you a Christian, you would have been one of the worst fellows that ever lived.” “Ah!” said Mr. Hill, “you have hit the mark this time!”

I should not wonder, too, if some of us, when we look in the mirror, were to see somebody there that would have been a very deep-dyed sinner if it had not been for the change of heart which Sovereign Grace has worked. This ought to keep us very humble and very lowly before God. I invite you, Friends, to think this over and when you feel yourselves beginning to swell a little, let the bladder of your foolish and wicked pride be pricked with the needle of conscience as you remember what you used to be and you will be all the better for letting some of the gas escape! Come back as speedily as you can to your fine shape, for what are you, after all? If you are anything that is good, or right, or pleasing in the eyes of the Lord, you must still say, “By the Grace of God I am what I am.”—

***“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.
The evil of my former state
Was mine and only mine.
The good in which I now rejoice
Is Thine and only Thine.”***

Well, those are two of the inferences which result from looking back at what you were—the retrospect excites gratitude and sustains humility.

III. The next is this—THE REMEMBRANCE OF OUR FORMER CONDITION SHOULD RENEW IN US GENUINE REPENTANCE. When we look back upon what we used to be before the Lord met with us, it should breed in us a perpetual repentance. There are some who seem to think that we only repent of sin when we are first converted. Do not be deluded by any such false notion! When you leave off repenting, you have left off living! You are not living for God as you ought to do unless you daily repent. Remember that we are not saved by a single act of faith which terminates the moment we receive the assurance of the Divine forgiveness, but by a faith which *continues* as long as we live and, therefore, as long as we have any faith we must have repentance, too, for these are twin Graces—faith with a bright eye, like Rachel, who was beautiful and well-favored—and repentance, tender-eyed, like Leah, but with a lovely eye for all that.

“Repentance,” says one, “why, I thought that was a bitter thing that was taken away when we believed!” No, it is a sweet thing—I could wish to repent in Heaven, though I suppose I shall not. We cannot carry the tear of penitence in our eyes into Heaven—it will be the only thing we might regret to leave behind. Surely we shall be sorry, even there, for having grieved our God. Even there, I think, we shall repent, but certainly as long as we are here we must *daily* repent of sin! Yes, and repent of the sin that is forgiven—repent *more* because it is forgiven than we did when we had any doubts about its being pardoned—

**“My sins, my sins, my Savior!
How sad on You they fall,
Seen through Your gentle patience,
I tenfold feel them all.
I know they are forgiven,
But still their pain to me
Is all the grief and anguish
They laid, my Lord, on Thee.”**

Smite on your breasts while you think that it was necessary that Christ should *die* that you might be delivered from sin and its penalty and power—and as your love increases, let your sorrow abound that such a Lord should have needed to be *crucified* for you.

Oh, Sin, as Christ becomes more lovely, you become more hateful and as our soul learns more of the beauty of holiness, it perceives more of your ugliness and so continually loathes you more and more! If you want to draw up the sluices of repentance, sit down and remember what you were by nature and would have remained if Grace had not intervened! So, then, it shall be good for you to say, “I was before a blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious,” or to use any other expression that shall accurately describe you, if it leads you, like Peter, to go out and weep bitterly true tears of repentance.

IV. And now, fourthly, (we have but a word on each inference, you see)—THE RETROSPECT OF OUR PAST LIVES SHOULD KINDLE IN US FERVENT LOVE to the Lord who has redeemed us. You remember Christ

went into the house of one of the Pharisees who had a measure of respect for Him—this was Simon who desired Him to eat with him. But when He entered in, Simon treated Him as a common guest and offered Him none of the delicate attentions which men give to choice friends or to superiors. Christ took no note of this, nor had He need to do so, for there was another who stole into that room who did for Him all that Simon *ought* to have done and more than Simon *could* have done!

“A woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster box of ointment and stood at His feet behind Him weeping.” She stood behind the couch upon which He was reclining and let her tears fall down upon His blessed flesh till she had washed His feet with them and then, unbraiding the luxurious tresses of her hair, she wiped those holy feet with them! Her love, her humility, her adoration and her penitence were all mingling as she kissed His feet and anointed them with the ointment which she had brought. Our Lord explained why this woman had performed this extraordinary action. He said it was because she had been forgiven much.

Now, rest assured that there is no exception to this rule—that those who are conscious of having had much forgiven are those who will love Christ much! I do not say—I almost wish I could—that love is always in proportion to the *amount* of sin forgiven, but I do say that it is in proportion to the *consciousness* of sin forgiven. A man may be a less sinner than another, but he may be more conscious of his sin and he will be the man who will love Christ more. Oh, do not forget what you were, lest you should become unmindful of your obligation to Jesus! You are saints, now, but you were not always so. You can talk to others of Christ, now, but you could not once have done it. You can wrestle with the Angel of God in prayer and prevail, now, but once you were more familiar with the devil than you were with the Angel!

At this moment your heart bears witness to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit—it is not long ago that the Prince of the power of the air worked within you and the Holy Spirit was not there at all! I beseech you, therefore, forget not this, lest you forget to love Him who has worked this wondrous change in you! I think there is nothing better than to retain a vivid sense of conversion in order to retain a vivid sense of love. Do not be afraid of loving Christ too much. I see the cold carping criticism of this age objects to any expressions of love to Christ which we use in our hymns because it says that they are sensuous. My only answer to such talk is—God give us more of such blessed sensuousness!

I think that instead of diminishing these utterances it will be a token of growth in Grace when they are more abundant—not if they become so common as to be hypocritical. Then they would be sickening, but as long as they are true and honest, I, for one, would say to you who love the Lord, go on and sing—

***“Safe in the arms of Jesus,
Safe on His gentle breast.”***

Go on and sing—

***“Jesus, I love Your charming name,
‘Tis music to my ear.”***

Hesitate not to say—

**“You, dear Redeemer, dying Lamb,
We love to hear of You”**

and if it shall please you and the Spirit shall move you, even say, like the spouse in the song, “Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth: for Your love is better than wine.” The starveling religion of the present day, not content with tearing away the doctrinal flesh from the spiritual body, is now seeking to drag out the very heart of religion and to reduce Christian experience to nothing but a chilly doubting of everything! Let this be far from you! Believe something and love something, for to believe is to live, and to love is to be in health.

Oh for more love arising out of a deep, intense sense of what we once were and of the change which Christ has worked in us! “But,” says one, “I do not know that any great change has been worked in *me*.” No and there are some who tell us that we do not need any. There are certain Paedobaptists preaching, nowadays, that most children of pious parents do not need conversion. We have long had the Church of England teaching us baptismal regeneration—now we have some Nonconformists trying to persuade us that no regeneration at all is needed! This a new kind of doctrine that I know nothing of and that the Word of God knows nothing of and it will not do for us! It will eat out the very life of Christianity if it is believed.

Pious ancestors could not save one of you—even if your fathers and mothers and grandfathers and grandmothers and great-grandfathers and great-grandmothers and great-great-great-great-grandfathers and great-great-great-great-grandmothers—as far back as ever you like—had been all saints, nevertheless, *their* faith could not be of any use to you! You must be born, “not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” “You must be born again” is as true of one child as of another—as true of you as it was of me and as true of me as of the thief confined in prison today.

But some of us *have* been changed—we are washed, we are sanctified, we are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. It has been a real work of Divine Grace—the turning of us upside down, the reversing of the course of Nature, a turning of night into day, a turning of the powers of our spirit from the dominion of Satan to the dominion of Christ—and we must and will, therefore, love Him who has worked in us such a wondrous transformation!

V. Well now, fifthly, REMEMBERING WHAT WE WERE, ARDENT ZEAL SHOULD BE AWAKENED IN US. Look at Paul. He says, “I was before a blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious.” What then? Why, now that he has become a follower of Christ, he cannot do too much! He put many saints in prison—now he goes into many prisons, himself. He hunted them even to strange cities—and now he goes into all manner of strange cities, himself. He dragged them before tribunals and now he, himself goes and stands before Roman proconsuls and before the Roman emperor, himself! Paul can never do too much for Christ because he had done so much for Satan!

I remember one who lived four or five miles away from a place of worship who used to say, “You old legs, it is no use being tired, for you have got to carry me. You used to take me to the place of amusement when I served the devil and you shall carry me, now, to the House of God that I may worship and serve Him.” When sometimes he had an uneasy seat, he used to say, “It is no use grumbling, old bones, you will have to sit here, or else you will have to stand. Years ago you put up with all kinds of inconveniences when I went to the theater, or some other evil place when I served Satan—and you must now be content to do the same now for a better Master and a nobler service.”

I think some of us might take a lesson from that old man and say to ourselves, “Come, Covetousness, you are not going to hinder me from serving the Lord. I used to be liberal to the devil and I do not intend, now, to be stingy with God.” If ever I am tempted in that fashion, I will give twice as much as I had thought of doing, so as to spite the devil, for he shall not have his way with me! Some, when they serve Satan, go as if they rode a racehorse and whip and spur to get in first. How they will destroy body and soul in the service of the Evil One! But if a Christian gets a little lively they say, “Oh, dear me, dear me, he is excited! He is fanatical! He has grown enthusiastic!”

Why should he not be in earnest? The devil’s servants are enthusiastic and why should not the servants of Christ be the same? Black Prince, Black Prince, are you served by heroes and shall Christ be served by dolts? Oh, let it not be so, my Brothers and Sisters! Surely if anything can wake up all the powers of our nature; if anything can make a lame man leap as a hart; if anything can make a palpitating, trembling heart to be bold and brave for Christ, it should be the love which Christ has shown in looking upon such as we were and changing us by His Grace! “Ah, but you must not do too much,” says one. Did you ever know anybody who did?

If anybody ever does too much for Christ, let us rail off a piece in the cemetery that we may bury him in it. That grave will never be needed—it will be empty till Christ comes! “Ah, but you may have too many irons in the fire.” It depends upon the size of the fire! Get your fire well hot—I mean get your heart well hot and your nature in a blaze—then put all the irons you can ever get, into it! Keep them all at a white heat if possible. Blow away and let the flames be very vehement. Oh, to live for God a life of ecstatic zeal even if it were only for a short space of time! It were better than to have a hundred years of bare existence in which one went crawling along like a snail, leaving slime behind and nothing else. It were better far than driveling out, as oftentimes we do—

***“Our souls can neither fly nor go
To reach eternal joys.”***

The love of Christ to us, then, suggests great zeal in His service.

VI. Now, sixthly, I am sure that another inference that should be drawn from it is this—If we remember what we were and how Divine Grace has changed us, IT OUGHT TO MAKE US VERY HOPEFUL ABOUT OTHER PEOPLE. Paul was, for he says, “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all

acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting." Well, Friend, are *you* saved? Then *anybody* can be! You never ought to despair of the salvation of anyone, for you know yourself and feel yourself to have been the most undeserving of men—and yet God's Grace has made you love Him. Well, then, that Grace can light on anybody. Already it has fallen on the most unlikely spot possible!

Now, from this moment on, never indulge the idea that it is useless to attempt to benefit any of your fellow men. I remember—indeed, I have often met with persons who tell me of being asked, "Why did you not ask So-and-So to attend a place of worship?" "Ask him? Oh, I never thought of *him*." "Why not?" "I did not think it was any use." It is a very amazing thing that those are the kind of people who, if you get them to hear the Word of God, are generally converted—the people you think it is no use to bring! Men who have been accustomed to speak very disrespectfully of religious things, when once brought under the sound of the Truth of God, are often the first to receive a blessing! Those are the kind of fellows to seek, for there is some hope of reaching men who are in such need of the Gospel we have to proclaim. You know there is virgin soil there, so it is the very place to sow the good Seed of the kingdom.

There is good fishing in a pond that never was fished before and here is a man who, at any rate, is not Gospel-hardened—he has not got used to the sound of the Word so as to take no notice of anything that is said. Bring him in! He is the very man we want—bring him in! "But he is a swearer." Well, but if you were a swearer before your conversion, you ought never to say anything about *that*. "Oh, but he is a very hardened man." Yes, but if you were converted, notwithstanding what you were, you ought never to make *that* objection against anyone. "Oh, but he is such a low-bred man." Well, there are plenty of us who cannot boast much about our aristocratic descent! "Oh, but," says one, "he is such a proud man, such a haughty man." Or, "He is a rich man. He is a purse-proud man." Yes, but there are others like he who have been brought in and while that man has sinned in one way, *you* have sinned in another—and if the Grace of God met your six, it can meet his half-dozen!

Depend upon it, God meant us to be hopeful about other people when He saved us. See that man coming out of the hospital? He has had pretty nearly all the diseases you ever heard of and yet he has been cured. He is not the man to say, "It is no use going in *there*. You will get no good by putting yourself under the treatment of *that* doctor." On the contrary, whenever he meets with anybody who is suffering, he says, "You go and try the physician that healed me. If you can get a bed under his care; if you can come under his notice, you are almost certain to get cured—your maladies cannot be worse than mine and he met my case exactly and he can meet yours." He is the man who will advertise Christ and will proclaim His fame the whole world over—who has tasted that He is gracious and has proven, in his own case, the converting power of the Holy Spirit!

Oh, I pray you, dear Friend, despair of nobody! You who go with your tracts, go into the worst houses! You who talk in the workhouses to those who are, perhaps, as gladly gone as any—who find them dying in the infirmary and rejecting the Word of God as you speak it, yet keep on! Keep on! “Never say die” concerning anyone! Since the Lord has saved you, the Grace of God can save anybody, however far he may have sunk in sin! It can reach even to the very vilest of the sons of men.

VII. The last inference is that **WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR US SHOULD CONFIRM OUR CONFIDENCE FOR OURSELVES**—our confidence, not *in ourselves*, but in God who will perfect that which He has begun in us. There is not half as much Grace necessary to bring you to Heaven if you are a Believer as you have had, already, to bring you where you are! You have got to be perfected, but remember that it was the very first step that had the difficulty in it. It always reminds me of the legend of St. Denis who picked up his head after it was cut off and walked, I think, 40 leagues with it. But a wit said that there was no trouble about walking 40 leagues—the difficulty all lay in the first step!

So it did and so all the difficulty of the walk of faith lies in the first step—that first coming of a *dead heart* to life! That first bringing of a reprobate soul—a carnal mind that is enmity against God—into friendship with God. Well, that has been done! That first great work has been worked in you by God the Holy Spirit and now you can say with the Apostle, “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.”

Do you think the Lord ever converts a man with a view of showing him His Light that he may go back, again, into the thick darkness, forever? Does He drop a spark of heavenly light into our souls that it may go out, never to be rekindled? Does He come and teach us to eat heavenly bread and drink the Water of Life and then leave us to starve or die of thirst? Does He make us members of Christ’s body and then allow us to rot and decay? Has He brought us thus far to put us to shame? Has He given me a heart that cries after Him and pines for Him! Has He given me a sighing after perfection, an inward hunger after everything that is holy and true and does He mean, after all, to desert me? It cannot be—

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

So let us go on our way rejoicing that it shall be even so with each one of us. Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON —Acts 26;
1 Timothy 1:11-17.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—30, 233, 235.**

END OF VOLUME 26

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FOR WHOM IS THE GOSPEL MEANT? NO. 1345

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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THE FAITHFUL SAYING

NO. 1416

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 26, 1878,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”
1 Timothy 1:15.

IT is worthy of notice that Paul, in the passage before us, as, indeed, in all his writings, exhibits great sensitiveness with regard to sin. The sin which he had, himself, committed against the Lord Jesus, looked at from some points of view, might have been greatly extenuated on account of the honest, although mistaken, motive which lay at the bottom of it. But Paul, after allowing for his ignorance, declares that of sinners he had been chief and that he obtained mercy that in him, first, Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting. He describes himself as having been “a blasphemer, a persecutor and injurious” and, he is evidently lost in grateful astonishment that he should have been saved.

This godly sensitiveness with regard to sin was associated in the Apostle's mind with an equally vivid sense of the freeness and richness of Divine Grace. That Christ died, not for the righteous, but for the *guilty*, is the great thought which is upon his mind and he has no hesitancy whatever in declaring it—and in speaking most boldly concerning the exceedingly abundant Grace of God in forgiving sin. The union of these two feelings in Paul is, by no means, an unusual occurrence among human minds, for you will generally find that the preacher who is most clear in his witness that salvation is by Grace, is also the man to whom sin is exceedingly sinful! Indeed, all those who prize Grace most are men who feel most sorrow concerning their transgressions.

All systems of theology, except that which is founded upon Free Grace, in some way or other take off the edge of guilt. If they try to compromise the business and make salvation to be partly a matter of human effort and human merit—and partly a work of Divine Grace—they are sure, in the process, to conceal the exceeding iniquity of sin. Man is made out to be a poor, weak creature *victimized* by a Law too rigid for his frailty. It is represented that he has a *right* to mercy and a great uproar is made if we deny him any such right! And much anger is felt if we declare that mercy is the Sovereign prerogative of God which may be exercised at His own absolute discretion.

Rebellion against Divine Election is often founded on the idea that the sinner has a sort of *right* to be saved and this is to deny the full guilt of sin. You will find that he who sets forth Free Grace as the only fountain and source of human salvation—and declares that sin is pardoned and put away freely by the mercy of God in Christ Jesus—is most plain and severe in denouncing sin with all his might and most tender in sorrowing

over his own personal iniquities. I shall preach Grace to the chief of sinners at this time without reserve and without guarding my words in any respect whatever! I shall fling the big net of the Gospel right into the sea, let it go where it may! But do not, therefore, conclude that we think little of sin. Far from it! It is to us the sum of all abominations and the fire of Hell! And this, I trust, shall be apparent all along, though for the present we shall confine our thoughts to the greatness of the Grace of God, since to that subject our text summons us.

The Apostle Paul had been describing himself and his sin. He confessed that he was, before, a blasphemer and a persecutor, "But," he says, "I obtained mercy." His was an instance of a sinner saved and he now declares that his case was a type of *all others*, for Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners! The tendency is to set up the Apostle as an *exceptional* convert, but he corrects the idea by asserting the grand doctrine that the Savior's errand was to those who are guilty and undeserving—among whom he counted himself to be the chief. This coming of Christ to save sinners as sinners he regards as a Truth of God so well known in the Christian Church that it had come to be a saying, "familiar in their mouths as household words." It had become a sort of proverb with Christians that Christ Jesus came to save sinners and Paul says that it might justly be received as a proverb among all nations, for it was worthy of universal acceptance from the weight of its meaning, the importance of its subject and the Divine authority with which it was sealed.

Moreover, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners is so true that it is not merely a saying, but a *faithful* saying, worthy of all confidence, being as sure as the Truth of God, Himself! Pass it round, you Christians! Repeat it among yourselves without the slightest hesitancy or question! Let it be a proverb among you, an undoubted fact, an unquestionable Truth of God—Jesus came into the world for the salvation of sinners! He contemplated the saving of no other sort of persons but those who are *sinful*.

I. Our first observation from this statement will be THAT SINNERS ARE IN AN AWFUL CONDITION. A man who needs saving is evidently in a very undesirable state. Now, every man and woman among you this day who has not been saved by Christ Jesus needs saving. You have kept the Law, you say, from your youth up, so what do you lack? My answer is that you need saving, notwithstanding your fine ideas about yourselves. But you have also been religious from your earliest recollection and you do not know that you have ever committed anything very wrong, you say!

Dear Friend, despite your morality and outward religiousness, we are compelled to tell you that you need saving just as surely as the unchaste or the profane! Despite all that you say in your own favor, you have broken the Law of God and you are a sinner. And as a sinner you are in a terrible position from which nothing can save you but the hand of God. For, first, it is a grave peril to be a sinner. You have broken your Maker's commandments—is not that a calamity? You have neglected His will, which is holy and just and good—is not that a crying evil? To have a heart which does not choose the right, but which leans to evil—is not that ruinous? To have a mind which does not love God, but cares for itself more

than for its Maker and Lord—is not that to be in a diseased state of soul? The polluting influence of sin upon the soul is the direst of all mischief, the worst of all destructions—it is spiritual death! From the defiling presence of sin every man needs to be saved.

Moreover, the thrice holy God hates sin with a hatred scarcely to be conceived by any of us since we have lost the sensitiveness of perfect purity. Whatever things are impure, unchaste, untrue, unloving, unrighteous, God loathes with all the infinity of His perfect Nature. Doubtless, sin is a grief to godly men, but it is far more obnoxious to the Lord our God. “The wicked and him that loves violence, His soul hates.” “The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination unto the Lord.” The Lord has fierce indignation against everything that is evil—this is no arbitrary trait of His Character—He does not choose to be angry with this or angry with that without a cause! No, from the very necessity of His Divine Nature He must delight in everything that is good and He must abhor everything that is evil.

O Sinner, what a plight you are in since there is *in* you and *upon* you the sin which God cannot endure! What must your position be, for it is written concerning the Lord, “You hate all workers of iniquity,” and such are *you*! Can you bear the thought? Furthermore, you are condemned and before long this will be made evident to all intelligent beings. There comes upon the swift wings of time a Day in which the Judge of all the earth will lay judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet—and every transgression and iniquity shall receive its just recompense of reward. It is not possible that it should be otherwise, for there must come a reaping to every sowing! Idle thoughts, idle words and evil deeds must bear their fruit and, therefore, every sinner is in danger of eternal fire! As surely as the righteous through Christ shall go into everlasting happiness, so shall the ungodly depart into everlasting punishment where there shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth!

And this may happen to any unpardoned sinner before he has heard the next word which I am about to utter! He may find himself shut out from all hope, eternally shut out from God before yonder clock shall strike! This is a perilous condition for an immortal soul! Yet every sinner not saved by Christ is in this condition! To this may be added the further reflection that the sinner is quite unable, of himself, to escape either from sin itself, or from the wrath which he has awakened, or from the punishment which is appointed for his transgressions. What can you do, O Ethiopian, to change your skin? O leopard, how can you remove your spots? And if, being evil, you could learn to do good, how could you put away the sin of the *past*? By what process could you take out the stains of *former* years? Do not the sins of your youth lie in your bones even to this day? And they must be there forever unless the strong hand of Christ shall take them away.

One of old cried, “O generation of vipers, how shall you escape the damnation of Hell?” And the question may well be asked of the most cunning and crafty of sinners. If you neglect the great salvation, which it shall be our joy to preach to you today, how shall you escape from the wrath to come? Chained up, then, as within a wall of fire, with that fire already

burning within his soul in the form of evil lusts and drawing nearer to him from without every day he lives, the sinner is in a terrible position, indeed! O unforgiven Sinner, what do you think of this? Perhaps that position may be all the better defined if I remind you of the way by which a sinner has to be rescued from it. There is no hope for *any* sinner unless the Son of God, Himself, saves Him!

You may safely measure the depth of the danger by the Glory of the Person who undertook to deliver us from it. It is the Son of God whom angels worship who has come to save sinners! It must be a deep destruction from which only God Himself can rescue man. And though He were the Son of God, yet when He came, observe how He had to be equipped. And from His equipment learn the sternness of the task. He must be Jesus—a Savior and then He must also be Christ—anointed for the work! He must come with a commission from God with Divine authority—and the Spirit of God must rest upon Him to qualify Him for the great undertaking. For the text says not that Jesus came into the world, but Christ Jesus, the anointed Savior, came that He might save. If this equipment was needed, then surely the state of man was a grievous one.

Note also that even Christ Jesus could not save men had He stayed in Heaven. He came into the *world* to save sinners. The Fall was so grievous that He must come right down into the place of our ruin! He must come to the dunghill that He might lift us out of it! God sat in Heaven and said, “Let there be light,” and the darkness fled before Him. But He could not sit in Heaven and save sinners—He must needs come into the world to do so—down into this polluted creation the eternal Creator must, Himself, descend! Look, there in Bethlehem’s manger He sleeps and on a woman’s breast He hangs! He cannot save sinners, so great is their ruin, unless He becomes Incarnate and takes upon Himself our nature! And being here, think how dreadful must be the ruin when we see that He cannot return, saying, “It is finished,” until, first of all, He dies!

That sacred head must be crowned with thorns! Those eyes must be closed in the darkness of the tomb! That body must be pierced even to its heart and then must lie a chill, cold corpse in the grave before man can be redeemed! And all that shame, suffering and death were but the outer shell of what the Savior suffered, for He passed under Divine wrath and bore a load such as would have crushed the whole race of men had they been left to bear it! O Sinner, you are awfully lost, you are *infinitely* lost, since it needs an infinite Savior to present the Atonement of His own body in order to save sinners from their sin! This is the first Truth of God, then, which is included in this faithful saying—may the Holy Spirit write it on our hearts.

II. The second observation which clearly contains the very heart of the text is THAT CHRIST JESUS CAME TO SAVE MEN AS SINNERS. His salvation is meant for men who are sinners and for none else. Somebody says, “But is not that a plain matter of fact?” It is, but it is a fact scarcely realized—indeed, its real meaning is not known until God the Holy Spirit reveals it! A great many persons have a notion that Christ Jesus came into the world to save *respectable* people who, if they have done any wrong, have repented of it and have made things square. He came, ac-

according to them, to save persons who do their very best by attendance at worship, taking the sacrament, giving to the poor, paying their way and saying their prayers.

These are doing all they can to get right and keep right—and surely they will be saved—so men talk. Their theory of salvation is very mixed, but it comes to this—the Gospel is for *good* people. They do not quite do without Jesus Christ—He comes in somewhere or other. But their religion is a kind of mingle-mangle—partly they save themselves and partly Christ saves them—and between the two they are not saved at all! Their vain fancy is that though they cannot do quite as much as they ought, Jesus comes in as an excellent make-weight and turns the scale in their favor. That is the notion of the bulk of mankind and in many places of worship you may hear something very much like it. Too much of the preaching of the present day mingles the Old Covenant with the New—you do not know whether, after all, you are going to be saved by merit or mercy, whether Christ came to save sinners or the righteous.

The trumpet gives an uncertain sound. It is far too generally supposed that there must be *something* to recommend the sinner to God and that God could not send His Son to save men whom He views in the base and horrible character of sinners. “Surely,” say the enemies of Free Grace, “He must have regard to their repentance or to something which He either sees or foresees in them.” That He should see man to be evil and only evil and yet visit Him in mercy for mercy’s sake seems hard for the carnal heart to believe! Therefore, lest we should be misunderstood, we lay down this straight line that Christ *did not* come into the world to save anybody but SINNERS—and He viewed those sinners as sinners and nothing more! He did not view them as repenting sinners, nor as believing sinners, nor as humble sinners, nor as sanctified sinners, nor anything else but sinners—and under that character He contemplated their salvation!

The text says nothing more and nothing less than this, “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.” There is not a qualifying word. It is clear that only sinners are the objects of salvation, for none but sinners need saving! And if there had been no sinners there would certainly have been no saving and no Savior. Who needs saving but a lost man? Who needs a Savior but a man who, through his sin, has ruined himself? The very term, “Savior,” and the very name, “Jesus,” imply that salvation work is for *sinners*. We have some sinecure offices in our Government—I have heard of a Master of the Buckhounds who never mastered a buckhound in his life—but my Lord Jesus holds no sinecure in His office of Savior, for there are plenty of sinners and He is always saving them!

If sinners are not contemplated by the plan of Grace, then the office of Savior is obsolete! But this can never be, since He is Jesus Christ, the anointed Savior, the same yesterday, today and forever! Nor would the Gospel be required for any *but* sinners, since none but the guilty need glad tidings of pardon and Grace. If man can be secure under the Law, let him stay under the Law. If the Law can justify, let the Law justify. What need of a second system to take away the first unless through the weakness of man the first system shall be found to be of no effect? No, verily the Law is glorious! Mount Sinai shines resplendently and verily perfec-

tion would have been by the Law if it could have been kept by mankind! No need for another glory or excellence, for the first would have sufficed if men had not been sinners—for the Law is holy, just and good!

The very sound of that word, “Gospel,” is lost and its sweetness dissipated in the midnight air unless there are sinners, for they, above all men, need glad tidings of a Savior born among men! Salvation *must* be for sinners, for to them, only, can mercy ever come. If I am brought before a court of justice and I plead, “Not guilty,” and the magistrate replies that he will have mercy upon me, I repel his observation with indignation—I need no mercy of him—I am innocent. Let him give me *justice*—that is all I ask! It is an insult to the innocent to offer him mercy and, therefore, unless man is *guilty* God cannot show him mercy! Mercy has no room to bestow her blessings of amnesty and pardon till, first of all, guilt is admitted. To the sinner, forgiveness can come, but to none else!

Moreover, the characters whom Jesus came to save are always so described that they must be sinners. Sometimes we read of them as being, “dead in trespasses and sins.” And it is written, “And you has He quickened.” Sometimes they are represented as enemies—“If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son.” They are called aliens, strangers, wandering sheep, prodigal sons and so forth—and all these imply distance from God by sin. Sometimes they are represented as debtors—and when they have nothing to pay, He freely forgives them all their debt. All the descriptions of persons for whom the mercy of God is intended bear upon their forefront the notion of their being sinners and our Lord, Himself, says, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

The coming of Christ has no bearing towards the 99 that went not astray, except that they are left where they were. The Good Shepherd comes after the lost sheep and only after the lost sheep and if you can prove that you are *not* a lost sheep, then you have proved that Christ never came to save you. The whole of His errand looks this way—He came to save sinners and only sinners. Look now at what He did when He was here. I will only ask you to consider the crowning act of His work when He hung upon the Cross. What do those bruises from the scourge mean? What do those deep furrows on His blessed back mean? What do those pierced hands and feet mean? They mean this, that He is suffering on account of human sin! “The chastisement of our peace was upon Him and with His stripes we are healed.” “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”

Self-righteous men and women, what has the Cross to do with you? You carry it on your bosoms and make an ornament and a plaything of it, but that is all it is to you! None but the guilty can know the true meaning of the Cross and derive benefit from it. For them the dreadful tree bears the precious fruit of substitutionary Sacrifice and peace and pardon through the atoning blood! But to those who are not sinners the Cross is a barren tree! O Christ of God, only a sinner can know Your worth! A saint may admire You in Your Glory, but a sinner *trusts* You in Your shameful

death, for You are meant for sinners! “He gave Himself for our sins”—for what else could He give Himself and yield Himself unto death?

Besides that, where is Jesus gone, now, but to Heaven? And what is He doing? When He went to Heaven He received gifts for men and, listen to this Word of God—“Yes, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.” He pleads today, but for whom is He an Advocate? He makes intercession for the transgressors! Prove that you are not rebellious nor transgressors and there are neither gifts nor pleadings for you, for the whole drift of what He is now doing is towards the sinful! Look, Sirs, at the legacy which our Lord has left us! He has left us the Holy Spirit and what for? The Holy Spirit is here to convict of sin! Of what use would He be to those who have no sin? He is here to *regenerate*, but of what use would He be to those who are so good by nature that they do not need a change of heart? He is here that He may work in us repentance and faith, but of what use would those be to persons who have no sin to repent of and no need to believe in a Savior?

The whole plan and scheme of redemption contains in it marks and evidences clear and palpable that it is meant for sinners, for guilty men, for such and such alone! All else that there is in man beside his sinner-ship is not truly his. If I were to preach, today, to sinners with some qualification, I should not be preaching the Gospel in its fullest reach. If, for instance, I were to say that Christ Jesus came into the world to save *humble* sinners, that would be a clipping of the truth—for if any sinner is humble, that humility is not natural to him, but already the work of salvation commenced in his being has made him humble! Jesus Christ died to give humility to sinners as well as to save them when they are humble. But surely we must believe in Christ? Yes, and there is salvation for believing sinners—but no man believes in Christ until that faith is *given* to Him from above—and Christ came not to save sinners who make *themselves* believe, but to save sinners by giving them faith.

He not only saves sinners when they repent but He goes lower down, for He is exalted on high to *give* repentance as well as remission of sins. But did He not die for penitent sinners? Assuredly! But He died for them when they were *impenitent* and, therefore, that is why they come to repentance! He who would come to Jesus must come as a sinner and never think of pleading any sort of goodness or qualification, for, “this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” SINNERS—write that in capitals and set it by itself, for it is the whole of the description and no one may dare to add to it! Away with your human addition of *sensible* sinners and so on—the text is not cumbered and spoiled by any such qualifying words!

III. This leads me, in the third place, to say THAT UPON THIS POINT SPECIAL CLEARNESS IS REQUIRED. That Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners as sinners must always be kept clearly before the human mind because, as I have said, man does not like the notion and if you put it baldly and boldly he cavils at it and waxes wrathful. Hear him mutter about immoral doctrine and encouraging sin! Hear it and marvel at the audacity which makes a guilty rebel express anxiety about the morals of his God! A set of criminals are shut up in a condemned cell to

be hanged and a message comes that the king freely forgives them—and they exclaim that they will not accept mercy because it might encourage immorality!

Morality! What have these lawbreakers to do with that? Surely they are repeating the devil's hypocrisy when he rebuked sin! They are living in sin and yet pretend to be the guardians of universal justice! Vile hypocrisy! When I have known the pens which have written against the Gospel under the pretense of advancing morality, I have pitied the paper which they defiled with their black words. Pleadings for morality! Why, men known to be debauched and drunken are often the very loudest talkers against Free Grace and the greatest sticklers for morality! Let them go and wash in Jordan seven times and be clean, themselves, before coming out in that fashion. It is for you and me, being guilty, to get mercy, first, and *then* talk of what we will do in the matter of morality!

Know you not that the man who believes not in Christ is condemned already? Shall a condemned man cavil at mercy's freeness? On your knees, Sir, and plead guilty before the Most High, for only so shall you find Grace! How often are we told in sermons that we are in a state of probation—as if we had to *do something* by which we should prove our worthiness and were still in a position in which we might or might not be condemned? My Hearers, you are NOT in a state of probation! No, not one of you! If you are saved, you are saved—and if you are not saved you are lost! You are forgiven, or else you are “condemned already!” And, unless Jesus Christ saves you, you will abide in condemnation forever and ever! The die is cast and cast against you! You are condemned and in the Book of God so it stands. Christ Jesus came to save the condemned—and blessed shall you be if you are willing to take up the condemned position at this moment and accept the Grace which He has brought for sinners.

I say, then, let the Truth of God be made clear, because man will muddle it if he can. Mark you, if this doctrine is not made clear, you will not lead sinners to look to Christ. If I preach that Jesus Christ died to save men of tender heart, what will be the result of the sermon? Every thoughtful hearer will look to see whether he has a tender heart. Is that a desirable result?—

“There is life for a look at the Crucified One,”

but there is no life by looking into our own hearts! Suppose I preach certain marks and evidences as tokens of the men whom Christ came to save? Then each man will look to see whether he has those tokens within himself—and that is precisely the thing which we do *not* want men to do, for we desire them to look right away from themselves to Christ alone! If they should imagine that they find some good thing within themselves, they will make it the basis of their hope and that will be an error of the gravest kind. Sinner, all the hope you can ever have lies in Him who died upon the tree! As for yourself, settle it in your mind that you are as bad as bad can be. Give over all hope from your own doings, willings, feelings and resolves!

Do not expect to obtain comfort from your own nature any more than to find fire in the midst of a rock of ice! Look right away from self to Christ, and Christ alone, for this is the way of salvation! When a man comes to Christ as a sinner, he has taken the safest way. If I say to myself, “Jesus

came to save me because I am a *believing* sinner, or a *repenting* sinner, or a *humbled* sinner,” then I have to ask the question, “How about my repentance, my humility—are they genuine?” My foundation shakes and my trust fails me because it rests on myself! But when I trust in Jesus because He is the sinner’s Savior and because I am a sinner, then I am beyond doubtful questions. This, also, is a constant ground to go upon. Imagine a man who is deeply in debt saying to his creditors, “I am in a terrible fix, but I can promise you 10 shillings in the pound.” Very well. They accept it.

Is he not at ease? Let me whisper in your ear—he is not worth two pence in all the world! Is he clear? Oh no. He tries a little trading and puts off the hour of payment, but again he has to call his creditors together and confess—“I am sorry. I cannot manage the 10 shillings, but I will try to scrape together two-and-sixpence—will you take that?” Yes, they will take the half-crown. Is he out of his difficulties, now? No, he is not one inch nearer, for he is not worth a penny! Again he summons his creditors and tells them that he has made another mistake, but he could arrange to pay sixpence. Is he at rest now? Not a bit, because he has not a penny and he can no more pay sixpence in the pound than the whole 20 shillings! He is absolutely a pauper.

What is the best thing for him to do? Why, to admit the truth and say, “Here I am. I have no assets whatever. I am in debt over head and ears and I have not a single penny to pay with. Do whatever you like with me. Put me in prison if you like. Sell these bones and the rags which cover them, but there is the truth, you cannot get anything out of me because I have nothing.” Now, if the creditors give him a clear discharge, he is safe and at rest—which he never was while he had even a sixpence to pay! Now, you needy sinners, be wise and go to the Lord in that penniless style and you shall have your debt forgiven. Remember the parable of the two debtors and the Truth of God which it teaches—

***“But let our debts be what they may,
However great or small,
As soon as we have nothing to pay,
Our Lord forgives us all.”***

Assuredly, there is nothing like going to the bottom of a thing and knowing the worst of your case.

I have a friend who had a bad knee. Something ailed it, he could not tell what. The doctors blistered, applied poultices and did a great deal to it—and showed their skill by making bad, worse, but they assured him that the knee was not out of joint but would come all right by outward applications. Under such professional treatment the patient became quite lame. At last he went to a renowned bone-setter and as soon as he saw the joint, he said, “I tell you, Sir, your bone is out.” “Impossible,” he said, “the doctors have never hinted at that.” “Yes, it is, or if it is not so, we will make it so, and then set it right.” With a terrible pull the operator seemed to drag the bone out of its place and then it flew back, again, into its socket and my friend felt that all was right.

“Now,” said the bone-setter, “walk across the room.” And he did so at once. There is nothing like knowing that the bone is out, for then it can be set. But while we understate the mischief, we shall not find an effectual

cure. Reckon on the worst and you will not be deceived! If there is something good about you and you begin trusting in it, that something good will grow less and less, like the 20 shillings which came down to sixpence and ended with nothing! But if you throw up all legal hope and say, "I am a sinner. If I am saved it must be entirely through the mercy of God in Jesus Christ. I accept Christ to save me as a sinner"—that is a sure and constant foundation to rest upon! Beware of the slippery belief that Christ died for you as long as you are humble, or as long as you are this or that, for, if you talk in that fashion, instead of trusting in Christ you are trusting in your own humility, your own feelings—and there is no soundness in your faith.

Often, Beloved, I feel that this way of coming to Christ, as a sinner, is the only available one for me. I have preached the Gospel, not without zeal for the Truth of God and have tried to consecrate my whole being to my Lord's service, but times out of mind I would not give a brass farthing for all that I have done or felt or been! I am glad to sink the whole in oblivion and come to Christ and say, "Save me, for I have sinned." What I rejoice to do, I feel sure that my Brethren have to do, also, and it will be your safety to be so doing continually. Why, Brothers and Sisters, this doctrine must be true because it glorifies Christ! If Christ comes to save men who meet Him half way with their prayers and tears and beliefs and doings—and He only saves them because of these things—then salvation is half of man and half of Christ! But if it is that Jesus comes to save *sinner*s and begins a work in them when they are in their nakedness and filthiness and spiritual death, oh, then, Free Grace does the more abound and the crown sits securely on the royal head of Him who is anointed to be both a Prince and a Savior—to give repentance as well as remission of sins!

I need to say, also, that the recognition of the Truth that Christ came into the world to save men as sinners is essential to salvation. You ask me, "How so?" I reply, "When a man comes before God simply as a sinner, he is then upon the line of truth." All the while he was claiming to be this and that, which was good, he was on a false tack. But when he says, "Lord, I have broken Your Law. I have done the things I ought not to have done and have left undone the things that I ought to have done. And if I am saved it must be by your Grace alone"—he is now speaking according to truth. It is something to bring a sinner round to the truth. When he has come to that, he will go further in the right direction. Do you not see that line is doing homage to the Law of God, for he confesses that he has broken it and deserves punishment? Thus the man is already honoring the Law of God in his heart—his salvation has begun!

Now he does honor to God, Himself, for he bows before the Most High and begs for mercy. He is already saved from presumption! God must be King and the man is willing that He should be, even though he, himself, should be condemned! And now he reads that God's salvation "comes to the guilty," and he cries, "I am guilty! I accept Your mercy." That done, he loves the Lord God for mercy received. Why, the man is being saved before our eyes! He was the enemy of God, before, but now a sense of free mercy causes him to love and fear the Lord! The next thing he says is, "Have I been so freely forgiven all my transgressions, not because of anything I

was or felt or did, but out of free mercy? Then, Lord, I will strive to avoid every sin if You will help me.”

See, his mind is becoming pure and by the operation of the same blessed Truth of God upon him, he will ultimately be perfected and stand complete before the Truth of God—and what do you think will be his song? He will join with all the saints and sing, “We have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” There is nothing like Free Grace to change the human heart! You may tell a man what he is and what he ought to be, and he will remain unmoved. But tell him that God meets him as a lost, guilty and condemned sinner and that simply because He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, He blots out all His sins and transgressions and accepts Him through Christ Jesus—why, that makes the man’s heart leap within him for joy! And then he begins to say, “Cleanse me, O God, from this hateful sin, for I love You because of Your wondrous love to me.”

Thus Jesus Christ’s coming to save sinners makes the point of our being sinners a very essential one in the matter of our being saved from the power of sin.

IV. I close by saying, let us, dear Friends, feel THAT IT WILL BE WISE TO ACCEPT AT ONCE THE TEACHING OF THE TEXT. Let us, on the spot, confess we are sinners! Whether you have been saved or not, come over, again, to Jesus. Take with you words and say unto Him, “We have sinned.” Confess your sinnership! Does it trouble you to do so? Have not you abundant evidence of it? Do not confess it with your mouth, only, but with your *heart*. Let me say sinners are very rare things—you cannot find them dead or alive. If you go into a cemetery with an intelligent child, the first question it will ask will be, “Papa, where do they bury the sinners? These are all good people who are buried here.”

Living sinners are equally scarce. We are all surprisingly good and though we say we are sinners, that is a part of our goodness, for it shows how very humble we are. If we come to details and are questioned as to our sins, how many turn out to be no more sinners than the beggars in the street are really lame, or blind, or sick, or sore? Many who say, “Lord, have mercy upon us miserable sinners,” do but sham their sinnership before God! Now, mark, there is nothing but sham salvation for sham sinners! But you *real* sinners, you who have broken God’s Law and know it! You who are ready to stand upon the drop of confession beneath the fatal tree of Justice feeling that you could not say a word against Divine Justice if you were now executed—come and welcome, for Jesus Christ came to save such as you are! Confess your sins and when you have done so, rest on the salvation provided in Christ Jesus!

At this moment I think I speak the language of every child of God when I say the top and bottom, the beginning and the ending of all my hope lies in this—that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. I trust myself as a sinner with Him. The devil often tells me, “You are not this, and you are not that,” and I feel bound to acknowledge that the accuser of the Brethren makes terrible work with my spiritual finery so that I have to abandon one ground of glorying after another. But I never knew the devil, himself, dare to say, “You are not a sinner.” He knows I am and I know it,

too! And as in due time Christ died for the ungodly, I rest in Him and I am saved! If I can perish resting in Christ I must do so. But I will tell it throughout the realms of Hell that I did trust in Christ and was lost. I will publish it in the infernal dens that I trusted in Jesus with all my soul and was confounded.

Will it ever be? No, never! For He has said, "Him that comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out." Poor Sinner, whoever you may be, surely this is a very simple matter! But do not reject it because it is so simple. It is your life! You shall find it your life at this very instant if you will trust my Lord. Have you any doubt about your being a sinner? Then bid farewell to hope, for Christ did not come to save *you*! But if you *know* you are a sinner, cast yourself on Jesus right now, even now, just as you are! "Will He save me?" Try it, Brother! Try it, Sister! Sink or swim, fling yourself upon Christ! Are you still holding to your prayers or your tears, or somewhat of your own? You will perish if you do! You must be disconnected with all grounds of self-hope and self-trust or they will prove your ruin!

Now cut the cable! Let every rope go! Break the last thread and commit yourself to the tide of Free Grace. You will never be a wreck if you do so. Well does Dr. Watts put it—

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

"You have taken away from us, Sir, every hope we ever had, and you make us out to be nothing but sinners." Yes, that is what I want to do! I long to make all things rock and reel under you till you feel that you have no place for the sole of your feet—and so fall before my Master's Cross! This old house of yours which you have been patching up so often will fall upon you before long. Its walls bulge, its roof drops, its timbers are rotten! However much you try to prop it up, it will come down and destroy you!

I, as an architect, advise you to tear it all down! Clear every wall away, stick and stone. Yes, and take out the very foundations, for every stone is ruinous! Clear the ground of the whole concern. You complain that there is a deep and ugly trench where the foundations used to be and I am glad of it, for, behold, the Lord lays in Zion, for a foundation, a stone, elect, precious, even Christ Jesus! And he that believes in Him shall never be confounded. You must remove all the wood, hay and stubble, and build with precious stones! None but Jesus, none but Jesus! Neither beam, nor stone, nor pin, nor nail must be our own. We may not take from a thread to a shoelace of self, but Christ must be first, last, midst and everywhere!

What do you say, fellow Sinners? Will you and I have Christ? I will, whether you will or not! Come along. Do not draw back. Take what God freely presents to you and from this day trust Jesus to be your Savior and we will meet in Heaven! Amen.

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THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL

NO. 184

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MARCH 21, 1858,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”
1 Timothy 1:15.***

I SUPPOSE that the message delivered by God’s servants to the people must always be called “the burden of the Lord.” When the old Prophets came forth from their Master they had such dooms and threats and lamentations and woe to preach that their countenances were sorrowful and their hearts heavy within them. They usually commenced their discourses by announcing, “The burden of the Lord, the burden of the Lord.” But now, our message is no heavy one. No threat and no thunders compose the theme of the Gospel minister. All is mercy! Love is the sum and substance of our Gospel—love undeserved—love to the very chief of sinners.

But it is still a burden to us. So far as the matter of our preaching is concerned it is our joy and our delight to preach it. But if others feel as I feel now they will all acknowledge it to be a hard matter to preach the Gospel. For now I am sore vexed and my heart is troubled, not concerning what I have to preach, but how I shall preach it. What if so good a message should fail because of so ill an ambassador? What if my hearers should reject this saying which is worthy of all acceptance because I may announce it with lack of earnestness? Surely—surely such a supposition is enough to draw the tears to the eyes of any man! But may God in His mercy prevent a consummation so fearfully to be dreaded. And, however I may now preach, may this Word of God commend itself to every man’s conscience. And may many of you now gathered together who have never as yet found Jesus for refuge, by the simple preaching of the Word now be persuaded to come in, that you may taste and see that the Lord is good.

Our text is one that pride would never prompt a man to select. It is quite impossible to flourish about it, it is so simple. Human nature is apt to cry, “Well I cannot preach upon that text—it is too plain. There is no mystery in it. I cannot show my learning—it is just a plain, common-sense announcement—I scarcely would wish to take it, for it lowers the man, however much it may exalt the Master.” So, expect nothing but the text from me this morning and the simplest possible explanation of it.

We shall have two heads—first there is *the text*. Then there is a *double commendation* appended to the text—“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance.”

I. First, there is THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE TEXT—"Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." In that there are three things very prominent. There is *the Savior*, there is *the sinner* and there is *the salvation*.

1. There is first of all, *the Savior*. And in explaining the Christian religion, this is where we must begin. The Person of the Savior is the foundation-stone of our hope. Upon that Person depends the usefulness of our Gospel. Should someone arise and preach a Savior who was man, he would be unworthy of our hopes and the salvation preached would be inadequate to what we need. Should another preach salvation by an angel, our sins are so heavy that an angelic atonement would have been insufficient. And therefore his Gospel totters to the ground. I repeat it—upon the Person of the Savior rests the whole of the salvation. If he is not able, if he is not commissioned to perform the work, then indeed, the work itself is worthless to us and falls short of its design.

But, Brothers and Sisters, when we preach the Gospel, we need not stop and stammer. We have to show you this day such a Savior that earth and Heaven could not show his fellow. He is one so loving, so great, so mighty and so well adapted to all our needs that it is evident enough that He was prepared of old to meet our deepest wants. We know that Jesus Christ who came into the world to save sinners was God. And that long before His descent to this lower world He was adored by angels as the Son of the Highest. When we preach the Savior to you, we tell you that although Jesus Christ was the Son of Man, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, yet was He eternally the Son of God and has in Himself all the attributes which constitute perfect Godhead.

What more of a Savior can any man want than God? Is not He who made the heavens able to purge the soul? If He of old stretched the curtains of the skies and made the earth that man should dwell upon it, is He not able to rescue a sinner from the destruction that is to come? When we tell you He is God, we have at once declared His omnipotence and His infinity. And when these two things work together, what can be impossible? Let God undertake a work, it cannot meet with failure. Let Him enter into an enterprise and it is sure of its accomplishment. Because Christ Jesus the Man was also Christ Jesus the God, in announcing the Savior we have the fullest confidence that we are offering you something that is worthy of all acceptance.

The name given to Christ suggests something concerning His Person. He is called in our text, "Christ Jesus." The two words mean, the "Anointed Savior." The Anointed Savior "came into the world to save sinners."

Pause here, my Soul and read this over again—He is the anointed Savior. God the Father from before all worlds anointed Christ to the office of a Savior of men. And, therefore, when I behold my Redeemer coming from Heaven to redeem man from sin, I note that He does not come unsent, or not commissioned. He has His Father's authority to back Him in His

work. Hence, there are two immutable things whereon our soul may rest—there is the Person of Christ, Divine in itself. There is the anointing from on high, giving to Him the stamp of a commission received from Jehovah, His Father. O Sinner, what greater Savior do you want than He whom God anointed? What more can you require than the eternal Son of God to be your Ransom and the anointing of the Father to be the ratification of the treaty?

Yet we have not fully described the Person of the Redeemer until we have noted that He was man. We read that He came into the world—by which coming into the world we do not understand His usual coming for He often came into the world before. We read in Scripture, “I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto Me. And if not, I will know.” In fact, He is always here. The goings of God are to be seen in the sanctuary—both in Providence and in nature they are to be seen most visibly. Does not God visit the earth when He makes the tempest His chariot and rides upon the wings of the wind?

But this visitation was different from all these. Christ came into the world in the sense of the fullest and most complete union with human nature. Oh, Sinner, when we preach a Divine Savior, perhaps the name of God is so terrible to you that you can scarcely think the Savior is adapted to you. But hear you again the old story. Although Christ was the Son of God He left His highest Throne in Glory and stooped to the manger. There He is, an infant of a span long. See, He grows from boyhood up to manhood and He comes forth into the world to preach and suffer! See Him as He groans under the yoke of oppression. He is mocked and despised. His visage is more marred than that of any other man and His form more than the sons of men! See Him in the garden as He sweats drops of blood! See Him in Pilate’s chamber in which He is scourged and His shoulders run with gore!

On the bloody tree behold Him! See Him dying with agony too exquisite to be imagined, much less to be described! Behold Him in the silent tomb! See Him at last bursting the bonds of death and rising the third day and afterwards ascending up on high, “leading captivity captive”! Sinner, you have now the Savior before you, plainly manifested. He who was called Jesus of Nazareth, who died upon the Cross, who had His superscription written, “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews”—this man was the Son of God, the brightness of His Father’s glory and the express image of His Father, “begotten by His Father before all worlds, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father.” He “thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant 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.”

Oh, could I bring Him before you, could I now bring Him here to show you His hands and His side! If you could now, like Thomas, put your fin-

gers in the holes of the nails and thrust your hand into His side, methinks you would not be faithless, but believing. This much I know, if there is anything that can make men believe under the hand of God's most Holy Spirit, it is a true picture of the Person of Christ. Seeing is believing in His case. A true view of Christ, a right-looking at Him will most assuredly beget faith in the soul. Oh, I doubt not if you knew our Master, some of you who are now doubting and fearing and trembling, would say, "Oh, I can trust Him. A Person so Divine and yet so human, ordained and anointed of God must be worthy of my faith. I can trust Him. No, more—if I had a hundred souls I could trust Him with them all. Or, if I stood accountable for all the sins of all mankind and were myself the very reservoir and sink of this world's infamy, I could trust Him even then—for such a Savior must be able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him." This, then, is the Person of the Savior.

2. Now, the second point is *the sinner*. If we had never heard this passage before, or any of similar import, I can suppose that the most breathless silence would reign over this place, if, for the first time, I should commence to read them in your hearing, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save ____." I know how you would thrust forward your heads. I know how you would put your hand against your ear and look as if you would hear with the eye as well as with the ear to know for whom the Savior died. Every heart would say, "whom did He come to save?" And if we had never heard the message before, how would our hearts palpitate with fear lest the character described should be one unto which it would be impossible for us to attain!

Oh, how pleasant it is to hear again that one word which describes the character of those Christ came to save—"He came into the world to save *sinner*s." Monarch, there is here no distinction. Princes, He has not singled you out to be the objects of His love—but beggars and the poor shall taste His Grace. You learned men, you masters of Israel, Christ does not say He came specially to save you. The unlearned and illiterate peasant is equally welcome to His Grace. Jew, with all your pedigree of honor, you are not justified more than the Gentile. Men of Britain, with all your civilization and your freedom, Christ does not say He came to save you—He names not you as the distinguishing class who are the objects of His love—no, and you that have good works and reckon yourselves saints among men, He does not distinguish you, either.

The one simple title, large and broad as humanity itself, is simply this—"Jesus Christ came into the world to save *SINNERS*." Now, mark, we are to understand this in a general sense when we read it—that all whom Jesus came to save are *sinner*s. But if any man asks, may I infer from this that I am saved—we must then put another question to him. To begin then, with the general sense—"Jesus Christ came into the world to save *sinner*s." The men whom Christ came to save were by *nature* sinners, nothing less and nothing more than sinners. I have often said that Christ

came into the world to save awakened sinners. It is quite true—so He did. But those sinners were *not awakened sinners* when He came to save them—they were nothing but “sinners dead in trespasses and sins” when He came to them.

It is a common notion that we are to preach that Christ died to save what are called *sensible* sinners. Now that is true—but they were not sensible sinners when Christ died to save them. He makes them sensible or feeling sinners as the *effect* of His death. Those He died for are described without any adjective to diminish the breadth of it, as being sinners and simply sinners, without any badge of merit or mark of goodness which could distinguish them above their fellows. SINNERS! Now, the term includes some of all kinds of sinners. There are some men whose sins appear but little. Trained up religiously and educated in a moral way, they do not dash into the deeps of sin. They are content to coast along the shores of vice—they do not launch out into the depths. Now, Christ has died for such as these, for many of these have been brought to know and love Him. Let no man think, because he is a less sinner than others, that therefore there is less hope for him.

Strange it is that some have often thought that! “If I had been a blasphemer,” says one, “or injurious, I could have had more hope. Though I know I have sinned greatly in my own eyes yet so little have I erred in the eye of the world that I can scarcely think myself included.” Oh, say not so! It says, “Sinners.” If you can put yourself in that catalog, whether it is at the top or at the bottom, you are still within it. And the truth still holds good that those Jesus came to save were originally sinners and you being such, you have no reason to believe that you are shut out.

Again—Christ died to save sinners of an opposite sort. We have some men whom we dare not describe. It would be a shame to speak of the things which are done by them in private. There have been men who have invented vices of which the devil himself was ignorant until they invented them. There have been men so bestial that the very dog was a more honorable creature than they. We have heard of beings whose crimes have been more diabolical, more detestable than any action ascribed even to the devil himself. Yet my text does not shut out these. Have we not met with blasphemers so profane that they could not speak without an oath? Blasphemy, which at first was something terrible to them, has now become so common that they would curse themselves before they said their prayers and swear when they were singing God’s praises.

It has come to be part of their meat and drink, a thing so natural to them that the very sinfulness of it does not shock them, they so continually do it. As for God’s Laws, they delight to know them for the mere sake of breaking them. Tell them of a new vice and you will please them. They have become like that Roman emperor whose parasites could never please him better than by inventing some new crime—men who have gone head over heels in the Stygian gulf of hellish sin—men who not content with fouling their feet while walking through the mire have lifted up the trap-

door with which we seal down depravity and have dived into the very kennel—rebellious in the very filth of human iniquity. But there is nothing in my text which can exclude even these. Many of these shall yet be washed in the Savior's blood and be made partakers of the Savior's love.

Nor does this text make a distinction as to the age of sinners. I see many among you here whose hairs if they were the color of your character would be the very reverse of what they are. You have become white without, but you are blackened all within with sin. You have added layer to layer of crime. And now, if one were to dig down through the various deposits of numerous years he would discover stony relics of youthful sins hidden down in the depths of your rocky hearts. Where once all was tender, everything has become dry and hardened. You have gone far into sin. If you were to be converted now, would it not, indeed, be a wonder of Grace? For the old oak to be bent, oh, how difficult! Now that it has grown so rugged and tough, can it be bent? Can the Great Husbandman train it? Can He graft on so old and so rough a stem something that shall bring forth heavenly fruit?

Ah, He can, for age is not mentioned in the text and many of the most ancient of men have proved the love of Jesus in their latest years. "But," says one, "my sin has had peculiar aggravations connected with it. I have sinned against light and against knowledge. I have trampled on a mother's prayers. I have despised a father's tears. Warnings given to me have been neglected. On my sick bed God Himself has rebuked me. My resolves have been frequent and as frequently forgotten. As for my guilt, it is not to be measured by any ordinary standard. My little crimes are greater than other men's deepest iniquities, for I have sinned against the light, against the pricks of conscience and against everything that should have taught me better." Well, my Friend, I do not see that you are shut out here. My text makes no distinction but just this—"SINNERS"!

And as far as my text is concerned there is no limit whatever—I must deal with the text as it stands. And even for you I cannot consent to limit it. It says, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." There have been men of your sort saved—why then, should you not be? There have been the grossest blackguards and the vilest thieves and the most debauched harlots saved. Then, why not you, even if you are such as they? Sinners a hundred years old have been saved. We have instance on record of such cases—then why not you? If from one of God's instances we may generally infer a rule and, moreover, we have His own Word to back us—where lives the man who is so wickedly arrogant as to shut himself out—and close the door of mercy in his own face? No, Beloved, the text says "SINNERS." And why should it not include you and me within its list? "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners."

But I said, and I must return to it, if anyone wishes to make a particular application of the text to his own case—it is necessary he should read this text in another way. Every man in this place must not infer that Christ came to save *him*. Those whom Christ came to save were sinners.

But Christ will not save all sinners. There are some sinners who undoubtedly will be lost because they reject Christ. They despise Him. They will not repent. They choose their own self-righteousness. They do not turn to Christ, they will have none of His ways and none of His love. For such sinners, there is no promise of mercy, for there remains no other way of salvation. Despise Christ and you despise your own mercy. Turn away from Him and you have proved that in His blood there is no efficacy for you. Despise Him and die doing so, die without giving your soul into His hands and you have given a most awful proof that though the blood of Christ was mighty, yet never was it applied to you, never was it sprinkled on your heart to the taking away of your sins.

If, then, I want to know did Christ so die for me that I may now believe in Him and feel myself to be a saved man, I must answer this question—do I *feel* today that I am a sinner? Not, do I *say* so, as a compliment, but do I feel it? In my inmost soul is that a Truth of God printed in great capitals of burning fire—I am a sinner? Then, if it is so, Christ died for me. I am included in His special purpose. The Covenant of Grace includes my name in the ancient roll of eternal election. There my person is recorded and I shall, without a doubt, be saved if now, feeling myself to be a sinner, I cast myself upon that simple Truth of God, believing it and trusting in it to be my sheet anchor in every time of trouble. Come, Brother and Sister, are you not prepared to trust in Him? Are not many of you able to say that you feel yourself sinners? Oh, I beseech you, whoever you are, believe this great Truth of God which is worthy of all acceptance—Christ Jesus came to save you. I know your doubts. I know your fears—for I have suffered them myself. And the only way whereby I can keep my hopes alive is just this—I am brought every day to the Cross. I believe that to my dying hour I shall never have any hope but this—

***“Nothing in my hands I bring;
Simply to Your Cross I cling.”***

And my only reason at this hour for believing Jesus Christ is my Redeemer is just this—I know that I am a *sinner*. This I feel and over this I mourn. And though I mourn it much, when Satan tells me that I cannot be the Lord's, I draw from my very mourning the comfortable inference that inasmuch as He has made me feel I am lost, He would not have done this if He had not intended to save me. And inasmuch as He has given me to see that I belong to that great class of characters whom He came to save, I infer from that, beyond a doubt, that He will save me. Oh, can you do the same, you sin-stricken, weary, sad and disappointed souls to whom the world has become an empty thing? You weary spirits who have gone your round of pleasure, now exhausted with satiety, or even with disease, are longing to be rid of it—oh, you spirits that are looking for something better than this mad world can ever give you here, I preach to you the blessed Gospel of the blessed God—Jesus Christ the Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified—

dead and buried and raised again the third day to save you—even you, for He came into the world to save sinners!

3. And, now, very briefly, the third point—what is meant by *saving* sinners? “Christ came to save sinners.” Brethren, if you want a picture to show you what is meant by being saved, let me give it to you here. There is a poor wretch who has lived many a year in the grossest sin—so indifferent to sin has he become that the Ethiopian might sooner change his skin than he could learn to do well. Drunkenness and vice and folly have cast their iron net about him and he has become loathsome and unable to escape from his loathsomeness. Do you see him? He is tottering onwards to his ruin. From childhood to youth, from youth to manhood he has sinned right on and now he is going towards his last days. The pit of Hell is flaring across his path, flinging its frightful rays immediately before his face and yet he sees it not. He still goes on in his wickedness, despising God and hating his own salvation. Leave him there. A few years have gone by and now hear another story.

Do you see that spirit yonder—foremost among the ranks most sweetly singing the praises of God? Do you mark it robed in white, an emblem of its purity? Do you see it as it casts its crown before the feet of Jesus and acknowledges Him the Lord of all? Hark! Do you hear it as it sings the sweetest song that ever charmed Paradise itself? Listen to it, its song is this—

**“I, the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me.”**

“Unto Him that loved me and washed me from my sins in His blood, unto Him be glory and honor and majesty and power and dominion, world without end.” And who is that whose song thus emulates the seraph’s strains? The same person who a little while ago was so frightfully depraved, the selfsame man! But he has been *washed*, he has been *sanctified*, he has been *justified*. If you ask me, then, what is meant by salvation, I tell you that it reaches all the way from that poor, desperately fallen piece of humanity, to that high-soaring spirit up yonder praising God. That is what it is to be saved—to have our old thoughts made into new ones, to have our old habits broken off and to have new habits given. To have our old sins pardoned and to have righteousness imputed. To have peace in the conscience, peace to man and peace with God. To have the spotless robe of imputed righteousness cast about our loins and ourselves healed and cleansed.

To be saved is to be rescued from the gulf of perdition. To be raised to the Throne of Heaven. To be delivered from the wrath and curse and the thunders of an angry God and brought to feel and taste the love, the approval and applause of Jehovah, our Father and our Friend! And all this Christ gives to sinners. When I preach this simple Gospel, I have nothing to do with those who will not call themselves sinners. If you must be canonized, if you claim a saintly perfection of your own, I have nothing to do with you. My Gospel is to sinners and sinners alone. And the whole of this

salvation, so broad and brilliant and unspeakably precious and everlastingly secure, is addressed this day to the outcast, to the offscouring—in one word, it is addressed to *sinners*.

Now, I think I have announced the truth of the text. Certainly, no man can misunderstand me unless he does so intentionally—“Christ Jesus came to save sinners.”

II. And now, I have but little to do, but yet I have the hardest work—THE DOUBLE COMMENDATION of the text. First, “it is a faithful saying”—that is a commendation to the *doubter*. Secondly, “it is worthy of all acceptance”—that is a commendation to the *careless*—and to the *anxious*, too.

1. First, “it is a faithful saying.” That is a commendation to the *doubter*. Oh, the devil, as soon as he finds men under the sound of the Word of God, slips along through the crowd and he whispers in one heart, “Don’t believe it!” And in another, “Laugh at it!” And in another, “Away with it!” And when he finds a person for whom the message was intended—one who feels himself a sinner, he is generally doubly in earnest, that he may not believe it at all. I know what Satan said to you, poor Friend, over there. He said, “Don’t believe it—it’s too good to be true.” Let me answer the devil by God’s own words—“This is a faithful saying.” It is good and it is as true as it is good. *It is too good to be true if God had not Himself said it.* But, inasmuch as He said it, it is *not* too good to be true. I will tell you why you think it too good to be true—it is because you measure God’s corn by your own bushel. Please remember that His ways are not as your ways, nor His thoughts as your thoughts. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so are His ways high above your ways and His thoughts above your thoughts.

Why, you think that if any man had offended you, you could not have forgiven him. Yes, but God is not a man—He can forgive where you cannot. And where you would take your brother by the throat, God would forgive him seventy times seven. You do not know Jesus, or else you would believe Him. We think that we are honoring God when we think great thoughts of our sin. Let us recollect, that while we ought to think very greatly of our own sin, we *dishonor* God if we think our sin greater than His Grace. God’s Grace is infinitely greater than the greatest of our crimes. There is but one exception that He has ever made and a penitent cannot be included in that.

I beseech you, therefore, get better thoughts of Him. Think how good He is and how great He is. And when you know this to be a true saying, I hope you will thrust Satan away from you and not think it too good to be true. I know what he will say to you next—“Well, if it is true, it is not true of you—it is true to all the world, but not to you. Christ died to save sinners. It is true you are a sinner, but you are not included in it.” Tell the devil he is a liar to his face. There is no way of answering him except by straight-forward language. We do not believe in the individuality of the existence of the devil, as Martin Luther did. When the devil came to him, he

served him as he did other impostors—he turned him out of doors with a good hard saying. Tell him on the authority of Christ Himself, that he is a liar. Christ says He came to save sinners. The devil says He did not. He says, virtually, He did not, for he declares that He did not come to save you and you feel that you are a sinner. Tell him he is a liar and send him about his business.

At any rate, never put Satan's testimony in comparison with that of Christ. Christ looks today on you from Calvary's Cross with those same dear tearful eyes that once wept over Jerusalem. He looks on you, my Brother, my Sister, and says through these lips of mine, "I came into the world to save sinners." Sinner! Will you not believe on Him and trust your soul in His hands? Will you not say—"Sweet Lord Jesus, You shall be our confidence henceforth! For You all other hopes I resign, You are, You ever shall be mine." Come, poor timid one, I must endeavor to reassure you, by repeating again this text—"Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." It is a true saying, I cannot have you reject it. You say you cannot believe it? Let me ask you, "Do you not believe the Bible?" "Yes," you say, "every word of it." Then, this is one word of it—"Jesus came into the world to save sinners." I charge you by your honesty—as you say, "I believe the Bible," believe this. There it stands. Do you believe Jesus Christ? Come, answer me. Do you think He lies?

Would a God of Truth stoop to deceit? "No," you say, "whatever God says, I believe." It is God that says it to you, then, in His own Book. He died to save sinners. Come, once again—do you not believe facts? Did not Jesus Christ rise from the dead? Does not that prove His Gospel to be authentic? If, then, the Gospel is authentic, the whole of what Christ declares to be the Gospel must be true. I charge you, as you believe His resurrection, believe that He died for sinners and cast yourself upon this Truth. Once again—will you deny the testimony of all the saints in Heaven and of all the saints on earth? Ask everyone of them and they will tell you this is true—He died to save *sinners*. I, as one of the least of His servants, must bear my testimony.

When Jesus came to save me, I tell you He found nothing good in me. I know of a surety that there was nothing in me to recommend me to Christ. And if He loved me, He loved me because He would do so. For there was nothing loveable, nothing that He could desire in me. What I am, I am by His Grace. He made me what I am. But a sinner He found me at first and His own sovereign love was the only reason for His choice. Ask all the people of God and they will all say the same.

But you say you are too great a sinner. Why, you are not greater than some in Heaven already. You say that you are the greatest sinner that ever lived. I say you are mistaken. The greatest sinner died some years ago and went to Heaven. My text says so—"Of whom I am chief." So, you see, the chief one has been saved before you. And if the chief one has been saved, why should you not be? There are the sinners standing in a line and I see one starting out from the ranks and he says, "Make way, make

way. I stand at the head of you, I am the chief of sinners. Give me the lowest place. Let me take the lowest room." "No," cries another, "not you. I am a greater sinner than you." Then the Apostle Paul comes and says—"I challenge you all, Manasseh and Magdalene, I challenge you. I will have the lowest place. I was a blasphemer, a persecutor and injurious, but I have obtained mercy, that in me, first, God might show His long-suffering."

Now, if Christ has saved the greatest sinner that ever lived, oh, Sinner, great as you may be, you cannot be greater than the greatest and He is able to save you. Oh, I beseech you by the myriads of witnesses around the Throne and by the thousands of witnesses on earth, by Jesus Christ, the Witness on Calvary, by the blood of sprinkling that is a witness even now—by God Himself—and by His Word which is faithful, I beseech you, believe this faithful saying, that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners."

2. And, now, to close. The second commendation of the text is to the *careless* and to the *anxious*, too. To the careless one this text is worthy of all acceptance. Oh, Man, you scorn it. I saw you curl your lips in derision. The story was badly told and therefore you did scorn it. You said in your heart, "What is that to me? If this is what the man preaches, I care not to hear it—if this is the Gospel, it is nothing." Ah, Sir, it *is* something, though you know it not. It is worthy of your acceptance—the thing I have preached, however poor the way in which it is preached—is well worthy of your attention. I care not what orator may lecture to you, he can never have a subject greater than mine. Demosthenes himself might stand here, or Cicero—they could never have a weightier subject.

Though a child should tell you of it, the subject might well excuse him, for it is so important. Man, it is not your *house* that is in danger—it is not your body, only—it is your *soul*. I beseech you, by eternity, by its dreadful terrors, by the horrors of Hell, by that fearful word, "Eternity—Eternity," I beseech you as a man, your Brother, one who loves you and who desires to snatch you from the burning—I beseech you do not despise your own mercies. For this is worthy of you, Man, worthy of all your attention and worthy of your heartiest acceptance. Are you wise? This is more worthy than your wisdom. Are you rich? This is more worthy than all your wealth. Are you famous? This is more worthy than all your honor. Are you princely? This is more worthy than your ancestry, or than all your goodly heritage. The thing I preach is the most worthy thing under Heaven because it will last when all things else fade away. It will stand by you when you have to stand alone. In the hour of death it will plead for you when you have to answer the summons of justice at God's bar. And it shall be your eternal consolation through never-ending ages. It is worthy of your acceptance.

And, now, do you feel anxious? Is your heart sad? Do you say, "I desire to be saved. Can I trust this Gospel? Is it strong enough to bear me? I am an elephantine sinner—will not its pillars crumble like leaves beneath my

weight of sin? I am the chief of sinners. Will its portals be wide enough to receive me? My spirit is diseased with sin—can this medicine cure it?” Yes, it is worthy of you—it is equal to your disease, it is equal to your wants, it is all-sufficient for your demands. If I had a half-Gospel to preach, or a defective one, I would not preach it earnestly. But I have one that is worthy of all acceptance. “But Sir, I have been a thief, a whore-monger, a drunkard.” It is worthy of you, for He came to save sinners and you are one. “But, Sir, I have been a blasphemer.” It does not exclude even you. It is worthy of your acceptance. But, mark, it is worthy of all the acceptance you can give it. You may not only accept it in your head, but in your heart. You may press it to your soul and call it all in all. You may feed on it and live on it. And if you live for it and suffer for it and die for it, it is worthy of all.

I must let you go now. But my spirit feels as if it would linger here. Strange it should be that many men should not care for their own souls, when your minister this day cares for you. What matters it to me whether men are lost or saved? Shall I be any the better for your salvation? Assuredly there is little gain there. And yet I feel more for you, many of you, than you feel for yourselves! Oh, strange hardening of the heart, that a man should not care for his own salvation—that he should, without a thought—reject this most precious Truth of God. Stop, Sinner, stop—before you turn from your own mercy. Stop, once more—perhaps this shall be your last warning, or worse, it may be the last warning you shall ever feel. You feel it now. Oh, I beseech you quench not the Spirit. Go not forth from this place to talk with idle gossip on your way home. Go not forth to forget what manner of man you are.

But hasten to your home—seek your chamber—shut the door. Fall on your face by your bedside—confess your sin! Cry unto Jesus, tell Him you are a wretch undone without His Sovereign Grace—tell Him you have heard this morning that He came to save sinners and that the thought of such a love as that has made you lay down the weapons of your rebellion. Tell Him that you are desirous to be His. There—on your face—plead with Him and say unto Him, “Lord save me, or I perish.”

The Lord bless you all for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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THE WHOLE GOSPEL IN A SINGLE VERSE

NO. 2300

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 19, 1893.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 28, 1889.**

***“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.”
1 Timothy 1:15.***

I SPOKE, yesterday, with a brother minister who had been a pastor in America, and I asked him why he was so anxious to go back again where the climate had so greatly tried him. He answered, “I love the people to whom I preach.” “What sort of people are they?” I enquired. “Well,” he replied, “they are a people who come together anxious to get good. They do not try to find fault with me, but they seek to get all the good they can out of the Gospel I preach.” “Well,” I said, “it is worth while crossing the ocean to go to a congregation of that sort of people.” You know, dear Friends, how it is with some people, as it was with one friend to whom I spoke last Tuesday. God had blessed the Word to his soul and he was converted, but he had been hearing me some time before and I said to him, “How was it, do you think, that during those other years that you came here, you did not find the Savior?” “Oh, Sir!” he answered, “I am afraid it was because I came to hear *you*, and when I had been here and heard you, I was quite satisfied. But when God taught me to come here to look for Christ, and to seek eternal life, then I obtained the blessing.” Now, will you who are here, tonight, especially you who are not saved, try to hear me in that fashion, not noticing how I preach, because I do not care much about that, myself—and you need to care about it far less—but only to think what good can be got out of it? Let each hearer ask himself, “Is there anything of saving benefit to my soul in what the preacher will say tonight?”

Now, this text contains the Gospel in brief, and yet I may say that it contains the Gospel in full. If you get condensed notes of a sermon or a speech, you often miss the very soul and marrow of it, but here you get all the condensation possible, as if the great Truths of the Gospel were pressed together by a hydraulic ram, and yet there is not a particle of it left out. It is one of the “little Bibles,” as Luther used to call them—the Gospel in a verse. The essence of the whole Bible is here—“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”

I. Now I am going to be short upon each point and, therefore, I shall at once speak upon this first head. Here is OUR NAME, OR A BROAD WORD

OF DESCRIPTION—“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” One of the most important questions that can be asked by any man is this, For whom is salvation meant? The answer we have is given by the Holy Spirit in the Inspired Word of God—“Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*.”

Jesus Christ came to save *sinners of all sorts*. So long as you can come under the general description, “sinners,” it matters not what shape your sin has taken. All men have, alike, sinned, and yet all have not sinned in the same way. They have all wandered the downward road and yet each one has gone a different way from all the rest. Christ Jesus came into the world to save respectable sinners and disreputable sinners! He came into the world to save proud sinners and despairing sinners! He came into the world to save drunks, thieves, liars, whoremongers, adulterers, murderers and such! Whatever sort of sin there is, this Word of God is wonderfully comprehensive and sweeping—“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

A black lot, a horrible crew, they are, and Hell is their due reward, but these are the people Jesus came to save. If there are any people in the world who are *not* sinners, Jesus did not come to save them because such people do not want a Savior. If there are any of you who venture to say that you have never sinned, well then, you need not listen to me, for I have nothing to say to you, nor has this Book of God, except to tell you that you are under a grievous error and a great delusion! There can be no mercy to a man who has committed no fault. Some time ago there was a man incarcerated for life for an offense he never committed and, when it was found out that he was not guilty, Her Majesty insulted him, I think, by giving him “a free pardon.” Why, he had never committed the crime for which he had suffered, poor Soul, and he had been a year, at least, in confinement as a felon, though he was innocent! I think Her Majesty should have begged *his* pardon and given him large compensation. Pardon and mercy are not for innocent people—they are for the guilty! And the Lord Jesus Christ, therefore, came into the world, not to save the innocent, the righteous and the good—but to save sinners!

Notice, next, that Jesus came to save sinners without any other qualification. There is a habit which some have of qualifying the word, sinner, as we have it in the hymn—

“Come, *humble* sinner, in whose breast,”

and so on. I think the writer of that hymn put it—

**“Come, *trembling* sinner, in whose breast
A thousand thoughts revolve.”**

But when Jesus Christ invites sinners, He does it after this fashion, “Come, sinners.” “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” There is no adjective before the noun! There is no sort of qualification except that they are sinners.

Christ Jesus came to save *hardened* sinners, for He softens the heart. He came to save *aggravated* sinners, for He breaks the iron sinew of the neck and subdues the stubborn will. He came to save sinners who have

no good thing in them. "If you have any merit," said one to another, "if you have any good thing about you, it is like a drop of rose water in a sea of filth." But, truly, there is not even that *one drop* of rose water in *our* nature—nor need there be in order that Christ may save us! He came to save sinners—that is all Paul says. I dare not limit what is left unlimited. I dare not qualify what is left unqualified. "Sinners"—that is all the Apostle says. What? If they have no trace of goodness, no mark of anything excellent? Yes. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

This means, also, that Christ Jesus came to *save sinners in their pollution*. Remember that sin is a very offensive thing. When conscience is really awakened to discover the pollution of sin, it is seen to be exceedingly sinful, a thing that is truly horrible. We are taught, in the Scriptures, even to hate the garments spotted by the flesh—and there is such a thing as a righteous indignation against sin. But the Lord Jesus Christ has come into the world to save the polluted, to save those against whom virtue gives her vote, to save those whom society expels! What a wonderful thing "society" is, itself rotten to the core very often and yet, if there happens to be a poor woman who has gone astray, "society" cries, "Put her out! Drive the wretched creature away from us." I have known one such turned out of hotel after hotel. They could not bear their righteous selves to come anywhere near to one who had in the least degree broken the laws of society!

But it was not so with Christ. Notwithstanding all His sense of the horror of sin—and it is much greater than our sense of it, for His mind is sensitive because of its supreme purity—yet, notwithstanding that, He came into the world to save sinners! And with sinners He mixed, even with publicans and harlots! With sinners He sat at meat. With sinners He lived. With sinners He died! He made His grave with the wicked. He entered Paradise with a thief! And today, those who sing the new song in Heaven confess that they were sinners, for they say, "You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." Yes, notwithstanding the pollution of sin, Christ came to save sinners!

He came, also, to *save sinners under the curse*. Sin is a cursed thing. God has never blessed sin and He never will do so. Though sin may seem to flourish, for a time, the blight of the Almighty is upon it—the breath of the great Judge of All will wither up everything that grows of evil. He cannot bear it—His fire shall burn, even to the lowest Hell, against all iniquity! And yet, though you are under the curse, Jesus Christ came into the world to save the accursed sinner by taking the curse upon Himself, and Himself hanging on the tree of the curse, and bearing the curse for us, that we might be saved! Do you feel the curse of God in your spirit, tonight? Does it seem to dry up all the springs of your life? Then remember, notwithstanding that, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

Once more, Christ came to *save sinners without strength*. Sin brings death. Wherever sin reigns, the power to do good dies out. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may you, also,

do good that are accustomed to do evil.” But when you are without strength, ah, even without strength to *believe* on Him—without strength to feel your sin, without strength to feel even a desire to be better—even then it is true that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” I know He did, for the first good desires are His gift. The first prayers are His own breath. The first sigh under the burden of sin is His own work. Jesus does it all! He came into the world to save us. “When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly,” those in whom there could not be any trace of goodness—“the ungodly”—those who were without God and without hope in the world. It is for such that Jesus Christ came into the world. I do not know how to set this gate open wider. I will take it right off its hinges and I will pull up post and bar and all and defy the very devils of Hell to come and shut this City of Refuge against any soul, here, that is a sinner! If you have sinned, behold, the voice of Everlasting Love speaks aloud to you, tonight, these words, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

II. I must not dwell long on any one word in our text, so I pass to another. In the second place, here is OUR NEED, OR A WIDE WORD OF SALVATION. We poor sinners need saving and, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

Jesus came to save. *He did not come to condemn us.* When God came down upon earth, it might have been thought that He must have come to condemn, for when He came down to look at the tower of Babel, and saw the sin of the world, He scattered the sinners upon the face of all the earth. Now, it might be thought that if He came on earth, He would be shocked and horrified by a personal investigation of sin and then would say, “I will destroy the world.” But Jesus said, “The Son of Man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.” “God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world, through Him, might be saved.” If you get condemnation out of the Gospel, you put the condemnation into it yourselves! It is not the Gospel, but your rejection of it, that will condemn you. Therefore, I pray God that you may never put from you the Word of God and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, as they did to whom Paul and Barnabas preached at Antioch.

But, next, Christ did NOT come into the world *to help us to save ourselves.* He came to save us—not to set us on our legs and say, “Now you do so much, and I will do the rest.” No, He came to save us! From top to bottom salvation is all of Grace, and all the gift of God by Jesus Christ. He did not come into the world, I say, to make us salvable, but to save us—nor to put us in the way of somehow or other meriting salvation! He came, Himself, to be the Savior and to save sinners. Cannot you see that you, who have been trying to spin a robe of righteousness, got all that you did in the day unraveled before night? You who have been knitting part of a garment to cover your nakedness, put your knitting needles down, and take what Christ has finished! Come, you who have been working hard, like prisoners on a treadmill, trying to get to Heaven that way, you will

never do it! See another ladder, like that which Jacob saw of old, that reaches from Heaven to earth, and from earth to Heaven, and may God enable you to climb to Him that way, but not by a way of your own! Jesus did not come to help us to save ourselves.

And He did not come *to save us in part*, that we might do the rest. It takes a long time to make some men know this. I know numbers of Christian people who still have one foot on the rock, and the other foot on the sand. There is a certain, or rather, *uncertain* doctrine that always makes people feel unsafe. It is that you must not say that you are saved, but that if you hold on your way, and keep on the right road, then, *perhaps*, when you come to die, you may begin to *hope* that you are saved. I would not give two pence for such a Gospel as that! We need salvation given to us outright and given to us forever—and this is what Christ does give us when we come and trust in Him. “He that believes on Him is not condemned.” He is saved, then and there, by the act of God. “He who has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” He did not come to save us in part.

And the Lord Jesus Christ has not come *to make us content to be unsaved*. I have sometimes heard people talk to the unconverted like this, “Now, you must wait. You must wait. *You cannot do anything, therefore, sit still and wait until something happens to you.*” That is *not* the Gospel! The Gospel is, “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.*” Read the Bible through and learn what God has revealed there. Lay aside your own system and notion. You will not find that the Lord Jesus Christ said to the man at Bethesda, “Now, lie at the pool till the angel comes and stirs it.” That is old Judaism that does that! But Jesus said, “Rise, take up your bed, and walk.” When Jesus speaks to sinners like that, they will rise and take up their beds and walk!

Somebody says, “But *you*, poor minister that you are, cannot tell men to take up their beds and walk—and make them do it.” Yes, we can, when our Master speaks through us, and when we deliver the Lord’s message in faith, resting on the power of the Holy Spirit! We can still be *used by the Lord* to work miracles. The dry bones are made to hear the voice of the Lord’s servant when the Holy Spirit goes with the voice and they are quickened by Divine power—

**“The Gospel bids the dead revive,
Sinners obey the voice and live!
Dry bones are raised, and clothed afresh,
And hearts of stone are turned to flesh!”**

Again, I say, Jesus did not come to make sinners contented to be lost, or to sit down and wait as if salvation did not concern them. No, He came to *save* sinners.

Well, what does it mean, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners? It means that He came *to save them from the punishment of their sin*. Their sin shall not be laid to their charge so that they shall be condemned for it. That is one thing. He came, also, to save them from the *pollution of their sin*, so that, though their mind has been debased, and their

taste degraded, and their conscience deadened by sin, He came to take that evil away and give them a tender heart, a hatred of sin, a love for holiness and a desire for purity. But Jesus came to do more than that. He came *to take away our tendencies to sin*, tendencies which are born in us and grow with us. He came, by His Spirit, to eradicate them, to pluck them up by the roots, to put within us another principle which shall fight with the old principle of sin and overcome it—till Christ, alone, shall reign, and every thought shall be brought into captivity to Him. He came to save His people from *apostasy*. He came into the world to save sinners by keeping them faithful to the end so that they shall not go back unto perdition—

***“Yes, I to the end shall endure,
As sure as the earnest is given.
More happy, but not more secure,
The glorified spirits in Heaven.”***

A very important part of the work of Grace is this. To start a man right is but little, but to keep that man holding on, even to the end—this is a triumph of Almighty Grace, and this is what Christ has come to do! Jesus came into the world, not to half save you, not to save you in this direction or that, and in this light or that, but to save you from your sin, to save you from an angry temper, to save you from pride, to save you from strong drink, to save you from covetousness, to save you from every evil thing—and to present you faultless before the Presence of His Glory with exceeding joy! This is a grand word, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” Oh, that you might believe it! I pray God that out of this congregation, which is wonderfully large for such a night, and yet small compared with our usual number on a Thursday evening, there may be very many who will say, “Yes, I believe that Jesus came to save sinners and I trust Him to save me.” You will be saved the moment that you do that, for faith is the mark of His salvation, the proof that He has saved you!

III. But now, thirdly, there is a name here. We have had our own name, sinners. Now here is HIS NAME, OR A GLORIOUS WORD OF HONOR—“*Christ Jesus* came into the world to save sinners.” Christ Jesus! Not an angel, not the best of men, but Christ Jesus!

“Christ” means, as you know, *Anointed*, that is, God sent Him, anointed by His own Spirit, prepared, fitted, qualified and endowed for the work of saving. Jesus comes not without an anointing from God! He is not an amateur Savior, come on His own account, without any commission or authority, but God has anointed Him in order that He may save sinners. When He went into the synagogue at Nazareth on the Sabbath, He applied to Himself the words of the Prophet Elijah, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.”

The other part of His name is “Jesus,” that is, *Savior*. He has come, therefore, to be the Anointed Savior, commissioned to be a Savior, and if

He is not a Savior, (I say it with all reverence), He is nothing! He came into the world to save and if He does not save, He has missed His mark! He laid His heavenly Glories down to take this still higher Glory, that He might be the Savior of sinners. The angels sang concerning Him, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." And the angel of the Lord said to Joseph—"You shall call His name, Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." Beloved, notice this—the Savior of sinners is not the Virgin Mary—saints are not saviors, but, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten *Son*, that whoever believes in *Him* should not perish, but have everlasting life." Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, "very God of very God," the Creator of all things, sustaining all things by the word of His power. He came into the world, to Bethlehem's manger and afterwards to Calvary's Cross, with this as His one business—that He might save sinners! Is He not able to save? Is He not just the Savior that we need? God and yet Man in one Person! He is able to sympathize because He is Man, and He is able to save because He is God! Blessed God-Man, Jesus Christ, only You are able to save me!

I cannot dwell longer on that part of my theme, but I wish that you who are seeking salvation would let your thoughts dwell upon it until you have truly trusted Him as your Savior.

IV. The fourth thing in the text is HIS DEED, OR A SURE WORD OF FACT. "Christ Jesus *came* into the world." We have not to look to what He *will* do to save sinners, for He has done it!

He came into the world. *He existed long before* He came out of Heaven into this world. He was in the beginning with God and He came here. You and I began our existence here, but He existed from the beginning! In the Glory of the Father and in the fullness of time He came into the world. He came willingly. It is put so in our text—"Christ Jesus came into the world." There is a kind of voluntariness evident in the words. He was sent, for He is the Christ, the Messiah, but He came of His own free will—

***"Down from the shining seats above,
With joyful haste He fled."***

He came into the world. I say, again, the salvation of sinners is *not* a thing to be accomplished in the future. If God had promised it, we might trust as Abraham did, when He saw Christ's day afar off and was glad, but Jesus *has come*—He has been here—God Almighty has been here in human form, dwelling among men! He came into the world to save sinners.

He came into the world so far that He knew the world's griefs and bore them, the world's penalty, the world's shame and reproach, the world's sickness and the world's death. He came into the world, into the very center and heart of this ungodly world, and there He dwelt, "holy, harmless, and undefiled."

Christ Jesus came into the world and when He came here, it was such a wonderful coming that *He stayed here*. Some 33 years He was here and all that while He was still seeking to save sinners. During the last three years He went about doing good, always hunting up sinners—and at the end of His service for sinners He stretched out His hands and feet, and

yielded up Himself to die for sinners. He breathed out His very soul for sinners. “Who His own Self bore our sins in His own body on the tree.”

I do not feel that I have any need to find any words of mine to try to garnish this Gospel of the Glory of the Blessed God. It is the greatest theme on which a man ever spoke! It needs no oratory to set it forth! The story, itself, is marvelous, “the old, old story of Jesus and His love.” God could not in justice pass over human sin without an atonement, but He made the Atonement, Himself! Jesus, who is One with the Father, came here and offered Himself as a Sacrifice that He might save sinners.

Now, *if He does not save sinners, His coming here is a failure.* Do you believe, can you imagine, that Christ’s coming into the world could be a failure? In my very soul I believe that all He meant to accomplish by His coming here He will accomplish—that no man shall ever be able to point to any failure in this grandest of Divine enterprises! There is no failure in Creation—there will be no failure in Providence! And when the whole story is ended, there will be no failure in this great work of Redemption! “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,” and sinners shall be saved. Will you be among them, my dear Hearer? Why should you *not* be among them?

V. Once more. We have here, in the fifth place, OUR ACCEPTANCE, OR A WORD OF PERSONALITY. The Apostle says, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, *of whom I am chief.*” I am not going to dispute with the Apostle and yet, if he were here, I should be a little dubious as to his right to the title of, “chief of sinners,” and I would ask him whether, if he were chief, I was not the next. I suppose that there are many here who would say, “Paul sinned no more grievously than we did before our conversion.” I remember, in preaching once, I said that if I ever got to Heaven, those lines would be true of me—

***“Then loudest of the crowd I’ll sing,
While Heaven’s resounding mansions ring,
With shouts of Sovereign Grace.”***

When I had done preaching, a lady met me in the aisle and she said, “You made one mistake in your sermon.” “Oh, dear Heart!” I replied, “I daresay I made twenty.” She said, “But the one you made was this. You said that you would sing the loudest when you got to Heaven—but you will not. When I get there, I shall owe more to the Grace of God than you will—you have not been such a sinner as I have been.” Well, I found all the other saints around us were of a mind to contest about which should praise God most because of the great things He had done for them in saving their souls! Ralph Erskine wrote a hymn about the contention among the birds of paradise as to which should praise God best, and he describes the different kinds of people in Heaven all vying with each other in magnifying the name of the Lord who had redeemed them! But that is not my theme just now.

When we come and appropriate this sinner’s Savior, we do it, first, by a *confession*. “Lord, I am a sinner. I know it. I mourn over it. I confess to You that I have broken Your righteous Law.” Then there follows, on that

confession, a sense of humiliation. Did Jesus come into the world to save *me*? Then I am a greater sinner than I thought I was, first, that I should need the Son of God to save me and, next, that I should sin against love so amazing, so surprising, as to rebel against One who would come into the world to save me! The more we appreciate Christ's saving sinners, the more we depreciate ourselves. He who has a great Savior will feel himself to be a great sinner. And he who has the best and clearest view of Christ is the man who will say, "Of whom—namely, of the saved sinners—I am chief."

Now, this appropriation of Christ, which began with confession and went on to deep self-humiliation, flowers into *faith*, because, notice, the Apostle says, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." Though he says that he is chief of them, yet he means, also, "I am *one of those* He came to save." "Of whom I am chief." "Oh, yes, I am one of those he came to save!" Faith enables the soul to say that. My dear Friends, I do trust that, by the Grace of God, many of you will say that, tonight. "Lord Jesus, I trust in You. Of the multitude that You did come to save, who are described as sinners, I am one."

This appropriation of Christ by faith will go on to *open confession of Him*. The Apostle confesses that, while he was the chief of sinners, yet Christ died for him, and you will be led to make that confession. I hope that you will do it as our friends are going to do it tonight—by *obedience* to Christ's Law in Baptism, as He bids you, "He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved."

One thing I notice about my text which greatly delights me. Paul says, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, *of whom I am chief*." No, no, Paul, that expression will not do! Why, my dear Man, you are a scholar, and yet you have made a mistake in the tense of the verb! It is not *sum*, "I am," but *fui*, "I was." "No, no," says Paul, "never bring your Latin in here. My Greek expression is, '*I am chief*.'" "What? After being saved, after being forgiven, still are you chief of sinners?" "Yes," he says, "it is so." And it is possible for a man to be not a whit behind the very chief of the Apostles and yet to feel that, in putting his whole life together, he has to take his place among the sinners, yes, at the head of them, as the chief of sinners!

I think I told you that I once tried the plan, which some of our Brothers and Sisters try, of praying to God as a *saint*. Why, I have seen some of our Brethren, when they have had a Sunday out, with their best go-to-meeting clothes on, talk about their being *perfect*, and they looked exactly like the peacock I saw with his tail spread out, strutting along so grandly! Well, I rather liked the look of that fine show—there was something very beautiful in it—so I tried it, myself, once. I went to God in prayer boasting about my virtues, my attainments, my growth in His Grace and my service for Him. I think that I have as good a right to do that as anybody else has. I have served God with all my might and I have laid everything at His feet. But when I tried to pray that way, I knocked at the gate and nobody came! I knocked again, but nobody came. There is a little wicket, you know, that

they open, just to look out to see who is there. So they asked, “Who is that knocking?” I answered, “Oh, it is a saint! It is one who has grown in Grace until he is perfectly sanctified, one who has preached the Gospel for many years.”

They just shut the gate at once—they did not know anything about me in that capacity! So I stood there and got nothing. At last, broken-hearted and full of grief, I knocked again with all my might, and when they asked, “Who is there?” I said, “Here is a poor sinner who has often come to Christ in that capacity, and has taken Him to be his whole righteousness and salvation, and he has come, again, just as he used to come.” “Ah!” they said, “it is you, is it? We have known you for many years! You are always welcome.” I found that I had access to my God when I said, “I am the chief of sinners. I am *still* a sinner.”

Well, now, putting myself in that position where I always must be and always hope to be, I would say to any sinner here, whoever you may be, come, Friend, come along with me to the Cross! One says, “But I cannot go with *you*. You have been a minister of the Gospel these 30 years and more.” My dear Friend, I am *still* a poor sinner and I have to look to Christ every day as I did at the very first. Come along with me! Come along with me! It is many, many years since, on a snowy morning, I looked to Him and was lightened. I wish that, this snowy night, some soul here would look to Him and live!

I had much more to say, but the time has gone, so I just leave you with my text, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” It is a blessed proverb, an Apostolic proverbial saying—but it is a true saying—“It is a faithful saying.” Everybody who has tried it has found it true! It is worthy of the acceptance of you all, and it is worthy of all the acceptance that any one of you can give to it. You may come and trust your soul on it for time and for eternity! You may come with all your burden of sin upon your shoulders. You may come with all your need of feeling, with all your hardness of heart and just take as your Savior this Jesus Christ who came into the world to save sinners! Only trust Him and when you have trusted Him, you have done much more than you dream. Some people think that there is nothing in faith, but God is pleased with it and, “without faith it is impossible to please God.” If God is pleased with it, there is a great deal more in it than some imagine! That faith contains within itself a future life of holiness! It is the one acorn out of which countless forests will yet grow!

Believe! May the Lord help you to believe in Jesus immediately! Ere you leave this place, trust Him! Trust Him wholly. He came to save sinners. Let Him save you! It is His business—it is not yours. Leave yourself in His hands and He will save you, to the praise of the glory of His Grace.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.
1 TIMOTHY 1:1-17.**

Verse 1. *Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope. Christ is our hope. We*

have not a shadow of a hope apart from Him. I remember, when on the Continent, seeing on a cross the words, “*Spes unica*,” the unique, the only hope of man—and that is true of the Cross of Christ, and of Christ who suffered on it. He is our hope!

2. *Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.* Notice the Apostle’s triple salutation, “Grace, mercy, and peace.” Whenever Paul writes to a Church, he wishes “Grace and peace.” But to a minister he wishes, “*grace, mercy, and peace.*” Ah, we need mercy more than the average of Christians! We have greater responsibilities and, consequently, might more readily fall into greater sin—so to a minister Paul’s salutation is, “Grace, *mercy, and peace.*”

3, 4. *As I besought you to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that you might charge some that they teach no other doctrine, neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do.* You see, the Apostle, in his day, had to contend against those who ran away from the simplicity of the Gospel into all manner of fables and inventions. Such, in our day, are the doctrine of evolution, the doctrine of the universal fatherhood of God, the doctrine of post-mortem salvation, the doctrine of the final restitution of all men, and all sorts of fables and falsehoods which men have invented!

5-7. *Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: from, which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; desiring to be teachers of the Law; understanding neither what they say, nor of which they affirm.* There were some who put the Law of God into its wrong place. They made it a way of salvation—which it never was meant to be, and never can be. It is a way of conviction! It is an instrument of humbling! It shows us the evil of sin, but it never takes sin away.

8. *But we know that the Law is good, if a man uses it lawfully.* In its own place it has its own uses, and these are most important.

9-13. *Knowing this, that the Law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for man-slayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for men-stealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine; according to the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust. And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has enabled me, for that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer.* Paul must have written this verse with many tears. What a wonder of Divine Grace it was that he should be put into the sacred ministry, to bear testimony for Christ, when he had been, before, a blasphemer!

13. *And a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.* He almost thought that if he had done all this *willfully*, he might not have been forgiven, but he felt that, here, God spied

out the only extenuating circumstance, namely, that he was mistaken—"I did it ignorantly, in unbelief."

14, 15. *And the Grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am, chief.* He spoke from his heart, from deep experience. This, indeed, was, to him, the glorious Gospel of the blessed God that had saved him, the very chief of sinners! He could, therefore, with confidence commend it to others as worthy of all acceptance.

16. *Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting.* The case of Paul is not a singular one—it is the pattern one. If there are any here who feel that they have sinned like Saul of Tarsus, they may be forgiven like Paul the Apostle! He is a pattern to all who should thereafter believe in Christ to life everlasting! Just as we often see things cut out in brown paper and sold as patterns, so is the Apostle Paul the pattern convert! What God did for him, He can do for thousands of others.

17. *Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.* Paul could not help this outburst of praise! He must put in a doxology. When he remembered his own conversion and pardon, and his being entrusted with the ministry of the Gospel, he was obliged to put down his pen and lift up his voice in grateful thanksgiving to God. So may it be with us as we remember what great things the Lord has done for us!

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A SERMON ON A GRAND OLD TEXT NO. 3089

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 23, 1908.

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

***“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that
Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”
1 Timothy 1:15.***

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon, upon the same text, are as follows—Sermon #184,
Volume 4—THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL; #1345, Volume 23—FOR WHOM IS
THE GOSPEL MEANT?; #1416, Volume 24—THE FAITHFUL SAYING; #1837,
Volume 31—A GREAT GOSPEL FOR GREAT SINNERS and #2300,
Volume 39—THE WHOLE GOSPEL IN A SINGLE VERSE—
Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

YOU will observe that Paul wrote this verse immediately after he had given a little outline of his own personal history. He had, he said, been “a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious.” And then he added this priceless Gospel verse, as if he inferred it from God’s Grace to him, as well as received it by Inspiration, “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.” It was an experimental text, then, one which the Apostle fetched out of the deeps of his own soul, as divers bring pearls from the ocean bed. He dipped his pen into his own heart when he wrote these words. No preaching or teaching can equal that which is experimental. If we would impress the Gospel upon others, we must have first received it ourselves. Vainly do you attempt to guide a child in the pathway which you have never trodden, or to speak to adults of benefits of Divine Grace which you have never enjoyed. Happy is that preacher who can truly say he speaks what he does know and testifies what he has seen.

The testimony of Paul is peculiarly forcible because he was a very straightforward man. Before his conversion, he was second to none in opposing the Gospel. He was a downright man who never did anything by halves. As the old Saxon proverb puts it, “It was neck or nothing with him.” He threw his whole nature into anything which he espoused and it must have been indeed a mighty inward force which led him to speed forward so eagerly in the directly opposite way to that which he had pursued with enthusiasm throughout the early part of his life! He was an honest man, a man to whom it was impossible either to lie or to be neutral. He was truthful, sincere, outspoken, wearing his heart upon his sleeve and carrying his soul in his open hand. When we hear him say, at the outcome of his own personal experience, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, we may be sure that he believed it with his whole being—and we may receive his testimony as one which he lived to prove and died to seal with his blood! Never had a fact a better witness—

he lost all for its sake and counted that loss his greatest gain! Hear his words, for he speaks to you from the ground which received his blood—his blood speaks better things than that of Abel, and it cries with a voice no less loud and clear!

The text, as we find it, is like a picture surrounded with a goodly border. We sometimes see paintings of the old masters in which the bordering is as full of art as the picture itself. We might safely say as much of our text. We will look at *its framework* first. Here it is—“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance.” When we have carefully considered that, we will study *the great masterpiece itself*, meditating upon the matchless saying, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.” When we have noticed the preface and the saying, you will then allow me to preach *a short sermon upon it*.

I. First, then, THE FRAMEWORK. Paul says, “*it is a saying.*”

When we declare a sentence to be a saying, we mean that it is commonly spoken and usually said, so that everybody knows it—it is town talk—“familiar in our mouths as household words.” Those who like harder words, explain that this is an axiom, a Christian axiom—a self-evident Truth of God, a thing which nobody who is a Christian doubts at all. But I will keep to our own version and add that I greatly wish that our text were more truly a saying among all Christian people at this day. That Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners is a Truth of God which we all believe, but do we all talk about it so frequently as to make it, in very deed, a saying? Do you think that our servants, who have lived for months in our houses, would in their gossips say, “It was one of my master’s sayings, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners”? I will even ask—Do you think that if a person attended our places of worship for years, he would be able to say conscientiously, “Why, it was our minister’s ordinary saying! It was quite a proverb with him—he was always repeating that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners”? Yet a sentence cannot be called “a saying” until it is often said. It does not get into the category of sayings and is not called by that name unless it is a matter of ordinary common talk!

I gather, then, from this, that Christian people ought to talk more about the Gospel than they do, and a great deal more about that primary and elementary Truth of the Gospel, the coming of Jesus Christ into the world to save the guilty. Believers ought so often to speak of it that it should be currently reported, among even ungodly people, as one of our common phrases and stock speeches. I would like them to be able to taunt us with it as a main part of our conversation. It would even be a good sign if they complained that we wearied them with it! Let them say, Why, they are always harping on that string! Even their children lisp it! Their young men boast of it, and their matrons and their sires affirm it and add their solemn seal thereunto, as if it were the sheet-anchor of their lives!” O you who know the wondrous story, talk of the Gospel by the way! Talk of it when you sit in your houses! Speak of it at your work! Tell it to those who pass you in the street or in the fields! Make the world hear it! Make society ring with it! If there is a new saying, though it is but a jest, men report it and every newspaper finds a corner for it. Are we to

be silent about this oldest and yet newest saying? Men rejoice in *bon mots*, and yet this is the best of words! We have the really good news—let us publish it, let us popularize the Gospel and compel men to know what it is! If before some men we are less communicative upon the more mysterious Truths of God because we fear to cast pearls before swine, yet let this simple Truth, since Scripture calls it “a saying,” be spoken again and again and again till it shall be confessed to be a common word among us!

Now Paul did not merely write “it is a saying,” but, “*it is a faithful saying,*” a saying worthy of faith, a saying full of the Truth of God, a saying about which no doubts may be entertained, a sure and certain saying, “that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” Many sayings in the world had been much better left unsaid. There are proverbs which pass current among us as gold, which are spurious metal and no man can tell the mischief which an untruthful proverb may work. But this is a saying fraught with unmingled benefit—it is pure Truth of God, a leaf of the Tree of Life sent for the healing of the nations! Some matters which were important years ago are now worn out. Times have changed and circumstances have altered—and things are not now what they were to our forefathers. But this is a faithful saying because it is as practically true today as when, 1800 years ago the Apostle wrote it to the beloved Timothy. This is still a saying full of blessing to the nations, “that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” Like the sun, it shines with the same golden light as in the ages past and, blessed be God, it will still shine when you and I have gone to our rest! And if this crazy world holds out another thousand years, or even fifty thousand, the Light of the Gospel will not have grown dim! This coin of Heaven will not have lost its image or its superscription when time shall be no more—it is of God’s minting and will outlast the world—“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” Ah, you heard it when you were a boy and you did not think much of it. Your years are now many and your life has almost run its course and you are still unsaved! But thank God that now, in your old age, we have the same Truth of God to tell to you, though you rejected it in your boyhood, and it is quite as certain now as then that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” To the eleventh hour this precious sentence abides sure. May none of you despise it or doubt it, but each one of you prove it to be God’s own word of salvation!

Our Apostle, however, adds yet another word—this saying “*is worthy of all acceptance.*” I think he meant two things. It is worthy of all the acceptance anyone can give it and it is worthy of the acceptance of all men. Some sayings are not worth accepting—the sooner you have done with them and forgotten them, the better for you. But this saying you may receive as the Word of God and, having received it as Truth to other men, it will be a happy circumstance if you receive it as Truth to yourself, for it will be a blessed day to you when you appropriate it as your own! “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” If I, feeling myself a sinner, infer that Jesus came to save *me*, I may without any fear rest assured that I am accepting a Truth of God, for, believing in Jesus, I

may safely rejoice that He came to save *me*. You may receive this Truth not only into your ear—it is worthy of that acceptance, or into the memory—it is worthy of that acceptance, but you may receive it into your inmost heart—it is worthiest of all of that acceptance! And receiving it, you may lay upon it all the stress of your soul's interests for the past, the present and the future, for time and for eternity! You may accept it as being the mainstay, the prop and pillar of your confidence, for it is worthy of all the acceptance that you or any other man can possibly give to it!

It is worthy, we have said, of the acceptance of all mankind. The richest, the greatest, the most learned, the most innocent, the most pure—speaking after the manner of men—these may accept it—it is worthy of their acceptance. In the sight of God they are still guilty and need that Christ should save them. And, on the other hand, the lowest, the most ignorant, the most groveling, depraved, debauched, abandoned, helpless, hopeless, lost castaways may receive it, for it is true to them—emphatically to them—for Jesus Christ came into the world to save just such offenders as they are! If I stood in Cheapside tomorrow and any man out of the crowd should come to me and ask, “Is that sentence, ‘Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,’ worth my believing and accepting?” I would not hesitate, but, without knowing who spoke to me, I would reply, “Yes.” If he stopped his carriage and came to me, or if he took his hand off the costermonger's barrow, or left his shoe-blackening box, or came with his rags about him, or if he had escaped from the prison omnibus—it would not matter who he was—I might safely assure him that this saying is worthy of his acceptance! It is not a stoop for a king or a saint to receive it, and yet it meets the level of the poorest and the worst of characters. It is worthy of everybody's acceptance!

Beloved Friends, no one can ever rightly accuse us of making too much of the Gospel. However earnest we may be, we can never be too earnest—and however diligent to spread it, we can never be too diligent—for it is a Gospel worthy of every man's acceptance and, therefore, worthy of every Christian's publication! Spread it! Let the winds bear it, let every wave proclaim it! Write it everywhere, that every eye may see it! Sound it in all places, that every ear may hear it! Simple are the words and to some men their meaning is despised as almost childish, but it is the great Power of God! “A mere platitude,” they say, yet it is a platitude which has made Heaven ring with sacred mirth, a platitude which will make earth's deserts blossom like a rose, a platitude which has turned many a man's Hell into Heaven and his densest darkness into the brightness of Glory! Ring out that note again, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”! It is worthy of angelic trumpets, it is worthy of the orator's loftiest speech and of the philosopher's most profound thought! It is worthy of every Christian's publication, as surely as it is of the acceptance of every human being. God help us never to undervalue it, but to prize it beyond all price! There is the frame of the picture—the basket of silver which holds the apples of gold!

II. Our meditation now turns to THE SAYING ITSELF—“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” Very briefly and simply I will open

up this passage as if none of us had, up to now, understood it. May the Holy Spirit instruct us!

Here is, first, *a Person coming*—a Divine Person—Christ Jesus the anointed Savior. The Son of God, the Second Person of the ever-blessed Trinity, became the Savior of sinners. “Very God of very God” was He. He created the earth and upon His shoulders the pillars thereof still lean. Yes, He who was personally offended by human sin—He, Himself, deigned to become the Savior of men. Weigh this and marvel and adore!

Next, you have *the deed He did*—He “came into the world.” He was born a Baby in Bethlehem. It was thus He came into the world. “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” Thirty years and more He lived in the world, sharing to the full its poverty and toil. He was a working Man, He wore the common garb of labor. He worked, He hungered, He thirsted, He was sick, He was weary. He, in all these senses, came into the world and became Man among men—bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. As it was a sinful world, He was vexed with the transgressions of those about Him. As it was a suffering world, He bore our sickness. As it was a dying world, He died—and as it was a guilty world, He died the death of the guilty, suffering in their place the wrath of God!

Mark well *the objective for which He came*—He came “to save.” He came into this world because men were lost, that He might find them and save them. They were guilty and He saved them by putting Himself into their place, and bearing the consequences of their guilt. They were foul and He saved them by coming into the world and giving His Holy Spirit, through whose agency they might be made new creatures and so might have pure and holy desires, and escape the corruption which is in the world through lust. He came to sinners to take them just where they are at Hell’s dark door, to cleanse them in His precious blood and fit them to dwell with Himself in eternal Glory, as saved souls forever!

This is all wonderful. Angels marvel at it, so may we! But the most wonderful fact of all is that He came into the world to save *sinners*—not the righteous, but the ungodly! Remember His own words, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” The physician comes to heal the sick—the Savior comes to save the lost! The attempt to save those who are not lost would be a ridiculous superfluity. To die to pardon those who are not guilty would be a gross absurdity. It is a work of supererogation to set free those who are not in bonds. Christ came not to perform an unnecessary deed. If you are not guilty, the Savior will not save you! If you are not a sinner, you have no part in Christ. If you can say, “I have kept the Law from my youth up and am not a transgressor,” then we have no Gospel blessings to set before you. If you were blind, the Lord Jesus would open your eyes, but as you say, “We see,” your sin remains. If you are guilty, the text is full of comfort for you—it drops with honey like a honeycomb—“Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*.”

Lest there should be any mistake, Paul added these words, “of whom I am chief,” or, “of whom I am first.” And Calvin warns us against

supposing that the Apostle labored under a mistake or uttered an exaggeration. Paul was an Inspired man writing Inspired Scripture and he spoke the Truth of God. He was, in some respects, the chief of sinners. He went very, very far into sin. It is true that he did it ignorantly in unbelief, but then, unbelief is, in itself, the greatest of all sins. It is an atrocious thing for a man to be an unbeliever—it is a damning sin, what if I say *the* damning sin? We have heard of a man who had committed a violent assault, who, before the magistrate, pleaded that he was drunk. Now, it is sometimes the case that magistrates admit this as an extenuating circumstance, but the magistrate on that occasion was a sensible man and, therefore, he said, “Very well, then, I give you a month for the assault, and I fine you forty shillings for being drunk. That is another offense and it cannot diminish your guilt.” So is it with unbelief. Though, from one point of view, it might be looked upon as a mitigating circumstance yet, from another, it is really an increase of sin and Paul regarded it as such. And, therefore, he believed himself to be the chief of sinners. Yet he declares that Christ Jesus came to save him! Now, if a great creature can pass through a certain door, a smaller creature can. If a bridge is strong enough to bear an elephant, it will certainly bear a mouse. If the greatest sinner who ever lived has entered into Heaven by the bridge of the atoning Sacrifice of Christ, no man who has ever lived may say, “My sin is beyond forgiveness.” Today no mortal has a just pretence to perish in despair. Some of you continue to despair, but you have no grounds for such a feeling, for this is the good news which is preached to you, that Jesus Christ has come to call the guilty, the lost and the ruined to Himself—and to save the vilest of them with a great salvation!

III. Thus we have looked at the setting of the text and at the text itself. Now for A BRIEF SERMON upon it.

Our short homily shall begin with *the doctrine of the text*—and we will handle it negatively. Notice that our text does not say that Jesus Christ has come to compliment, to encourage or to foster the independent spirit of righteous men. It is not written that He has come to tell us that human nature is not so bad as some think it to be, or that He has come to commend those who are self-reliant and intend to fight their own way to Heaven. There is not a word of the kind and, what is more, there is not a word like it in the entire Book of God! There is no encouragement in Holy Scripture to the man who depends upon himself for salvation, or who imagines or conceives that eternal life can spring out of his own loins, or can be worked out by anything that he can do—and yet our human nature loves to do something to save itself.

I do not know that I ever felt my blood boil so with indignation, nor my heart melt so much with pity, as when I went to see the Santa Scala, at Rome—the holy staircase up which our Lord is said to have been brought by Pilate. On those very stairs, Martin Luther was crawling on his knees, trying to find pardon for his sins, when the text came to him, “The just shall live by faith.” I stood at the foot of those marble stairs. They are very high and they are covered with wood, lest the knees of the faithful should wear them out—and this wood has been worn away three

different times by the kneelers. I saw men, women and children—little children, too, and aged women—going up from step to step upon their knees to find their way to Heaven. On the first step there is a little hole in the wood so that the worshippers may kiss the marble—and they all kissed it and touched it with their foreheads. The middle and top step are favored in the same manner. It was an awful reflection to me to think that those poor creatures really believed that every step their knees knelt on there were so many days less of “purgatory” for them—that every time they went up the stairs there were so many hundreds of days of deliverance from the punishment of their sins! Oh, if they could but have understood this text, “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”—that men are not saved by crawling on their hands and knees, or by penances and self-inflicted misery—what a blessing it would have been to them! And how they would have turned with scorn from these infamous impostures with which priests seek to mislead and destroy the souls of men! No, the Scripture does not say that Jesus came to encourage the righteous and to help those who are their own saviors.

Note, again, that it does not say in the text that Jesus Christ came to help sinners to save themselves. There is a Gospel preached which is very much like that—but it is not the Gospel of Christ. The poor man who was wounded on the road to Jericho was found by the Samaritan half-dead. Now the Samaritan did not say to him, “I want you to come part of the way to me in this business.” But he went where he was lying wounded and half-dead and poured the oil and wine into his wounds, bound up the gashes, took him and set him on his own beast, carried him to the inn and did not even ask him to pay the reckoning, but said to the host, “If there is anything more, I will pay you.” If there were anything more to be done for sinners, Jesus would do it, for He would never let them have a share of the work of salvation! The sinner’s business is to take the finished work of Christ, to give up all his own doings and let Him who came from Heaven to save, do the saving which He came to do! It is not ours to interfere, but to let Jesus do His own work!

Another thought demands expression. The text does not say that Christ came to half-save sinners, intending, when He had completed half the work, to leave them to themselves. There is a motion abroad that men may be saved and yet may fall from Grace—that they may have eternal life, but it is eternal life of an odd kind, for it may die out! They may be pardoned and yet punished! They may be children of God and yet become children of the devil! Members of Christ’s body and yet be cut off and joined to Satan! Blessed be God, it is not so written in this precious Book! Jesus does not begin the saving work and leave it unfinished! When He once puts His hand to it, He will go through with it! His wonderful salvation shall be completed—none shall say that He began, but was not able to finish. Glory be to His name, Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners from top to bottom! He will be the Alpha and the Omega, He will be the beginning and the end to all who trust Him!

One other reflection here. Christ, the real Savior, came into the world to save real sinners. When Luther was under a bitter sense of sin, he said, "Oh, but my guilt is so great I cannot believe that Christ can save me!" But one who was helping him much said to him, "If you were only the semblance of a sinner, then Christ would only be the semblance of a Savior. But if you are a real sinner, then you should rejoice that a real Savior has come to save you." If we meet with a man who says, "Yes, I am a sinner, I know I am a sinner, but I do not know that I ever did much amiss. I have always been honest and correct," such a person has a name to be a sinner and no more. He is a sham sinner and a sham savior would suit him well. But for another who confesses that he has been a grievous transgressor, there is a real Savior. Rejoice, O you guilty ones, that the Christ of God, Himself, really came, with real blood and presented a real Atonement to take away real sins, such as theft, drunkenness, swearing, uncleanness, Sabbath-breaking, lying, murder and things I need not mention lest the cheek of modesty should blush! Even these can be blotted out by the real Savior who has come to save the chief of sinners from suffering what is due to their sins! Oh, that we could ring this great Gospel bell till the hills and valleys were filled with its music! May the Lord open men's ears and hearts that those who hear the glad tidings may accept the Savior who has come to save them!

My little sermon has dealt with the doctrine of the text, now it must treat of *the differences from the text* which are these. First, it is a great and a difficult thing to save a sinner, for the Son of God must come into the world to do it. It could not have been accomplished by any other except Jesus Christ—He Himself must leave the Throne of Heaven for the manger of earth and lay aside His Glories to suffer, bleed and die. If soul-saving is so great and difficult a work, let the Lord Jesus have all the Glory of it now that it is accomplished! Let us never put the crown on the wrong head, or neglect to honor the Lord who bought us so dearly. Unto the Lamb of God be honor and Glory, forever and ever! Amen.

And next, it must be a good thing to save a sinner, since Jesus would not have come from Heaven to earth on an ill errand. It must be a great blessing to a sinner to be saved. Dear Brothers and Sisters, this ought to lead all of us to consecrate ourselves to be willing instruments in the hand of Christ in endeavoring to rescue the fallen. That work which filled the Savior's heart and hands is noble work for us. It were worth living for and worth dying for to be the instruments in the Spirit's hands of bringing souls into a state of Grace! Think much of the blessed service which Jesus allots you, though it is but to teach an infant class in the Sunday school, or a few poor men and women whom you visit from house to house, or a group of sorry idlers at a local lodging house—mind not the degradation of the people, for to save them from sin is a work which God, Himself, did not disdain to undertake.

Another inference I draw is that if Jesus came from Heaven to earth to save sinners, depend upon it, He can do it. If He has come into the world and bled and died to be a Savior, He can do it. The price He paid is enough to redeem us—the blood He shed suffices to cleanse us. If there is any man here who feels himself very foul and filthy, let him look up to

Christ at the right hand of the Father and dare to say in his soul, “He can save even me. He is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins and He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. He must be able to save me.” O Soul, if you can say that, and venture your soul on it, there is no risk in it. Your faith shall save you and you may go in peace, for he who can rely upon Christ shall not find the Savior fail the faith which He, Himself, has worked in the soul!

These are the inferences, then, which I gather from the text. And I shall close by *an enquiry*, which my text very naturally raises in my mind, and suggests to you. If Jesus came to save sinners, has He saved *me*? Has He saved *you*?

Has He saved *me*? I dare not speak with any hesitation here—I *know* He has! Many years ago, I understood by faith the plan of salvation. Hearing it simply preached, I looked to Jesus and lived, and I am looking to Him now. I *know* His Word is true and I *am* saved! My evidence that I am saved does not lie in the fact that I preach, or that I do this or that. All my hope lies in this—that Jesus Christ came to save sinners. I am a sinner, I trust Him, He came to save me, I am saved. I live habitually in the enjoyment of this blessed fact and it is long since I have doubted the truth of it, for I have His own Word to sustain my faith.

Now, Beloved, can *you* say, if not positively, yet with some measure of confidence, “Yes”—

**“All my trust on Him is stayed,
All my help from Him I bring”?**

Ah, then, you are favored, you are very favored. Be happy, for God has highly blessed you. You ought to be as merry as the days are long in June! A man who can say, “Christ has saved me,” has bells enough inside his heart to ring marriage peals forever! Oh, be glad, be very glad, for you have the best inheritance in the world and if temporal matters are not quite as you would wish them to be, do not become discontented, but solace yourself with the fact that the Lord has saved you with a great salvation!

But are you compelled to answer, “No, I do not think that Christ has saved me”? Then I will ask you another question—May it not be, before this day is finished, that you shall be able to say, “He has saved me”? Look at the matter. It is written that He came to save sinners. Is that your name or not? Spell it over. Are you a sinner? I have distinguished between a sham sinner and a real sinner. Do you confess that you are guilty? Then Jesus came to save such as you are. There is a passage of Scripture which says, “He that believes on Him is not condemned.” You know what to believe is—it is to trust, to rely upon. Now Soul, if you rely upon Christ Jesus, sinner as you are, you are a saved sinner. If you do lean on Him, you are this moment saved, at this instant forgiven!

“Oh, but I, I__” ah, you want to crawl up that Roman staircase, do you? That is what you want, you are anxious to go up and down those steps. “No,” you say, “I am not quite as foolish as that.” But, indeed, if you are trying to be saved by your own works, you are quite as foolish! You make a Pilate’s staircase for yourself and toil up and down its steps. “Oh but, Sir,” you say, “I must *be* something, I must *feel* something.” Yes,

yes, it is that staircase again, always that staircase! Now the Gospel is not that staircase, nor yet your feelings, nor yet your works—its voice is, “He that believes on Him is not condemned.” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved!” You smile at the folly of Romanists and yet Popery, in some form or other, is the natural religion of every unconverted man! We all want to do the crawling and penance in some shape or another. We are so proud that we will not accept Heaven for nothing. We want to pay, or do something or other, forgetting that, “if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.” The one only plan of salvation is “Believe and live”—trust, rest, depend upon, rely upon Jesus!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 CHRONICLES 33:1-19.**

Verses 1, 2. *Manasseh* [Manasseh is the subject of the following sermons by Mr. Spurgeon—#105, Volume 2—MANASSEH; #2378, Volume 40—PARDON FOR THE GREATEST GUILT and #2385, Volume 40—ANOTHER LESSON FROM MANASSEH’S LIFE—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] *was twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem: but did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord.* Yet who could have had a better father than Manasseh had? He was given to Hezekiah during those 15 years which God graciously added to that good king’s life. Manasseh was, therefore, doubtless carefully trained and looked upon as being one who would maintain God’s worship and the honor of his father’s name. But Grace does not run in the blood—and the best of parents may have the worst of children. Thus Manasseh, though he was the son of Hezekiah, “did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord.”

2. *Like unto the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.* It often happens that when the sons of good men become bad, they are among the worst of men. They who pervert a good example generally run headlong to destruction.

3. *For he built again the high places which Hezekiah, his father, had broken down, and he reared up altars for Baalim, and made groves, and worshipped all the hosts of heaven, and served them.* One form of idolatry was not enough for him—he must have all forms of it, even rearing altars to Baal and making the stars also to be his gods!

4. *Also he built altars in the house of the LORD, whereof the LORD had said, In Jerusalem shall My name be forever.* Manasseh was worse than an ordinary idolater, for he polluted the very place which was dedicated to the service of the only living and true God!

5, 6. *And he built altars for all the hosts of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD. And he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom.* Perhaps he gave some of them actually to be burned in honor of his false gods. But if not, some of his children were made to pass through the fire and were thus dedicated to the idol deities.

6. *Also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards: he worked much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger.* You cannot

imagine, I think, a worse character than this Manasseh was! He seems to have raked the foulest kennels of superstition to find all manner of abominations. Like false-hearted Saul, he had dealings with a familiar spirit. He had entered into a covenant with Satan himself, and made a league with Hell, and yet, marvel of Grace, this very Manasseh was saved and is now singing the new song before the Throne of God in Glory!

7-9. *And he set a carved image, the idol which he had made, in the house of God, of which God had said to David and to Solomon, his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen before all the tribes of Israel, will I put My name forever: neither will I anymore remove the foot of Israel from out of the land which I have appointed for your fathers; so that they will take heed to do all that I have commanded them, according to the whole Law and the statutes and the ordinances by the hand of Moses. So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen, whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel.* You see, dear Friends, that he was not only a monster in iniquity, himself, but he led a whole nation astray! Some people who, under the gracious rule of his father, Hezekiah, had kept the Passover in so joyous a manner, now, under this false son of so good a father, turned aside.

10. *And the LORD spoke to Manasseh, and to his people: but they would not hearken.* This was all that was necessary to fill up the measure of his guilt. He and his people were warned of God, but they would not listen.

11. *Therefore*—Since words were not sufficient, and God intended to save him, he came to blows! “Therefore”—

11. *The LORD brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon.* They very likely chastened him with thorns, for the kings of Babylon were very cruel. And it may be that when his back was lacerated by thorny scourges, he was put in prison with heavy fetters upon him.

12, 13. *And when he was in affliction, he besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto Him: and He was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD, He was God.* There surely can be no person in this assembly who can say that he has sinned worse than Manasseh did. He seems to have gone as far as any human being could go and yet, you see, when he humbled himself before the Lord and lifted up his heart in supplication, God forgave his sin, and restored him to his former position in Jerusalem.

14. *Now after this he built a wall outside the city of David, on the west side of Gihon in the valley, even to the entering in at the fish gate, and compassed about Ophel, and raised it up a very great height, and put captains of war in all the fenced cities of Judah.* This is not of very much importance, but what else did he do?

16. *And he took away the strange gods.* When Divine Grace comes into any man's heart, there is sure to be a change in his actions. Manasseh "took away the strange gods."

16. *And the idol out of the house of the LORD, and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the house of the LORD, and in Jerusalem, and cast them out of the city.* Sins which were before so pleasing to him, are now abominations in his sight—and he flings them over the city wall like unclean things! In the very valley of the Son of Hinnom where he had dedicated his sons to idols, he now consumes his idol gods as foul and offensive things, to be cast away with all the refuse of the city!

16. *And he repaired the altar of the LORD, and sacrificed thereon peace offerings and thank offerings, and commanded Judah to serve the LORD God of Israel.* It was not possible for him to undo all the evil which he had worked, as he soon found out.

17. *Nevertheless the people did sacrifice still in the high places, yet unto the lord their God only.* The work of reformation is slow—you can lead men to sin as rapidly as you like, that is downhill work—but to get them to toil with you uphill toward the right is not so easy.

18, 19. *Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and his prayer unto his God and the words of the Seers that spoke to him in the name of the LORD God of Israel, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel. His prayer also, and how God was entreated of him, and all his sins, and his trespass, and the places wherein he built high places, and set up groves and engraved images before he was humbled; behold, they are written among the sayings of the Seers.* So we must remember that all the deeds that we have done, both good and evil, are written in God's Book of Remembrance.

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

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THE CHIEF OF SINNERS

NO. 530

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

“Sinners; of whom I am chief.”
1 Timothy 1:15.

WHO among all the Scriptural writers can compare with Paul in the fullness of his testimony to the Grace of God? Upon the Doctrines of Grace, upon the experience of Divine Grace, upon everything that has to do with the exceeding abundant Grace of God through our Lord Jesus Christ, Paul is the mighty master and the great teacher. If it were right to look at him from an exclusively human point of view and speak of his genius rather than his inspiration, I might say of him that so mighty, so clear, so eloquent a teacher of the Truth of God has never existed since the days of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Though Augustine was a particularly bright star and Calvin in after generations rivaled, if he did not even excel Augustine, Paul far excels both in the brilliance with which he exhibits every quality of Grace and Grace in everything that has a good quality. Or, to use another figure, Paul towers aloft above them all in the great mountain range, lofty though full many of their summits are. One reason for his clearness about Divine Grace was that he was himself a very pattern and model of its power. In him God had expressly, as much as in any other man, and perhaps more, shown forth the super-abundant power of His love in passing by transgression, iniquity and sin—and in making the very man who had been a ringleader of mischief, to become the leader of the hosts of the Lord.

Paul calls himself in our text the chief of sinners. It is possible that he literally exceeded every other sinner, dared more and sunk deeper in crime than any of his fellows among the sons of men. If so, let no man that lives despair of mercy. If the gate of Heaven is wide enough for the chief of sinners to go through, then there must in that respect be room enough for those who must be less than the chief, who, though very great, yet cannot be quite so great as he. I say, though I hardly think so, that it is just possible that, taking certain circumstances into consideration, Paul really *was* in such sense the very chief of sinners. And yet I hardly think so, because he himself, in another place, calls himself less than the least of all saints, which was the modest apprehension of one who in another place affirmed that he was not a whit behind the very chief of the Apostles.

Might it not, then, rather have been that his deep view of his own sinfulness and his clear sense of his guilt made him consider himself to be the chief of sinners, though, probably, there have been tens of thousands even greater than he? Tonight my business is *to find out the chiefs of sin-*

ners and endeavor to describe them. And then, to enquire how it is that so often the very chiefs of sinners are saved.

I. First, dear Friends, as Saul hunted out Believers, I have, tonight, TO TRY AND HUNT OUT THE CHIEFS OF SINNERS. Now who are they? They come under various characters and may be classified in different lists. We will begin with *those who directly oppose themselves to God and to His Christ*. These are chiefs among sinners. Paul did join their ranks. He set himself determinately against the name of Christ and thought with himself that he ought to do very much against that name.

Now those who directly attack the Person of God come, first, under the head of *blasphemers*. Paul says he was such. He had, no doubt, used expressions quite as strong as those sometimes used by unbelieving Jews when they are much irritated by Christians. He had said some foul things about the *Impostor crucified* upon Mount Calvary—things, perhaps, more vile than he ever cared to remember—much less to repeat. He had been exceedingly mad, and when men are mad they say exceedingly mad things. He had been a blasphemer, and a blasphemer challenges the vengeance of the Almighty with no common effrontery.

Have I one here whose mouth is foul with oaths? Has there strayed into this House of Prayer tonight one who has cursed God and dared in his angry moments to lift his puny hand of rebellion and curse the Most High God? Have I the misfortune—no, I will not call it so—have I the hopeful *privilege* of talking to one who has spoken against Jesus of Nazareth and who is determined to quench His religion, or to oppose it to the utmost of his power? Is it so?

Then indeed, Friend, you are one of the chief of sinners, and I am glad that you are here, that I may tell you that there is mercy even for such as you are. For “all manner of sin *and blasphemy* shall be forgiven unto men.” No matter how often or how foully you have cursed the Most High and damned yourself, He will not damn you if you will turn from the error of your ways and seek mercy through the blood of Him whom you have despised.

Others come under the same class. For instance, we must here put the *infidel*, for although his words may not take the form of blasphemy, yet the very thought that there is no God is blasphemy. And he that dares to vent that thought is not only a fool, but one of the chief of sinners. And so you have tried to stultify your conscience and to silence its monitions by pretending to believe that there is no God! You have tried to rake up the stale arguments of Tom Paine and of Voltaire and you have chuckled when one who called himself a bishop of God’s heritage dared to vent some strong things against the Book of His Divine inspiration.

You know in your heart that there is a God! Your conscience tells you that He is a just God. You expect to be punished for your sins. That start the other night when you were alone, that cold shiver when someone spoke of death—all these prove that your infidelity is not so stout and brave a thing as you have dreamed it was. A poor, craven, cowardly thing it is, that turns pale at a sickbed and flies, with coward paleness on its cheek, when once it thinks of judgment to come.

Oh, if you are here, you Atheist, you Deist, you disbeliever in Christ Jesus, you are one of the chief of sinners and I am glad you are here!—That I may tell you that a God of Love waits to embrace you and that He still declares this to be true—that He is able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by Him! Fling down your weapons, Man! You cannot fight the Most High! End this unequal quarrel. Have neither truce nor parley, but consider how you may be at peace with Him. The hand of His love is stretched out to accept the hand of your submission. Oh, be you reconciled to God through the death of His Son!

And here I ought to include *those who hold views derogatory of the Deity and the Person of Christ*. Faithfulness to you, my Hearers, compels me to put down the *Socinian*. I will not call him Unitarian, for we all hold the unity of the Godhead. Trinitarians, but Unitarians are we still. Far otherwise the Socinian and the Arian—I put them down here—the men who say that Christ is not God, that the Redeemer of the world was but the son of Mary, that He who walked the waters of the deep, chained the winds, cast out evil spirits and made even Hades startle with His voice when the soul of Lazarus came back—that He was but a Prophet, a creature, a mere man!

Surely, Sir, you are one of the chief of sinners to have talked thus of Him who is “very God of very God,” the express image of His Father’s Person! But even to you is Jesus gracious, and He bids you still believe in Him. You shall bow the knee to Him one day and worship Him, for, “at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Bow your knee, NOW, and kiss the Son lest He be angry and you perish from the way when His wrath is kindled but a little. He bids you come to Him, then will He blot out your sins like a cloud and like a thick cloud your iniquities. The chiefs of sinners, we are sure, are found among those who directly attack the Person of Jehovah’s Christ, yet even to these is the Gospel of salvation sent.

Another group of princes and peers in the realm of evil may be described as *those who attack Christ’s people and who seek to pervert them from the right way*. This sin pressed heavily upon the conscience of Paul. He had not only put them in prison, which was bad enough, but he had taken the saints into the synagogue and probably they had been beaten before the assembly and compelled to blaspheme. You, perhaps, know what that means—compel them to blaspheme. The Roman way of doing it was to say, “Curse Christ.” Often did the Roman Emperor command the martyrs to curse Christ.

And you remember Polycarp’s answer?—“How can I curse Him? Sixty years have I known Him. He never did me a displeasure and I cannot and I will not curse Him.” Then the whip was applied, or the hand was held over burning coals, or the flesh was pinched with hot irons. And then the question was put again—“Will you curse Christ now?” Paul says that he, though probably using milder means, compelled the professors of Christ’s faith to blaspheme. And there may be some such here—the husband who persecutes his wife for Christ’s sake. The father who charges his child, upon his obedience, never to go to the sanctuary of the Lord again.

The master who plagues his servant, mocks and jeers and can never be content except when he is saying hard things against him. Have I not many here who still practice the device of cruel mocking? You abhor Christ and His people. You fight against God in His little ones. Beware! Beware! For this is a high sin! Nothing puts a man on his mettle like meddling with his children, "Touch me, if you will," the father says, "if you are a man, smite me if you dare." But touch his children, and the blood is in his cheeks and the mettle is up and there is no knowing what a man will do when he sees the offspring of his own heart ill-treated.

So God will avenge His own elect that cry day and night unto Him, though He bears long with them. To you who thus rank with the chiefs of sinners, I say that Paul the persecutor "obtained mercy," and so may you! "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom" *persecutors* rank among the chief.

There is another group whom you will all allow to be of the chiefs of sinners—*those who have sinned foully in the world's esteem*—violating the instincts of nature and outraging the common sense of morality and decency. It scarcely needs that I should mention the harlot that infests the streets and pollutes society. Or that worse wretch, the whoremonger, who first leads her astray. I speak plain words, such as I find in Scripture. Such God shall judge when He comes at the last day, for this temptation is a deep ditch and the abhorred of the Lord shall fall into it. This crying sin of our land needs to be sternly rebuked. Other sins are without the body, but this pollutes both body and soul and often sends down to generations yet unborn a horrid curse—at the very thought of which the soul is sick!

Of all sins, young man, young woman, take care that you stand aloof from this! Pass not by the house of the strange woman if you love your life, for her gates lead down to death, even to the chambers of the damned! Yet, glory be to Divine Grace! There is mercy, mercy for such—and multitudes of these chiefs of sinners have become as the very brightest stars in Heaven—snatched by the strong arm of Jesus from the miry clay and out of that horrible pit. They are now clothed and in their right mind, they have gone to sit at the feet of Jesus, to sing of redeeming love.

There was that Mary, that Mary whom Jesus had forgiven. Well might she love much! And many a loving spirit do I know, and there are some very dear to God's Church here, who love their Lord, and often shame some of us who stand more prominent than they who once drank deep of that bitter cup and once went to the very depths of that sin. Publish it in your streets! Tell it wherever you meet with the most loathsome and most defiled! Jesus is able to save to the uttermost! He was the friend of publicans and sinners. "This man receives sinners," is Jesus Christ's motto. Other men reject the sinner. They turn aside from her—woe unto her if she come between the wind and their nobility. But "*this Man* receives sinners"—receives them to His heart and to His bosom—to His Kingdom and to His Throne. You chiefs of sinners, rejoice that if you believe in Jesus there is mercy for you!

And surely I may find another class of the chiefs of sinners among *those who have become not only adepts themselves, but the tutors to others in the school of evil*. Satan has a university and there are many who have fairly won their diplomas as first-class professors there. They have learned to sin with a high hand and with an outstretched arm—until they not only sin themselves—but delight in the sins of others. Have we not seen the old drunkard and how he gloats when he sees another man won to the army of the bestial! Have you not seen the eyes of some base old demon in a country village twinkle when he sees that fair-haired boy for the first time pander to the infamous customs in which he has long reveled?

Have we not known some of those foul-mouthed masters of all baseness whose very talk is enough to make a whole parish sick with the pestilence of vice—men that you had better go over hedge and ditch seventy miles than meet! There are such. You have seen them, I dare say. And, mark you, *when that being is a woman*, if anything, it is then worse! The softer sex, usually by far more apt to teach, instills the secret vice of evil and wraps it up in insidious enchantments, by reason of which many a strong man has fallen when Delilah has been his charmed tutor in sin! I may not, oh, I hope I may not have one such being within earshot now.

Yet, it is possible, amidst the thousands that this house now contains, but what there must be some of you who roll sin under your tongue as a sweet morsel and talk of it with a gusto till you tickle the fancies of others—and lead them into defilements which otherwise they never might have touched. You artfully conceal the book while putting the bait in the young man's way and thrusting the knowledge of new vices upon those who should have shunned them! Oh, you are the chief of sinners with a vengeance, and you shall be hung up like Haman upon the lofty gallows forever if you repent not!

Yet, O Sovereign Grace! How can I tell Your heights? O sea of Love, how can I ever fathom Your depths! There is even mercy proclaimed for such. Turn, turn, why will you die, O house of Israel? Why will you perish?—

***“While the lamp holds out to burn
The vilest sinner may return.”***

I find no exception in the offer of mercy. All are included in the invitation of welcome, “Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely.” “Though your sins are as scarlet they shall be as wool, though they are red like crimson they shall be whiter than snow.” Here is a full, a free, a perfect and a complete pardon for all your past offenses.

Though I have not yet finished the list, I would rather change the note for a minute. I have another class of the chiefs of sinners to find out. I, myself, belong to them, and I therefore speak with feeling. In this section we include *those who have had much light and yet have sinned against it. They who have been taught better, who have had a knowledge of the way of the Truth of God and yet have turned aside to crooked paths*. To have been nursed upon the lap of piety and dandled upon the knee of Christian affection is no small privilege. To be lighted to one's cradle by the lamps of the sanctuary, and to be hushed to sleep with a lullaby in which the name of Jesus comes as a sweet refrain—this involves an awful responsibility.

No man can go to Hell over a mother's tears without accumulated vengeance. No son can rebel against a father's affectionate and tearful admonitions without perishing ten times more frightfully than as if he had never been thus privileged. Ah, my Hearers, alas, alas, for the hardness of your hearts—there are many such here now. I would charitably suppose that very few of you belong to the other classes I have been speaking of, but the great mass of you who are unconverted belong to this class. Do you remember young Man, how your mother put her arms around your neck and wooed you to turn to Christ?

Do you remember that little Bible when you first went to school and that verse she inscribed as a motto—she watered it with her tears as she wrote it. Do you recollect those letters she addressed to you? She is now in Heaven, is she? Then let them be the more sacred to your recollection. And do you remember that Sunday school teacher? Was he not a father to you? Was not that excellent woman who used to entreat you to turn from the error of your ways a very mother to you in Israel? Do you not remember, young Woman, some of you, the earnest exhortations that my beloved Sister, Mrs. Bartlett, has addressed to you?

If ever there was a woman that could, under God, move the heart and soul, she is that woman. And yet, there are some of you that listen to her voice and yet you are unconverted! You have the light shining upon your eyes and yet they are sightless still! You live in the land of mercy, where its bell summons you to come to its assembly of Divine Grace, but you will still not come! You have the light, but you shut your eyes against it! Remember, young Man, young Woman, when you sin you sin with seven-fold atrocity, because you know better! No—seventy sins are rolled into one in your sin of daring deliberate willfulness.

Within that egg of sin there sleeps the seed of your greater damnation because you know the right and yet you choose the evil. Have I not now the privilege of speaking to some whose old familiar associations are awakened up by these feeble glances at your life story? Do you not feel just now as if you were kneeling down again in that little room and heard the native accents of your mother's prayer, while your lips hardly refrain from repeating afresh the words of your own prayer which she taught your lips to frame before she put you to your rest? Do you not remember it? And do you not remember sometimes when your conscience was awakened and your heart was almost broken, and your soul said, "I could almost be a Christian," but you excused yourself with a frivolous delay—"Go your way for this time. When I have a more convenient season I will send for you"?

But, alas, that *convenient season* has never yet come. And your conscience grows seared. Drugged with the opiates of sin, you grow less and less tender of the affectionate appeal. Woe will be the day of your visitation, for it shall be cloudy indeed, unless you turn at the voice of reproof. But even to you, O chief of sinners, is the word of this salvation sent.

There are those, too, who sit under an earnest ministry and yet go on in sin—they surely belong to the class of chief sinners. O, my Hearers, how I would to God that I could be as earnest with you as I want to be! The Lord

knows there are times when I am not in the pulpit, when I feel that I could weep you to a Savior. But sometimes when standing here, the influence of this mighty throng seems rather to distract me than to bring my whole soul into play. And yet, the Lord knows how earnestly I long for you in the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ. I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God as far as I have known it. I know I have failed in knowledge, but never in honesty.

Yet I know there are some of you who come here and yet you live in sin. The world says, "So-and-So goes to Spurgeon's Tabernacle," and they expect you to be better for going there. And yet they say, "Ah, how they drink!" or, "Hear how they will swear!" Where are you? You used to have your shop open on the Sunday morning, but it is shut now. I am glad you have got as far as that. Still, let me tell you, you only compound your sin and make a covenant with Hell, if you outwardly pay respect to the Sabbath and secretly indulge in other profanities. Drunkenness may destroy you without Sabbath-breaking. It is not giving up *one* sin, it is giving up the *whole*.

It is not the barter of one sin for another to quiet your conscience, which will satisfy justice or rescue you from destruction. Man, there must be a divorce between you and your sins! Not a mere separation for a season, but a clear divorce. Cut off the right arm! Pluck out the right eye and cast them from you, or else you cannot enter into eternal life. Are there not some of you who have for years listened to my ministry and yet you are none the better? And some of you are rather the worse, I fear. You are getting Gospel-hardened by it all.

Well, by God's Grace, there is mercy for you, too! You are the chief of sinners, but the red flag is not run up yet—the white flag still floats mast-high—the flag of invitation—the flag of love—the flag of mercy. Come to it! Come to Jesus now. You may never have another invitation. Soon may this tongue be cold in death, or your ears may be deaf forever, like clay-cold marble. Turn you, at this rebuke, for if after being often reproved, you harden your necks, you shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy. To you, even to the chief of sinners, is the word of this salvation sent!

Drawing the bow at a venture, there is another class I would single out—*those who are gifted from their childhood with a tender conscience*. There are men who seem to be born without a conscience. So hard and dull of impression are they that if they have any faculty of distinguishing between good and evil, it is as though they had eyes and saw not, and ears but they hear not. And does it ever speak, the voice is so weak, you can never hear it. But there are those, on the other hand, who have naturally a quick understanding, a delicate sensitiveness, a ready perception of right and wrong, a strong and vigorous conscience. They never do sin without being aware of what they are doing and they are troubled and pestered, as they say, about it.

They cannot sleep at night after they have been committing any serious breach of propriety. Even when they are walking the streets, or when they are busy, they are quickly startled at the recoil of their own transgres-

sions. Oftentimes there is a certain uneasiness and fretfulness which comes over them because they are conscious that they are not pursuing the right course. Now, if you are gifted with this tender conscience and yet you constantly violate it and directly act in the face of your own convictions, you are the chief of sinners. But still, still Paul, the chief of sinners, found mercy—and so may you!

And again—if you have had warning in sickness and especially if on your sick bed you have vowed unto the Lord that you would turn to Him, then you are covenant-breakers, *you that violate vows made to the Most High*—you must also be put among the first and foremost of transgressors. When the cholera was here some nine years ago, you vowed that if God would spare you, things should be different. He did spare you, but things are no better now than they were before. When the fever prostrated you, what promises you made and where are they now? You have lied unto the Eternal God! Is it little for you that you should have promised and not have paid—have vowed unto Him and not performed? Now, Sinner, you are a liar, as well as anything besides. You are a rogue, a dishonest one against God, with Whom the compact was made. But the invitation is still freely tendered unto you—come unto the Lord Jesus Christ and believe in Him—and you shall be made whole.

The chiefs of sinners comprises so numerous a body. I believe everyone of us must be included in the list in some shape or other. I know this—ever you and I are saved—if God shall give us very great mercy, we shall feel that we were the greatest sinners. When Paul saw how kindly his Master treated him, it seemed to break his heart—“What? Did I ever curse that Christ who has blessed me? He that is so rich in loving kindness, did I ever spurn Him?” Verily, now, I think I have had the blackest sight of sin when I have had the brightest sight of mercy. When my dear Lord and Master has privileged me, by allowing me to come near Him in prayer, and I have felt His love shed abroad in my heart—then it is that I have felt as if I could bring imprecations upon myself for ever having been a traitor to Him.

What? Could I spit in Your face, my Redeemer and my Lord? Could I ever crown Your head with thorns, which now it shall be my life’s task to crown with jewels? What? Did You love me so? Did You forgive me so and could I ever speak against You? It is great mercy that sets forth our great sin, for we only come to reckon ourselves the chief of sinners when we see the great love of God. So then, without amplifying any longer, I will put the invitation thus—whoever among you have sinned against the Most High, you are all on a level, and the invitation of mercy is put to you, each and all, and this is the Gospel—“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, he that believes not shall be damned.” May you be led to believe and to profess your faith according to God’s way.

II. Well, now, but a few minutes remain to me and I will endeavor to be brief while I try to answer the question, WHY ARE THESE WHO ARE PROVERBIALY THE CHIEF OF SINNERS ARE VERY FREQUENTLY SAVED?

One reason is *to illustrate Divine Sovereignty*. There is no jewel of His crown of which God is more jealous than His Sovereignty. "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." Now, when He saves the harlot, when He calls the persecutor by Sovereign Grace, then all men see that this is the finger of God and that He dispenses His love and kindness according to the purposes of His own absolute and uncontrollable will. He chooses the chief of sinners that He may show to all men that He will take the base things of the world and the things which are not, and things which are despised, to bring to nothing the things that are—that no flesh may glory in His Presence.

Another reason is *that He may show His great power*. Oh, how Hell is made angry when some great champion falls! When their Goliaths are brought down, how the Philistines take to their heels! How Heaven rings with songs when some chief of sinners becomes a trophy of the Divine power! And how men talk, with glib tongues, of the great and mighty deeds of God, when the drunkard and the swearer and the prostitute are washed and made saints! What a noise it made at Elstow, when they said at the public-house on the green—"You know John Bunyan?" "Oh, yes, we know him! You mean the fellow that was always first at a game of tip-cat—he that could always drink the longest! Oh, yes, we know *him*."

"Well, do you know, he was preaching over at Bedford yesterday." "What?" says one, "preaching at Bedford? I would as soon have thought of the devil preaching as John Bunyan! What a wonderful thing the Gospel must be, to change such a man as that!" And yet it was true! John Bunyan, who frequented the ale-house, who knew more about the county jail and more about the Celestial City that is on the other side the flood than most men of his times. It shows the power and the Sovereignty of God when such men are saved.

And next, *how it shows His Grace!* When I have sometimes sat to see enquirers I have seen a number come in one after the other that have been born and brought up in the midst of piety and I have blessed God for them. But, by-and-by there has come in one whose tale has been terrible to tell and it was not easily told—except with many sighs and sobs and tears. But when it was disclosed, there have sat *two* weeping together—I scarcely know which wept more—he who wept because of Divine Grace illustrated *in* him or the other because he saw in another the Divine Grace which he had tasted for *himself*.

Oh, when great sinners tell out their tales, they are so straightforward, so explicit! There is no muddle about it, no questions about when they were converted, or how, but there they are. They say—"Ah, Sir, it must be Divine! Such a change has been worked in me that nothing could have thus turned the lion to a lamb, the raven to a dove, but the Grace of God." In great sinners, then, the Grace of God is made conspicuous.

Again—great sinners are very frequently called by God *for the purpose of attracting others*. You know that when some great transgressor finds mercy, straightway many hearts say—"Ah, then there is mercy for *me*." I am glad, I am very glad that there was a Manasseh, that there was David,

that there was a Saul of Tarsus, and I am glad they are in the Bible. The wicked cut the stories out and they laugh at us and say, “*These are your saints?*” Ah, we can bear that, while we can say—“No, this is what they were by nature, but they were saved, for all that, by the distinguishing Grace of God, who saves men through faith and not by their works.”

Now, I believe that that case of David has been a solace to thousands, if not to millions. The hurt he did in his lifetime was certainly very great—but the incalculable benefit which has flown to the universal Church from the penitential Psalms—puts altogether into the shade the damage which the fall of David did to the Church in his own time. Not that there is less shame to the sinner, but that there is more glory to the Savior where sin abounded in the first instance and Divine Grace did much more abound in the sequel. We can well bear this spot, for the sake of the light which comes from the sun.

Sinners! All of you! If you would put yourselves among the little ones, if your lives have never been grossly vile (I am glad if they have not)—let the fact that the great sinner enters and is washed, attract you. I have heard it said of the elephant, that sometimes before he crosses a bridge he puts his trunk and perhaps one foot, upon it. He wants to know if it is quite safe, for he is not going to trust his bulky body to things that were built only for horses and men. Well, after he has tried it, if he finds it strong enough, away he goes and his great carcass is carried right across the stream.

Now, suppose you and I sat on the other side and said we were afraid the bridge would not bear us! Why, how absurd our unbelief would be! So when you see a great elephantine sinner, like the Apostle Paul, go lumbering over the bridge of mercy and not a timber creaks and the bridge does not even strain under the load—why then, methinks you may come rushing in a crowd and say—“It will bear us, if it will bear *him*—it will carry us across, if it can take the chief of sinners to Heaven!”

And then, dear Friends, the saving of the chiefs of sinners is useful, *because, when they are saved they generally make the most fiery zealots against sin.* Have we not a proverb that, “The burnt child dreads the fire”? I noticed my host, on one preaching excursion, particularly anxious about my candle. Now, as everybody ought to know how careful I am, I was a little surprised and I put the question to him why he should be so wonderfully particular. “I had my house burned down once, Sir,” said he. That explained it all. No man is so much afraid of fire as he, and they who have been in sin and know the mischief of it, protest against it the most loudly.

They can speak experimentally. They talk of what they have tasted and handled to their own smart and ruin! Oh, what revenge there seems to be in the Apostle’s heart against his sin! He seems to bring out the great battle-axes and weapons of war against it—and wherever he can see sin he smites right and left—anywhere. Persecution, death, martyrdom—all these are nothing to him if he can but get a blow at sin. He always seems to have the gun charged to the muzzle and no devil comes in his way but what he has a shot at him. There are no ramparts or hellish bulwarks but what Paul thinks he must take them, whether they are in Asia, or Italy, or

Spain. This great knight-errant of the Cross is everywhere the great antagonist of sin, and so must those always be who are saved out of great iniquity.

And then, again, *they always make the most zealous saints*. I have said and it will come true, though I am no prophet nor the son of a prophet—I have said that the Lord will deliver this city and deliver this age, not by ministers from colleges—not by the sons of gentlemen or the inheritors of titles. But He will yet shake London and bring about a religious revival with the men who will come from St. Giles's and from White Chapel—from the slums, and from the dens and kens of infamy. God will take such men by-and-by, and He is beginning to work it already.

There are one or two names that will come to your recollection—illustrious names in connection with the preaching in theatres—God will raise up more such and you shall see that when human wisdom and creature devices have done their utmost to make the Church of God the dull lethargic thing it now is, God, in the plenitude of His might will raise up some who have tasted that He is gracious and have drunk deeply of the cup of His love that will turn the world upside down. It is all an idle and a wicked tale that our places of worship in the City of London cannot be supported. I see them building new places in the suburbs and leaving the City itself destitute of the means of Divine Grace.

Were the right men found, the Churches in the City of London might be as crowded as those in the suburbs. Only put into their pulpits men who know the guilt of sin and who know that Gospel in which is revealed the righteousness of God—men who know and preach Christ—then the effect would be palpable. Give us the men who do not talk as botanists might do upon botany, when they had not seen a flower, or as some might speak of various lands who have never traveled a league. But give us men who know experimentally those things that they labor to teach and let their tongues be set on fire of the Holy Spirit, and you shall then see London as full of the glory of the Lord as was Jerusalem of old.

May this come to pass! May it begin to come to pass *tonight!* May the Lord find out, as He moves among this mass, some stray, strange being that has given himself up to desperation, to work mischief with both his hands—and may He say to him tonight, “I have need of you and I will have you.” Oh, mighty Grace, do it tonight! He will have you, Man! Your will must be subdued. Your pride must come down. That proud temper of yours shall yield. “I am your Master. I made you. I bought you with My blood, and do you think I will lose you? I am mighty to save, do you think that you can overcome Me? I came forth on purpose to redeem you! Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?” O that the Lord would speak thus personally to some individual now!

And now I have done when I have just put this before you. My Hearers, here is life and death. If you despise Christ, there is death for you. If you turn aside from the love and mercy which streams from the wounds of Jesus, the angry God shall find you in your sin and cut you in pieces and there is none that can deliver you. If you go on in your sin, you will soon meet with death. But a few Sundays ago we had to mark how sudden

death thinned our ranks. Sometimes it is a working man. There was one, you know, some weeks ago, who lost his life in building the great bridge at Blackfriars, who was often a hearer here.

There is scarcely a day passes but we hear of someone gone out of this great assembly. We are going one after another. The pastor may go soon, but perhaps before he goes he may see many of you carried to your graves—he cannot tell. But, oh, why will you remain without God and without Christ? If you had a lease of your lives you might go on in sin until the lease was out. But even then you would be foolish to be enemies to God and enemies to yourselves so long. But as you may die today, God help you to repent tonight.

On the other hand, I set mercy before you—no man can say he has not been invited—no soul can say that I did not set the gate open wide enough! You are without excuse in the Day of Judgment. When the trumpet peals through Heaven and earth and awakes the slumbering dead—when Christ shall come in the clouds to judge the earth, I must give an account of the Gospel I have preached to you tonight. I would to God I could preach it better, but I cannot. You know what it is. You are without excuse. You have been invited. You have been entreated.

You have been bid to come to the marriage supper. All things are ready. The oxen and the fatlings are killed—come to the supper. You that are in the highways and hedges, we would compel you to come in, that God's House may be filled. Come. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

But if you come not, I must be a swift witness against you at the last. I am clear of your blood. I am clear of the blood of you all. God save you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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A GREAT GOSPEL FOR GREAT SINNERS NO. 1837

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 3, 1885,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON JUNE 2, 1884.**

“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me, first, Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him to life everlasting. Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.”
1 Timothy 1:15-17.

WHEN Paul wrote this ever-memorable text, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,” he placed it in connection with himself. I would have you carefully notice the context. Twelfth verse—“I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has enabled me, for that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the Grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” You see, the Apostle had spoken of himself and then it was that the Holy Spirit put it into his mind to write of the glorious salvation of which he was so notable a subject! Truly it was a seasonable and suggestive connection in which to place this glorious Gospel text. What he preached to others was to be seen in himself.

When I read to you the story of Saul’s conversion, suppose I had finished it by making the remark, “This is a faithful saying, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”? You would all have said, “That is true and it is a natural inference from the narrative.” Such a remark would have served as the moral of the whole story! It is an easy and a simple inference, from such a conversion, that Christ Jesus must have come into the world to save sinners. See, then, why Paul uttered it in this particular place. He could not help bringing his own case forward, but when he *did* bring it forward, it was to add emphasis to this declaration that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. It is my conviction that our Lord, in infinite wisdom, intends that His ministers should, themselves, be proofs of the doctrines which they teach. If a young man, a very young man, stands up to tell you of the experience of an aged Chris-

tian, you say at once, "That may be very true, but *you* cannot prove it, for you are not an aged person yourself."

If one who has been privileged, in the Providence of God, to enjoy the comforts of life, stands up to preach upon the consolations of the Spirit in poverty, you say, "Yes, that is very true, but *you* cannot speak from experience yourself." Hence the Lord likes His servants to have such an experience that their testimony shall have a man at the back of it. He would have their lives sustain and explain their testimonies. When Paul said that Christ came into the world to save *sinners*, his own conversion and his own joy in the Lord were proof positive of it! He was a witness who had tasted and handled the good Word of Life to which he witnessed.

Paul went to Heaven years ago, but his evidence is not lessened by that fact, for a truthful statement is not affected by the lapse of time. If a statement was made yesterday, it is just as truthful as if you were hearing it today. And if it were made, as this was, 1,800 years ago, yet, if true, then, (and nobody disputed it in Paul's day), it is true now! The facts recorded in the gospels are as much facts now, as ever, and they ought to have the same influence upon our minds as they had upon the minds of the Apostles. At this moment, the statement that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners has Paul still at the back of it. "He being dead yet speaks." Oh, you who are burdened with your sins, I want you to see Saul of Tarsus before you, at this moment, and to hear him say, with penitent voice, in your presence, "The Lord Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." Doubt not the statement, for the man is the evidence of it! He who saved Paul can save you! Yes, He is willing, now, to display His power upon you! Be not disobedient to the heavenly message!

But, Beloved, if we have not Paul in our midst to bear his personal witness, we have still many living proofs—we have indisputable evidence in those that are still about us, that it "is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." I could summon to this pulpit scores who were literally the blackest of transgressors, but they are washed, sanctified—and so they are living arguments of the Lord's power to save! Many, also, are now present who could *not* be numbered by their fellow men among the chief of sinners in certain aspects of the case, yet they most willingly put themselves down as the chief of sinners under some other way of viewing it—and they bear their testimony, as I do, tonight—that Jesus is able to save unto the uttermost! I, who now stand before you, am a living witness that Christ Jesus can save sinners and does still save them!

The Lord has forgiven and justified me and I have found Grace in His sight. In my case, also, it is proven that it "is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." Oh, how I wish that my Hearers would believe me! Many of you would accept any statement which I should make—why do you not accept *this*? You do not think of me as a liar—why, then, do you not believe my testimony concerning Jesus? He is as ready to save, today, as He was of old! He is ready to save *you* if you will trust Him!

The run of thought at this time will be, first, concerning those *who are the chief of sinners*. Secondly, we will enquire *why God has saved them*. And thirdly, *what they say when they are saved*.

I. First, then, WHO ARE THE CHIEF OF SINNERS? Paul says that he was the chief. I think, however, that he was only one of a regiment! There are different classes of sinners and some are greater and some less. All men are *truly* sinners, but all men are not *equally* sinners. They are all in the mire, but they have not all sunk to an equal depth in it. It is true they have all fallen deep enough to perish in sin unless the Grace of God prevents it, yet there are differences in the degrees of guilt and there will doubtless be differences in the degrees of punishment.

Some are the chief of sinners in the same way as the Apostle Paul, for *they have persecuted the Church of God*. Paul, who was then called Saul, had given his vote against Stephen. And when Stephen was stoned, he held the clothes of them that murdered him. He felt that blood lying upon his soul long afterward and he bemoaned it. Would not you, if you had been a helper at the murder of some child of God, feel that you were among the chief of sinners? If you had been willingly and willfully, maliciously and eagerly, a helper in putting a man of God like Stephen to death, you would write yourself down as a sinner of crimson dye! Why, I think that I would say, "God may forgive me, but I will never forgive myself." It would seem such a horrid crime to lie upon one's soul.

Yet this was merely the beginning. Saul was like a leopard who, having once tasted blood, must always have his tongue in it. His very breath was threatening and his delight was slaughter. He harassed the people of God. He made great havoc of the saints. He compelled them, he says, to blaspheme. He had them beaten in the synagogues, driven from city to city and even put to death. This must have remained upon his heart as a dark memory, even after the Lord Jesus Christ had fully forgiven him. Though he knew, as Paul did know, that he was a justified man through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, yet he must always have felt a smiting at his heart to think that these innocent lambs had been worried by him—that for no other reason but that they were lovers of the Crucified—he had panted for their blood. This matter of deadly persecution placed Saul head and shoulders above other sinners. This was the top stone of the pyramid of his sin, "because I persecuted the Church of Christ."

I thank God that there is no man here who has that particular form of sin upon his conscience in having actually put to death or joined in the slaughter of any child of God. The laws of our country have happily prevented your being stained with that foul offense and I bless the Lord that it is so. Yet if there should be such among those who are hearing these words, or among those who shall, one day, read them, I must confess that they are, indeed, numbered among the chief of sinners and I pray God to grant that they may obtain mercy as Saul did.

But you can go very near to this—in all probability certain of you have done so. That husband who has threatened his wife so bitterly if she obeys her conscience; that man who has discharged his servant for no other reason but his fidelity to Christ; that landlord who has turned out

his cottager from his home because he held a religious service beneath his roof; that man who has willfully and maliciously slandered a servant of God, not because he did him any harm, but because he cannot bear to hear of any truly following after Christ—these are the people who must be reckoned among the chief of sinners. They have done no murder, but they have gone as far as they dare to go and their heart is full of venom against the people of God—this is a grievous crime! Though it may seem a very small thing to grieve a pious child, or to vex a poor godly woman, God does not think so. He remembers jests and scoffs leveled at His little ones and He bids those who indulge in them to take heed! You had better offend a *king*, than one of the Lord's little ones! That poor man in the workshop who has so hard a time of it with your jests and chaff, has a Friend in the heavens. That other man who, seeking the Lord, has found the cold shoulder in society, has an Advocate on high who will not see him despised without espousing his cause.

It may appear a trifle to make a saint the target of ridicule, but his Father in Heaven does not think so. I know this, that many patient men will bear a great deal, but if you strike their children, their blood is up and they will not have it. A father will not stand by to see his child abused—and the Great Father above is as tender and fond of His children as any other father! You have seen, among birds and beasts, that they will put forth all their strength for their young. A hen, naturally very timid, will fight for her little chicks with all the courage of a lion. Some of the smallest of animals and the least powerful, nevertheless become perfectly terrible when they are taking care of their offspring! And do you think that the Everlasting God will bear to see His children maligned, slandered and abused for their following of Him? Is the God of Nature without natural affection? I know not! You shall rue the day, Sir, in which you took up arms against the people of God! Humble yourself before God on account of it, otherwise you will be numbered among the chief of sinners, and the chief of punishments shall be meted out to you.

I have no doubt that there may be some of that kind here and, if there are, I can only pray that the story of Saul of Tarsus may be repeated in them by boundless Grace. May they even yet come to preach the Gospel which now they despise! It is no new thing for the priest to be converted to Christ. It is no new thing for the opposer to become the advocate and to be all the better and more powerful a pleader because of the mischief which he formerly did. Oh that the Lord would turn His foes into friends! God send it! For Christ's sake may He send it now!

Further, among the chief of sinners we must, of course, include *those who are guilty of the coarser and grosser sins*. I will not occupy a moment in mentioning what they are, for it is a shame even to speak of them. God keep us from unchastity and dishonesty—from any one of those sins which are censurable, even, under the head of common morality, for, if not—if we indulge in these—we shall certainly come, by them, to be numbered among the chief of sinners! I must, however, mention blasphemy and lewd speaking, because these are unhappily far too common. Does a man think that he can go on damning his own body and soul in so many

words and never provoke the Lord to anger? Does he *dream* that he can use foul and filthy words, and wicked oaths without incurring sin? I believe that these things bring the blackest guilt on the conscience, for God has expressly said that He will, by no means, hold him guiltless that takes His name in vain!

It is true of *every* sin that God will not hold a man guiltless who does it, but it is especially said about this sin because men are apt to fancy that words are of no great importance, or that God takes no notice of them. Even the thoughtless, or trifling repetition of the name of the Lord involves great sin, for thus a man takes the sacred name in vain. Yet men trifle with that name in common conversation—and that with fearful frequency. There is no excuse for this wanton wickedness because it brings neither profit nor pleasure to the person who so offends! What practical end can it serve? As George Herbert said long ago—

***“Lust and wine plead a pleasure, avarice gain,
But the cheap swearer through his open sluice
Lets his soul run for nothing, fearing little.
Were I a gourmet, I could lessen swearing.”***

I am unable to frame an excuse for profane language—it is needless, willful wickedness! Men talk so as to horrify us. They chill our blood with fear lest God should take them at their word—and all for nothing at all. I would to God that every blasphemer here, (if such there are, and I have no doubt that there are), would abandon that vile, inexcusable, useless habit which lowers men in society, defiles them before God and ensures their condemnation!

Filthy speech puts those who are guilty of it among the chief of sinners and to them will certainly be meted out a terrible vengeance in that day when God shall solemnly curse those who have so glibly cursed themselves! It will be an awful thing for the man who used profane imprecations to find out, at last, that his prayers were heard and that they will be answered! O Swearer, beware lest the Lord God hear your prayers at once to your everlasting confusion! Sit down at this moment in deep contrition and *weep* to think of the many times in which you have defied the God of Heaven and uttered words of provocation against the God in whose hand your breath is! Not yet has He cut you down. Oh, wonder of mercy! Take heed to yourself! Above all, marvel that there should be mention of mercy for such a one as you are!

Now, dear Friends, there are other chiefs among sinners who do not go in for these grosser sins at all. Let me mention them, for in this line I shall have to place myself and many of you. Those are among the chief of sinners *who have sinned against great light* and against the influences of holy instruction and gracious example. Children of godly parents, who have been brought up and instructed in the fear of God from their youth, are among the chief of sinners if they turn aside from the Way of Life. When they transgress, there is a heavy weight about their fault which is not to be found in the common sin of the children of the slums, or the Arabs of the gutter. The offspring of the degraded know no better, poor souls, and hence their transgressions are sins of ignorance. But those who know better, when they transgress, transgress with an emphasis.

Their sin is as a talent of lead and it shall hang about their necks like a millstone!

I remember how this came home to my heart when I was convinced of my sin. I had not engaged in any of the grosser vices, but then I had not been tempted to do so, but had been carefully guarded from vicious influences. But I lamented that I had been disobedient to my parents, proud in spirit, forgetful of God's commands—I knew better—knew better from the very first and this put me, in my own estimation, among the chief of sinners! It had cost me much to do evil, for I had sinned against the clearest Light of God. Especially is this the case when the possession of knowledge is accompanied by much tenderness of conscience.

There are some of you unconverted people, who, when you do wrong, *feel* that you have done wrong and feel it keenly, too, even though no one rebukes you for it. You cannot be unjust, or hasty in temper, or faulty in speech, or break the Sabbath, or do anything that is forbidden, without your conscience troubling you! You know what it is to go to bed and lie awake in misery after some questionable amusement, or after having spoken too frivolously. Yours is a tender conscience—do not violate it, or you will be doubly guilty! When God puts the bit into your mouth, if you try to get it between your teeth and it does not check you at all, you must mind what you are doing, for you may be left to dash onward to destruction. “He that being often reprov'd hardens his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.” It puts men among the chief of sinners when, against the Light of God and against conscience, they deliberately choose the way of evil and leave the Commandments of the Lord.

Especially is it a grievous offense *to sin against the gentle checking of the Holy Spirit*. Have you not been sad offenders upon this point? You felt, the other Sunday night, that if you could once get out of the Chapel and get home, you would bow the knee in prayer—but you did not. You have felt like that many times and you have shaken off the feeling—and now a sermon scarcely moves you—it had need be full of thunder and lightning to make you turn a hair! Truths which used to make you shake from head to foot scarcely affect you now! Take care, I pray you, for he that sins against the Holy Spirit may find himself waterlogged by sin, so as to be no longer able to move his vessel towards the shores of salvation! Nothing hardens like the Gospel when it is long trifled with. To lie soaking in the Truth of God without receiving it into the heart is sure destruction! To die on holy ground is to die, indeed! God grant that it may not be so with any here!

Yet if you are, this day, the chief of sinners, do not despair! Do not turn away in sullen anger, for we are going to say to you, at this hour, in the name of the merciful God, that His Son, Jesus Christ, has come into the world to save sinners, even the very chief!

I think that I must put down those among the chief of sinners *who have led others into sin*. Ah, this is a sad, sad, sad, sad subject! If you have led others astray—if you, yourself, seek the Lord, and are saved—yet you cannot save them. If it is young persons whom you have polluted with evil, you cannot take the wretched stain out of their minds. You can leave

off sowing the devil's seed, but you cannot gather up what you have sown, nor prevent its growing and ripening! Fire is easily kindled, but not so soon extinguished when it has taken hold upon the fuel. It is an awful fact that there may be souls in Hell whom you have sent there! It was a wise penitential prayer of a converted man who had exercised influence for evil—"Lord, forgive me my other men's sins."

When you lead others to sin, their sins are, to a large extent, your sins. They do not cease to be the sins of those who commit them, but they are also the sins of those who promoted or suggested them by precept or example. A bad example, a lewd expression, an unholy life may be the means of drawing others down to Hell—and those that destroy others and so are soul-murderers, are among the chief of sinners. He who uses dagger or pistol to the body is abhorred. What shall we say of those who poison human minds and stab at the heart of piety? These are guiltiest of the guilty! Woe unto them!

Especially must I rank him among the chief of sinners who has preached falsehood—who has denied the Deity of Christ—who has undermined the Inspiration of Scripture—who has struggled against the faith, fought against the Atonement and done evil, even as he could, in the scattering of skepticism. He must take his place among the ringleaders in diabolical mischief—he is a master destroyer, a chosen apostle of the Prince of Darkness! Oh, that he might be brought, by Sovereign Grace, to be among the foremost teachers of that faith which, before, he has destroyed! I think that we should do well as Christian people if we prayed more for any who make themselves notorious by their infidelity. If we talked less bitterly against them and prayed more sweetly for them, good would come of it. Of political argument against atheists we have had enough—let us carry the case into a higher court and plead with God about them. If we use the grand artillery of Heaven by importunate prayer, we would be using much better weapons than are commonly employed. God help us to pray for all false teachers, that they may be converted to God and so display the Omnipotence of His love.

I shall not say more upon this mournful matter, for, indeed, I have only mentioned these examples in the hope that some here present may confess, "I am sorry to say that the preacher means me. Under some aspect or other I must take my place among the chief of sinners."

II. Now, secondly, WHY ARE THE CHIEF OF SINNERS SO OFTEN SAVED? The Lord Jesus Christ, when He went into Heaven, took with Him one of the chief of sinners as a companion—the dying thief entered Paradise the same day as our Lord! *After* our Lord Jesus had gone to Heaven, so far as I know, He never saved more than one person by His own immediate instrumentality—and that one person was this very Apostle Paul who has given us our text! To him our Lord spoke personally from Heaven, saying, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" To him He revealed Himself by the way and called Him to be His Apostle, even to this man who truthfully called himself the chief of sinners! It is wonderful to think that it should be so, but Grace delights in dealing with great and glaring sin and putting away the crying crimes of great offenders!

The Lord Jesus not only saved the chief of sinners, but He was related to some of them by blood. Look through the long line of our Lord's genealogy. You know that doctrine, the last invention of Rome, concerning the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary? I am going to tell you a doctrine which is about as far apart from that as the east is from the west! In the genealogy of our blessed Lord, we find the names of certain of the chief of sinners. Three women, especially, hold a position in it, who were each notorious for sin. Not many women are mentioned, but among the first is Tamar, guilty of incest. The next is Rahab the harlot, and a third is Bathsheba the adulteress. This is a crooked pedigree, an ancestral tree whose branches are more than a little gnarled and twisted!

Admire the condescension of our Lord in coming of such a stock! He came *of* sinners because He came *for* sinners. According to the flesh He comes of sinners that sinners may come to Him! There was mixed, in the veins through which flowed His ancestry, the blood of Ruth the Moabitess, a heathen, brought in *on purpose* that we Gentiles might see how truly He was bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. I say not that there was any defilement in His *humanity*, God forbid, for He was not born after the manner of men, so as to be polluted in that fashion! But still, I say that His genealogy includes many great sinners in order that we may see how closely He allied Himself with them, how thoroughly He undertook their cause.

Read the roll of His ancestry and you will see that David is there, who cried, "Against You, You only, have I sinned," and Solomon, who loved strange women, and Rehoboam, his foolish son. And Manasseh, "who shed innocent blood very much," and worse men than they, if worse could be! Such sinners as these are in the genealogy of the Savior of sinners. "He was numbered with the transgressors." He was called "The friend of publicans and sinners." It was said of Him, "This Man receives sinners and eats with them." He still delights to save great sinners! O my Hearer, it will delight Him to save you!

Why does He do it? The Apostle says, in the 16th verse, "For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me, first, Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering." What? Is that His reason for saving a sinner? It is that He may show, in that sinner, His long-suffering, revealing His patience and forgiveness! In a great sinner like Paul, He shows all His long-suffering, not little grains of it, nor portions of it, but *all* His long-suffering. Is Jesus Christ willing to show forth *all* His long-suffering? Does He delight to unveil *all* His love? Yes, for remember that He calls His mercy, His riches—"He is rich in mercy." I do not find that He calls His *power* His riches, but He calls His *Grace* His riches, "in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His Grace."

Oh, dear Friends, the Lord, who is rich in mercy, seeks a treasury in which to put His riches! He wants a case for the sacred jewelery of His love and these atrocious criminals, these great offenders, these who think themselves black as Hell—these are the very men in whom there is space for His rare jewels of goodness! Where sin has abounded, there is elbow-room for the infinite mercy of the living God! Ought you not to be encour-

aged, if you feel yourself greatly guilty, that God delights to show forth all His patience by saving great sinners? Will you not, at once, seek Him, that all long-suffering may be shown in *your* case? *Believe* on the Lord Jesus and it shall be so!

And what does Paul say next? He says that the Lord saved him *for a pattern* to those who are going to believe on Him to life everlasting. For a pattern. It means for a type or specimen. Paul was a “proof before letters.” The first prints of an engraving are sharp and clear and, therefore, they are very valuable—they exhibit the productive power of the plate at its highest point, before the surface is worn down in the least degree. Paul was one of the proof-engravings taken off the plate in the earliest days and under the most favorable circumstances for bringing out every line of Grace. All God’s long-suffering was seen in him for a pattern. I would to God that we could put some of *you* under that same engraved plate and issue more impressions at this very hour, for the plate is not worn out—the type that God uses is as new as ever!

When a printer sets his type, he sends the author a sheet to let him see what the type is and he calls it his *proof*. So also Paul was God’s proof—one of the first taken off by the glorious machinery of Grace to let us all see what God has to say to us concerning long-suffering love! That printing machine is at work at this very moment—it is making impressions at this hour—most clear, sharp and readable! I would to God that some great sinner here would be like the paper laid under the type to take the impression of almighty Grace! But a grand edition of the Work of Love was issued before Paul was printed off and published. I refer to the time when Peter preached at Pentecost. Many large and splendid editions have been issued from that press since! I see before me a whole library that God has printed in this house—the proofs that God has taken, of late, from the old standing type! But Paul stands at the head of the list as a fine first proof of what God can do.

Then God can save *me*. I came to that conclusion a year ago, and putting it to the test, I found it true. Dear fellow sinners, come to the same conclusion! Who are you? No, I do not ask you to tell me. I do not want to know! God knows. But I want you to come to this conclusion—“If Paul is a specimen of saved ones, then why should not I be saved? If Paul had been unique, a production quite by himself, then we might justly have doubted as to ourselves. But since he is a *pattern*, we may all hope to see the Lord’s long-suffering repeated in ourselves.” Nowadays, by the Parcels’ Post, people are sending you patterns of all sorts of things and many articles are bought according to sample. When you buy from a pattern, you expect the goods to be like the pattern. So God sends us Paul as a pattern of His great mercy to great sinners! He thus says, in effect—“That is the kind of thing I do. I take this rough, bad material of the chief of sinners, and I renew it, and show forth all My mercy in it. This is what I am prepared to do with you.”

Poor soul, will you not accept the mercy of God? Enter into this salvation business with the Lord, that you, too, like the Apostle, being a sinner, may become like he in obtaining the glorious salvation which is in Christ

Jesus, who came into the world to save sinners! I am talking very plainly and simply to you, but if you love your own souls, you will be all the better pleased to listen. I do not want to amuse you, but to see you saved. Do, I pray you, bend your minds to this subject and learn that there is good hope for the worst of you if you will cry unto the Lord. That is why Jesus saves those who have most grievously erred, that He may display them as specimens of what His Grace can do.

“But I belong to such a wicked family,” cries one. Oh, yes, and many have been saved who belonged to the most depraved and degraded of families. They have entered into relationship with Christ and their own base condition has been swallowed up in His Glory! The children of criminals, when converted, belong to the family of God. “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.” “Oh, but I have indulged in such horrible vices.” This is a sad confession, but it does not doom you to despair, for the blood of Jesus washes away the worst of filth! Blasphemers, adulterers, drunkards, thieves—“such,” O you saints—“such were some of you, but you are washed, but you are sanctified!” And why should not others of like character be washed and sanctified, too?

III. I must close by dwelling a moment on the third head, which is this—WHAT THE CHIEF OF SINNERS SAY WHEN THEY ARE SAVED. What they say is recorded in the text. It reads like a hymn—“Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.” Look, the first word is, “Now.” As soon as ever they are saved, they begin praising the Lord! They cannot endure to put off glorifying God! Someone might whisper to them, “You will praise God when you get to Heaven.” “No,” replies the gracious soul, “I am going to praise Him now. *Now* unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, be glory forever and ever!” Grateful love cannot be restrained—it is like fire in the bones! Our heart would break for love if it could not find a means of expressing itself at once.

Does another person whisper, “When you praise God, do not be too long about it. Leave off as soon as you have moderately praised and adored. Do not be forever engaged in the work of praise.” “No,” says the saved man, “I cannot stop as long as I am alive—To Him be honor and glory *forever and ever!*” Not only forever—that might seem to be long enough—but, “forever and ever.” It is a redundant expression, such as enthusiasm delights to use. It indicates a sort of double eternity. The saved sinner can never have enough of glorifying the Lord! He will praise Him throughout eternity! As soon as a man is cleansed from sin, he is clothed with praise. A new song is put into his mouth and he must sing it—he cannot help it! There is no stopping him.

Notice what titles Paul, here, heaps together. First, he calls the Lord Jesus Christ *a King*. “Now unto the King eternal.” Or apply it to God the Ever-Blessed, in His sacred Unity, if you will. He calls the Lord, King, for he would give Him the loftiest name and pay Him the lowliest homage. He calls Him a King, for he had found Him so, for it is a king that distributes life and death, a king that pardons rebels, a king that reigns and rules

over men. Jesus was all this to Paul and much more—and so he must give Him the royal title—he cannot speak of Him as less than majestic! If Jesus is not King to all the world, at least He is King to the man whose sins have been forgiven him. “Now,” he says, “unto the King eternal be honor and glory forever and ever.”

See how he puts it, “the King *eternal*.” Not a king who will lose his kingdom; not a king who will cease to reign, or abdicate, or die. Oh, dear Brothers and Sisters, the King that pardoned Paul is a King, *today*, equally mighty to save! Eighteen hundred years after His great deed of Grace to the chief of sinners He is still a King!—

**“Jesus sits on Zion’s hill:
He can save poor sinners still.”**

He sits upon the Throne of Mercy in the sovereignty of His Grace, in the splendor of His love, in the majesty of His power, passing by iniquity, transgression and sin! Will you not bow before Him? Here, at this moment, I pause to do Him reverence—Glory be to the Lord Jesus, for He is the King eternal!

Then he calls Him the King *immortal*. He is the King that always lives by His own power and is, therefore, able to give life to dead souls! Blessed be the name of the Savior that He died for sinners, but equally blessed be His name that He always lives to make intercession for sinners and is, therefore, able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. The quickened, raised-up spirit cries aloud, “Glory be unto the King immortal, for He has made me immortal by the touch of His life-giving hand!” Because He lives, we shall live, also. Our life is hidden in Him and, throughout eternity, we shall reign with Him!

Then Paul styles Him the King *invisible*, for, as yet, we see not all things put under Him and His reign is perceived rather by faith than by sight. The Lord Jesus is, to mortal eyes, invisible and, therefore, our service must be rendered by the spirit rather than through the senses. He must be *trusted* if we are to draw near to Him and we must say of Him, “whom having not seen, we love.” An unseen Lord, who can only be known to our faith, has saved us, and will save us, world without end! We have not a King that we have seen or touched, or whose voice we have audibly heard, but ours is a King who is invisible and yet moves to and fro among us, mighty to save! Thanks be unto the Holy Spirit for giving us eyes of faith to *see* Him that is invisible, and hearts to *trust* and to *rest* upon an invisible Lord!

“Now, now, now, now, now, now, now,” that is the word for every saved soul! NOW unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, be endless glory! Do you not respond to the call by immediate praise? Do you not say, “Awake my glory! Awake, psaltery and harp”? Oh, for a seraph’s coal to touch these stammering lips! As a sinner saved by my Lord and King, I would gladly pour out my life in a continual stream of praise to my redeeming Lord!

Furthermore, our Apostle speaks of *the only wise God*. He is so wise that He saves great sinners to make them patterns of His mercy! He is so wise that He takes bigots and persecutors to make them into Apostles! He

is so wise that He makes the wrath of man to praise Him and the very wickedness of man, He uses as a foil to set forth the brightness of the Glory of His Grace! Unto the only wise God, wise enough to turn a lion into a lamb, wise enough to make a sinner a saint, a persecutor a preacher, an enemy a friend—to Him be GLORY! Oh, the wisdom of God in the plan of redemption! It is a deep unfathomable! Compared with it, there is no wisdom anywhere and only God is seen to be, “only wise.”

To Him *be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.* Unto Him be glory on earth and glory in Heaven, honor from all of us poor imperfect beings—and glory from us when He shall have made us perfectly meet to behold His face! Come, lift up your hearts, you saved ones! Begin, at once, the songs which shall never cease! The saints shall never have done singing, for they remember that they were sinners. Come, poor Sinner, out of the depths extol Him who descended into the depths for you! Chief of sinners, adore Him who is to you the Chief among 10,000 and the Altogether Lovely! You black sinners who have gone to the very brink of damnation by your abominable sins, rise to the utmost heights of enthusiastic joy in Jesus your Lord! Put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and all manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven you—and at the receipt of such a pardon—you shall burst out into new-made doxologies to God your Savior!

“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.” O you guiltiest of the guilty, the Apostle Paul speaks to you and stands before you as the bearer of God’s white flag of mercy! Surrender to the King eternal and there is pardon for you, and deliverance from the wrath to come! Thirty-five years Paul lived in sin. Twenty years after that, when he was older than I am, he wrote these words, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” Is there not some 35 years old fellow here, tonight, who had better turn over a new leaf? Is there not some woman here of that age who has had more than enough of sin? Is it not time that you turned unto the Lord and found a new and better life?

Turn them! Lord—turn them, and they shall be turned! Make them live and they shall live unto You, world without end. Amen and Amen!

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Acts. 9:1-31.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—546, 588, 551.**

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PAUL AS A PATTERN CONVERT

NO. 3367

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“However for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me, first, Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting.”
1 Timothy 1:16.

IT is a vulgar error that the conversion of the Apostle Paul was an uncommon and exceptional event and that we cannot expect men to be saved now-a-days after the same fashion. It is said that the incident was an exception to all rules, a wonder altogether by itself. Now, my text is a flat contradiction to that notion, for it assures us that, instead of the Apostle as a receiver of the long-suffering and mercy of God being at all an exception to the rule, he was a model convert, and is to be regarded as a type and pattern of God's Grace in other Believers. The Apostle's language in the text, “for a pattern,” may mean that he was what printers call a first proof, an early impression from the engraving, a specimen of those to follow. He was the typical instance of Divine long-suffering, the model after which others are fashioned. To use a metaphor from the artist's studio, Paul was the ideal sketch of a convert, an outline of the work of Jesus on mankind, a picture of Divine long-suffering. Just as artists make sketches in charcoal as the basis of their work—which outlines they paint out as the picture proceeds—so did the Lord, in the Apostle's case, make, as it were, a picture or outline sketch of His usual work of Grace. That outline, in the case of each future Believer, He works out with infinite variety of skill and produces the individual Christian, but the guiding lines are really there. All conversions are, in a high degree, similar to this pattern conversion. The transformation of persecuting Saul of Tarsus into the Apostle Paul is a typical instance of the work of Grace in the heart.

We will have no other preface, but proceed at once to two or three considerations. The first is that—

I. IN THE CONVERSION OF PAUL, THE LORD HAD AN EYE TO OTHERS, AND IN THIS PAUL IS A PATTERN.

In every case the individual is saved, not for himself, alone, but with a view to the good of others. Those who think the Doctrine of Election to be harsh should not deny it, for it is Scriptural—but they may to their own minds soften some of its hardness by remembering that elect men bear a

marked connection with the race. The Jews, as an elect people, were chosen in order to preserve the oracles of God for all nations and for all times. Men personally elected unto eternal life by Divine Grace are also elected that they may become chosen vessels to bear the name of Jesus unto others. While our Lord is said to be the Savior especially of them that believe, He is also called the Savior of all men—and while He has a special eye to the good of the one person whom He has chosen—yet *through that person* He has designs of love to others—perhaps even to thousands yet unborn!

The Apostle Paul says, “I obtained mercy, that in me, first, Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe.” Now, I think I see very clearly that *Paul’s conversion had an immediate relation to the conversion of many others*. It had a tendency, had it not, to excite an interest in the minds of his brother Pharisees? Men of his class, men of culture, who were equally at home with the Greek philosophers and with the Jewish rabbis, men of influence, men of rank, would be sure to enquire, “What is this new religion which has fascinated Saul of Tarsus? That zealot for Judaism has now become a zealot for Christianity—what can there be in it?” I say that the natural tendency of his conversion was to awaken inquiry and thought and so to lead others of his rank to become Believers. And, my dear Friend, if you have been saved, you ought to regard it as a token of God’s mercy to your class. If you are a working man, let your salvation be a blessing to the men with whom you labor. If you are a person of rank and station, consider that God intends to bless you to some with whom you are on familiar terms. If you are young, hope that God will bless the youth around you. And if you have come to older years, hope that your conversion, even at the eleventh hour, may be the means of encouraging other aged pilgrims to seek and find rest unto their souls. The Lord, by calling one out of any society of men, finds for Himself a recruiting officer who will enlist his fellows beneath the banner of the Cross! May not this fact encourage some seeking soul to hope that the Lord may save him, though he is the only thoughtful person in all his family—and then make him to be the means of salvation to all his kindred?

We notice that *Paul often used the narrative of his conversion as an encouragement to others*. He was not ashamed to tell his own life story. Eminent soul-winners, such as Whitefield and Bunyan, frequently pleaded God’s mercy to themselves as an argument with their fellow men. Though great preachers of another school, such as Robert Hall and Chalmers, do not mention themselves at all, and I can admire their abstinence, yet I am persuaded that if some of us were to follow their example, we would be throwing away one of the most powerful weapons of our warfare! What can be more affecting, more convincing, more overwhelming, than the story of Divine Grace told by the very man who has experienced it? It is better than a dozen tales of converted Africans and

infinitely more likely to win men's hearts than the most elaborate essays upon moral excellence! Again and again, Paul gave a long narrative of his conversion, for he felt it to be one of the most telling things that he could relate.

Whether he stood before Felix or Agrippa, this was his plea for the Gospel. All through his Epistles there are continual mentions of the Grace of God towards himself—and we may be sure that the Apostle did right to argue thus from his own case—it is fair and forcible reasoning and ought by no means to be left unused because of a selfish dread of being called egotistical! God intends that we should use our conversion as an encouragement to others and say to them, “Come and hear, all you that fear God, and I will tell you what He has done for my soul.” We point to our own forgiveness and say, “Do but trust in the living Redeemer and you shall find, as we have done, that Jesus blots out the transgressions of Believers.”

Paul's conversion was an encouragement to him all his life long to have hope for others. Have you ever read the first Chapter of the Epistle to the Romans? Well, the man who penned those terrible verses might very naturally have written at the end of them, “Can these monsters be reclaimed? It can be of no use whatever to preach the Gospel to people so sunken in vice.” That one Chapter gives as daring an outline as delicacy would permit of the nameless, shameful vices into which the heathen world had plunged! And yet, after all, Paul went forth to declare the Gospel to that filthy and corrupt generation, believing that God meant to save a people out of it! Surely one element of his hope for humanity must have been found in the fact of his own salvation—he considered himself to be, in some respects, as bad as the heathen, and in other respects even worse! He calls himself the *foremost* of sinners (that is the word) and he speaks of God having saved him foremost, that in him He might show forth all long-suffering. Paul never doubted the possibility of the conversion of a person, however infamous, after he had himself been converted! This strengthened him in battling with the fiercest opponents—He who overcame such a wild beast as I was can also tame others and bring them into willing captivity to His love!

There was yet another relation between Paul's conversion and the salvation of others, and it was this—*It served as an impulse*, driving him forward in his lifework of bringing sinners to Christ. “I obtained mercy,” he said, “and that same Voice which spoke peace to me said, “I have made you a chosen vessel unto Me to bear My name among the Gentiles.” And he did bear it, my Brothers and Sisters! Going into regions beyond that he might not build on another man's foundation, he became a master builder for the Church of God. How indefatigably did he labor! With what vehemence did he pray! With what energy did he preach! Slander and contempt he bore with the utmost patience. Scourging or

stoning had no terrors for him. Imprisonment, yes, death itself, he defied—nothing could daunt him! Because the Lord had saved *him*, he felt that he must, by all means, save some. He could not be quiet. Divine love was in him like a fire and if he had been silent, he would, before long, have had to cry with the Prophet of old, “I am weary with restraining.” He is the man who said, “Necessity is laid upon me, yes, woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel.” Paul, the extraordinary sinner, was saved that he might be full of extraordinary zeal and bring multitudes to eternal life! Well could he say—

***“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.
My life, my blood, I here present,
If for Your Truth they may be spent!
Fulfill Your Sovereign counsel, Lord!
Your will be done, Your name adored!”***

Now, I will pause here a minute to ask a question. You profess to be converted, my dear Friend. What relation has your conversion already had to other people? It ought to have a very apparent one. Has it had such? Mr. Whitefield said that when his heart was renewed, his first desire was that his companions with whom he had previously wasted his time might be brought to Christ. It was natural and commendable that he should begin with them. Remember how one of the Apostles, when he discovered the Savior, went immediately to tell his brother? It is most fitting that young people should spend their first religious enthusiasm upon their brothers and sisters. As to converted parents, their first responsibility is in reference to their sons and daughters. Upon each renewed man, his natural affinities, or the bonds of friendship or the looser ties of neighborhood should begin to operate at once, and each one should feel, “No man lives unto himself.”

If Divine Grace has kindled a fire in you, it is that your fellow men may burn with the same flame! If the eternal fount has filled you with Living Water, it is that out of the midst of you should flow rivers of Living Water! You are blessed that you may bless—whom have you blessed? Let the question go round. Do not avoid it. This is the best return that you can make to God—that when He saves you, you should seek to be the instruments in His hands of saving others! What have you done? Did you ever speak with the friend who shares your pew? He has been sitting there for a long time and may, perhaps, be an unconverted person—have you pointed him to the Lamb of God? Have you ever spoken to your servants about their souls? Have you broken the ice sufficiently to speak to your own sister, or your own brother? Do begin, dear Friend.

You cannot tell what mysterious threads connect you with your fellow men and their destiny. There was a cobbler once, as you know, in Northamptonshire. Who could see any connection between him and the mil-

lions of India? But the love of God was in his bosom and Carey could not rest till, at Serampore, he had commenced to translate the Word of God and preach to his fellow men! We must not confine our thoughts to the few whom Carey brought to Christ, though to save one soul is worthy of a life of sacrifice—but Carey became the forerunner and leader of a missionary band which will never cease to labor till India bows before Immanuel! That man mysteriously *drew, is drawing and will draw* India to the Lord Jesus Christ! Brother, you do not know what your power is! Awake and try it!

Did you never read this passage—“You have given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him”? Now, the Lord has given to His Son power over all flesh, and with a part of that power Jesus clothes His servants. Through you, He will give eternal life to certain of His chosen—by you and by no other means will they be brought to Himself! Look about you, regenerate man! Your life may be made sublime. Awaken yourself! Begin to think of what God may do by you! Calculate the possibilities which lie before you with the eternal God as your helper! Shake yourself from the dust and put on the beautiful garments of disinterested love to others and it shall yet be seen how grandly gracious God has been to hundreds of men by having converted you!

So far, then, Paul’s salvation, because it had so clear a reference to others, was a pattern of all conversions. Now, secondly—

II. PAUL’S FOREMOST POSITION AS A SINNER DID NOT PREVENT HIS BECOMING FOREMOST IN GRACE AND, HEREIN, AGAIN, HE IS A PATTERN TO US.

Foremost in sin, he became also foremost in service! Saul of Tarsus was a *blasphemer* and he is to be commended because he has not recorded any of those blasphemies. We can never object to converted burglars and chimney-sweepers of whom we hear so much, telling the story of their conversion. But when they go into dirty details, they had better hold their tongues! Paul tells us that he was a blasphemer, but he never repeats one of the blasphemies. We invent enough evil in our own hearts without being told of other men’s stale profanities. If, however, any of you are so curious as to want to know what kind of blasphemies Paul could utter, you have only to converse with a converted Jew and he will tell you what horrible words some of his nation will speak against our Lord! I have no doubt that Paul, in his evil state, thought as wickedly of Christ as he could—considered Him to be an imposter, called Him so, and added many an opprobrious epithet. He does not say of himself that he was an unbeliever and an objector, but he says that he was a blasphemer, which is a very strong word, but not too strong, for the Apostle never went beyond the truth. He was a downright, thorough-going blasphemer who also caused others to blaspheme. Will these lines meet the eye of a

profane person who feels the greatness of his sin? May God grant that he may be encouraged to seek mercy as Saul of Tarsus did, for “all manner of sin and blasphemy” does He forgive unto men!

From blasphemy, which was the sin of the lips, Saul proceeded to *persecution*, which is a sin of the hands. Hating Christ, he hated His people, too. He was delighted to give his vote for the death of Stephen—and he took care of the clothes of those who stoned that martyr. He hauled men and women to prison and compelled them to blaspheme. When he had hunted all Judea as closely as he could, he obtained letters to go to Damascus, that he might do the same in that place. His prey had been compelled to quit Jerusalem and flee to more remote places, but “being exceedingly mad against them, he persecuted them unto strange cities.” He was foremost in blasphemy and persecution! Will a persecutor read or hear these words? If so, may he be led to see that even for *him*, pardon is possible! Jesus, who said, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do,” is still an intercessor for the most violent of His enemies!

He adds, next, that he was *injurious*, which, I think, Bengel considers to mean that he was a despiser. That eminent critic says—blasphemy was his sin towards God, persecution was his sin towards the Church, and despising was his sin in his own heart. He was injurious—that is, he did all he could to damage the cause of Christ and he thereby injured himself. He kicked against the pricks and injured his own conscience. He was so determined against Christ that he counted no cost too great by which he might hinder the spread of the faith! And he did hinder it terribly—he was a ringleader in resisting the Spirit of God which was then working with the Church of Christ. He was foremost in opposition to the Cross of Christ!

Now, notice that he was saved as a pattern, which is to show you that if you also have been foremost in sin, you also may obtain mercy as Paul did! And to show you yet again that if you have not been foremost, the Grace of God, which is able to save the chief of sinners, can assuredly save those who are of less degree! If the bridge of Grace will carry the elephant, it will certainly carry the mouse! If the mercy of God could bear with the greatest sinners, it can have patience with you! If a gate is wide enough for a giant to pass through, any ordinary-sized mortal will find space enough. Despair’s head is cut off and stuck on a pole by the salvation of “the chief of sinners.” No man can now say that he is too great a sinner to be saved—because the chief of sinners was saved 1,800 years ago! If the ringleader, the chief of the gang, has been washed in the precious blood and is now in Heaven, why not I? Why not *you*?

After Paul was saved, he became a foremost saint. The Lord did not allot him a second-class place in the Church. He had been the leading sinner, but his Lord did not, therefore, say, “I save you, but I shall always remember your wickedness to your disadvantage.” Not so! He counted him faithful, putting him into the ministry and into the Apostleship, so

that he was not a whit behind the very chief of the Apostles! Brother, there is no reason why, if you have gone very far in sin, you should not go equally far in usefulness! On the contrary, there is a reason why you *should do so*, for it is a rule of Grace that to whom much is forgiven, the same loves much—and much love leads to much service. What man was more clear in his knowledge of Doctrine than Paul?

What man more earnest in the defense of the Truth of God? What man more self-sacrificing? What man more heroic? The name of Paul in the Christian Church stands, in some respects, very next to the Lord Jesus! Turn to the New Testament and see how large a space is occupied by the Holy Spirit speaking through His servant Paul! And then look over Christendom and see how greatly the man's influence is still felt—and must be felt till his Master shall come! Oh, great sinner, if you are even now ready to scoff at Christ, my prayer is that He may strike you down at this very moment and turn you into one of His children—and make you to be just as ardent for the Truth as you are now earnest against it, as desperately set on good as now you are on evil! None make such mighty Christians and such fervent preachers as those who are lifted up from the lowest depths of sin and washed and purified through the blood of Jesus Christ! May Grace do this with you, my dear Friend, whoever you may be.

Thus we gather from our text that the Lord showed mercy to Paul. That in him, first, it might be seen that prominence in sin is no barrier to eminence in Grace, but the very reverse! Now I come to where the stress of the text lies.

III. PAUL'S CASE WAS A PATTERN OF OTHER CONVERSIONS AS AN INSTANCE OF LONG-SUFFERING.

“That in me, first, Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe.” Thoughtfully observe the great long-suffering of God to Paul. He says, “He showed forth all long-suffering.” Not only all the long-suffering of God that ever was shown to anybody else, but all that could be supposed to exist—all long-suffering—

**“All Your mercy's height I prove,
All its depth is found in me,”**

as if he had gone to the utmost stretch of his tether in sin—and the Lord had strained His long-suffering to its utmost!

That long-suffering was seen, first, *in sparing his life* when he was rushing headlong in sin, breathing out threats, foaming at the mouth with denunciations of the Nazarene and His people. If the Lord had but lifted His finger, Saul would have been crushed like a moth! But Almighty Wrath forbore and the rebel lived on. Nor was this all—after all his sin, the Lord allowed mercy to be possible to him. He blasphemed and persecuted at a red-hot rate—and is it not a marvel that the Lord did not say, “Now, at last, you have gone beyond all bearing, and you shall die like

Herod, eaten of worms”? It would not have been at all amazing if God had so sentenced him. But He allowed him to live within the reach of mercy and, better still, He in due time actually sent the Gospel to him and laid it home to his heart. In the very midst of his rebellion the Lord saved him! He had not prayed to be converted, far from it! No doubt he had that very day along the road to Damascus profaned the Savior’s name and yet mighty mercy burst in and saved him purely by its own spontaneous native energy! Oh mighty Grace, Free Grace, victorious Grace ! This was long-suffering indeed!

When Divine Mercy had called Paul, *it swept all his sin away*, every particle of it—his blood shedding and his blasphemy, all at once, so that never man was more assured of his own perfect cleansing than was the Apostle! “There is therefore now,” he says, “no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” “Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” You know how clear he was about that—and he spoke out of his own experience! Long-suffering had washed all his sins away. Then that long-suffering, reaching from the depths of sin, lifted him right up to the Apostleship, so that he began to prove God’s long-suffering in its heights of favor. What a privilege it must have been to him to be permitted to preach the Gospel! I should think sometimes when he was preaching most earnestly, he would half stop himself and say, “Paul, is this you?” Especially when he went down to Tarsus, he must have been surprised at himself and at the mighty mercy of God. He preached the faith which once he had destroyed! He must have said many a time after a sermon, when he went home to his bedchamber, “Marvel of marvels! Wonder of wonders, that I who once could curse have now been made to preach—that I, who was full of threats and even breathed out slaughter, should now be so Inspired by the Spirit of God that I weep at the very sound of Jesus’ name and count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord!”

Oh, Brothers and Sisters, you do not measure long-suffering unless you take it in all its length from one end to the other and see God in mercy not remembering His servant’s sin, but lifting him into eminent service in His Church. Now, this was for a pattern, to show you that He will show forth the same long-suffering to those who believe! If you have been a swearer, He will cleanse your blackened mouth and put His praises into it! Have you had a black, cruel heart, full of enmity to Jesus? He will remove it and give you a new heart and a right spirit! Have you dived into all sorts of sins? Are they so shameful that you dare not think of them? Think of the precious blood which removes every stain! Are your sins so many that you cannot count them? Do you feel as if you were almost damned already in the very memory of your life? I do not wonder at it, but He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him! You have not gone farther than Saul had gone and, therefore, all

long-suffering can come to you and there are great possibilities of future holiness and usefulness before you! Even though you may have been a street-walker or a thief, yet if the Grace of God cleanses you, it can make something wonderful out of you! Full many a lustrous jewel of Immanuel's crown has been taken from the dunghill! You are a rough block of stone, but Jesus can fashion and polish you and set you as a pillar in His Temple!

Brother, do not despair! See what Saul was and what Paul became—and learn what you may be! Though you deserve the depths of Hell, yet Grace can lift you up to the heights of Heaven! Though now you feel as if the fiends of Hell would be fit companions for such a lost spirit as yourself, yet believe in the Lord Jesus and you shall one day walk among the angels as pure and white as they! Paul's experience of long-suffering Grace was meant to be a pattern of what God will do for you—

***“Scripture says, ‘Where sin abounded,
There did Grace much more abound.’
Thus has Satan been confounded,
And his own discomfit found.
Christ has triumphed!
Spread the glorious news around!
Sin is strong, but Grace is stronger!
Christ than Satan more supreme!
Yield, oh, yield to sin no longer,
Turn to Jesus, yield to Him—
He has triumphed!
Sinners, henceforth Him esteem.”***

Again—

V. THE MODE OF PAUL'S CONVERSION WAS ALSO MEANT TO BE A PATTERN. And with this I shall finish. I do not say that we may expect to receive the miraculous Revelation which was given to Paul, but yet it is a sketch upon which any conversion can be painted. The filling up is not the same in any two cases, but the outline sketch. Paul's conversion would serve for an outline sketch of the conversion of any one of us. How was that conversion worked? Well, it is clear that there was nothing at all in Paul to contribute to his salvation. You might have sifted him in a sieve without finding anything upon which you could rest a hope that he would be converted to the faith of Jesus! His natural bent, his early training, his whole surroundings and his life's pursuits all lettered him to Judaism and made it most unlikely that he would ever become a Christian. The first Elder of the Church that ever talked to him about Divine things could hardly believe in his conversion. “Lord,” he said, “I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he has done to Your saints at Jerusalem.” He could hardly think it possible that the ravening wolf could have changed into a lamb! Nothing favorable to faith in Jesus could have been found in Saul—the soil of his heart was very rocky, the plow could not touch it and the good Seed found no root-hold. Yet the

Lord converted Saul and He can do the same by other sinner, but it must be a work of pure Grace and of Divine power, for there is not in any man's fallen nature a holy spot the size of a pin's point on which Grace can light! Transforming Grace can find no natural lodging in our hearts—it must create its own soil and, blessed be God, it can do it, for with God all things are possible! Nature contributes nothing to Grace and yet Grace wins the day! Humbled Soul, let this cheer you! Though there is nothing good in you, yet Grace can work wonders and save you by its own might!

Paul's conversion was an instance of Divine power and of that alone, and so is every true conversion. If your conversion is an instance of the preacher's power, you need to be converted again! If your salvation is the result of your own power, it is a miserable deception from which may you be delivered! Every man who is saved must be operated upon by the might of God the Holy Spirit—every jot and tittle of true regeneration is the Spirit's work! As for our strength, it wars against salvation rather than for it. Blessed is that promise, "Your people shall be willing in the day of Your power." Conversion is as much a work of God's Omnipotence as the Resurrection—and as the dead do not raise themselves, so neither do men convert themselves!

But Saul was changed immediately. His conversion was once done and done at once. There was a little interval before he found peace, but even during those three days, he was a changed man, though he was in sadness. He was under the power of Satan at one moment and in the next he was under the reign of Grace! This is also true in every conversion. However gradual the breaking of the day, there is a time when the sun is below the horizon and a moment when it is no longer so. You may not know the exact time in which you passed from death to life, but there was such a time, if you are, indeed, a Believer! A man may not know how old he is, but there was a moment in which he was born. In every conversion there is a distinct change from darkness to light, from death to life, just as certainly as there was in Paul's. And what a delightful hope does the rapidity of regeneration present to us! It is by no long and laborious process that we escape from sin! We are not compelled to remain in sin for a single moment. Grace brings instantaneous liberty to those who sit in bondage. He who trusts Jesus is saved on the spot! Why, then, abide in death? Why not lift up your eyes to immediate life and light?

Paul proved his regeneration by his faith. He believed unto eternal life. He tells us over and over again in his Epistles that he was saved by faith, and not by works. So is it with every man! If saved at all, it is by simply believing in the Lord Jesus. Paul esteemed his own works to be less than nothing and called them dross and dung, that he might win Christ, and so every converted man renounces his own works that he may be saved by Grace alone. Whether he has been moral or immoral. Whether he has lived an amiable and excellent life, or whether he has raked in the ken-

nels of sin, every regenerate man has only one hope—and that is centered and fixed in Jesus alone! Faith in Jesus Christ is the mark of salvation, even as the heaving of the lungs or the coming of breath from the nostrils is the test of life. Faith is the Grace which saves the soul and its absence is a fatal sign. How does this fact affect you, dear Friend? Have you faith or no?

Paul was very positively and evidently saved. You did not need to ask the question, “Is that man a Christian or not?” for the transformation was most apparent! If Saul of Tarsus had appeared as he used to be, and Paul the Apostle could also have come in, and you could have seen the one man as two men, you would have thought them no relation to one another. Paul the Apostle would have said that he was dead to Saul of Tarsus, and Saul of Tarsus would have gnashed his teeth at Paul the Apostle! The change was evident to all who knew him, whether they sympathizes in it or not. They could not mistake the remarkable difference which Grace had made, for it was as great as when midnight brightens into noon. So it is when a man is truly saved—there is a change which those around him must perceive. Do not tell me that you can be a child at home and become a Christian, and yet your father and mother will not perceive a difference in you! They will be sure to see it. Would a leopard in a menagerie lose his spots and no one notice it? Would an Ethiopian be turned white and no one hear of it? You, masters and mistresses, will not go in and out among your servants and children without their perceiving a change in you if you are born-again! At least, dear Brother or Sister, strive with all your might to let the change be very apparent in your language, in your actions and in your whole conduct. Let your conversation be such as becomes the Gospel of Christ, that men may see that you, as well as the Apostle, are decidedly changed by the renewal of your minds!

May all of us be the subjects of Divine Grace as Paul was—stopped in our mad career, blinded by the glory of the heavenly Light of God, called by a mysterious Voice, conscious of natural blindness, relieved of blinding scales and made to see Jesus as one All-in-All. May we prove in our own persons how speedily conviction may melt into conversion, conversion into confession and confession into consecration!

I have done when I have enquired how far we are conformed to the pattern which God has set before us. I know we are like Paul as to our sin, for if we have neither blasphemed nor persecuted, yet have we sinned as far as we have had opportunity. We are also conformed to Paul’s pattern in the great long-suffering of God which we have experienced. And I am not sure that we cannot carry the parallel farther—we have had much the same Revelation that Paul received on the way to Damascus, for we, too, have learned that Jesus is the Christ! If any of us sin against Christ, it will not be because we do not know Him to be the

Son of God, for we all believe in His Deity because our Bibles tell us so. The pattern goes so far—I would that the Grace of God would operate upon you, unconverted Friend, and complete the picture by giving you like faith with Paul. Then will you be saved as Paul was! Then, also, will you love Christ above all things, as Paul did, and you will say, “But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yes, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord.” He rested upon what Christ had done in His death and Resurrection, and he found pardon and eternal life at once and became, therefore, a devoted Christian!

What do you say, dear Friend? Are you moved to follow Paul’s example? Does the Spirit of God prompt you to trust Paul’s Savior and give up every other ground of trust and rely upon Him? Then do so and live! Does there seem to be a hand holding you back and do you hear an evil whisper saying, “You are too great a sinner”? Turn round and bid the fiend depart, for the text gives him the lie. “In me, *first*, has Jesus Christ showed forth all long-suffering for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on His name.” God has saved Paul. Back, then, O devil! The Lord can save any man, woman or child and He can save me! Jesus Christ of Nazareth is mighty to save and I will rely on Him. If any poor heart shall reason thus, its logic will be sound and unanswerable. Mercy to one is an argument for mercy to another, for there is no difference, but the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him!

Now I have set the case before you and I cannot do more. It remains with each individual to accept or refuse. One man can bring a horse to the trough, but a hundred cannot make him drink. There is the Gospel—if you want it, take it—but if you will not have it, then I must discharge my soul by reminding you that even the gentle Gospel—the Gospel of love and mercy has nothing to say to you but this, “He that believes not shall be damned.”—

***“How they deserve the deepest Hell,
That slight the joys above!
What chains of vengeance must they feel
Who break the bonds of love!”***

God grant that you may yield to Almighty Love and find peace in Christ Jesus!

—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.**

SALVATION BY KNOWING THE TRUTH NO. 1516

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

***“God our Savior; who will have all men to be saved and to
come unto the knowledge of the truth.”
1 Timothy 2:3, 4.***

MAY God the Holy Spirit guide our meditations to the best practical result this evening, that sinners may be saved and saints stirred up to diligence. I do not intend to treat my text controversially. It is like the stone which makes the corner of a building and it looks towards a different side of the Gospel from that which is mostly before us. Two sides of the building of the Truth of God meet here. In many a village there is a corner where the idle and the quarrelsome gather together and theology has such corners. It would be very easy, indeed, to set ourselves in battle array and during the next half-hour to carry on a very fierce attack against those who differ from us in opinion upon points which could be raised from this text. I do not see that any good would come of it and, as we have very little time to spare and life is short, we had better spend it upon something that may better tend to our edification. May the good Spirit preserve us from a contentious spirit and help us to really profit by His Word.

It is quite certain that when we read that God will have all men to be saved it does not mean that He *wills* it with the force of a decree or a Divine purpose, for, if He did, then all men *would* be saved! He willed to make the world and the world was made—He does not so will the salvation of all men, for we know that all men will not be saved. Terrible as the Truth of God is, yet is it certain from Holy Writ that there are men who, in consequence of their sin and their rejection of the Savior, will go away into everlasting punishment where there shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. There will, at the last, be goats upon the left hand as well as sheep on the right. There will be tares to be burned as well as wheat to be garnered, chaff to be blown away as well as corn to be preserved. There will be a dreadful Hell as well as a glorious Heaven and there is no decree to the contrary.

What then? Shall we try to put another meaning into the text than that which it fairly bears? I think not. You must, most of you, be acquainted with the general method in which our older Calvinistic friends deal with this text. “All men,” they say—“that is, *some* men”—as if the Holy Spirit could not have said, “*some* men,” if He had meant some men! “All men,” they say—“that is, *some* of all sorts of men”—as if the Lord could not have said, “*all* sorts of men,” if He had meant that. The Holy Spirit, by the Apostle, has written, “*all men*” and unquestionably He means ALL men. I know how to get rid of the force of the “alls” according to that critical method which, some time ago, was very current, but I do not see how it can be applied, here, with due regard to the Truth of God.

I was reading, just now, the exposition of a very able doctor who explains the text so as to explain it away. He applies grammatical gunpowder to it and explodes it by way of expounding it. I thought, when I read his exposition, that it would have been a very capital comment upon the text if it had read, "Who will *not* have all men to be saved, nor come to a knowledge of the truth." Had such been the Inspired language, every remark of the learned doctor would have been exactly in keeping, but as it happens to say, "Who will have all men to be saved," his observations are more than a little out of place. My love of consistency with my own doctrinal views is not great enough to allow me knowingly to alter a single text of Scripture.

I have great respect for orthodoxy, but my reverence for Inspiration is far greater. I would sooner a hundred times over appear to be inconsistent with *myself* than be inconsistent with the Word of God. I never thought it to be any very great crime to seem to be inconsistent with myself, for who am I that I should everlastingly be consistent? But I do think it a great crime to be so inconsistent with the Word of God that I should need to lop away a bough or even a twig from so much as a single tree of the forest of Scripture. God forbid that I should cut or shape, even in the least degree, any Divine expression. So runs the text and so we must read it, "God our Savior; who will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."

Does not the text mean that it is the *wish* of God that men should be saved? The word, "wish," gives as much force to the original as it really requires and the passage should run thus—"Whose wish it is that all men should be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth." As it is my wish that it should be so; as it is *your* wish that it might be so, so it is God's wish that all men should be saved, for, assuredly, He is not less benevolent than we are! Then comes the question, "But if *He* wishes it to be so, why does He not *make* it so?" Beloved Friend, have you never heard that a fool may ask a question which a wise man cannot answer and, if that is so, I am sure a wise person like yourself can ask me a great many questions which, fool as I am, I am yet not foolish enough to try to answer.

Your question is only one form of the great debate of all the ages—"If God is infinitely good and powerful, why does not His power carry out to the fullest all His beneficence?" It is God's wish that the oppressed should go free, yet there are many oppressed who are not free. It is God's wish that the sick should not suffer. Do you doubt it? Is it not your own wish? And yet the Lord does not work a miracle to heal every sick person. It is God's wish that His creatures should be happy. Do you deny that? He does not interpose by any miraculous agency to make us all happy and yet it would be wicked to suppose that He does not wish the happiness of all the creatures that He has made. He has an infinite benevolence which, nevertheless, is not in all points worked out by His infinite Omnipotence and if anybody asked me why it is not, I cannot tell.

I have never set up to be an explainer of all difficulties and I have no desire to do so. It is the same old question as that of the American slave who said, "Sir, you say the devil makes sin in the world." "Yes, the devil makes a deal of sin." "And you say that God hates sin." "Yes." "Then why

does not He kill the devil and put an end to it?" Just so. Why doesn't He? Ah, my black Friend, you will grow white before that question is answered! I cannot tell you why God permits moral evil, neither can the ablest philosopher on earth, nor the highest angel in Heaven! This is one of those things which we do not *need* to know. Have you never noticed that some people who are ill and are ordered to take pills are foolish enough to chew them? That is a very nauseous thing to do, though I have done it myself. The right way to take medicine of such a kind is to swallow it at once.

In the same way there are some things in the Word of God which are undoubtedly true which must be swallowed at once by an effort of faith and must not be chewed by perpetual questioning. You will soon have I know not what of doubt and difficulty and bitterness upon your soul if you must know the unknowable and have reasons and explanations for the sublime and the mysterious! Let the difficult doctrines go down whole into your very soul by a grand exercise of confidence in God! I thank God for a thousand things I cannot understand. When I cannot get to know the reason why, I say to myself, "Why should *I* know the reason why? Who am I and what am I, that I should demand explanations of my God?" I am a most unreasonable being when I am most reasonable and when my judgment is most accurate I dare not trust it. I had rather trust my God.

I am a poor silly child at my very best—my Father must know better than I. An old parable maker tells us that he shut himself up in his study because he had to work out a difficult problem. His little child came knocking at the door and he said, "Go away, John—you cannot understand what Father is doing. Let Father alone." Master Johnny, for that very reason, felt that he must get in and see what Father was doing—a true symbol of our proud intellects! We must pry into forbidden things and uncover that which is concealed. In a little while, there, upon the sill, outside the window, stood Master Johnny looking in through the window at his father! And if his father had not, with most tender care, taken Master Johnny away from that very dangerous position, there would have been no Master Johnny left on the face of the earth to exercise his curiosity in dangerous elevations!

Now, God sometimes shuts the door and says, "My child, it is so. Be content to believe." "But," we foolishly cry, "Lord, *why* is it so?" "It is so, My child," He says. "But why, Father, is it so?" "It is so, My child. Believe Me." Then we go speculating, climbing the ladders of reasoning, guessing, to reach the lofty windows of eternal Truth. Once up there we do not know where we are! Our heads reel and we are in all kinds of uncertainty and spiritual peril. If we mind things too high for us we shall run great risks. I do not intend meddling with such lofty matters. There stands the text and I believe that it is my Father's *wish* that "all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth."

But I know, also, that He does not *will* it, so that He will not save any of them unless they believe in His dear Son, for He has told us over and over that He will not. He will not save any man unless he forsakes his sins and turns to Him with full purpose of heart—that I also know. And I know, too, that He has a people whom He will save, whom by His eternal love He has chosen and whom, by His eternal power, He will deliver. I do not know

how that squares with this—that is another of the things I do not know. If I go on telling you of all that I do not know and of all that I do know, I will guarantee you that the things that I do not know will be a hundred to one of the things that I do know!

And so we will say no more about the matter, but just go on to the more practical part of the text. God's wish about man's salvation is this—that men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the Truth of God. Men are saved and the same men that are saved come to a knowledge of the Truth. The two things happen together and the two facts very much depend upon each other. God's way of saving men is not by leaving them in ignorance. It is by a *knowledge* of the Truth of God that men are saved. This will make up the main body of our discourse and, in closing, we shall see how this Truth gives instruction to those who wish to be saved and also to those who desire to save others. May the Holy Spirit make these closing inferences to be practically useful.

Here is our proposition—IT IS BY A KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH THAT MEN ARE SAVED. Observe that stress is laid upon the article—it is *the* truth (Truth of God) and not every truth. Though it is a good thing to know the truth about anything and we ought not to be satisfied to take up with a falsehood upon any point, yet it is not *every* truth that will save us. We are not saved by knowing any one theological truth we may choose to think of, for there are some theological truths which are comparatively of inferior value. They are not vital or essential and a man may know them and yet may not be saved. It is the Truth which saves. Jesus Christ is the Truth! The whole testimony of God about Christ is the Truth of God!

The work of the Holy Spirit in the heart is to work in us the Truth of God. The knowledge of the Truth is a large knowledge. It is not always so at the first. It may begin with but a little knowledge, but it is a large knowledge when it is further developed and the soul is fully instructed in the whole range of the Truth of God. This knowledge of the grand facts which are here called, the Truth, saves men and we will notice its mode of operation. Very often it begins its work in a man by awakening him and thus it saves him from carelessness. He did not know anything about the Truth which God has revealed and so he lived like a brute beast. If he had enough to eat and to drink, he was satisfied. If he laid by a little money he was delighted. So long as the days passed pretty merrily and he was free from aches and pains, he was satisfied.

He heard about religion, but he thought it did not concern him. He supposed that there were some people who might be the better for thinking about it, but as far as *he* was concerned, he thought no more about God or godliness than the ox of the stall or the ostrich of the desert. Well, the Truth of God came to him and he received a knowledge of it. He knew only a part and that a very dark and gloomy part of it, but it stirred him out of his carelessness, for he suddenly discovered that he was under the wrath of God. Perhaps he heard a sermon, or read a tract, or had a practical word addressed to him by some Christian friend and he found out enough to know that, "He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed on the Son of God."

That startled him. "God is angry with the wicked every day"—that amazed him. He had not thought of it; perhaps had not known it—but when he did know it—he could rest no longer. Then he came to a knowledge of this farther Truth of God, that after death there would be a judgment—that he would rise again and that, being risen, he would have to stand before the Judgment Seat of God to give an account of the things which he had done in his body. This came home very strikingly to him. Perhaps, also, such a text as this flamed forth before him—"For every idle word that man shall speak he must give an account in the Day of Judgment." His mind began to foresee that last tremendous day when on the clouds of Heaven Christ will come and summon the quick and the dead to answer at His Judgment Seat for the whole of their lives.

He did not know that before, but, knowing it, it startled and awakened him! I have known men, when they have first come to a knowledge of this Truth of God, become unable to sleep. They have started up in the night. They have asked those who were with them to help them to pray. The next day they have been scarcely able to mind their business, for a dreadful sound has been in their ears. They feared lest they should stumble into the grave and into Hell! Thus they were saved from carelessness. They could not go back to be the mere brute beasts they were before. Their eyes had been opened to futurity and eternity. Their spirits had been quickened—at least so much that they could not rest in that dull, dead carelessness in which they had formerly been found. They were shaken out of their deadly lethargy by a knowledge of the Truth of God!

The Truth is useful to a man in another way—it saves him from prejudice. Often when men are awakened to know something about the wrath of God they begin to plunge about to discover methods by which they may escape from that wrath. Consulting, first of all, with themselves, they think that if they can reform—give up their grosser sins—and if they can join with religious people, they will make it all right. And there are some who go and listen to a kind of religious teacher who says, "You must do good works. You must *earn* a good character. You must add to all this the ceremonies of our church. You must be particular and precise in receiving blessings only through the appointed channel of the Apostolic succession."

Of the aforesaid mystical succession, this teacher has the effrontery to assure his dupe that he is a legitimate instrument and that sacraments received at his hands are means of Grace. Under such untruthful notions we have known people who were somewhat awakened, sit down, again, in a false peace. They have done all that they judged right and attended to all that they were told. Suddenly, by God's Grace, they come to a knowledge of another Truth of God and that is that by the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in the sight of God! They discover that salvation is *not* by works of the Law or by ceremonies and that if any man is under the Law, he is also under the curse. Such a text as the following comes home, "Not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

And such another text as this, "You must be born again." And then this at the back of it—"That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which

is born of the Spirit is spirit.” When they also find out that there is a righteousness better than their own which is necessary—a *perfect* righteousness to justify them before God—and when they discover that they must be made new creatures in Christ Jesus, or else they will utterly perish, *then* they are saved from false confidences, saved from crying, “Peace, peace,” when there is no peace! It is a grand thing when a knowledge of the Truth of God stops us from trusting in a lie!

I am addressing some who remember when they were saved in that way. What an opening of the eyes it was to you! You had a great prejudice against the Gospel of Grace and the plan of salvation by faith. But when the Lord took you in hand and made you see your beautiful righteousness to be a moth-eaten mass of rags and when the gold that you had accumulated suddenly turned into so much brass, cankered and good for nothing—when you stood stripped naked before God and the poor cobwebs of ceremonies suddenly dropped off you, oh, then the Lord was working His salvation in your soul and you were being saved from false confidences by a knowledge of the Truth of God!

Moreover, it often happens that a knowledge of the Truth stands a man in good stead for another purpose—it saves him from despair. Unable to be careless and unable to find comfort in false confidences, some poor agitated minds are driven into a wide and stormy sea without rudder or compass, with nothing but wreck before them. “There is no hope for me,” says the man. “I perceive I cannot save myself. I see that I am lost. I am dead in trespasses and sins and cannot stir hand or foot. Surely, I may as well go on in sin and even multiply my transgressions. The gate of Mercy is shut against me—what is the use of fear where there is no room for hope?”

At such a time, if the Lord leads the man to a knowledge of His Truth, he perceives that though his sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool and though they are red like crimson they shall be as white as snow! That precious doctrine of Substitution comes in—that Christ stood in the place of the sinner; that the transgression of His people was laid upon Him and that God, by thus avenging sin in the Person of His dear Son and honoring His Law by the suffering of the Savior, is now able to declare pardon to the penitent and Grace to the believing!

Now, when the soul comes to know that sin is put away by the atoning blood—when the heart discovers that it is not *our* life that saves us, but the life of God that comes to *dwell in us*—that we are not to be regenerated by our own actions, but are regenerated by the Holy Spirit who comes to us through the precious death of Jesus, then despair flies away and the soul cries exultingly, “There is hope! There is hope! Christ died for sinners—why should I not have a part in that precious death? He came like a physician to heal the sick—why should He not heal me? Now I perceive that He does not want my goodness, but my badness! He does not need my righteousness, but my unrighteousness, for He came to save the ungodly and to redeem His people from their sins!” I say, when the heart comes to a knowledge of *this* Truth of God, then it is saved from despair and this is no small part of the salvation of Jesus Christ!

A saving knowledge of the Truth, to take another line of things, works in this way. A knowledge of the Truth shows a man his personal *need* of being saved. O you that are not saved and who dream you do not need to be, you only require to know the Truth of God and you will perceive that you must be saved or lost forever! A knowledge of the Truth reveals the Atonement by which we are saved! A knowledge of the Truth shows us what that faith is by which the Atonement becomes available for us. A knowledge of the Truth teaches us that faith is the simple act of trusting, that it is not an action of which man may boast—it is not an action of the nature of a *work*, so as to be a fruit of the Law—but faith is a self-denying Grace which finds all its strength in Him upon whom it lives and lays all its honor upon Him.

Faith is not self in action but self *forsaken*, self *abhorred*, self put away that the soul may trust in Christ and trust in Christ alone! There are persons now present who are puzzled about what faith is. We have tried to explain it a great many times to you, but we have explained it so that you did not understand it any the better. And yet the same explanation has savingly instructed others! May God the Holy Spirit open *your* understandings that you may practically know what faith is and at once exercise it. I suppose that it is a very hard thing to understand because it is so plain. When a man wishes the way of salvation to be difficult, he naturally kicks at it because it is easy. And, when his pride wants it to be hard to be understood, he is pretty sure to say that he does not understand it because it is so plain.

Don't you know that the unlettered often receive Christ when philosophers refuse Him and that He who has not called many of the great and many of the mighty, has chosen poor, foolish and despised things? That is because poor foolish men, you know, are willing to believe a plain thing, but men wise in their own conceits desire to be, if they can, a little confounded and puzzled that they may please themselves with the idea that their own superior intellect has made a discovery and, because the way of salvation is just so easy that almost an idiot boy may lay hold of it, therefore they pretend that they do not understand it!

Some people cannot see a thing because it is too high up. But there are others who cannot see it because it is too low down. Now, it so happens that the way of salvation by faith is so simple that it seems beneath the dignity of exceedingly clever men. May God bring them to a knowledge of this Truth! May they see that they cannot be saved except by giving up all idea of saving themselves! May they see that they cannot be saved except they step right into Christ, for, until they get to the end of the *creature*, they will never get to the beginning of the Creator! Till they empty out their pockets of every moldy crust and have not a crumb left, they cannot come and take the rich mercy which is stored up in Christ Jesus for every empty, needy sinner! May the Lord be pleased to give you that knowledge of His Truth!

When a man comes, in very deed, to a knowledge of the Truth of God about faith in Christ, he trusts Christ and he is then and there saved from the guilt of sin and he begins to be saved altogether from sin. God cuts the root of the power of sin that very day, but yet it has such life within it—

self that at the scent of water it will bud again. Sin in our members struggles to live. It has as many lives as a cat—there is no killing it. Now, when we come to a knowledge of the Truth, we begin to learn how sin is to be killed in us—how the same Christ that justifies, sanctifies and works in us according to His working—works in us mightily that we may be conformed to His image and made meet to dwell with perfect saints above.

Beloved, many of you that are saved from the guilt of sin have a very hard struggle with the power of sin and have much more conflict, perhaps, than you need to have, because you have not come to a knowledge of all the Truth about indwelling sin. I therefore beg you to study much the Word of God upon that point and especially to see the adaptation of Christ to rule over your nature and to conquer all your corrupt desires and learn how, by faith, to bring each sin before Him that, like Agag, it may be hewed in pieces before His eyes. You will never overcome sin except by the blood of the Lamb! There is no sanctification except by faith. The same instrument which destroys sin as to its guilt must slay sin as to its power. “They overcame by the blood of the Lamb,” and so must you. Learn this Truth well, and you shall find salvation worked in you from day to day.

Now, I think I hear somebody say, “I think I know all about this.” Yes, you may think you know it and may not know anything at all about it! “Oh, but,” says one, “I do know it. I learned the ‘Assembly’s Catechism’ when I was a child. I have read the Bible ever since and I am well acquainted with all the commonplaces of orthodoxy.” That may be, dear Friend, and yet you may not know the Truth of God. I have heard of a man who knew how to swim, but, as he had never been in the water, I do not think much of his knowledge of swimming. In fact, he did not really know the art. I have heard of a botanist who understood all about flowers, but as he lived in London and scarcely ever saw above one poor withered thing in a flowerpot, I do not think much of his botany.

I have heard of a man who was a very great astronomer, but he had not a telescope and I never thought much of his astronomy. So there are many persons who *think* they know and yet do *not* know because they have never had any personal acquaintance with the thing. A mere notional knowledge or a dry doctrinal knowledge is of no use. We must know the Truth of God in a very different way from that. How are we to know it, then? Well, we are to know it, first, by a *believing* knowledge. You do not know a thing unless you believe it to be really so. If you doubt it, you do not know it. If you say, “I really am not sure it is true,” then you cannot say that you know it. That which the Lord has revealed in Holy Scripture you must devoutly believe to be true.

In addition to this, your knowledge, if it becomes believing knowledge, must be *personal* knowledge—a persuasion that it is true in reference to *yourself*. It is true about your neighbor, about your brother, but you must believe it about yourself, or your knowledge is vain! For instance, you must know that *you* are lost—that you are in danger of eternal exclusion from the Presence of God. You must *know* that, for you, there is no hope but in Christ—that for you there is hope if you rest in Christ—that resting in Christ you are saved. Yes, you! *You* must know that because you have

trusted in Christ you are saved and that now you are free from condemnation and that now, in you, the new life has begun which will fight against the old life of sin until it overcomes and you, even you, are safely landed on the golden shore! There must be a *personal* appropriation of what you believe to be true. That is the kind of knowledge which saves the soul.

And this must be a *powerful* knowledge, by which I mean that it must operate in and upon your *mind*. A man is told that his house is on fire. I will suppose that standing here, I held up a telegram and said, "My Friend, is your name So-and-So?" "Yes." "Well, your house is on fire." He knows the fact, does he not? Yes, but he sits quite still. Now, my impression about that good Brother is that he does *not* know, for he does not believe it. He cannot believe it! Surely he may believe that *somebody's* house is on fire, but not his own. If it is his house which is burning and he knows it, what does he do? Why he gets up and goes off to see what he can do towards saving his goods! That is the kind of knowledge which saves the soul—when a man knows the Truth of God about himself and, therefore, his whole nature is moved and affected by the knowledge!

Do I know that I am in danger of Hell fire? And am I in my senses? Then I shall never rest till I have escaped from that danger! Do I know that there is salvation for me in Christ? Then I never shall be content until I have obtained that salvation by the faith to which that salvation is promised—that is to say, if I really am in my senses and if my sin has not made me beside myself as sin does. For sin works a moral madness upon the mind of man so that he puts bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter and dances on the jaws of Hell and sits down and scoffs at Almighty mercy. He despises the precious blood of Christ and will have none of it, although then and there, only, is His salvation to be found! This knowledge, when it really comes to save the soul, is what we call experimental knowledge—knowledge acquired, according to the exhortation of the Psalmist, "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good"—acquired by tasting.

Now, at this present moment, I, speaking for myself, know that I am originally lost by nature. Do I believe it? Believe it? I am as sure of it as I am of my own existence! I know that I am lost by nature. It would not be possible for anybody to make me doubt that. I have felt it. How many weary days I spent under the pressure of that knowledge! Does a soldier know that there is such a thing as a cat when he has had a hundred lashes? It would take a deal of argument to make him believe there is not such a thing, or that backs do not smart when they feel the lash. Oh, how my soul smarted under the lash of conscience when I suffered under a sense of sin!

Do I know that I couldn't save myself? Know it? Why, my poor, struggling heart labored this way and that, even as in the very fire with bitter disappointment, for I labored to climb to the stars on a tread wheel and I was trying and trying and trying with all my might but never rose an inch higher! I tried to fill a bottomless tub with leaking buckets and worked on and toiled and slaved but never accomplished even the beginning of my unhappy task! I *know*, for I have tried it, that salvation is *not* in man, or in all the feelings and weeping and prayers and Bible reading and Church goings and Chapel goings which zeal could crowd together! Nothing what-

ever that man does can do any good for him towards his own salvation. This I know by sad trial of it and failure in it.

But I do know that there is real salvation by believing in Christ. Know it? I have never preached to you concerning that subject what I do not know by experience! In a moment, when I believed in Christ, I leaped from despair to fullness of delight! Since I have believed in Jesus I have found myself totally changed altogether from what I was and I find, now, that in proportion as I trust in Jesus, I love God and try to serve Him! But if at any time I begin to trust in myself, I forget my God and I become selfish and sinful. Just as I keep on being *nothing* and taking Christ to be *everything*, so am I led in the paths of righteousness!

I am talking of myself because a man cannot bear witness about other people so thoroughly as he can about himself. I am sure that all of you who have tried my Master can bear the same witness. You have been saved and you have come to a knowledge of the Truth of God *experimentally*. And every soul here that would be saved must, in the same way, believe the Truth, appropriate the Truth, act upon the Truth and experimentally know the Truth which is summed up in few words—"Man lost—Christ His Savior. Man nothing—God All in All. The heart depraved—the Spirit working the new life by faith." The Lord grant that these Truths of God may come home to your hearts with power! I am now going to draw two inferences which are to be practical.

The first one is this—in regard TO YOU THAT ARE SEEKING SALVATION. Does not the text show you that it is very possible that the reason why you have not found salvation is because you do not know the Truth of God? Therefore, I do most earnestly entreat the many of you young people who cannot get rest to be very diligent searchers of your Bibles. The first thing and the main thing is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, but if you say, "I do not understand it," or, "I cannot believe," or if there is any such doubt rising in your mind, then it may be because you have not gained complete knowledge of the Truth of God.

It is very possible that somebody will say to you, "Believe, believe, believe." I would say the same to you, but I should like you to act upon the commonsense principle of knowing *what* is to be believed and in *whom* you are to believe. I explained this to one who came to me a few evenings ago. She said that she could not believe. "Well," I said, "now suppose, as you sit in that chair, I say to you, 'Young Friend, I cannot believe in you.' You would say to me, 'I think you should.' Suppose I then replied, 'I wish I could.' What would you bid me do? Should I sit still and look at you till I said, 'I think I can believe in you'?" That would be ridiculous! No, I should go and inquire, 'Who is this young person? What kind of character does she bear? What are her connections?' And when I knew all about you, then I have no doubt that I would say, 'I have made examination into this young woman's character and I cannot help believing her.'"

Now, it is just so with Jesus Christ. If you say, "I cannot believe in Him," read those four blessed testimonies of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and especially linger much over those parts where they tell you of His death. Do you know that many, while they have been sitting, as it were, at the foot of the Cross viewing the Son of God dying for men, have

cried out, "I cannot help believing! I cannot help believing! When I see my sin, it seems too great, but when I see my Savior, my iniquity vanishes away"?

I think I have put it to you, sometimes, like this—if you take a ride through London, from end to end, it will take you many days to get an idea of its vastness, for probably none of us know the size of London. After your long ride of inspection you will say, "I wonder how those people can all be fed. I cannot make it out. Where does all the bread come from and all the butter and all the cheese and all the meat and everything else? Why, these people will be starved! It is not possible that Lebanon with all its beasts and the vast plains of Europe and America should ever supply sufficient food for all this multitude."

That is your feeling. And then, tomorrow morning you get up and you go to Covent Garden. You go to the great meat markets and to other sources of supply and when you come home you say, "I feel quite different now, for now I cannot make out where all the people will come from to eat all these provisions—I never saw so much food in all my life! Why, if there were two Londons, surely there is enough, here, to feed them." Just so—when you think about your sins and your needs, you get to saying, "How can I be saved?" Now, turn your thoughts the other way! Think that Christ is the Son of God! Think of what the merit must be of the Incarnate God's bearing human guilt! And instead of saying, "My sin is too great," you will almost think the atoning Sacrifice too great! Therefore I urge you to try and know more of Christ and I am only giving you the advice of Isaiah, "Incline your ear and come unto Me; hear and your soul shall live."

Know, hear, read and believe more about these precious things, always with this wish—"I am not hearing for hearing's sake and I am not wishing to know for knowing's sake, but I am wanting to hear and to know that I may be saved." I want you to be like the woman that lost her piece of silver. She did not light a candle and then say, "Bravo, I have lit a candle, that is enough!" She did not take her broom and then sit down content, crying, "What a splendid broom!" When she raised a dust she did not exclaim, "What a dust I am making! I am surely making progress now!"

Some poor sinners, when they have been seeking, get into a dust of soul-trouble and think it to be a comfortable sign. No, I'll guarantee you, the woman wanted her coin—she did not mind the broom, or the dust, or the candle—she looked for the silver! So it must be with you. Never content yourself with the reading, the hearing, or the feeling. It is Christ you need! It is the precious piece of money that you must find! And you must sweep until you find it. Why, there it is! There is Jesus! Take Him! Take Him! Believe Him now, even now, and you are saved!

The last inference is for YOU WHO DESIRE TO SAVE SINNERS. You must, dear Friends, bring the Truth before them when you want to bring them to Jesus Christ. I believe that exciting meetings do good to some. Men are so dead and careless that almost *anything* is to be tolerated that wakes them up. But for real solid soul-work before God, telling men the Truth of God is the main thing. What Truth of God? It is Gospel Truth—Truth about Christ that they need. Tell it in a loving, earnest, affectionate

way, for God wills that they should be saved, not in any other way, but in this way—by a knowledge of the Truth of God.

He wills that all men should be saved in this way—not by keeping them in ignorance, but by bringing the Truth of God before them. That is God’s way of saving them. Have your Bible handy when you are reasoning with a soul. Just say, “Let me call your attention to this passage.” It has a wonderful power over a poor staggering soul to point to the Book, itself. Say, “Did you notice this promise, my dear Friend? And have you seen that passage?” Have the Scriptures handy. There is a dear Brother of mine here whom God blesses to many souls and I have seen him talking to some and turning to the texts very handily. I wondered how he did it so quickly, till I looked in his Bible and found that he had the choice texts printed on two leaves and inserted into the Bible so that he could always open to them.

That is a capital plan, to get the cheering words ready to hand, the very ones that you know have comforted you and have comforted others! It sometimes happens that one single verse of God’s Word will make the light to break into a soul when 50 days of reasoning would not do it. I notice that when souls are saved, it is by our *texts* rather than by our sermons. God the Holy Spirit loves to use His own Sword! It is God’s Word, not man’s comment on God’s Word, that God usually blesses. Therefore, stick to the quotation of the Scripture, itself, and rely upon the Truth of God. If a man could be saved by a lie it would be a lying salvation. Only the Truth of God can work results that are true. Therefore, keep on teaching the Truth! God help you to proclaim His precious Truths about the bleeding, dying, risen, exalted, coming Savior and God will bless it.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON

DEAR FRIENDS—Accept, again, my heartiest salutations. I hope soon to issue sermons preached at home on the previous Sabbaths, for I purpose, if the Lord wills, to leave this shelter on February 2, or thereabouts. Six weeks of continuous fine weather have, by God’s blessing, delivered me from my pains and enabled me to regain a large measure of strength. And the daily good tidings from home have also helped to quiet my mind and revive my spirit. O that I may be the better for this affliction! As after heavy showers the fountains and brooks run with new force and fullness, so may it be with these sermons, now that, with me, “the rain is over and gone.” If you, dear Readers, are the more refreshed I shall count pain and weakness to be a small cost for so blessed a result.

Yours most heartily,

C. H. SPURGEON

Mentone, January 16, 1880

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

WHAT THE CHURCH SHOULD BE NO. 1436

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 29, 1878,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“That you may know how you ought to behave yourself in the house of God,
which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and basement of the Truth.”
1 Timothy 3:15.*

PAUL'S design in this Epistle was to instruct young Timothy how he should behave himself in the Church of God, so as to discharge his office as minister, evangelist and pastor with honor to himself and profit to the people. He reminds him that the Church is the house of God and in God's own house a man ought to be upon his best behavior, for it is no light thing to draw near unto the Lord. A poor man who is called to visit a prince or king will anxiously enquire how he ought to act. We, poor creatures that we are, when we are admitted into the Church which is the house of God, should enquire what conduct will be decorous and comely in those who are admitted into the Presence of the great King and permitted to dwell within His palace gates.

Especially should each of us endeavor to behave himself aright in the house of God if we know that we are looked up to and imitated. All who teach the young, all who are parents, all who are persons of age and experience, all who occupy influential positions and especially all deacons, elders and preachers should pray the Lord that they may know how they may behave themselves in the house of God, lest inadvertently their misbehavior should be injurious to the weaker sort. Such need to learn how they should behave to their brethren, to the Elder Brother and to the great Father of all. We need to learn the ways of the house, the customs of the palace.

Part of the objective of the sermon this morning will be that those of us who are in the house of God may learn how we should behave in it—but special prominence will be given to steadfastness in the faith which makes a man not only a dweller in the Church but a pillar of it. I am not going to trouble you, this morning, with the various interpretations which have been given to the passage before us. It has been a sort of Plain of Esdraelon, where battles have been fought from time immemorial. Many suggestions have been made as to its interpretation, so as to avoid the sense given in our version because that sense has been perverted into a defense of the Romish church. It seems to me, however, looking at it as carefully as I am able to do, that our translation is about the best possible one and I feel sure that it has in it the mind of God.

Probably the sense would never have been disputed if it had not been for the controversies which have arisen in which this verse has been misused and misrepresented. I am rather suspicious of interpretations which arise out of controversies. What have we to do with giving either a Protestant or a Catholic sense to Scripture? Is it not our duty to give the *true*

sense, be it what it may? There can never be any justification for twisting Scripture in order to wrench it out of an enemy's hand. Nor is there any need in this case, even if it were allowable! In vain has the Romish church tried to gather from this verse that she is the great source of truth, for the passage can never apply to her, since she has utterly gone aside from the Truth of God and is described by the Apostle in the verses which follow the text as departing from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, forbidding to marry and so forth.

Popery or no popery, let us take the Word of God in its natural and evident meaning, and we shall be instructed thereby. May God the Holy Spirit enable us to understand His own word.

I. First, I shall at some length expound the text, and then try to enforce the lesson from it. In expounding it, I see three things to note, and the first is THE GLORIOUS NAME OF THE CHURCH—"The Church of the living God." First, it is called the Church. What is a church? It is an assembly—and a Christian Church is an assembly of faithful men—of men who know the Truth of God, believe it, acknowledge it boldly and adhere to it.

The Greek word signifies an assembly summoned out of the whole population to exercise the right of citizenship. An ecclesia, or church, is not a mob, nor a disorderly gathering rushing together without end or purpose, but a regular assembly of persons called out by Grace and gathered together by the Holy Spirit. Those persons make up the assembly of the living God! In order to be a Christian Church, there must be a selection and a calling out—and that calling must come from God who alone can call effectually. Touching all the members of this select assembly there is an eternal purpose which is the original reason of their being called—and to each of them there is an effectual calling whereby they actually gather into the Church.

Then, also, there is a hedging and fencing about of this Church, by which it is maintained as a separate body, distinct from all the rest of mankind. The command which calls them away from the world is very clear—"Come out from among them and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." The Church is not a number of unregenerate people coming together entirely of their own notion to defend such-and-such dogmas. Such persons may form a *club*, but they cannot make a Church! There must be a coming together of renewed men, in the name of Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit—and these must meet for purposes which God Himself ordains—and be joined together after His own fashion.

Jesus must be the uniting cornerstone and His Spirit the indwelling power, as it is written, "In whom you also are built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." But the title grows upon us when we read it as "the Church of God." There is a Synagogue of Satan and there is a Church of God. There are churches so-called which are not of God, though they take upon themselves His name. But what an honor it is to be one of the assembly of God, to be one of those whom God has chosen, whom God has called, whom God has quickened, whom God has sanctified, whom God loves and calls His own! How honored is that assembly in

which He resides! The text speaks not of the church of a country, or of a city, nor of the church of king or prelate, but of the Church of God!

Blessed be God, since Jesus Christ ascended up on high there has never ceased to be a Church of God in the earth, generally hidden and concealed, often persecuted and always despised, yet still living! This Church, like its Lord, has been more often found among the poor than among the rich, more frequently confessing at the stake than honored in the palace. Still has she been present bearing witness for the Truth of God even in the darkest times. There has been left to us a remnant, according to the election of Grace, in every age—I speak not, now, of this denomination nor of that—but of the truly spiritual people who have witnessed faithfully in the life and power of God to the Truth of God as it is in Jesus. This is the Church of God!

The title is enhanced in its excellency by the word which is applied to God. It is, “The Church of the living God”—not *your* congregation, O Diana, though they said of you that you did fall from Heaven, for you are a lifeless image! What was Diana of the Ephesians? What life or power was in that senseless block? Timothy knew that the assembly which gathered in the name of Diana was not called out by a living god. Brethren, it is a glorious fact that our God, the God of the Church, lives and reigns, and that He shows His life all around us! We see Him sustaining Nature, ruling Providence and reigning in the midst of His Church! And while we see Him we adore Him. Jehovah is the living God and the Divine Life is seen in each of the adorable Persons of the Godhead. Our Lord Jesus Christ is not to us a dead Christ—we love and bless Him because He once died upon the Cross—and we adore Him because He always lives to make intercession for us!

We are bold to preach the Gospel because of His living power and we are earnest to observe His commands because we acknowledge His living government in the midst of the Church. The living God proves His life among us by the Holy Spirit, by the conversion of sinners, by comforting and instructing saints and by edifying the faithful into a building fitly framed together. Since, then, the Church belongs to the living God, what is a dead church? Is that the church of the living God? How can it be? Only as you and I possess the Spirit of God quickening us to a life of godliness may we dare to think ourselves a part of the Church of the living God! If you have never been quickened by the Spirit of God; if you are dead in trespasses and sins, what have you to do with the Church of the living God?

O you dead and corrupt, how can you have communion with the living in Zion?! Only when you live unto God may you be built up as living stones into the living Temple of the living God! The thing most to be dreaded in any one Church is the decay of life. We may soon fall into formalism and even hold the Truth in the cold grip of spiritual death! Prayer may be neglected and the other offices of spiritual life may be disregarded and then all will languish. “You have the name that you live and are dead” is the dreadful sentence which must be written across the brow of a merely nominal church! Brethren, if we would be the Church of the living God, we must be thoroughly alive unto God!

What an august body is this Church of the living God! Where do I see it? I say not that I see the whole of it, for as yet this bride of Christ is in the making. As Adam saw not Eve until she was perfected and, therefore, we cannot suppose that she saw herself, so we see no visible embodiment of the entire Church of Christ nor shall we see it until Christ shall come a second time and shall present her unto Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. Today we must walk very much by faith as to the Church of Christ, for her members are yet being fashioned and are best discerned by spiritual men. Happy are we if we are members of that Church, yes, members of Christ Himself by the living faith which unites us to the living God!

Never let us speak disrespectfully of the Church of God, nor think of her with other than love and with intense devotion to her interests, for she belongs to God! Let us pray for her peace and prosperity, since she is the City of the great King. Let us ask the Lord daily to make His own Church more and more visible and powerful in the midst of mankind, that she may come forth "fair as the moon, clear as the sun and terrible as an army with banners."

II. Now, secondly we will consider HER DESIGN IN REFERENCE TO GOD. The Apostle speaks of the Church of the living God as the house of God. This is a very beautiful and instructive figure. "The Most High dwells not in temples made with hands," whether they are called cathedrals, churches, or meeting houses. Today there is no consecrated shrine, no appointed building where we must resort if we would meet with God, for behold the Lord is to be found everywhere by those who worship Him in spirit and in truth! True hearts view the entire universe as a temple wherein everyone speaks of the Glory of God. Yet there is a shrine and a temple, but it is living and spiritual—the called-out assembly—the Church of the living God is the special abode of Deity.

I suppose we are to understand, first, by the Church being God's house, that it is the place of His worship. As of old the temple was the holy place to which the children of Israel went up in pilgrimage, the point towards which they opened their windows when they prayed and the place of the one altar and the one sacrifice. So now the Church of God is the only place of God's true worship. He is spiritually worshipped nowhere else. They who were never called and never quickened by Him may *pretend* to worship Him, but what is dead worship to the *living* God? They may profess to serve Him with gorgeous ceremonies, smoking incense and harmonious music—but what is this to Him who is a Spirit and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth?

It is only where men are spiritual that there can be spiritual worship! It is only with their love, their trust and joy in the name of Jesus and with their prayers and praises presented by the power of the Holy Spirit that God is to be worshipped at all! Do not dream, you ungodly, that you can worship the living God! The first essential to your acceptance is that you accept His salvation. Be first reconciled to Him by the death of His Son—for how shall His enemies present to Him acceptable praises? You must become a part of the living Church by being born again, or else you cannot worship the Lord at all!

But I like better, still, to get away from the somewhat ceremonious idea of a *temple* to the more familiar thought of a house or home. The Lord makes the Church the place of His indwelling. The thought, itself, is charming. It is that old prophecy fulfilled, "I will dwell in them and walk in them." God calls His Church a house in the sense of His residing there! He is everywhere, but His special resort, the place of His feet, the home of His heart, is His called-out congregation, His elect, redeemed, regenerated, sanctified Church! Does not this invest Believers with a wondrous dignity, that God should dwell in them? "Know you not that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit?" God dwells in you! If you are, indeed, quickened of the Spirit, the Spirit abides in you and shall be with you forever!

Of the Church we read, "God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved." In his own house, a man not only dwells, for he might do that in any inn—but there he feels himself to be at home and, therefore, it is the place of his manifestation. You do not see the real man on the bench, for there you see a judge—nor on business, for there you see a trader—but at home with the children! As one of them, you see the man, the father, the husband! You see his heart and soul. And God is not seen in all the universe with anything like the degree of clearness that He is beheld in the midst of His people! The Lord God is more gloriously manifested in His people than in all the works of creation.

First, in the Person of His Son He has revealed Himself right gloriously! And then in all those who are united to His Son, He manifests Himself to us as He does not unto the world. Oh, what unbending of Divine majesty have we seen! What unveilings of the incomprehensible! What revelations of the infinite has the Lord caused to pass before His Church! "I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet unto my taste." "He brought me into the banqueting house and His banner over me was love." It is in the midst of His Church that we see our Lord and are glad! A man's house is, also, the place of his paternal rule. In the Church we are under the present rule of our heavenly Father.

In the Church of God you will sometimes see this very remarkably. I believe that when Paul said, concerning certain offenses in the Church, "For this cause some are sickly among you and many sleep," he gave us a hint of the remarkable discipline which the great Head of the house exerts over Church members. I do not say over members of all churches, but I say that among members of pure churches there is a solemn discipline going on, for the Lord is jealous over His house and He will be sanctified in them that come near unto Him. Therefore "be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord."

If a man is a father, he expects that his word should rule his household. In the blessed household of God our Father, our Lord is the only ruler! In God's house we know no Law but God's Law and we acknowledge no legislator but Jesus, who said, "One is your Master, even Christ, and all you are brethren." Blessed is that rule and blessed are they who submit to it, obeying His commandments, listening to the voice of His Word! God grant us Grace to stand up for the crown rights of King Jesus and the paternal authority of God in His own Church! And never may we idolize

any merely human authority in the Church, however long the usurpation may have continued. If any come among us and speak not according to His Word, let us judge that they have no light in them and let us give no place for subjection to them—no, not for an hour!

Once again, it is for his own house that a man works and spends his strength. It is the object of his choicest purposes. If a man shall compass sea and land to gain gold, it is for his house. If he rises up early and sits up late and eats the bread of carefulness, it is still for his house. And so the great Householder rules all things for His chosen family and the end and the design of all Providence, if we were to trace it to its ultimate objective, is the good of them that love God and are the called according to His purpose! The Lord's people are His portion and His inheritance. Dwelling in them, He regards them as His palace—He looks upon the Church as the eye of the universe, the joy of the earth, the crown of all His works! Towards her His thoughts of love go forth and for her are His Words of Truth and acts of power!

We will not leave this point without observing how holy, then, should all members of Christian Churches be! “Holiness becomes your house.” An unholy member of a Church of the living God?! What shall I say? Let that black stone be wet with tears of penitence this very day and then may it be washed in the blood of Jesus! O members of the Church, is your conduct inconsistent with your profession? Judge yourself and be zealous and repent! All of us may well humble ourselves in the sight of God and ask Him to cleanse us that we may be fit for Him to dwell in. How obedient, also, should we be—for if we are a part of the house of God, let it be our joy to submit ourselves to the Master.

When we were children in the home of a loving father, his rule was not irksome to us—and with such a Father as our God we admit that His Commandments are not grievous. Let us obey carefully and joyfully, each one of us. How struck with awe ought every Church member to be to think that he is built into God's house! Truly, as I enter among the people of God, I feel bound to cry with Jacob, “How dreadful is this place! It is none other than the house of God!” Take not lightly upon yourselves a profession of Christianity! And when you have been baptized into the name of Christ and are united with His Church, see that you walk circumspectly and that you adorn the doctrines of God, your Savior, in all things.

At the same time, how full of love ought we to be, for God *is* Love! A house is no home if love is absent and a Church of the living God is unchurchly if there is division among the Brethren. Is it not written, “The Father Himself loves you”? “Little children, love one another”? “God is love and he that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in Him”? Thus have we spoken upon the design of the Church in reference to God—the tug of war comes in the third place.

III. THE DESIGN OF THE CHURCH IN REFERENCE TO THE TRUTH. Paul compares it to a pillar and its pedestal or *basement*, for that, I think, would be a fair translation. The temple of Diana, at Ephesus, was adorned with more than a hundred columns of stupendous size. They were mostly of Parian marble and were either furnished by the various cities of Asia as

offerings to the goddess, or were contributed by wealthy men and princes. These pillars are said to have been immense monoliths—single stones of 60 feet in height—and they were set upon a basement which was elevated ten steps above the surrounding area.

Diana had her pillar and her basement, but she had no pillar or basement of the Truth of God—hers was all imposture throughout. Now, Paul calls the Church of God the basement and pillar of the Truth. What does He mean? Notice, that she is not the *creator* of the Truth, nor the inventor and fashioner of *doctrine*. You would think from the talk of certain divines, nowadays, that the Church of God must surely be a manufactory of notions, a school of inventions where clever men think out new gospels for new times, or, like spiders, spin out of themselves fresh webs as the old ones are broken!

Our admiration is solicited for those who are “abreast of the times” and who keep pace with the wonderful advance of the 19th Century. Now, the Church of God is not the inventor of the Truth of God—she is the pillar and basement of it! Let it be remembered, also, that the figure must not be pushed beyond what it was meant to teach. In a certain sense the Church *cannot* be the pillar and basement of the Truth. Truth is true of itself and owes its origin to God Himself and the nature of things. The Church is not here described as the deepest foundation of the Truth, for the basement of the pillar of the Truth of God rests on a Rock and the Church rests on God, the Rock of Ages.

But the Truth of God, in itself, is one thing, as truth as existing in the world is another thing! You often hear it said at public meetings that truth is mighty and will prevail. I dare say the proverb is true, but if you put a truth away on the shelf and no man mentions it for ages, it will *not* prevail! Truth never prevails till some living mind believes it, vindicates it and proclaims it abroad. The person who thus takes up a grand Truth of God, declares it, fights for it and makes it known, may be very properly called the pillar and the basis of the cause, for the spread of the principle depends upon him. We may say of the Reformation, Luther was its pillar and basement—or of Methodism the same might be said of Wesley.

Note how, in another place, Paul says that James and Cephas and John seemed to be pillars—that is to say, they held up the good cause. There are men alive at this day of whom we may say, “They are the pillars of the cause,” and in the same sense the Church of God is the pillar and the basement of the Truth of God among mankind. Notice that the text speaks of, “The Church of God,” meaning all the people of God and not the clergy, alone. There is a very grave lesson here. We frequently hear it said, “So-and-So is gone into the church.” Now remember that everybody who has gone into Christ Jesus has gone into the Church, but no one else! The clergy are not the Church! It would be a great pity if they were.

In all Churches of the living God it is a great fault if the whole of the people are not recognized in the work of the Lord, in the affairs of His house and especially in the maintenance of His Truth. As fish are said to stink first at the head, so will you find that the first people to depart from the Truth are those who ought to be the very last, namely, the professed teachers of it! If the people could but speak so as to be heard, we should

not have one-half the heresy which now defiles the house of God! The people are very often put on one side, as if they were not at all to be considered, but were to be managed and catered to by their spiritual lords! Then, alas, these great ones betray the cause and sell Christ as cheaply as Judas did! They mix up the teaching of the Spirit with the conceit of the flesh and become so wise that they refuse to know Christ and Him crucified.

They will not keep to the Scriptures, but dive down into their own thoughts and imaginations till they stir the mud at the bottom of their subjects and do not, themselves, know where they are, nor can any man tell them! Most of the false doctrine in the world has been suggested by those whose very office it is to preach the Truth! Hence the Truth of God is not trusted to the ministry—it is based and pillared upon the whole Church! The poor old bed-ridden Sister who sings of Jesus' everlasting love is quite as much a defender of the faith as an archbishop—perhaps more! The unlettered peasant who knows the doctrines of Grace by deep experience and, therefore, will never let them go, is as true a guardian of the Gospel treasure as the most profound scholar! And perhaps far more so. The whole of you who really love God are set for the maintenance of the Truth of God in the world! Under God the Holy Spirit, the cause of Truth depends upon you—you are its pillar and its basement!

What does the expression mean—the pillar and basement? I think it means, first, that in the Church, the Truth should abide. In the Church of the living God it always *does* abide, even as a pillar stirs not from its place. In the confession of the Church, made by each one of her members; in the teaching of her ministers and in the witness of the whole body, the Truth of God will be found at all times. The Church of God is not the quicksand of the Truth, but the pillar and pedestal of it—she is not the floating island of the Truth, but the eternal column of it. The Church stands steadfast and unmovable as a pillar of Truth fixed on its base. If you find not the Truth of God anywhere else, you will find it in the Church of the living God, which is Truth's castle and stronghold.

“In which church?” you ask. I said in the Church of the living God! I did not say in the Church of England, nor in the Church of Scotland, nor in the Wesleyan Church, nor in the Baptist Church, nor even in the assembly of Exclusive Brethren! But I did say that the Truth of God is as a treasure in the Church of the living God and it is never removed from her keeping! Therefore, if the Truth of God is not maintained by any so-called church, it is not the Church of God! When the Truth of God is given up, everything is given up! The very idea of a Church involves the retaining of the Truth with constant steadfastness and if this is neglected, the so-called church has nothing left in it but the name! As a pillar and its base are always in one place, so will the Church be a fixed, permanent and unalterable column of Gospel Truth—and woe to her if she is not!

Secondly, “the pillar and basement,” means that in the true Church the Truth of God is lifted up as upon a pillar. Truth not only rests there as on a pedestal, but it stands upright as a pillar! It is the duty and the privilege of the Church of God to exalt the Truth into the open view of all mankind. Possibly you may have seen the column of Trajan, or the column in the

Place Vendome in Paris—these may serve as illustrations. Around these shafts you see the victories of the conqueror pictured in relief and lifted into the air, that all may see them.

Now, the Church of God is a pillar which lifts up and publishes, far and wide, the achievements of our conquering Lord! It says to all mankind, “God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into Glory.” I may give an illustration of a pillar being said to speak from our own column commemorating the great fire of London which is popularly called the Monument. It used to bear an inscription to the effect that the papists burned the city, a charge which no one now believes. The poet Pope said of it—

***“Where London’s column, pointing to the skies,
Like a tall bully, lifts its head and lies.”***

Now I shall venture to alter the lines, and say—

***“See Christ’s own Church, still pointing to the sky,
Like a tall champion, lifts His Truth on high.”***

Our Lord never taught us to hide the Gospel in little rooms down back alleys—He would have us come to the front as much as we can! The Church is not a cellar to conceal the Truth of God, but a pillar to display it! “A city set on a hill cannot be hid.” What is there to be ashamed of? We may, ourselves, remain unknown, but we must make the Truth known at all costs. The Church should be like a lighthouse, which is often built as a tall pillar to bear the light at its summit and, like a memorial column which bears a statue upon the top of it, she should lift up the Truth of God before the gaze of all men!

Again, a Church is intended by God to set forth the Truth with beauty, for in a temple, pillars and columns are meant for ornaments as well as for service. The fluted and richly carved pillars of Diana’s temple were the admiration of all who saw them and, in later days they were so esteemed that they were carried to other lands to adorn other edifices—the dome of Santa Sophia, in Constantinople, now rises from columns of green jasper originally placed in the temple of Diana! The Church should adorn the doctrine of God her Savior in all things. His Truth should be emblazoned upon her like an inscription upon a column, so stately as to secure attention and command respect. A living Christian is the best ornament of Christianity—God’s service should be performed in the beauty of holiness.

Once more, it is the Church’s business to maintain the Truth of God with all her might. She is set as a bronze wall and an iron pillar against all error. However men may cringe or bow, there stands the column fast and firm, fixed on its pedestal, set on its base. So should the Church in all ages stand fast to Truth and yield to no error, nor concealment of doctrine, nor change of ordinance! The Church of the Apostles is the model of the Church of today. The pattern of the Church of Christ is not to be found in the popish synagogues of the middle ages, but in the first age when Jesus Christ spoke and said, “Go you, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatever I have com-

manded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

The business of the Church is to uphold, defend, maintain, and propagate the pure doctrines of Christ and His Apostles—and if she fails in this—if in her midst the Truth is not prized, if it is not adorned, if it is not vindicated and proclaimed, the church, so-called, is no longer the pillar of the Truth, but a bowing wall and a tottering fence! Now, I must occupy your time a little longer while I try to enforce a Truth which lies very near my own heart. And I pray God it may lie near the hearts of all His people at this perilous hour.

The Truths of God which may be derived from the text are of one order. The first is that the *whole* Church is to maintain the Truth. Dear Brothers and Sisters, be very zealous for the Gospel, the old, old Gospel of the Grace of God! Be very zealous of the doctrine of Justification by Faith and forgiveness by the Atonement. I speak to you who know the Truth, for you, alone, make up the Church of God. Do not, I beseech you, allow in yourselves an ignorance of God’s Word, but study it and seek to know more and more of it. And what you do know, by the teachings of God’s Spirit, bind about yourselves as a belt never to be loosened!

There are seducing spirits abroad that would deceive, if it were possible, the very elect! Therefore I entreat you to not be beguiled by their exceeding craftiness. Turn not aside from your steadfastness, but abide in the faith! They will tell you that you are bigoted. Never mind them, for in their mouths bigotry is another name for decision of character! The Gospel of salvation is the hope of men, therefore do all you can to make it known! Do not cast in your lot with those who are given to change, but stand in the old paths. It may happen that the wealthier people of the town are in error and it may be for your temporal advantage to join their community—but make no confederacy with false doctrine! Better go to the meanest conventicle and help to maintain the Truth of God than attend the wealthiest congregation where the Gospel is thrown into the background!

I charge you by the living God, in these evil days, to keep yourselves pure from error! A true Church is appointed of God for the conservation of His Truth—and before the Lord, at the foot of the Cross, in the power of the eternal Spirit—we would pray that even unto *death* we may be faithful to our charge! Next, remember that a church is unchurched which is not faithful to the Truth of God. The church of Rome, when she forbade to marry and commanded to abstain from meats, set up also the “mass” in the place of the Sacrifice of Christ and her priests in the place of the one Great High Priest. Then she taught and encouraged idolatry in the worship of images, relics and the like. By all this she unchurched herself and is now described in Scripture, not as the bride of Christ, but as the harlot of Babylon!

She is not the pillar of the Truth, but the grave of it! She was moved by error. She fell from her uprightness. She lies prone in utter ruin, never to be restored. Alas, any church may thus perish! The apostasy of Rome should be a warning to all other Churches of the living God, lest they, also, by little and little become defiled and cease to answer to the Divine

design and are cast away forever! Next, remember that any Church fails in her design as being the pillar and basement of the Truth of God in proportion as she departs from the Truth of God. I therefore do, with all my soul, condemn what I see around me everywhere of disregard to the Truth of God!

It is not merely that men change their views, but that they are becoming indifferent to Truth altogether and seem to think they do God a service when they unsettle the youthful minds of our day! First, we deplore all tampering with Inspiration. The Sacred Volume is scarcely admitted to be Inspired at all, or at best it is said to be inspired in some such moderated sense as Milton or Shakespeare may have been inspired! Then this Book is torn away from Scripture and then the other—and some who ought to know better say, “That portion of the Bible is written for the Jews, but not for us.” And so, by degrees, all the precious Volume is torn from us.

Could the saints in Heaven, who used to feed on the Word of God, return to this lower world, they would be surprised to find that our wise men have questioned almost every Prophet, Evangelist, Psalm and Epistle! Every portion of the Word of God is challenged and the whole of Scripture is assailed—and that by men who continue in what professes to be a Church of the living God! We still hold that the Bible, and the Bible, alone, is the religion of the Christian—and we intend to hold to it all the more because others fall from their steadfastness! Alas, the grand old doctrines of the Gospel are also despoiled! Do you notice, nowadays, how all the great Truths of God are being spirited away? Men use the words, but they mock the ears, for they reject the sense—they hand us nuts—we crack them and we find that the worm of modern thought has eaten out the meat!

The doctrine of the Atonement has, in some cases, been the chief object of assault. Take that away and what is left?! For what purpose is there a Church at all if the Atonement of Jesus Christ is not to be proclaimed by it? Let her die! Why should she live if she has no testimony to bear! If she has no Divine, Infallible message of pardon for the guilty and rest for the weary, let her perish! Listen to the detestable talk of modern ecclesiastics and you will hear them say, “Brethren, your own thoughts are your best guide! The enlightened consciousness of this age will best instruct you. The Bible is our sacred book, but cut out whatever you like, alter whatever you please.

“We will yield anything sooner than be in opposition to the philosophers! Our illiterate predecessors, the fishermen, together with Paul and others, were raw hands at teaching and very unwisely thrust themselves into conflict with the best thought and culture of the period—so that their teaching was to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness—but we know a great deal better! We adapt ourselves to the times and entertain great sympathy for honest doubt. We also know on which side our bread is buttered and we are ready to alter and amend to please the fashion of the hour!” Where this is the talk, there remains no longer a Church of the living God! It is nothing but the name of a church when the doctrines of God’s Infallible Word are trod in the dust!

A church ceases to be a Church of Christ in proportion, also, as she alters the ordinances of God. These must be practiced as they were delivered. When a church rejects the ancient ordinances of Believers' Baptism and the Lord's Supper, her next step is to make new ones! Thus forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from meat are brought in. The first is much vaunted as a means for the production of purity, but how much the priests and monks and nuns have done for purity I leave history to record! Believers' Baptism was thrown to the winds and then baptismal regeneration must be brought in. The Lord's Supper was by far too common and so the "unbloody sacrifice of the 'mass'" was devised! O Church of God, when will you come back to the Law and to the Testimony and follow the mind of Christ and the doings of His Apostles?

Churches also get wrong when they neglect discipline; when they admit into their membership persons who do not even profess to be converted and, I add, when, because of pleasing men, they tolerate in their midst ministers whose teaching is corrupt and full of infidelity! There are preachers, nowadays, who are studiously undermining the faith once delivered to the saints! The Church should separate itself both from wicked persons and from false teachers. She should no more tolerate evil teachers in her pulpits than you would allow a poisoner in your nursery, or a wolf in your sheepfold. God grant that our Churches may rise to their duty, however painful it may be! Yes, may they keep close to the faith, for otherwise they cannot be the pillar and basement of the Truth of God! An unholy, unregenerated church can never be the pillar of the Truth of God. If there is a failure in vital godliness; if humble walking with God is neglected, the Church cannot long remain a healthy Church of God.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, you see how each one of you ought to behave in the Church of God. One part of your behavior is that you abide firm as a pillar. Stand fast! Be strong! You ought to be pillars, especially you who have known the Lord 30 or 40 years. You should stand fast to the Truth of God and I pray that you may. May the Church in Scotland, which of old witnessed to the Gospel, be kept steadfast. Her Covenanting fathers loved the Truth of God and shed their blood for it. May the Lord help their sons to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. May the Churches of our own England also be recovered from their declension and then maintained by the Spirit of God in stern fidelity to the Gospel.

I cannot finish my sermon better than by commending to you the verse which was sung just now by your 5,000 voices—

***"Should all the forms that men devise
Assault my faith with treacherous art,
I'll call them vanity and lies,
And bind the Gospel to my heart."***

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THE CHURCH OF GOD AND THE TRUTH OF GOD NO. 3093

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 21, 1908.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 14, 1856.**

***“The house of God, which is the Church of the living God,
the pillar and ground of the Truth.”
1 Timothy 3:15.***

[This sermon was preached during “The Rivulet Controversy,” of which an account is given in Volume II of C. H. Spurgeon’s Autobiography, in the chapter entitled, “The ‘Down-Grade’ Controversy Foreshadowed.” It was a very long discourse—nearly one-third longer than the twelve pages here given—and although it was delivered more than half a century ago, its message is as timely, now, as it was then.]

WE live in very singular times just now. The professing Church has been flattering itself that, notwithstanding all our divisions with regard to Doctrine, we are all right in the main. A false and spurious liberality has been growing up which has covered us all, so that we have dreamed that all who bear the name of ministers are, indeed, God’s servants—that all who occupy pulpits, of whatever denomination they might be, are entitled to our respect as being stewards of the mystery of Christ. But, lately, the weeds upon the surface of the stagnant pool have been a little stirred and we have been enabled to look down into the depths. This is a day of strife—a day of division—a time of war and fighting between professing Christians! God be thanked for it! Far better that it should be so than that the false calm shall any longer exert its fatal spell over us! The day is come when we must know who are for the Lord and for His Truth—and who are on the side of error! The time is now come when some men, once distinguished among us for the attractiveness of their preaching, must be ranked among those who are opponents of the Truth of God! We did once imagine, in the blindness of our charity, that we all preached one Gospel, but now the enmity of the carnal mind has appeared. Carnal churches have chosen to themselves cruel teachers who have begun to teach strange doctrines which they mystify by their words, garnish with their eloquence and try to support by deceptive logic apart from simple Scripture.

The time is coming when it shall be openly proved who is on the Lord’s side. At this very hour separations are taking place everywhere. We weep for the cause—we do not weep for the effect. We weep that there should have been such heresies growing up in the midst of the Church, but we do not weep when we see those heresies brought out to the day and slaughtered with what some think remorseless cruelty, but what we

believe unflinching justice! We desire that God may spare to us the men who are still faithful and who will never cease, at the risk of being called bigots, to drag out to the light those who lie against God's Gospel—to bring them publicly before the world as opponents of the faith which is in Christ Jesus, whereby we hope to be saved. May God give us courage to stand up for the right! It is with this view that I have selected my text—to urge upon you, at this time, the great duty of standing fast at your post for the Truth of God and the equally great duty of endeavoring, wherever you are, to maintain them right. Be you not carried about by every wind of doctrine. Give not heed to every schismatic who would lead you aside. Hold fast by the oracles of the Most High! You know what you have been taught and whereunto you have been called—and you know the foundation whereupon you have been built up. “Be you steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.” Whatever may happen to denominations, whatever divisions we may live to see, let it still be known that for God and His Truth we are prepared to hold our ground at any expense or at any risk!

Now, first, we have *two things mentioned in one text*. And then, secondly, we have *the relationship which exists between them*. The two things are “*the Church of the living God*” and “*the Truth*.” The relationship that exists between them is that “*the Church of the living God*” is “*the pillar and ground of the Truth*.”

I. First, then, we have TWO THINGS MENTIONED IN OUR TEXT.

The first is “*the Church of the living God*.” Note well its *unity*. It is not said *the churches* of the living God, but *the Church*. God has not two churches, He has but one. We may be called by different names and, according to Scripture, we are to be separated, like sheep, into different folds, yet there is still only one flock and one Shepherd. The independence of Scripture is still to be practiced. Each Church is to be separate, having its bishop and its elders governing in the fear of the Lord, without respect of persons and without being disturbed by the opinion of any other Church. But though we are separate churches as to our organization, we are really but one Church, under one Head, the Lord and Bishop of our souls. There are not two churches any more than there are two Gods. There are not two Lords. There, are not two faiths. There are not two baptisms—there is one Lord, there is one faith, there is one Baptism—and there is one Church holding the one Lord, the one faith and the one Baptism. If any hold not the Truth of God, we cannot allow that they belong to “*the Church of the living God*.” It is not for us to adopt the cant phraseology of the present day and say that men may be of the Church, and yet differ from the Truth of God. No, by no means! They are either initiated by the Holy Spirit into God's Church, or they are not. If they are not one with Christ, if they are not washed with Jesus' blood, if they have not received His Spirit, if they have not been humbled to know and believe Him to be King in the midst of His own assemblies, if they have not put their trust under the shadow of His wings—whatever they may profess or believe, or however they may stand before men—if they do not so stand before God, they do not belong to the one Church!

And not belonging to that, they cannot belong to Christ! Though our Lord Jesus Christ has only one Church, a part of its members, I believe, may be found in every denomination—but they owe not their standing to the fellowship they hold with denominations. There is one great denomination, “the Church of the living God,” to which every true Believer must belong. Some persons allege that the children of God may act on different principles, may believe different doctrines, may be the recipients of different kinds of Divine Grace and that their apprehensions of God and of Christ may be thoroughly diverse—we hold no such opinion! If there is not the vital principle in a man’s heart, teaching him the Truth of God as it is in Jesus, he does not belong to the one “Church of the living God.” Thus, there is but one Church, however divided it may be.

You will further observe that the Church is called “*the house of God.*” Why? Because, first, *it had God for its Architect*—it is not built after man’s plan. The Tabernacle in the wilderness was framed after the pattern which God gave to Moses in the mount and, verily, Christ’s Church is built after God’s own model—it is not molded according to man’s idea, it is not shaped according to his option—the will of God and His will, alone, has been followed in the construction of His own house, which is the Church. God has ordained every stone and He has marked where each is to be placed. He planned her walls and her pillars, her foundations and her pinnacles. He has not left anything in the Church to the mere impulse of man, but He has comprised every tittle in His own statutes and decrees. He has not given a vague idea for man to develop, but He has made known His mind in His own words. There is no designer of the spiritual temple save the Infinite Jehovah! There is no architect of the house of the living God save the living God Himself.

And not only is He its Architect, but He is its *Builder*. He has not left it for us to dig the stones out of the quarry, or to lay them one upon another. He does the whole work Himself. The foundation upon which each living stone is based has been laid of old, Jesus Christ, Himself, being the chief Cornerstone. In His obedience and His Sacrifice no creature rendered help. Nor less, as “the building fitly framed together grows unto a holy temple,” is every portion of the structure the work of God and not the work of man. To the Sacred Trinity we look for the gradual construction of the edifice. In Christ we “are built together for a habitation of God through the Spirit.” There is never a child of God brought into the Church by man’s contrivance or man’s persuasions—each precious stone is brought there by God, and by God alone! No child of God is sanctified by man—he is sanctified by the living God. No heir of Heaven is fitted into the Church by man—God alone puts him into his proper position. Men at times try to build with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, and stubble upon the one foundation, but God consumes them all, for He will have no building in His Church but His own—

***“The vast materials all He forms,
Nor power nor love He spares.*”**

***He guards the building from all harms,
And all the Glory bears.”***

I have often remarked that when men have been adopting a patent process of building up a church by the revivalist sermons of some crazy-brained preachers, after the first excitement has subsided that church has become sickly and fallen into a very sad and grievous state. Those revivalists have often been like locusts in our churches, devouring every green thing! And the revivals they have stimulated have well-near brought us to destruction! God will not have men usurp His prerogative in the building! And though they may with their own hands speedily pile up a mighty structure, yet, like the baseless fabric of a vision, it soon disappears and is gone. In His building, He allows no man to use tool or hammer—He will use men *for* trowels and hammers, but He will not allow them to make use of themselves or of others. His own hands shall perform it!

Again, it is God's house because *God resides there*. Wherever the Church is, there is God. God is pleased, in His mercy and condescension, to stoop from the highest heavens to dwell in this lower Heaven—the Heaven of His Church. It is here, among the household of faith, He deigns—let me say it with sacred reverence—to unbend Himself and hold familiar fellowship with those round about Him whom He has adopted into His family. He may be a consuming fire abroad, but when He comes into His own house, He is all mercy, mildness and love. Abroad He does great works of power, but at home, in His own house, He does great works of Grace. Into this house we have been brought—we trust we live there and He has manifested Himself unto us as He does not unto the world. A father will reveal himself to his children as he will not to his servants, or to those with whom he mingles in his business. So, in the Church, God is pleased to manifest all the greatness of His love, all the marvelous depth of His compassion and show Himself to His people as He never did to angels—and as He never will to the unregenerate! It is the house of God because all who live there have access to their Father and because they can always find Him there— a very present help in time of trouble.

Again, the Church is God's house because *He provides for it*. The household of the Church would be starved if God did not provide for it. Does the Church need pastors? God gives us pastors after His own heart. Does it need teachers? Then the teachers shall be taught of God. Does it need supplies? He makes for it a feast of fat things, full of marrow. Are comforts and luxuries needed? There are the wines on the lees well refined and at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which, He says, “I have laid up for you, O my Beloved.” God always provides for His Church because He is the Husband—the *houseband* of it! Blessed be God, He never leaves the Church to be provided for by man! We tell you that in dependence upon God we will seek to bring you a portion of meat in due season, but we never undertake to provide the meal. The Lord will provide! We are but His servants, to bring unto His people food for their spiritual sustenance. Beloved, the Church is God's

own house and since His Word has taught us that “if any provide not for his own, and for those of his own house, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel,” we can never believe that God will leave His house destitute of supplies! No, while He is Infinite in goodness, while Heaven and earth cannot measure the riches of His estates, while He is the Lord of all flesh and the Monarch of all worlds, we may rely upon it that His house will always be abundantly provided for and His table bountifully spread!

One more remark here. The Church is God’s house because *therein God is honored, and therein He rules*. Among men it is justly said that “without hearts, there is no home.” In the circle of a man’s household, he expects to find those “eager to please,” and if he has children, surely the affection of the little prattlers shall call forth his fond paternal love. However he may be belied abroad, it is meet that he should be honored at home—that is the place where he deserves and commands obedience! There he is master and lord, and every beck of his should be obeyed. So, the Church is God’s house, the abode of His household and His family. Therefore, though the world may disobey Him, yet His Church always welcomes His Presence, rejoices to do His bidding and listens to His words. In the Church, God must always be honored. Let Him speak and our ears shall at once give attention, and our feet shall run with swift obedience. “As the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God,” to learn His mind and to do His bidding. May He grant unto you, Beloved, this distinguishing sign that you belong to this Church which is the house of God, because by your profession and your practice He is continually honored!

The second thing mentioned in the text is “*the Truth*.” What do these words mean, “the Truth”? Depend upon it, they mean nothing more nor less than is wrapped up with the two covers of this Bible! What is the Truth? I might tell you that it is the counsels of Heaven revealed on earth, the mind of God made known to men, all the precepts, statutes, and testimonies of the Most High. I might point you to the Person of Christ, His obedience to the Law, His death, His Resurrection and His Ascension, and tell you that the Gospel contained in the writings of the four Evangelists is the Truth of God! Or, once more, I might tell you of the witness of the Holy Spirit, those convictions He brings home to the Believer’s heart and the teaching by which He trains up the heirs of Glory from the moment of conversion till their final gathering into the heavenly garner—and say that all the witness of the Holy Spirit is “the Truth.” But then you might ask me why we should call these the Truth. What difference is there between their being true, and their being “*the Truth*”? I answer, what God says is necessarily true. It is most certainly true because God has said it. It needs no evidence to establish it, no argument to prove it. Therefore it is so far above evidence and proof that it is really “the Truth.” I have, as your minister, to assert it, illustrate it and preach it as dogmatically as possible, for there can be no appeal

against “the Truth.” You have, as disciples, to believe it, search it and explore its depths—but there is no room to doubt or reason how much or how little you ought to receive, seeing it is, *prima facie*, “the Truth.”

Note its *importance*. It is called *the* Truth. There are many other truths in the world beside God’s Truth. There is natural truth, the truth of science, the truth of history and the truth man constantly utters on the evidence of his senses which we unhesitatingly receive. Yet, though these may be important in some degree, they give way to the all-important Truth of God. Now the definite article, “the,” is here put before the word, “Truth,” to teach us that if everything else we believe to be true should prove true, the whole would sink into insignificance when compared with the importance of the Truth of God! See, then, that you do not underrate the importance of God’s Truth. I would have you particularly value it, for some think it a matter of comparative indifference and that although it is right for us to believe all things which God has revealed, yet it is not important that we should do so! They suppose that it is of little consequence what sentiments we hold—we may be half right and half wrong, and yet be quite as well off—it matters little, so long as the heart is right, what the head believes. Alas, Sirs, this is a strange infatuation! The saints of old purified their souls “in obeying the Truth through the Spirit.” I cannot understand how your hearts can be right while you oppose the Truth of God! Were it only that God has revealed it, you might know that it is of Divine importance. What He speaks, it is surely incumbent upon us to believe! What He has set forth, we ought to accept as essential to our well-being, our comfort and our happiness. You may turn a deaf ear to the words of our poets, our philosophers, or our historians. You may even be content to live in ignorance of the laws of your country, “but see that you refuse not Him that speaks” to you from Heaven. This would be perilous, indeed!

Mark then well the importance of the Truth of God, for in these days men are apt to set light by it and, for the sake of peace and quiet, to lead us to suppose that contrary things can also be true.

The Truth is not only important, but *substantial in its character*. The Gospel which God has revealed is so essentially THE Truth there is nothing false, as there is nothing trifling in it. It is Truth unalloyed. It is Truth which ought to be undoubted. It is a vile sin to imagine that there can be any fallacy in the utterances of an Infallible God! Let everything else we credit be a lie. Let all that man has asserted and proved be swept away—God’s Words are *the Truth*, substantially and really so!

The Truth, moreover, is a thing of *unity*. It is not said “truths,” but “THE TRUTH.” God’s Truth is only one. Have you ever noticed, in the great summary of Doctrines, that as surely as you believe one, you must believe the rest! One Doctrine so leans upon the others that if you deny one, you must deny the rest. Some think that they can believe four out of the five points and reject the last. It is impossible! God’s Truths are all joined together like links in a chain. There is but one Truth, and one system of the Truth of God.

“Then,” say some, “tell us how to discern the Truth.” You may judge of it by three things—by God, by Christ and by man. That is, the truth which honors God, the truth which glorifies Christ, and the truth which humbles man. Unless a Doctrine exalts God, unless it acknowledges Him Monarch of Creation and gives Him absolute power over His creatures—He the Potter and ourselves the clay, *He* molding the vessels as seem good in His sight, *we* the vessels that are molded after His pleasure, God everything and ourselves nothing—that doctrine is not *the Truth of God*. And unless a Doctrine magnifies the Atonement—if it asserts that the Atonement may fail, that it was made for many who do not benefit by it, that God’s purpose in redemption is in anywhere frustrated—it is not of God, it is of Satan! If a doctrine teaches that man is possessed of good natural powers, that he is not so fallen as the Bible states, that he can do something to help himself, that his exertions can meet with God’s Grace half way, that he can assist a little in the work of salvation, or, at any rate, that he can preserve himself from falling and hold on his way with steadfastness, it is a man-glorifying, God-dishonoring doctrine! Cast it to the winds, for it never came from above. God never intended it to be preached otherwise than as the very foil of blackness against the brightness of His own Truth!

II. Now I desire to address you very solemnly on THE RELATIONSHIP WHICH EXISTS BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND THE TRUTH. “The Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the Truth.”

There is a sense in which the Truth is the pillar of the Church, for the Church is built on the Truth. It is on the revealed Doctrines of Divine Grace, such as Eternal Predestination, Immutable Affection, Covenant Security, the responsibility of Christ as the Surety of His people—it is on such Doctrines as these that the Church is built—and in this sense the Truth is the pillar and ground of the Church. In another sense, the pillar and ground of the Truth is God. He Himself maintains His own Truth. It is not committed to the hands of mortals to maintain it apart from God. One of the best proofs of this is that the Truth is still preserved in the original purity, after so many hypocritical preachings of it, and so much wresting of it to wrong purposes. While God lives, His Truth can never die! There remains the sense in which the Church is, as it were, delegated by God to maintain and support the Truth. You must understand this, then, instrumentally—while God is the real pillar and ground of His Truth, yet in this world He is pleased to make His children such. Really and effectively it is God who upholds the Truth, but instrumentally it is the ministers and elders and members of the Church who maintain the Truth and hold it firm.

In reading this verse, I was pleased with two thoughts that occurred to me. The Church is both the pillar and the ground of the Truth. Sometimes it is the pillar of the Truth when it preaches the Word, when it administers the ordinances and publicly shows forth the Gospel. But sometimes there have been seasons of persecution, when the disciples have not been able to go forth and testify to the world—and then the

Church becomes a kind of underlying foundation, the *ground* of the Truth. In the days when Paul stood before Nero, he was like the pillar of the Truth. At another time, when he was shut up in a dungeon and could not come forth, he was in his heart like the ground of the Truth. When the Church stands boldly out and preaches the Word, it is the pillar of the Truth! When it is hidden in the Roman catacombs and cannot proclaim the Savior's name to the world, there still lives the Truth of God deep in the hearts of Believers—and they are then the ground of the Truth. We, Beloved, who are of the house of God and of the Church of God, are the maintainers and supporters, instrumentally, of God's Truth on the earth. Come, then, let me stir you up to do your duty! Let me beg of you who love God's Truth not to leave it to itself. Perhaps you imagine that God's Truth, being mighty, must prevail without your assistance. It is true, it must and will, but then God has said that if you belong to His Church, you are to be the pillar and ground of the Truth. To leave God's Truth to shift for itself is as bad as to leave your own children to provide for themselves. True, the great decrees of destiny shall be carried out and our Savior's Kingdom shall be established—but it shall be by means! God has honored you by choosing you to be the maintainers, the testifiers, the pillar and ground of the Truth. I will endeavor to awaken you, then, by one or two exhortations, to be faithful to this, your solemn duty.

In the first place, *remember how your fathers, in times gone by, defended God's Truth*—and blush, you cowards, who are afraid to maintain it! Remember that our Bible is a blood-stained book—the blood of martyrs is on the Bible, the blood of translators and confessors. The pool of holy Baptism, in which many of you have been baptized, is a blood-stained pool—full many have had to die for the vindication of that baptism which is “the answer of a good conscience toward God.” The Doctrines which we preach to you are Doctrines that have been baptized in blood—swords have been drawn to slay the confessors of them! And there is not a Truth which has not been sealed by them at the stake, or the block, or far away on the lofty mountains where they have been slain by the hundreds. It is but a little duty we have to discharge compared with theirs. They were called to maintain the Truth when they had to die for it—you only have to maintain the Truth when taunt and jeer, ignominious names and contemptuous epithets are all you have to endure for it! What? Do you expect easy lives? While some have led through seas of blood and have fought to win the prize, are you wearied with a slight skirmish on dry land? What would you do if God should suffer persecuting days to overtake you? O cowardly spirits, you would flee and disown your profession! Be you the pillar and ground of the Truth. Let the blood of martyrs, let the voices of confessors speak to you. Remember how they held fast the Truth of God, how they preserved it and handed it down to us from generation to generation! And by their noble example, I beseech you, be steadfast and faithful, tread valiantly and firmly in their steps, acquit yourselves like men—like men of God, I implore you! Shall we not have some champions in these times who will deal sternly with heresies for the love of the Truth—men who will stand

like rocks in the center of the sea so that, when all others shake, they stand invulnerable and invincible? You who are tossed about by every wind of doctrine, farewell! I acknowledge you not till God shall give you Grace to stand firm for His Truth and not to be ashamed of Him nor of His Words in this evil generation!

Think about it again, that you have the greatest reason to be the pillar and ground of the Truth *from the fact that this Truth has been of immeasurable service to you.* How often has it gladdened your hearts? You were once in darkness, but now are you light in the Lord! Once you had no clear view of that great mystery of godliness, but now God has been pleased to open your eyes, having touched them with spiritual eye-salve, so that in His Light you can see light. You are now brought to see that which is revealed and to believe the Doctrines of Grace. Have you not found these things comforting? How often have they supported you in the hour of peril? How often have they checked you when you would have sinned, and guarded you from despair when you were trodden underfoot by the enemy? How often have they nerved your arm for conflict, or moved your foot for journeying? How well furnished have you been since you believed these things, who were but poor defenseless creatures before! Will you not, then, maintain the Truth and spread it abroad? Will you blush to acknowledge the Word which has brought salvation to your souls, which has rescued you from the thralldom of sin and introduced you into the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free? No! I beseech you by the glorious panoply wherewith Christ has arrayed you, by His perfect love wherewith He has covered you, by the crown which He has promised you, by the Heaven which He has prepared for you—be you faithful to the Church of Christ, whereof you are members! Be you still the pillar and ground of the Truth.

Reflect once more, as another weighty reason, that *you should ever have been led to know the Truth at all.* Why, you know you did not deserve it! You believe that God has chosen you in His Sovereignty, entirely irrespective of your character. You must regard yourself as being the last man in the world that you could ever have thought God would have chosen. Some of you were sinners against His love and against His Law—great, open and apparent sinners! Others of you were secret transgressors—you sinned against God with a high hand and an outstretched arm, though men knew it not. Many of you were poor sinners involved in the darkness of deceitful doctrine—you had been led astray to believe yourselves saved, whereas you have since found that it was no work of the Spirit, but the mere excitement of your carnal feelings. And now that you, the chief of sinners, rescued by Divine Grace from death and Hell, are brought into His Church, will you not, for gratitude's sake, considering what you owe your Master, defend and maintain His Truth at all hazards, in the midst of a gainsaying generation?

Then, once more, you are bound to maintain this Truth as you *consider the manifold blessings which it will confer upon your fellow*

creatures when it shall win the day. The Truth of God is always a blessing. Men may hate it, but it is a blessing and it brings a blessing to their door, though they welcome it not. They may think it curses them, but the Truth is no curse unless men make it so to themselves. Nothing can benefit your generation, nothing can ameliorate the morals of mankind, nothing can refine the earth, nothing can wash away its blood, nothing can cleanse its stains, nothing can purge its lusts, nothing can stop its wars and heal its feuds—nothing better, nothing nearly so well as the maintenance of the Truth of God! Therefore, be very bold for it. It is the earth's one hope—take it away and that world's brightest star is quenched and her central sun is dim. Maintain the Truth, then, for the world's sake, I beseech you.

And if encouragement can stir you up to duty, let me remind you that the time is coming when Truth shall be triumphant. Soldier of the Cross, the hour is coming when the note of victory shall be proclaimed throughout the world! The battlements of the enemy must soon succumb. The swords of the mighty must soon be given up to the Lord of lords! What? Soldier of the Cross, in the day of victory would you have it said that you did turn your back in the day of battle? Do you not wish to have a share in the conflict, that you may have a share in the victory? If you are even in the hottest part of the battle, will you flinch and flee? You shall have the brightest part of the victory if you are in the fiercest part of the conflict! Will you turn and lose your laurels? Will you throw away your sword? Shall it be with you as when a standard-bearer faints? No, Man, up to arms again, for the victory is certain! Though the conflict is severe, I beseech you, on to it again! On, on, you lion-hearted men of God, to the battle once more, for you shall yet be crowned with immortal Glory!

May God, then, grant unto us that we may always stand fast in the fight, as we would stand foremost among the conquerors! Mark those who have already overcome—they are pillars in the house of their God and they will “go no more out forever.” As you mark their white garments, their crowns, their palms, do you not pant to join the triumphant host? I know you do! Well then, wrestle hard as they did and, by Divine Grace, you, also, shall overcome and then shall you sit down with Jesus on His Throne, even as He did overcome and is set down forever with His Father upon His Throne!

But some will say, “If we go forth resolved to maintain this Truth, we shall be called bigots and we shall get very much ill feeling from the world.” Well, if you are afraid of that, I have done with you! I call you not kith or kin with me if you are abashed at such trivial rebuffs. If you blush at that, Sir, you will never do much for your Master's honor! If you do not know how to stand fast against the world, you will find the world will stand fast against you. Did they not call Luther a bigot? Did they not say he was a mere declaimer? Did they not charge him with lack of logic and say he was a man that hurled invectives? But did any of these things move him? No, he persevered and still spread abroad the savor of his Master's name in every place till he finished his course with joy as a

conqueror! What sort of a character was John Knox in his day? Were not all manner of accusations heaped upon his head? But what did he say? "If I am God's servant and on God's side, I will not start for anyone of you." And now he has this for his epitaph, "Here lies a man who in his life never feared the face of man." Such an epitaph, few of you would merit.

"But," says another, "how am I to know that it is THE TRUTH?" That question I answer in this way—if you do not know it is the Truth of God, you cannot stand up for it. I am only speaking to men and women who do *know* that it is the Truth. A true Christian cannot allow that he is in error, for he sees the Truth positively written in God's Word. But you tell me that I may err. No, but I cannot err when I have God's Word in my lips. People will controvert and will go into endless arguments to show that we are wrong. We cannot be wrong, Sirs! We cannot allow ourselves to be even *supposed* to be wrong when we hold fast by the Scriptures only—for that were to suppose that God's Word could be wrong! Our inferences from Scripture may be wrong, but when we have the genuine Scripture, itself, we cannot admit the possibility of our being in error! And unless you are most solemnly convinced that you have the Infallible testimony of God in your own consciences and of the truthfulness of His Inspired Word, I do not ask you to be defenders of the Truth—such defense would be childish, and I would be more childish to ask for it!

"But," another says, "I don't think it necessary to make a noise about Doctrine—it does not concern souls much." Does it not? I believe souls have been instrumentally damned by the thousands by false doctrine. I believe that the universal redemption scheme is doing immense mischief. As Joseph Irons said, "When men once believe that Jesus Christ died for His elect, they begin questioning, 'Did He die for me?' and that stirs them up to seek to know the Truth of God. But when they hear that there is salvation for all, they say at once, 'Then I may sit still and fold my arms!' And so they are deluded into Hell." When men are told that they can do all things, and have power to save themselves, do you not think that is a soul-deluding doctrine? They seek to do what they can and they do a great deal, resting content with a spurious conversion, instead of the conversion which is of God and not of the will of the creature! I do not believe in all the conversions we hear of as brought about by false doctrine. God forbid that I should! Men who preach false doctrine may be sometimes useful in conversion because they preach some true doctrine, but a false doctrine never converted a soul yet, unless it converted it into worse dangers and made it tenfold more the child of Hell than before! It is foolish for you to cry out that Doctrine does not matter! What would you do if it were not for Doctrine? How could your soul be saved? How could you enter Heaven but for the Doctrine of Redemption? Yes, and how could you get to Glory but for the Doctrine of Election—the Doctrine that you were chosen in Christ Jesus from before the foundation of the world? Say what you like, you will find Doctrines far more essential than you ever dreamed!

Now, how many of my hearers have had any spiritual realization of the preciousness of these things? “Ah!” cries one, “I will defend the Truth.” Stop, young man! Have you felt in your heart the great Doctrine of God’s Sovereignty? Have you been humbled in the dust to know that God has a right to do with you as He pleases? If not, you cannot defend the Doctrine of Divine Sovereignty! Have you been brought to see the blood of Christ shed especially for you? If not, you cannot defend the Doctrine of Particular Redemption, for you do not understand it. Have you ever felt your own depravity in all its desperate character? If not, you cannot defend the Doctrine of Original Sin. Have you felt that God the Holy Spirit has called you out of darkness into marvelous light? If not, you cannot defend the Doctrine of Effectual Calling. Do you feel in your soul that God has enabled you to persevere up to the moment and have you the solemn conviction that you shall hold on your way? If not, you cannot defend Final Perseverance. I beseech you examine yourselves and see whether you have these Doctrines in your heart. If you have, I shall never be much afraid that you will not maintain them, though I think it right, sometimes, to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance. And as there are too many who would guide your minds into “THE NON-DOCTRINE SCHEME” and feed you with that which is vague and visionary instead of that which is substantial and true, I would the more earnestly exhort you, as for your very lives, to “hold fast the form of sound words which you have received.” Stand fast, Beloved! Be not moved in the evil day and, having done all, stand fast in the Lord! May God grant it for Jesus’ sake!

—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 CHURCH—CONSERVATIVE AND AGGRESSIVE NO. 393

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 19, 1861,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“The Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the Truth.”
1 Timothy 3:15.***

YOU will remember it was announced last Sunday that a collection would be made today in behalf of our institution for training young men for the ministry. It has been thought desirable that I should state a few particulars relative to the institution. Some of them will appear in the course of the sermon. It may suffice for me to say now that some five or six years ago one of the young men of the Church gave promise of being a successful minister if he could but have a good education. With the assistance of a friend in the Church, I undertook to take him under my charge, put him under a suitable tutor and train him for the ministry.

So successful, by God's grace, was that work that I was induced to take another and another and another. Up to now I have been myself the committee, secretary, treasurer and subscriber. I have not, except in one or two instances, even mentioned the matter to anyone but have been content to provide everything that I could out of my own income, besides that which is necessary for the support of my household in order to educate any young men who might become ministers of the Cross of Christ.

There are now seven settled out, all of whom have been eminently successful. They are not men probably who will become great or brilliant but they have been good and useful preachers. I think there are not another seven in the whole Baptist denomination who have had so many converts during the years that they have been settled. They have been the means, most of them, in the hands of God of adding a very considerable number every year to the churches where they have settled. Those are churches not in provincial towns but in villages.

I have therefore been led still further to increase my number and I think I have now about sixteen young men wholly to support and maintain. Besides these, there is a very considerable number who receive their education in the evening though they still remain in their own callings. With the enlarged sphere we now occupy as a Church, I have proposed so to enlarge my scheme that all the members of this Church and congregation who happen to be deficient in the plain rudiments of knowledge can get an education—a common English education for themselves. Then, if they display any ability for speaking—without giving up their daily avocations—they shall have classes provided for higher branches of instruction.

But should they feel that God has called them to the ministry, I am then prepared after the use of my own judgment and the judgment of my friends, as to whether they are fit persons to give them two years' special tutorship that they may go forth to the work of the Cross, thoroughly trained so far as we can effect it in so short a time. I know I am called to this work and I have had some most singular interpositions of Providence in providing funds for it. At the day of judgment the world shall know that

there has never lived a man upon the face of the earth who has less deserved the slander of seeking to enrich himself than I have.

I shall say no more upon that. Let the world scandalize me if it will. I want the money today, not for myself in any respect. I give my services and my work freely and of my own income all that I can spare. I only want my friends who feel interested in this work to assist me that we may provide men who shall preach the Gospel to multitudes who are longing to hear it fully and faithfully proclaimed. Permit me to say there was held in Westminster Abbey last Thursday a grand choral festival, at which there were singers from the various choirs of London—St. Page, the Abbey, the Temple and the Foundling and some from Windsor.

Several ecclesiastical dignitaries graced the assembly. Anthem and cantatas and I know not what else, were performed on a most classic scale. The sermon was preached by a Provost of some college in which the claims of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts were eloquently advocated and the whole collection amounted to seventy pounds. "A very poor result for so sublime a service," said the *Times* report. Last Friday evening there was held a little meeting in one of the rooms here of about forty or fifty of the seat holders in this congregation.

There were no bishops present. There were only a few street preachers and my poor student. They addressed that little meeting and though no collection was called for or even contemplated, those friends spontaneously subscribed one hundred and eighty pounds as an earnest of what they were sure the congregation would give to this work today. I think this just shows that when people have a mind for Christ's cause, they do not need to have the State to support their religion but can support it out of the generosity of loving hearts without the elaborate parade of gorgeous rituals.

I shall now invite your attention to the subject of this morning's discourse which has a very strong bearing upon this point. "The Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the Truth"—1 Timothy 3:15. The word "Church" has suffered very much from the hands of men. Strangely but frequently, has it been used to designate a mass of bricks and mortar. *Ecclesia*, a chosen assembly, has actually by the natural debasement of the tongue of priests come down to mean a *building*. By no possible construction can it mean any such a thing. A more debasing use of a divine word than that can scarcely be found. The word "Church" has also been used by many to signify the clergy. A young man is to enter the Church—that is, he is to take holy orders, to become a preacher and an authorized dispenser of the sacraments, as they are called.

He is to aspire after an incumbency and is to be recognized as an ordained minister of the Word. Now, the word "Church" in Scripture means nothing like that. Such a use of terms is but confusion. It is taking God's Words, making and destroying their sense and then using them for our own purpose. The "Church of Christ" according to the Scripture, is an assembly of faithful men. *Ecclesia* originally signified *assembly*. Not a mob, but an assembly of persons who were called together on account of their special right to meet for the discussion of certain subjects. They were a called-out assembly.

The "Church of God" itself, in its full sense, is a company of persons called out by the Holy Spirit from among the rest of mankind, banded together for the holy purpose of the defense and the propagation of the

Truth. If there are but three or four, yet if they be so banded together in the fear of God, they are to all intents and purposes a Church. And if they should happen to number thousands, they are no more a Church on account of their numbers—a Church being a company of faithful men. To our minds, the Scripture seems very explicit as to how this Church should be ordered. We believe that every Church member should have equal rights and privileges.

We believe that there is no power in Church officers to execute anything unless they have the full authorization of the members of the Church. We believe, however, that the Church should choose its pastor and having chosen him they should love him and respect him for his work's sake. That with him should be associated the deacons of the Church to take the oversight of pecuniary matters. And the elders of the Church to assist in all the works of the pastorate in the fear of God, being overseers of the flock. Such a Church we believe to be scripturally ordered.

And if it abide in the faith—rooted, grounded and settled—such a Church may expect the benediction of Heaven and so it shall become the pillar and ground of the Truth. But what is intended in our text by saying that the Church of God is the pillar and ground of the Truth? When you go outside this building you may observe the use of a pillar. And that part of it which forms a basement upon which the circular stone rests exactly answers to what the Apostle means by the ground of the Truth. It is the business of the Church, of course, to uphold the Truth in its deep foundations. To conserve and preserve it intact—thus it is the ground.

To lift it up and bear it aloft in beauty and in all its fair proportions, in this the Church, of course, is the pillar of the Truth. Some commentators say that as pillars were used of old to bear inscriptions, as upon pillars even the brazen decrees of the Roman senate were exhibited to the people, so the Church of Christ is intended to be a pillar bearing the inscription of the Truth, so that it not only maintains it and upholds it, but sets it forth. At any rate I think you will perceive in a moment that the simple meaning of my text is just this—it is the business of the Church of God to maintain, to propagate, to uphold, to spread and to defend the Truth as it is in Jesus—wherever that Church may be placed.

I shall use the text, this morning, in four ways. First, *to correct certain mistakes*. Secondly, *to convince judgments of the excellency of God's ordinance in this matter*. Thirdly, *to awake reflections upon the subject*. And fourthly, *to suggest some ways of making this Church and every Church, the pillar and ground of the Truth*.

I. First, then, my Brethren, LET US CORRECT SOME FEW MISTAKES. We are all deeply impressed with the importance of maintaining the doctrines of the Gospel and the Truths of Christ pure and simple as we find them in the New Testament. There are brethren who in their extreme anxiety to accomplish this end suggest methods which are not warranted by the text. For the rule here laid down is that the Church is itself to maintain and to be the guardian of the Truth. But these brethren, in their great anxiety to maintain it, have suggested other ways.

One of the first has been the drawing up of a creed. The articles of the faith shall be written out clearly and unmistakably. At a general synod every word of these articles shall be argued—any discrepancy shall be removed—and the articles shall, as nearly as possible, express the orthodox creed. It is done. The ministers assembled go home and say that creed will

be the pillar and ground of the Truth—as long as ever the name of the Westminster Assembly Confession shall be known—the Truth will be safe. As long as the thirty-nine articles of the Church of England shall stand—that Church must be free from error.

Ah, how signally they have failed! Especially let us take the glaring instance of the Church of England. The articles of the Church of England are Calvinistic. No person who is not deluded or dishonest, can read them without seeing that the pen was dipped in Geneva ink which wrote those articles. And yet how many Church of England clergy are as far from anything like Calvinism, as the wildest Pelagian could be supposed to be? There are, it is true and God be glorified for it, many Brethren who do believe these articles and preach them faithfully, too. We love them and honor them for the Truth's sake.

But is there one in ten? Nay, is there one in twenty who really receives those articles in their pure and simple meaning? If this were all, it were not so bad. But men have had the impudence to subscribe to those articles of the Church—when they have not believed a single one of them—and have been infidels. You have had of late and it is not necessary for me to allude to the matter, a glaring proof that no articles whatever can conserve and maintain the Truth. For men will sign them when they do not believe a word they set forth.

We have been led to think we have grown a little wiser and we have tried to maintain the Truth by our trust deeds. Our friends have, as they thought, put the Truth in the trust deeds. And it is enacted that if a minister does not preach the doctrines the trustees shall see that he is dismissed. Ah, a very poor pillar and ground of Truth this is! Our strict Baptist Brethren—I am not now about to enter into the question whether they are right or wrong—but supposing they are right for the moment—they have been exceedingly wise in putting the strict Baptist clause into their trust deed.

I am not now about to dispute the verdicts of the judges. But their clauses have been broken and their bands have been like green twigs. I know a chapel now in Norfolk which has on the forefront over the door, these words printed in stone, "For the strict Baptists forever." Really there is something fine and heroic in that—but equally ridiculous and absurd. The place will not be for the strict Baptists forever. Nor will any trust deed ever be so written but that you may drive a coach and horses through, just as surely as you can through an Act of Parliament. That never was and never will be the way to maintain the Truth. Let it be done if you like, but do not imagine that your trust deed is a pillar and ground of the Truth.

We have fallen into a similar mistake with regard to the diffusion of the Truth. In order to spread the doctrines of the Gospel, we have formed societies. There are missionary societies appended to every denomination. These societies are to be pillars and grounds of the Truth, not so much in the maintenance of the Truth as in the spreading of it. To become a member of a missionary society you have only to subscribe to it. If you were a very infidel and subscribed, you would become a member. Nothing whatever is required of you but that you should simply give a certain amount of money and you become a member of that society.

We have been wondering why our societies have not greater success. I believe the reason is because there is not a single word in the Book of God

about anything of the kind. The Church of God is the pillar and ground of the Truth—not a society. The Church of God never ought to have delegated to any society whatever, a work which it behooved her to have done herself. Instead of sending our subscriptions to associations we ought to have picked our own men out of our own midst and found the means to send them forth to preach the Truth as it is in Jesus, ourselves.

We have given up the work of the education of our young men to our colleges. I will not say they have done it ill. But I do dare say they have not done it well. The reason, I think, has been because there is nothing in the Word of God that could warrant their accepting the trust. The Church of God, not a college, is the pillar and ground of the Truth. Every Church should itself see to the education of its own young men. It should look out for its own evangelism—should train its own soldiers and send them forth to the fight. The Church of God will never see things done rightly, if shirking her own responsibility, she tries to cast it upon other men.

Even if those men could be the best of men. If they were angelic, if you could find superhuman beings—yet if God never called them to the work He will not, therefore, honor them in it. The Church, the Church, the Church of God, the assembly of believers is, according to God's Word, to hold forth His Truth and to be the pillar and ground of the Truth.

Many have thought, however, that the Truth would be quite safe in the hands of ministers. If we could not leave its preaching to the society, at least let the minister, so intimately connected with the Church, become the pillar and ground of the Truth. It is a melancholy fact that heresy never began with the people yet—but with the minister. And I speak what I know—the hearts of the people of our denomination are more sound in the Truth than the hearts of the preachers. There is not a denomination under Heaven which has a more sincere love to all Calvinistic doctrines than our own. Yet how many of our ministers there are who, while they do not preach against them and I hope secretly believe them, are, nevertheless silent upon the subject?

They keep it back, perhaps imagining it would not be profitable to their hearers. But there is scarcely a Church in London in which there are not men and women grumbling, groaning and murmuring, because the full Truth is not preached to them and they do not hear the Word by which alone they live. There are Churches in London where the Truth is fully preached, praised be God and there you will find none who are groaning because they are famished. But there is not a Church of the other sort in which there are not many disaffected persons who are thoroughly ready to come out at any moment and leave their minister if he will not give them the whole Truth, instead of keeping part of it back.

You must not trust the ministry, Brethren. If you rely upon us you will rely upon broken reeds. However honest we may be, yet we have not to deal so much with the world and with its cares and troubles as you. And I think your dealing with the world casts you back very often upon the old, solid realities—because in the hard daily struggle which you have to carry on, you need to have the finest of the wheat to sustain your strength. Let us uplift, this morning, as a great Truth which the Church has too much forgotten, the words of the text, "The Church of the living God is the pillar and ground to maintain the Truth." Not trust deeds nor Church articles. And the Church of the living God is the pillar to set forth and proclaim the Truth. Not the ministry, not societies, not authors, not any set of men to

whom it can be delegated, but the Church of God—and the Church of God alone.

Now do not misunderstand me. I would not say a single word against any society for the spread of God's Truth. But I must repeat again that all societies of that sort spring from an irregular and unscriptural position of the Church. THE Church, if she were in her right state, would do the whole of the work herself. The city missionary would be a member of the Church sent out and supported by the Church itself. The missionary to foreign lands would have the Church at his back to whom he would look for support both in prayers and in subscriptions. Every work would be performed—not through this secretary or that—but through the Church itself.

This, I believe, is the principle which will work a radical cure in all the errors that have been made and bring back the state and system of evangelization into a proper and healthy condition. I may be wrong, but this has deeply laid upon my soul. And I shall never be satisfied till I see in this Church an organization so complete that it does not need a supplement—able to do every good work and fulfill every needful office of itself and by itself—welcoming ever the cooperation of others—but never needing to depend upon a society for the accomplishment of any purpose to which the Lord God has been pleased to call it.

II. I shall now pass on to my second point. Let us note THE WISDOM OF GOD IN MAKING THIS MATTER SO—presuming, of course—that we have thus far rightly interpreted the will of God concerning us.

The Church of God in Scripture is called a mother. What is a mother's business? What is a mother's duty? A mother's duty is to feed her own child from her own bosom. She loses a joy herself and inflicts a serious injury upon her offspring when, if having the ability, she lacks the affection which would constrain her to support her own child from the fountains which God Himself has opened. And as the Church of Christ is a mother, she shall lack the greatest joy and lose the sweetest privilege unless she herself train her own children and give them the unadulterated milk of the Word.

She has no right to put her children out to nurse. How shall they love her? What affection shall they bear towards her? No, let her do as she should and keep her children at home and supply them herself. It is a mother's business, as that child grows up, to train and teach it. Let her teach it the first letters of the alphabet. Let it gather its first knowledge of Christ from a mother's lips. Who so fit to teach as she that brought it forth? None can teach so sweetly and none so effectually as she. Let her not give up the training of her child to another. And why should we, the Church of Christ, give up our children when we first taught them to speak in Christ's name, to be trained and to be taught by others?

No, by every motherly feeling that remains within the bosom of Christ's Church, let us see her children brought up at her own knees, dandled there in her own lap and not give up the work of training her sons and daughters to others. And who so fit as the mother of the family to inspire her son with holy ardor when at last he goes forward to the battle of life? Who shall give him the affectionate advice? Who shall give him the cheering word which shall sustain him in the hour of difficulty so well as a mother whom he loves? And let the Church of God, when her young men go forth to her battles, put her hand upon their shoulders and say, "Be

strong, young man, be strong. Dishonor not the mother that bare you. But go forth and like the son of a Spartan mother, return not but in glory. Go forth to conquer or to die. Come back on your shield, or with it—a hero or a martyr.”

Who can speak the words so well and sing at home so powerfully as the mother to her son, or the Church to her child? The Church, then, has no right to delegate to another her own work. Let her bring forth her own children. Let her give them nourishment. Let her train them up. Let her send them forth to do the Master’s work.

But, then, my Brethren, the Church is often compared to a city. Christians are the citizens. Who so fit to fight the battles of a country as the countrymen themselves? Shall we give up to a tribe of mercenaries the defense of this stalwart island? Shall we hire foreigners from afar and say to them, “Dash the invader from our own shores”? No, my Brethren, Britain’s true hearts would wake up and Britain’s strong arms would wield the weapon if invasion should ever take place. The liberties of a country are not safe with an army, but with the citizens themselves. We must be our own defenders if the land is to be preserved. No body of troops more fit than those who fight for their own children, their own wives, their own hearths and the altars of their own land.

Shall we, then, the Church of God, seek out others besides our own citizens? Shall we give the command of our armies to those who belong not to us? Shall we send our sons and daughters out to be enrolled in other armies? No. In the name of the living God let the Church of Christ train her own citizens for the battle of Christ. Let her bring up her own young warriors for the defense and maintenance of the Truth. Besides, who is there who will naturally care for this matter like the Church? My dear Brethren, if I were the minister of a society I should be in a miserable plight. What would the society care for me? What would they care about what I did if there could be but a smart report sent in at the end of the year to be read at the public meeting amid the clapping of hands and so forth?

The secretary would smile upon me, but what would they care for me? What prayers should I have from the subscribers? How should I be likely to be carried on the heart of the secretary? Good man, he has twenty other agents to think of—how should he be thinking of me? But I am a minister of a Church and there is not one member of this Church but what prays for me. I know that as often as you bow your knee at the family altar you mention my name as you mention the name of your son and your daughter. Many a proof have I had from you that I am as much loved by you as if I were your brother according to the flesh.

Your prayers make me strong. Your sympathies make me blest. They cheer my heart and bear me up amidst the waves of calumny. And who shall care for anything when God and the Church are with him? So, then, if it is so with a minister it must be very much more so with a missionary in the foreign land. “Why,” says he, “who will pray for me? The Missionary Society has sent me out. The secretary knows about me. He reads my letters when I send them to him. They are put in the magazine.” But suppose some young man from these galleries was sent out to preach the Word—why we should all notice him. When the letter came from John So-and-So at Canton and we read it at the prayer meeting, how should we pray for him! We should feel he was one of ourselves. And when we made

the collection for his support, we should give far more liberally than for another that we never saw, who had no connection with us and—however good the man might be—was not a personal friend of ours.

The Church of God can naturally care for the state of her own ministers and her own missionaries—and a minister, a missionary, cannot hope to be greatly blest till they are under the Church—and not under a society. Just so with the young men for the ministry. When they go to college they do not, I suppose, expect many people to care about them there. But with regard to those we have in our midst, why there is nothing that any of you would not cheerfully do for them! As soon as there is a new face seen among them, some of the elders of the Church are sure to get him into their houses—are sure to speak kindly with him till I fall into another difficulty.

Sometimes my friends take them away too much, are too kind to them, get them away from their studies in order to be with them—when they ought rather to be sticking fast by their books. I find no lack of sympathy and I know the men are happier. And I believe they have greater motives to be holy because they are more watched, more observed by the members of the Church. Anything which they do ill would reflect discredit upon the whole of us and when they do that which is right and honorable, there is a sort of *esprit de corps* which makes them long to distinguish themselves—that the whole Church may share in the honor of their connection.

I am persuaded that this is a right principle and I shall not cease to advocate it unless I find arguments by which it can be disproved. And after all, my Brothers and Sisters, who should care for the cause of Christ like the Church? Oh what reason you and I have for loving Christ's cause! Dear have been the places where we have worshipped, some of us, for there we first found a Savior. Some of you, not long ago, were the servants of sin and Satan—you were at a distance from God—and you loved that distance well. Could we not cast our eyes around and remember how some of you were drunkards and swearers and such like?

But you are washed, you are sanctified. And now you rejoice in Him that loved you, for He has washed you in His own blood. Now you can sing of pardoning grace and dying love. Who, like you, my Brethren, to propagate the Gospel? Who makes such preachers as these Pauls, who preach the faith which they once destroyed? Who will stand so well at the back of every agent for Christ as those who have themselves tasted and felt and handled the good Word of Life? Truly the Word of God is safe in the hands of the Church, when the Church lives near to God.

When you are sensible of your gratitude to Christ, when you are conscious of your obligations to eternal and sovereign mercy, then it is that you will be pillars of the Truth. And you will maintain and uphold it, not shunning to declare the whole counsel of God, not hesitating to support those who endeavor to do it in your names. Thus the Church is made the salt of the earth and the light of the world—irrespective of any society whatever—"The Church of God is the pillar and ground of the Truth."

III. Thirdly, this topic AWAKENS REFLECTION.

"Well," says one, "I am afraid it would not work." That is it, my Brethren, that is just the hitch in the whole matter—it would not work. "We have got a machinery," said a Brother to me once, "we have got a machinery in our Church which will go on just as well, whatever the characters of

the members may be.” “Then,” I said to him, “depend upon it, yours is not that which God has ordained.” For it seems to me that the most Scriptural system of Church government is that which requires the most prayer, the most faith and the most piety to keep it going.

The Church of God was never meant to be an automaton. If it were, the wheels would all act of themselves. The Church was meant to be a *living* thing—a living person. And as the person cannot be supported if life be absent, or if food be kept back, or if breath be suspended—so should it be with the Church. There should be certain solemn necessities without which she ceases to be a Church—certain things which she must have and without which she cannot do her work.

I am glad that this difficulty is suggested at all, for it seems to me that if there were not this difficulty, it would not be God’s plan. “Well,” says one, “if you believe the Church is to do all this work, then the Churches cannot yet be what they should.” I am glad you draw that inference, my Brethren, I am glad you do. “Why,” says one, “our Churches could not support a missionary, some of them hardly support their minister.” Just so, Brethren, but that is just because they are in a wrong state. There is hardly a Church anywhere but if the Spirit of God were poured upon it might not do ten times as much for Christ as it is now doing. The fact is there may be some few Churches that are walking in the right road but they are very few indeed. And the objection which you bring ought to be an objection against the state of the Church and not against the plan itself—for it is possible for the Churches to maintain missionaries and minister—if they want to do it.

“Well,” says one, “but a Church must be very watchful to find out young men for the ministry.” Just so, I am glad you say that, for a Church ought to be very watchful. “But the minister must have a good deal to do,” you say. Just so and he ought to have a great deal to do. What is the use of a lazy minister? He is no good either to the world, to the Church, or to himself. He is a dishonor to the noblest profession that can be bestowed upon the sons of men. Let him have plenty to do. It will keep him out of mischief and it would do him good. Too much to do may be an evil, but too little to do is a curse. Let him have much to do.

“But,” says another, “the minister ought to be a holy man, because if the young persons who associate with him learn ill manners, what then?” Just so, I am glad you say that. And so he should be a holy man. Amongst the Swiss, the Vaudois and the Waldenses, every minister trains one young man. Those pastors or shepherds always have a younger brother to travel with them wherever they go. He watches the elder pastor, observes his ways, listens to his holy prayers. He is inspired with his spirit, learns to tread the craggy mountains with him, learns to defy the enemy through the courage which he sees in his elder brother. He learns lessons of wisdom which are not to be learnt from books, lessons of practical pastoral training which are not to be gathered from the best professors of the best colleges in the world.

And thus the Swiss have ever maintained a succession of men, perhaps not brilliant, but always useful—perhaps not popular, but always sound and valiant in their defense of the Truth. And should it not be so with the Church? If to carry it out it need a laborious ministry, so much the better. If it need a holy and wise ministry, so much the better. No other man should be a minister at all. If it need a watchful Church and a prayerful

Church and a Church which consecrates liberally of its substance to the Lord, I say so much the better—for so ought every Church be.

The only question is, are we in the right state now to accomplish all the Lord's purposes? If we are not, let us make it a matter of prayer that we may be brought into this state—for we are never healthy unless we are prepared to do whatever God calls us to do. We must be losing in our own spiritual enjoyment if we fail to have strength to carry out all the work which the Lord imposes upon us. The Lord never gives us more to do than we can do. We had the work of building this place and many thought we could not do it—at last we thought we could—and by God's grace we did it.

If we had fifty more such places to build and the Lord laid it to our heart to build them, we could do it if we were in a right state. Our only want of power is want of grace. Give the Church grace and she does not want a new banker. Give her grace, she does not need then to have new ministers. Give her more grace, she will not want the world's pitiful gold to endow her and make her rich. Give her grace and you have given her all she wants. In that one word, you shall have successful ministers, you shall have laborious agencies, you shall have benevolence pouring out its floods and piety consecrating all its activities for Christ.

IV. Now I shall come to my last point. The last point is BY WAY OF SUGGESTION.

What can we do practically to carry out this plan? Brethren, before I answer that question let me say there are some things we must take care of or else we cannot carry it out at all. We must watch lest the Church be adulterated by additions which are not an increase to her strength. We must be very careful that no thought of strife, no symptom of envy, no feeling of jealousy creep in. Up to now you have been as one man—undivided and indivisible. This is absolutely necessary in the Church for the carrying out of any of her purposes. Divided we should utterly fail.

I remember a somewhat ludicrous incident which occurred to a Church in which there were great quarreling and bickerings. The minister and the deacons and his people, were all at arm's length and daggers drawn. It was determined at last that the matter should come to a settlement and it was by mutual consent given up to the judgment of a good Christian farmer, who lived in the neighborhood. He was to hear the case and write an answer to be read at the next Church-meeting.

Our friend, the farmer, sat down to write his Letter—at the same time he had a letter from a steward or tenant asking advice about his farm—and by a mistake, or rather by a blessed Providence as God would have it, he put the wrong letters into the envelopes, so that the letter which was intended for the Church went to the steward and that which was intended for the steward went to the Church.

At the Church meeting, when they were all assembled, this letter was read to the Church, it ran thus—"Dear friend, mind you see to the hedges well. Keep them up as best you can and take special care of the old black bull." Now that was a most extraordinary letter to write to a Church. It had been sent by mistake, but the minister thinking it was a *bona fide* piece of advice, said he could not comprehend it. Some Brother got up and said it was plain enough—it was meant that they must be very watchful as to whom they should receive into the Church. They must keep their hedges up and see there were no gaps.

“And,” said he, “by the ‘old black bull’ I have no doubt he means that spirit of Satan that would get in and trouble and divide us.” So understanding it in that sense they made up their difference, repaired their hedges and were careful of “the old black bull.” Every Church must do the same, for before we can do anything for Christ, we must first be right at home. We must have peace within our borders. We must be filled with the finest wheat, or else he will not send forth his Word and make it to run very swiftly. This, I hope, will be well seen to.

What, then, are *we* to do? If the Church is to do all this, Brethren, what are you and I to do? As for *me*, I must take heed unto myself. I am to be the leader of this people, constantly ministering to them in the Word of Life. I must take care that my dedication of myself and all I have to my Lord be so perfectly complete that I would not have an objection to them knowing what I do with all I have. I must so live that they can see right through me that I desire to serve my Master and serve Him alone.

Then one and all of you must say, “What must I do?” Let each man finding his own proper niche, each seaman on board the vessel finding which rope he can best handle, or what part of the tackling he best understands, take his place. Then come rocking tempests, let the ship reel. She is safe, for she is in the hand of God and in the hand of faithful men, who know how to manage her right well.

The battle is to be fought, Brethren. It is to be fought by Christ’s army, not by hirelings. What are you and I to do? I must stand at the front of the line and wave my sword and say, “Come on, comrades!” And you, with steady step advancing, with firm bold front maintaining every inch of the ground you take and at last—rushing in one tremendous phalanx straightway to the thick of the fight—you must carry everything before you and win the crown for King Jesus. England expects every man to do his duty, but the Church of God expects it more and must and shall have it. By Him who shall judge the quick and the dead. By Him who bought you with His blood, I adjure you, Christian men and women, see to it that you stand each of you in your place. Do, each of you, your own appointed work. And so shall Christ’s kingdom come and His will be done on earth even as it is in Heaven.

I think I hear a little murmuring going round the gallery and especially stopping at some few of the pews. I will not indicate the Brethren. They are saying, “I do not belong to the Church—what am I to do?” My Brethren, the first thing you ought to do is to join the Church. You say you love the Lord Jesus Christ. Very well. If you neglect one duty, that does not excuse you from another. You are dying in a state of sin, as a Christian man, if you omit the duty of joining yourself with the people of God. May I ask you, when the Church goes to the fight, will you tarry at home? “No,” you say, “I will follow with you. I will do my work. I will go as one of the camp-followers.”

Yes, but somehow or other, those camp-followers are in a very unsatisfactory state because they are not under the discipline of the officers. And though some of them can fight well a sort of guerilla warfare, yet we should be much stronger if we could have them in the ranks. Brethren, don’t you think sometimes that the world may imagine that you mean to hold hard till you see which will win? Had you not better cast in your lot with us while the battle rages? Besides, what does the Master say?—“He that confesses Me before men, him will I confess.”

And what does He say to those who do not confess? “He that denies Me before men, him shall be denied of My Father which is in Heaven.” You do not wish for that, surely. Enlist, then. Put on your Lord’s regimentals. True, you can fight His battle without them, but methinks you will be more in the path of obedience and the path of safety, if you put on the garments of Christ and the garments of His salvation. Come! Whosoever is on the Lord’s side, let him join with the Lord’s hosts. If you be not, stand back and do not dare to come. But if you are, the standard is lifted, the trumpets sound. Come, comrades! Who is for Christ? Soldiers, who is for the Lord God Omnipotent? Unfurl the standard afresh today.

Jehovah-Nissi, the Lord is our banner and who will stand back? Let us enroll ourselves beneath Him and say, “O Lord, go forth with our armies and grant success, for the battle is great and without You we shall utterly fail, but with You we shall surely get the victory.”

I have preached, as you will perceive, then, to the Church only. I have said nothing to the unconverted. We cannot do twenty things at a time. But I would say this word before I sit down. Remember, my dear Hearers, if you are not numbered with the friends of Christ, you are numbered with His enemies. Will you remember that? I do not mean if you are not numbered with the visible Church—I mean this—if you do not love and serve Christ. He that is not with Him is against Him—he that gathers not with Him scatters abroad.

You say you take neither side—it is impossible—you must be on one side or the other. Clear the field! There is no room here except for the two armies. Whosoever is not with Christ is with Satan and shall surely be trod down when the enemies of God are trod like straw for the dunghill. Sinner, be you aware of this—that *God* is against you—and the hosts of God are against you. The Lord give you repentance! The Lord give you faith! And come you to the Captain of salvation and ask Him to have mercy on you! Run down the old flag! Thank God it is not nailed to the mast! Let the black flag come down and let the blood-red flag run up!

Spirit of God, constrain them to change masters! May they no more serve the black prince, Satan. But may they, by Your grace, serve under His banner whose service is perfect freedom and whose reward is everlasting life!

May the Lord bless each one of you, for Christ’s sake!

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THE HEXAPLA OF MYSTERY

NO. 1087

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 22, 1872,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”
1 Timothy 3:16.***

THE Apostle tells us in the preceding verse that the Lord has a double design in maintaining His Church in the world. The first is that it may be the place of His abode, for the Church of the living God is “the house of God,” the home wherein He reveals Himself unto His own children, the resting place of His love which He has of old appointed. Jehovah still inhabits the praises of Israel and still He fulfills His promise to His chosen, “I will dwell in them and walk in them.” (2 Cor. 6:16). Blessed is the Church which has realized this first design of God and so has continued to enjoy the Lord’s Presence and power. May we in this place be a building fitly framed together and grow unto a holy temple in the Lord, for a habitation of God through the Spirit.

God’s next purpose in sustaining a Church in the world is that it may preserve and uphold His Truth among men, for the Church of the living God is “the pillar and ground of the Truth.” The Gospel must be believed, practiced and proclaimed by men of God or it will not have power. God does not trust the conservation of His Truth to books, or to the most accurately written creeds, or to some one person supposed to be infallible—He puts the incorruptible Seed into the hearts of His chosen and in such good soil its vitality and its growth secure its preservation. Even the inspired Word, as a letter, has small power till it gains a lodging place for the Truth in a warm heart—and then it grows and yields fruit till its boughs spread far and wide and its seeds are wafted on the wings of every wind to spring up on the hills and among the valleys where none had looked for them.

As long as one copy of the Holy Scriptures remains in the world we shall have the pure Truth of God among us, but it will be like an unplanted seed. For the propagation of the Gospel, human voices are required—for the establishment and confirmation of it among men, human lives are needed. And God intends that His Gospel shall be set forth and held up, published, defended, maintained and supported in the world by His Church—not alone by His ministers, nor by a hierarchical establishment—but by the entire company of faithful men and women! To the sacramental host of His elect has He committed the banner of the Truth which they are always to unfold and carry on by the power of His Spirit, from victory to victory. In this sense, the Church of the living God is and ever must be, “the pillar and ground of the Truth.” Let us take care, in our measure, to make her so.

While dealing with this question, it was most fitting for the Apostle to tell us what the Truth is and *now* is the most proper time for each one of us to learn what are the vital and essential Truths which the Church of God is forever to maintain. Our text is, for this reason, deeply interesting. It deals not with questionable and debatable topics, but with things verily and, indeed, received among us. Its testimony is short but weighty. We cannot spare a single word from it and it would be a crime to add anything to it.

The Apostle calls it a “mystery,” and so, indeed, it is for exceeding greatness of meaning, but not for obscurity of language, for it is as plain as it is full. Neither is it a mystery because it speaks of recondite opinions or philosophical theories, for it deals only with facts and is an historical summary of actual occurrences. Observe that the comprehensive summary of the Gospel here given is contained in six little sentences which run with such regularity of measure in the original Greek that some have supposed them to be an ancient hymn. And it is possible that they may have been used as such in the early Church.

There is a poetic form about the six sentences. You are aware, of course, that the Orientals do not consider it essential to sacred Psalms and hymns that they should resound with jingling rhymes—*we* are the slaves of mere sound in that respect, but they are free. Their fashion of verse-making has more respect to the sense than ours and lies, as a rule, very much in introducing pleasant parallels and contrasts. These you have here, whether the six paragraphs are verses of a hymn or not. Note that “manifest in the flesh” is contrasted with “justified in the spirit.” “Seen of angels,” who are nearest to the Throne of God, is fitly set by the side of “preached unto the Gentiles,” who stand at the opposite pole and are far off. And then the third duplicate is made up of the evident opposites, “believed on in the world,” “received up into glory.” Thus, all through, the lights and shades are set over against each other by evident design.

Moreover, you will perceive an equally plain parallelism if you will read attentively. The first two stanzas deal with the revealing of the Lord Jesus—He is manifest in the flesh and He is yet more fully made manifest by being justified in the Spirit. Then follows a making known of the Lord by sight to angels and by hearing to the Gentiles. And in the third pair of lines there is a twofold reception—the one by Grace among men who believe and the other into His actual glory in Heaven. Add to all this that pairs are also discernable in the first and last, the second and fourth and the two middle lines.

Just for an instant notice that the first clause of the series deals with Christ’s descent and the last with His ascent. The second and the fifth are both intensely spiritual and the third and fourth have to do with the senses only. Thus you find another set of parallels whose existence can hardly be a mere accident. Note this, for it teaches us that our memories need to be helped and strengthened in every way and so it is well to have condensed Truth to carry about with us and exceedingly advantageous to us to have it arranged in such a shape that we are likely to recollect it.

The Apostle has been led by the Spirit to give us goodly words helping our infirmities—of this help we should gratefully avail ourselves to the utmost.

If we are somewhat instructed in the Word we have here an example of practical usefulness. We may for ourselves and for others, especially for the young, try to put the Truth of God into forms which will help it to retain its hold upon the memory. I shall call my text a hexapla of essential Truth, a six-fold mystery of godliness. You have six great points clearly set forth before you and these constitute the main, the essential elements of our holy faith which the Church of God is forever to set forth and uphold to the end of time. The Apostle has said, “without controversy great is the mystery of godliness.” When he says “without controversy,” I suppose he means that there ought to be no controversy about these facts though controversies have arisen concerning them and always will, since the most self-evident Truth of God will always find self-evident fools to contradict it!

He means that in the Church of God, at any rate, there is no question about these fundamentals. Outside of the Church these statements are denied, but inside the house of God no one ever questions them for a moment—and he who does so is by that very act proven to have no part nor lot in the matter. Without controversy all Christians agree that these are Truths of God and also that they are no trifles, but involve a mystery—a great mystery—that is to say they were things hidden in themselves and so concealed that reason could not have found them out. And even now, though they are revealed, they concern matters so vast and so profound that none of us comprehend them fully—and the best instructed scribe in the kingdom recognizes in them infinite deeps which he cannot hope fully to explore.

The facts are unquestioned by the Church of God and are without dispute among the faithful, regarded as containing in their inner depths a world of weighty meaning, even the great mystery of godliness. Have you ever noticed that there are six New Testament mysteries? There may be more, but these six are the chief. The first is the mystery of the Incarnation, which is now before us—“Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh.” The next is the mystery of the union of Christ with His Church, of which we read, in Ephesians 5:31, 32, “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.” Thrice blessed union with Jesus, may our souls find their Heaven in Your holy mystery—

***“Oh teach us, Lord, to know and own
This wondrous mystery,
That You with us are truly ONE,
And we are ONE with You!”***

The third mystery is the mystery of the calling of the Gentiles, to which Paul refers in Ephesians 3:4-6, where he says, “Whereby, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ; which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy Apostles and Prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel.” Herein we have a joyful portion for which we can never be too grateful.

The fourth mystery concerns the Jews and deals with the restoration of Israel, whom we ought to remember with abounding sympathy and brotherly love. Of this you will read in Romans 11:25, 26: "For I would not, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles is come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob."

For a fifth mystery I would bid you remember the doctrine of the removal of corruption from the body and of its resurrection as spoken of in the famous passage, "Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." And then, alas, to close the list, there is that mystery of iniquity which began to work so soon and works yet more and more of evil.

Our text, then, is one of six mysteries, but it has this preeminence that it is a *great* mystery. It is called, "the mystery of godliness," because it most intimately concerns a godly life. Those who receive it in their hearts become thereby godly men and, moreover, it builds up Believers in godliness and is to them a grand motive for the reverent love and holy fear of the Lord their God. Let so much as we have already spoken stand for our preface, and let us now, by the Holy Spirit's aid, consider one by one the six branches of the mystery which is now before us.

I. The first sentence is, "GOD WAS MANIFEST IN THE FLESH." I believe that our version is the correct one, but the most fierce battles have been held over this sentence. It is asserted that the word *Theos* is a corruption for "Os" so that, instead of reading, "God was manifest in the flesh," we should read, "*who* was manifest in the flesh." There is very little occasion for fighting about this matter, for if the text does not say, "*God* was manifest in the flesh," who does it say was manifest in the flesh?

Either a man, or an angel, or a devil. Does it tell us that a man was manifest in the flesh? Assuredly that cannot be its teachings, for every man is manifest in the flesh and there is no sense whatever in making such a statement concerning any mere man and then calling it a mystery! Was it an angel, then? But what angel was ever manifest in the flesh? And if he were, would it be at all a mystery that he should be "seen of angels?" Is it a wonder for an angel to see an angel? Can it be that the devil was manifest in the flesh? If so, he has been "received up into glory," which, let us hope, is not the case.

Well, if it was neither a man, nor an angel, nor a devil—who was manifest in the flesh? Surely He must have been God! And so, if the word is not there, the *sense* must be there or else *nonsense*. We believe that if criticism should grind the text in a mill, it would get out of it no more and no less than the sense expressed by our grand old version. God Himself was manifest in the flesh! What a mystery is this! A mystery of mysteries! God the Invisible was manifest! God the Spiritual dwelt in flesh! God the Infinite, uncontained, boundless, was manifest in the flesh!

What infinite leagues our thought must traverse between Godhead self-existent and, therefore, full of power and self-sufficiency, before we have descended to the far-down level of poor flesh which is as grass at its best and dust in its essence! Where can we find a greater contrast than between God and flesh? And yet the two are blended in the Incarnation of the Savior! God was manifest in the flesh. Truly God, not God *humanized*, but God as God! He was manifest in real flesh. Not in manhood deified and made superhuman, but in actual flesh—

***“Oh joy! There sits in our death,
Upon a throne of light,
One of a human mother born,
In perfect Godhead bright!
Forever God, forever Man,
My Jesus shall endure;
And fixed on Him,
My hope remains
Eternally secure.”***

Matchless Truth of God! Let the Church never fail to set it forth, for it is essential to the world's salvation that this doctrine of the Incarnation be fully known. O my Brothers and Sisters, since it is, “without controversy,” let us not controvert but sit down and feed upon it! What a miracle of condescension is here, that God should manifest Himself in flesh! It needs not so much to be preached upon as to be pondered in the heart. It needs that you sit down in quiet and consider how He who made you became like you—He who is your God became your brother Man. He who is adored of angels once lay in a manger! He who feeds all living things hungered and was thirsty. He who oversees all worlds as God, was, as a Man, made to sleep, to suffer and to die like yourselves!

This is a statement not easily to be believed. If He had not been beheld by many witnesses, so that men handled Him, looked upon Him and heard Him speak, it were a thing not readily to be accepted that so Divine a Person should be manifest in flesh. It is a wonder of condescension! And it is a marvel, too, of benediction, for God's manifestation in human flesh conveys a thousand blessings to us. Bethlehem's star is the morning star of hope to Believers. Now man is nearest to God. Never was God manifest in angel nature, but He is manifest in *flesh*. Now, between poor puny man that is born of a woman and the infinite God, there is a bond of union of the most wonderful kind. God and Man in one Person is the Lord Jesus Christ!

This brings our manhood near to God and by so doing it ennobles our nature—it lifts us up from the dunghill and sets us among princes—while at the same time it enriches us by endowing our manhood with all the glory of Christ Jesus in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily! Lift up your eyes, you down-trodden sons of man! If you are men you have a brotherhood with Christ, and Christ is God! O you who have begun to despise yourselves and think that you are merely sent to be drudges upon and slaves of sin, lift up your heads and look for redemption in the Son of Man who has broken the captives' bonds!

If you are Believers in the Christ of God, then you are also the *children* of God and if children then heirs—heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus Christ! What a fullness of consolation there is in this Truth, as well as of

benediction, for if the Son of God is Man, then He understands me and will have a fellow feeling for me. He knows my unfitness to worship sometimes—He knows my tendencies to grow weary and dull—He knows my pains, my trials and my griefs—

***“He knows what fierce temptations mean,
For He has felt the same.”***

Man, truly Man, yet sitting at the right hand of the Father, You, O Savior, are the delight of my soul! Is there not the richest comfort in this for you, the people of God? And, besides, there is instruction, too, for God was manifest in the flesh. And if you desire to see God, you must see Him in Christ Jesus.

It does not say God was veiled in the flesh, though under certain aspects that might be true, but God was “manifest in the flesh.” The brightness of the sun might put out our eyes if we gazed upon it and we must look through dark glasses and then the sun is manifested to us. So the excessive glory of the infinite Godhead cannot be borne by our mind’s eyes till it comes into communication and union with the nature of man and then God is manifest to us. My Soul, never try to gaze upon an absolute God—the brightness will blind your eyes—even our God is a consuming fire! Ask not to see God in fire in the bush, nor God in lightning upon Mount Sinai—be satisfied to see God in the Man Christ Jesus, for there God is manifested!

Not all the glory of the sky and of the sea, nor the wonders of Creation or Providence can set forth the Deity as does the Son of Mary, who from the manger went to the Cross and from the Cross to the tomb—and from the tomb to His Eternal Throne. Behold, now, the Lamb of God, for God is manifest in Him! People of God, look nowhere else for God! I shall leave the point when I have asked a personal question. Have we, each one of us, seen God in Christ Jesus? Remember, this is essential to salvation! We speak not now that which is harsh or severe—we only speak that which is honest and true. If you rebel against it we can still say no less. You cannot be right anywhere unless you are right about the Person of the Lord Jesus!

If you do not accept Him as the Son of God He cannot be a Savior to you. And without Him for a Savior you are as surely lost as you are born, whatever profession you may make. I trust we can say, many of us, “Yes, Jesus Christ is to us Lord, to the glory of God the Father and we worship Him and obey Him, putting all our trust in Him and rendering our adoration to Him.” If you are not now His worshippers, may the blessed Spirit bring you to Jesus and not suffer you to attempt to go to the Father first, for the Lord Jesus has told us, “no man comes unto the Father but by Me.” May you go to the Throne of God by the way of the Cross, for that is the *only* way—and may you go by that road at once.

II. The second clause concerns our Lord’s vindication by the Spirit. He who was “manifest in the flesh” was also “JUSTIFIED IN THE SPIRIT.” When our Lord came in human flesh and declared to be the Son of God there were many reasons why His statement would be doubted, for He came in such poverty, weakness and disrepute. In any case, the appearance of God in flesh would need great proof, but the circumstances which

surrounded our Savior were such as to cast, especially in carnal minds, great doubt upon His pretensions.

Our Lord, however the flesh might seem to cloud His claims, was “justified in the Spirit,” which may mean, and perhaps does, that His *spiritual* Nature as Man was so elevated by His Godhead that it abundantly justified His claim to be the Son of God. What a spirit was His for purity and dignity! What nobility ever came near to His? What a mind was His! What wisdom dwelt in Him! Even as a Child He baffled Rabbis and as a Man He confounded all who would entrap Him in His speech. Was there ever such teaching as His? Listen to Him and you feel that the spirit which flashes from those eyes and distils from those lips justifies His claim to be the Son of the Highest.

Hearken, also, to His words of command when His Godhead glows through His Humanity and proves Him Divine. He speaks and it is done. He commands and it stands fast. At His bidding waves sleep and winds rest—pain flees, strength returns, health smiles—and death lives! Has not His spiritual Nature, by deeds so astounding, fully justified Him? And see, dear Friends, how He was justified—not only by His own spirit, which worked beyond the reach and compass of all other spirits—but He was justified by the Holy Spirit which rested upon Him without measure and made His human spirit strong.

It was this anointing which made Him the chief of all Prophets, teachers and revealers of the mind of God. All who heard Him confessed His unrivalled power, even when they resisted it. The Spirit of God bore witness *in* Him—His words were full of unction. The Spirit of God bore witness *with* Him—His words went to men’s hearts. The Spirit of God bore witness to Christ and justified all His claims at the time of His Baptism, when out of the excellent Glory there appeared the form of a dove and a voice cried out of Heaven, “This is My beloved Son.” That same Spirit justified Him audibly again in His Transfiguration. But silently and yet more evidently the seal of God was *always* on Him—the Spirit witnessed to Him everywhere. Only blind eyes, blinded by hate, refused to see the Divine light which hung about His every word and act, as radiance enrobes a star!

Above all, our Lord’s claims were justified by the Spirit in His Resurrection, when He was “declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness by His resurrection from the dead.” Nor less so when, after 40 days, He was received up into Glory and the Spirit of God justified all that Christ had said by coming down like a rushing mighty wind and cloven tongues of fire and resting upon His disciples. If Christ had not risen from the dead He would have been a convicted impostor. And after His rising from the dead, if the Spirit of God had not been given, His claim would still have remained under a cloud!

But now it is clear that, “He has ascended on high and received gifts for men, yes, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them,” for the scattering of the Spirit of God among men was that promised largess which our mighty Conqueror distributed among His people when He entered upon the possession of His crown. The Holy Spirit has justified Christ! This is a part of the testimony of the Church—that

Christ's claims are to be justified by the spirit of His teaching and also by the Holy Spirit whose supernatural power will accompany the proclamation of the Gospel.

Now, let the Church always stand to this. I am afraid we are on wrong ground when we begin to defend the Gospel by mere *reason*. The true defense of the Gospel is the Spirit of Christ—Jesus is justified in the Spirit—and needs no other justification. O, Brethren, if we exhibit the Spirit of Christ we shall answer ridiculers and if the Spirit of God rests on the ministry of the Church, ridiculers will cease to ridicule! They will see her glory and they will be ashamed.

The Holy Spirit is our strength, our glory, the abiding witness that our great Leader is Lord and God. Brethren, has the Holy Spirit ever justified Christ in your soul? He has come to save—has the Holy Spirit revealed Him as your Savior? He has come to blot out sin—has the Holy Spirit ever revealed Him in all His power to pardon you? This is the sure vindication of Christ—your own personal experience of His preciousness and His power! If the Holy Spirit has given you that, none can confuse you! But if you have it not you lack the one thing necessary. God grant you may not lack it long!

III. The third clause of our hexapla is, "SEEN OF ANGELS." This is an important point, for angels had waited to see the Lord, patiently gazing on the Mercy Seat. There had been rumors in Heaven of this mystery of the manifold wisdom of God but they had not understood it. And it is now in Christ that the mystery of Incarnate God has been revealed to them. If I may say so, the brightness of the Godhead had confused even the angels. They were not able to see God, but when God came and manifested Himself in the flesh, then God was seen of angels.

The Godhead was seen in Christ by angels as they had never seen it before. They had beheld the attribute of justice. They had seen the attribute of power. They had marked the attribute of wisdom and seen the prerogative of sovereignty. But never had angels seen love, condescension, tenderness and pity in God as they saw these things resplendent in the Person and the life of Christ! They were astounded to think that God was such a One. They knew Him to be thrice holy, for they had chanted, "Holy, holy, holy," in their perpetual song. But they did not know Him to be Love—essential Love—as they knew it when they saw that, "He spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all."

The angels, seeing God thus manifest in flesh, ministered to Him. They watched around the manger. They were messengers to His foster parent to warn him of intended evil to the Child. And they waited on the Redeemer in the desert of His temptation. One of their number strengthened Him in the garden. Another rolled away the stone from His grave, while others sat at the head and foot of the sepulcher where Jesus had lain. I doubt not it is true as we sang just now—

***"They brought His chariot from above,
To bear Him to His Throne;
Clapped their triumphant wings, and cried,
'The glorious work is done.'"***

Jesus was alone seen of angels and this is one reason why they sing so sweetly of Him—why they tune their notes so heartily to the song, "Worthy

is the Lamb that was slain,” for they saw Him live and die—they saw Him labor and suffer and therefore is their song so vivid and so full of adoration. “You were slain,” they sing, though they *cannot* add, “and have redeemed us unto God by Your blood.”

Now the joy of this truth lies here—it brings the angel host near to us, for they saw Jesus and waited on Him and we see Him and therefore our eyes and the angels’ eyes meet upon the Person of Christ. We have one common love, one common Lord—and now the ministering spirits that waited upon Him are ready to wait upon us. They love the members for the sake of the Head. Beloved, we rejoice this day to know that Christ is Head of angels and principalities and powers, as well as Head of His Church! And so, in Him broken unity is restored and the household of God is one in Him. Angelic eyes beheld and loved—they still love and wonder. Fair spirits, charmed with the beauty of our Bridegroom, you rejoice with us and make it your delight to swell His train!

One question and we leave this point. Have you ever seen Jesus? He was seen of angels. Have your eyes ever seen Him—your inner, spiritual eyes? If not, the Lord help you this morning to look unto Him and be saved! It is nothing that He was seen of angels unless He is seen of me also, even as of one born out of due time. O, to see Him as my Savior, my All and rest in Him! This is the main business. May God grant us that gladness!

IV. Briefly, the fourth part of the great mystery does not look, at first sight, to be at all mysterious. There is much of mystery in the facts that God was “manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, and seen of angels.” But the next appears very commonplace—“PREACHED UNTO THE GENTILES.” Yet it is not without a marvel. Those who reflect will see a great mystery of Grace in it. Until Christ came, *nothing* was “preached to the Gentiles.” They were accounted *dogs*, and few were the crumbs that fell to them from the Master’s table! But after our Lord had ascended on high He was proclaimed to the Gentiles.

To a Jew, especially, this would seem a very strange thing. The Jew thought that if the Gentile perished it was but a matter of course—but for the Gentiles to be visited with the Gospel was strange, indeed! That God should work effectually in Peter to the Apostleship of the circumcision was to them readily a matter of faith. But that the same should be equally mighty in Paul towards the Gentiles was incredible! Well, blessed be God, you and I are partakers in this mystery, for we have heard and believed the love which God has toward us! We are Gentiles, also, but unto us has the Gospel been preached as well as unto the ancient people! Yes, and we have been more highly favored than they, for at this day more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife.

God has multiplied the seed of Abraham after the Spirit among the Gentiles, whereas the seed of Abraham after the flesh have, in these times, rejected the Savior. Rejoice then, in the mystery that Christ is preached among the Gentiles! Mark you, *preached*! For He is to be set forth in that manner. The Church is ever to maintain this great, incontrovertible mystery that the setting forth of Christ to the Gentiles is to be by *preaching* and not by any other means of man’s devising. Suppose I could

take my pencil, now, and draw the Savior with such matchless skill that a Raffaele or a Titian could not rival me? God has never ordained that Christ should so be set forth to the Gentiles.

Or, suppose I should perform the ceremony of the “mass” with all the exactness and with all the gorgeousness which the church of Rome would require? Such a setting forth of Christ among the Gentiles would not be according to the Divine mystery. Christ is to be *preached* among the Gentiles! The appointed way of manifesting the Incarnate God to the sons of men is by *preaching*—the Church must always maintain this! The strongest castle of the walls of Zion for offense and defense must always be the pulpit. God is pleased by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe!

I hate to see, as I do sometimes in certain modern buildings, the pulpit stuck in the corner and the altar in the most conspicuous place. The altar of sacrifice, indeed! The place of defilement and remembrance of sin—how come is that in the holy place at all? God has never ordained it to be there! Where in Holy Scripture have we mention of a material altar in the assemblies of Believers? Our only altar is the *spiritual* Altar of our Lord’s Person, whereof they have no right to eat that serve the tabernacle of outward forms of rites and ceremonies. Altars belong to Jews and heathens and even they never bow before them! None but your Popish idolaters have fallen so low as that!

The most prominent agency in the Church of God is the preaching of Christ—this is the trumpet of Heaven and the battering ram of Hell! By this door salvation comes, for faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God—and how shall they hear without a preacher? God’s way of creating faith in men’s hearts is not by pictures, music, or symbols, but by the hearing of the Word of God! This may seem a strange thing—but strange let it seem, for it is a *mystery*—and a great mystery, but a fact beyond all controversy! Let the Church forever maintain that Christ is to be preached unto the Gentiles!

A part of the greatness of the mystery lies in the persons who preached the Gospel. It was a strange thing that Jesus should be preached unto the Gentiles by unlearned and ignorant men. One of the Apostles, it is true, was of another class, but he declares that he never preached with excellency of speech. He declared that in all simplicity he laid bare the mystery of God in plain language. It was wonderful that Christ should be preached unto the Gentiles so rapidly. It was but the other day the 120 were in the upper room and within a few years there was no part of the civilized globe which had not heard the name of Jesus! They had penetrated Scythia. They had subdued the barbarians—their only weapon being the Cross!

They had triumphed at Athens, in the stronghold of classic learning. They had passed into Rome and set up the Cross amidst the luxurious vices of the capital. No place was untrodden by the Christian missionary and no place was unaffected by the power of the Gospel which he preached. This is a great mystery—may the Lord repeat the mystery again and again! O that preaching might once again be recognized to be God’s power unto salvation and used everywhere—in the Church, in the lecture

hall, in the street—in foreign lands and at home! The voice of the Truth of God in the preaching of Jesus is the great power of God!

One question here, and we leave it—Have you reverently heard the Gospel? For there goes with the declaration that God saves through preaching, the warning, “Take heed how you hear.” If God waits to bless by hearing, woe unto the men who hear inattentively and disrespectfully! Woe unto the hearers who are not *doers* of the Word! A responsibility goes with hearing and God grant that you may be *obedient* hearers so that we who preach may give a good account of you at the last—that our ministry may not have been in vain—but may have been to you the voice of God to your salvation.

V. And now the fifth part of the mystery is a very remarkable one. Like that which preceded, it does not appear to be mysterious on the surface, but it is so—“BELIEVED ON IN THE WORLD.” This is the most glorious of all the six points, this wonderful fact that Jesus is “believed on in the world.” Why, when the humble preachers first went out to tell of Jesus, their story was so strange you could not imagine that any would believe it! And then the doctrines that they taught were so contrary to all the prejudices of flesh and blood, so humbling to human pride, so insulting to all our self-esteem that it was not probable that men would accept them!

And the world, too, what a world it was! It was steeped up to its throat in cruelty, in vice, in luxury, in sins infamous and unmentionable—and was it likely that a pure Savior with a perfect doctrine like His would find followers? But He did—He was “believed on in the world.” Why, I think the first preachers must have been ready to leap for joy when they found that men believed them! If I had been Peter, I should scarcely have slept for joy for many a night if I had found 3,000 willing to believe my testimony and willing to be baptized into Christ! And Paul—oh, I think with all his sorrows, he must have been a very happy man—must have been struck with wonder to see that though he went into idolatrous lands to tell this new, strange and incredible story, yet in every place there were found men or women who received it joyfully!

Hark well that the Church is bound to maintain this mystery—that it is by believing in Christ that the efficacy of His Sacrifice comes to men. The mystery is not that Christ is *served* in the world, that is not put here—nor that Christ is *worshipped* in the world, that is not the first point—those things will be sure to follow. But the vital mystery is that Christ is “believed on in the world,” that is to say, trusted as the Savior! Men leave all other trusts and trust in Him! They give up their self-righteousness. They leave their vaunted sacraments. They forsake all ways and modes of self-salvation and come and trust in Christ—this is the great mystery!

“Well,” says one, “I do not see that there is a mystery in it.” Have you ever believed in Jesus yourself, beloved Friend? If you have, you will say, “this is the finger of God.” Belief in Jesus is as great a work of Divine power as the making of this globe. One of the visitors to this place lately said, “I am willing to be a Believer if the preacher can persuade me.” Very likely, but no preacher can create true faith—it needs a mightier power than the preacher’s, even the power of the Holy Spirit! God gives to His elect the blessing of faith and others willfully remain in unbelief. Faith,

simple as it is, is *supernatural*, Divine and not to be attained by human aid, nor human eloquence. They who have it know that it is a blessed mystery, this believing on Jesus Christ in the world. Have you this faith? Do you believe in Jesus? Everything else in my text leads up to this.

If He is manifest in the flesh, what is that unless I believe in Him? What if He is justified in the Spirit? What is that unless faith in Him justifies *me*? What if He is seen of angels, how does that help me unless I see Him, too? And even if He is preached among the Gentiles, that does but involve greater guilt upon my soul if, after hearing, I have not believed in Him. O dear Hearers, I may not speak to you much longer and every time that I am kept away from addressing you I feel a deep anxiety that by some means my preaching may be made effectual to your salvation. Many of you have believed in my Lord—this is my comfort—but, on the other hand, how many there are who still hear, and hear, and hear, and that is all? How long will you wait? How long will you cause me to labor for nothing? No one is so worth trusting as the Savior is and nothing is so true as that He came to save sinners!

VI. The last point of the Church's witness is that Jesus was "RECEIVED UP INTO GLORY." Only this word about it—He was so received because His work is finished. He would never have gone into His Glory if He had not finished all His toil. He would have accepted no reward had He not fully earned it. My Soul, do you believe that Christ is received up into Glory? That will let you know that you are resting in a finished work, an Atonement which has put away all sin, a satisfaction which has made all Believers accepted in the Beloved. He has gone into Glory, thus He is personally rewarded.

And moreover, He has thus representatively taken possession of all that He has purchased. Is Christ in Glory? Then the Believer is in Glory—not *literally* but in his Covenant Head. What Christ takes possession of He claims in our name—"I go to prepare a place for you." O you who sorrow over the present, rejoice also, for even now at this moment Heaven is yours—your Jesus has taken possession in your name! And oh, it is joyous to know that our great Lord is eternally exalted! If He were not exalted what comfort could we have? He is received up into Glory!

Men say He is not God—they cannot hurt Him, for He is received up into Glory! They revile His Gospel—they cannot dim the luster of His crown, He is received up into Glory! They would gladly slay His people if they could, but He is received up into Glory! They struggle and they strive against His cause and would gladly overthrow it—but O, what does it matter? He is everlastingly exalted and He will shortly come—that same Jesus who was received into Glory shall so come, in like manner as He was seen to go up into Heaven!

Here are great wells of comfort! He has gone to His Glory and has taken to Himself His great power! But every hour is bringing nearer the time when He shall lay bare His sword in the midst of His foes and shall unveil His face in the midst of His friends! Let us rejoice in Him this day and go our way to bear with all the Church of the living God the six-fold testimony of our text concerning our precious Savior. Amen.

THE GREAT MYSTERY OF GODLINESS

NO. 786

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 22, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness:
God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit,
seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed
on in the world, received up into glory.”
1 Timothy 3:16.*

THE Apostle had just reminded Timothy that the Church of the living God is the pillar and ground of the Truth of God, and he had pressed it upon him to behave himself aright in the midst of those faithful men to whom the Lord had committed the Gospel. And, lest by any means the youthful minister should think that the treasure committed to the Church was of little value, he declares that beyond all controversy it was great and precious. Every heathen religion had its mystery, its secret doctrine revealed only to the initiated which was held to be the essence of the faith. The mystery of some religions was mere froth, foolish if untrue, and if true of no consequence to anyone. But even those who do not believe the facts of our religion can hold no controversy with us about the unspeakable greatness of them, if they are, indeed, true.

Be a man what he may, if he is reasonable he will admit that Christianity does not deal in trifles. Like the eagle, it does not hawk for flies—it aspires to conquer the loftiest themes of thought. Right or wrong, the subjects with which we deal are not secondary, but wear about them an awful interest which none but the frivolous despise. Jesus sits in no second place among teachers. Paul mentions what the mystery of godliness is and declares that it concerns the manifestation of God in human flesh that He might save men from their sin. Now, says he, without controversy this is a great matter. If it is received by us as true, it becomes us to act as those who are put in trust with a priceless deposit with which we dare not be otherwise than faithful.

There is no room for indifference where the Gospel is concerned—it is either the most astounding of shams, or the most amazing of revelations! No man can safely remain undecided about it—it is too weighty, too solemn to be snuffed at as a matter of no concern. Foes and friends alike confess that the mystery of godliness is great. It is no rippling rill of dogma but a broad ocean of thought. It is no molehill of discovery, but an Alp of revelation. It is no single beam of light but a sun shining at its strength.

I shall, this morning, first take up the Apostle's summary of our religion. Secondly, I shall give a few notes upon it. And, thirdly, draw one or two inferences from it.

I. First let us carefully look at THE SUMMARY OF TRUE RELIGION handed by the Apostle to his son in the faith.

1. The first article in this most authentic Apostle's creed declares that "God was manifest in the flesh." This is claimed as an especially valuable part of the great mystery of godliness. My Brothers and Sisters, if you will carefully consider it, this is one of the most extraordinary doctrines that was ever declared in human hearing! And were it not well attested, it would be absolutely incredible that the Infinite God who fills all things, who was and is, and is to come—the Almighty, the Omniscient, and the Omnipresent actually condescended to veil Himself in the garments of our inferior clay!

He made all things, and yet He deigned to take the flesh of a creature into union with Himself! The Infinite was linked with the infant, and the Eternal was blended with mortality. That manger at Bethlehem, tenanted by the express image of the Father's Glory, was a great sight, indeed, to those who understood it. Well might the angels troop forth in crowds from within the gates of pearl, that they might behold Him whom Heaven could not contain finding accommodation in a stable with a lowly wedded pair. Wonder of wonders! God over all, blessed forever, became One with a newborn Babe which slept in a manger where the horned oxen fed! "God was manifest in the flesh."

In this Paul testifies not merely to our Lord's *birth*, but to the whole of the Divine manifestation in His life of two or three and thirty years. He was abundantly manifest among the multitudes and before His disciples during the latter part of His life. He was God in miracles most plenteous, but He was Man in sufferings most pitiable. He was the Son of the Highest, and nevertheless, "a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." He trod the billows of the obedient sea and yet He owned not a foot of land in all Judea. He fed thousands by His power and yet all faint and weary He sat upon a well, and cried, "Give Me to drink."

He cast out devils, but was Himself tempted of the devil. He healed all manner of diseases and was Himself exceedingly sorrowful even unto death! Winds and waves obeyed Him. Every element acknowledged the august Presence of Deity and yet He was tempted in all points like as we are. Our Lord's Manhood was no phantasm, no myth, no mere appearance in human shape. Beyond all doubt "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." "Handle Me and see," says He, "a Spirit has not flesh and bones as you see I have." "Reach here your finger, and behold My hands; and reach here your hand, and thrust it into My side: and be not faithless, but believing."

Yet with equal certainty God was manifest in Him. As the light streams through the lantern, so the Glory of Godhead flamed through the flesh of Jesus. Those who were His nearest companions bear witness—"We beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." That revelation of God in the flesh became yet more extraordinary when, at last, our Lord condescended to be put to death by His own creatures! Arraigned before human tribunals, condemned as guilty of the gravest crimes, He is taken from prison and from judgment with none to declare His generation. He is fastened to the accursed wood and put to a death of deepest shame and bitterest torture.

O you whose loving eyes have looked upon the ensanguined rills which gush from the wounds of your bleeding Lord and have delighted to behold the Lily of the Valleys reddened into the Rose of Sharon with the crimson of His own blood—you can see God in Christ as you behold rocks rending,

the sun darkened and the dead arising from their tombs at the moment of His departure from the earth! Behold in the writhing form of the Crucified Man the vengeance and the love of God, nor less behold Divine power sustaining the load of human guilt, and Divine compassion enduring such agonies for rebels so ill deserving. Truly this Son of Man was also the Son of God!

Beloved, this is a mystery surpassing all comprehension. If any man should attempt to explain, or even to define the union of the Divine and Human in the Lord Jesus, he would soon prove his folly. The schoolmen of the dark ages were very fond of asking puzzling questions about what they called the hypostatical union of the Deity and humanity of Christ. They could not cast so much as a ray of light upon the subject. They amused themselves with enigmas and lost themselves in labyrinths. It is *enough* for us to know that the Incarnation is a glorious fact and it suffices us to hold it in its simplicity. God was manifest in the flesh of Jesus Christ the Incarnate Word.

Beloved, this is a great mystery—great because it treats of God. Any doctrine which relates to the Infinite and the Eternal is of the utmost weight. We should be all ears and all heart when we have to learn concerning God. Reason teaches us that He who made us, who is our Preserver, and at whose Word we are soon to return to the dust, should be the first object of our thoughts. Turn here, you wayward children of Adam, and behold this great mystery for your God is here! A bush burning and unconsumed would attract your curious gaze—what do you think of a Man who was in union with the God who is a consuming fire? The Truth of God manifest in flesh is great if you consider the great honor which is thereby conferred upon manhood!

Man honored in God's taking the nature of man into union with Himself, for verily He took not upon Him the nature of angels, but He took upon Him the seed of Abraham! Whichever of all the creatures shall come nearest to the Creator will evidently have the preeminence in the ranks of creatureship! Which, then, shall bear the palm? Shall not the seraphs be chosen? Shall not the swift-winged sons of fire be chief among Heaven's courtiers? Behold, and be astonished—a *worm* is preferred—a rebellious child of the earth is chosen! Human nature is espoused into oneness with the Divine! There is no gulf between God and redeemed man at this hour. God is first, over all, blessed forever, but next comes man in the Person of the Man Christ Jesus.

Well may we say with David, "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars which You have ordained; what is man, that You are mindful of him? And the son of man, that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and have crowned him with glory and honor. You made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands. You have put all things under his feet." Man is royal now that Christ is human! Man is exalted since Christ is humiliated. Man may go up to God now that God has come down to man. This is great, is it not? A mystery, certainly, but great in every way! See that you despise it not lest you miss the abounding benefit which flows to man through this golden channel.

My Brothers and Sisters, the mystery appears greatest of all because it is so nearly connected with our eternal redemption. There could have been no putting away of sin by vicarious suffering if God had not become

Incarnate. Sin is not removed except by an atonement—neither would any person have sufficed to atone but one of like nature to those who had offended. By man came death—by man also must come resurrection. Jesus appears as Man to save His people from their sins by taking the sins of His people upon Himself and offering a propitiation for them. What a wondrous sight was the dying Redeemer! The Cross is the focus of all human history. I was almost going to say it is the *center* of the life of God, if such a thing can be.

All the ages meet in Calvary. Jesus is the central Sun of all events. O, gaze again, and marvel more and more that God should put Himself into the place of His offending creature, and in the Person of His dear Son should offer to eternal justice a compensation for the insults which sin had cast upon law and rule! There is no greatness in Heaven or earth if it is not here in the bleeding flesh of Jesus, the Son of God! All else is dwarfed into nothingness in His Presence. Beloved, the manifestation of God in Jesus Crucified will appear to be great to you if you have ever drunk deep into its meaning. If, standing at the foot of the Cross, you have seen all your sins punished in the Person of the Incarnate God, and have heard the voice which says, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus,” you cannot think lightly of the Word made flesh.

If you have learned that His blood has brought perfect pardon to all Believers, and that through the torn veil of His flesh the saints have access to God and entrance into Heaven, you will lay hold upon the great Truth of an Incarnate Deity with a grasp which neither the trials of life nor the terrors of death shall unclasp! You will hate the very thought of denying the Godhead of the Lord that bought you—you will be jealous for His great name, and burn with sacred zeal for His glory. Your heart will cry out indignantly, “Away from me, you rejecters of the Divine Redeemer! If you rob Christ of His glory I count you the worst of thieves. ‘Whoever denies the Son, the same has not the Father,’ and in denying Jesus you reject the one God Himself!”

2. The Apostle mentions, in the next place, the important witness by which the mission of Jesus was confirmed. He was “Justified in the Spirit.” By the word “Spirit,” we understand the Holy Spirit, although it may be understood of the spiritual nature of Christ in which He was *always* justified, though in the flesh He was condemned of men. It appears more natural to confine the expression to the Holy Spirit.

Every religion demands our attention in proportion to the certainty of its teachings and the value of its confirmatory testimony. How matchless is the seal which is set upon the mystery of godliness, since the Holy Spirit has been pleased Himself, Personally and repeatedly, to confirm it! If we demand trustworthy evidence, behold the Holy Spirit bearing witness to our most holy faith, both in Heaven and in earth!—“It is the Spirit that bears witness, because the Spirit is truth.”

Observe what part the Holy Spirit took in connection with our Lord. The formation of the Immaculate Body of the Holy Child Jesus was by the energy of the Holy Spirit—as the angel said to Mary, “The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you: therefore also that Holy Thing which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God.” Afterwards, the Holy Spirit confirmed this same most sacred Person, in whom God was manifest, by descending upon Him at His

Baptism in the waters of Jordan. John, who was the forerunner and witness of Jesus, bore record, saying, "I saw the Spirit descending from Heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom you shall see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizes with the Holy Spirit. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God."

The heavens were opened, and the Spirit, the Voice of God, proclaimed, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." On one or two other occasions we have it upon the testimony of witnesses who were present that an audible voice was heard out of the excellent glory, saying, "This is My beloved Son: hear Him!" The greatest attestation which the Holy Spirit gave to Christ was the raising of Him from the dead. In some respects Christ rose from the dead by His own power, but it is a Scriptural doctrine that He was "declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead."

The power by which we are converted is evidently the Holy Spirit, and we read in the Ephesians, "The exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He worked in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead." Moreover, let us not forget that 40 days after our Master had been taken up from us, while the disciples were gathered together with one accord in one place, suddenly they heard a sound as of a rushing mighty wind which filled all the place where they were sitting. The Holy Spirit, whom Jesus had promised, had come to make good the Word of the Lord. You have not forgotten the miraculous flames of fire which sat upon each of the disciples and how they spoke with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance!

You know how that day 3,000 were converted to the faith by the testimony of those first champions of Christ! Thus the Holy Spirit bore witness with signs and miracles, and wondrous gifts, that He who professed to be Incarnate Deity was most truly God and the Savior of men! Beloved, if you complain that this attestation has now ceased and that the record of miracles is rather a strain upon your faith than an assistance to it, I would remind you that the Spirit of God has not ceased from the midst of the Church. The Holy Spirit no longer operates upon material substances—the sick are not healed and the dead are not raised—this we freely confess. But He still acts with equally wonderful results upon the minds of men.

In this very house there have been miracles performed, which, in lasting value, put the raising of the dead to shame! Many of us who are now present bear witness that by the Spirit of God we have been newly created, raised from spiritual corruption, delivered from the dominion of Satan and translated into the kingdom of God! The swine of drunkenness have been made lovers of holiness! The beasts of sensuality have become partakers of the Divine nature! What better sign is needed? When hearts of stone melt like wax and streams of penitence flow from souls as hard as flinty rocks—who will refuse to believe? Let the Gospel be judged by its *fruits* and we are satisfied with the trial. If it does not turn the moral desert into an Eden, transform the lion into a lamb, and raise up the beggar from the dunghill, then let it be rejected!

But since it has done this, and is doing it, let its despisers beware lest they commit the sin against the Holy Spirit while they reject the solemn

evidences which He daily thrusts before our eyes. Brethren, in our own souls the blessed Spirit has borne most overwhelming witness when we have been bowed in penitence at Jesus' feet, and have been lifted up into the loftiest joy as we found pardon in His blood. The Spirit of God is with us still, working with the Word of God. See the savage casting away his weapons, the cannibal softened into the man! What philosophy could not do and did not care to attempt—what civilization never could have accomplished alone, the Cross of Christ has effectually performed! The Spirit of God is with us, and both in the holiness of the saints and in the conversions of unbelievers He bears witness that God was in Christ.

3. Our Apostle writes, as the next part of the great mystery of godliness, that Christ "was seen of angels." Jesus was seen of angels at His birth. They appeared to the shepherds and bade them hasten to Bethlehem while they, themselves, looked on with holy wonder—

***"They saw the Heaven-born Child, in human flesh arrayed,
Benevolent and mild, while in a manger laid.
And praise to God, and peace on earth,
For such a birth, proclaimed aloud."***

Our Lord was watched by holy spirits in the wilderness where, after He had conquered that arch tempter, angels ministered unto Him. He was with the wild beasts at one moment and seraphic spirits waited in His train. An angel ministered unto Him in Gethsemane when His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood. Upon Calvary they watched Him, too, and doubtless, as the poet says—

***"Around the bloody tree they pressed with strong desire
That wondrous sight to see, the Lord of Life expire.
And, could their eyes have known a tear,
Had dropped it there in sad surprise."***

Visions of angels were seen by the witnesses of His Resurrection. Two clothed in white sat the one at the head and the other at the foot where the Body of Jesus had lain. Angels met Him at His Ascension when the clouds received Him out of the sight of His gazing followers. And they attended Him up to Glory, crying, "Lift up your heads, O you gates; and be you lift up, you everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in."

The Apostle mentions this to show the greatness of our religion since the most noble intellects are interested in it. Did you ever hear of angels hovering around the assemblies of philosophical societies? Very interesting papers are sometimes produced speculating upon geological facts. Startling discoveries are every now and then made as to astronomy and the laws of motion. We are frequently surprised at the results of chemical analyses, yet I do not remember ever reading, even in poetry, that angelic beings have shown any excitement at the news! The fact is that the story of the world's history in geologic times, and all the facts about this world are as well known to angels as the letters of the alphabet are to us!

All our profound sciences and recondite theories must seem utterly contemptible to them. Those august minds which have been long ago created of God and preserved from defilement by His decree, are better able to judge than we are of the importance of things. And when we find them deeply interested in a matter, it cannot be of small account. Concerning an Incarnate God, it is said, "which things the angels desire to look into." Their views of God's manifesting Himself in the flesh are such that over the Mercy Seat they stand with outspread wings gazing in reverent admiration. And before the Throne they sing, "Worthy is the Lamb, for He was slain."

The doctrine of Incarnate Deity may be folly to the Greeks, and the vainglorious wisecracks of this world may call it commonplace, but to angels it is an ever flowing fountain of adoring admiration. They turn from every other sight to view the Incarnate Redeemer, regarding His condescending deed of Divine Grace as a bottomless ocean of mystery, a topless steep of wonder! Jesus was seen of angels and they still delight to gaze upon Him—this, to the Apostle's mind, was conclusive evidence that the doctrines of our faith are of the greatest importance.

4. Then, he passes on to the next Truth—Jesus Christ was preached unto the Gentiles. Was this a great thing? Is preaching a wonder? Yes. The preaching of the Gospel proves conclusively the grandeur of our religion. The nearest to Christ were the angels—He was seen of them. The furthest from Christ were fallen Gentiles who had given themselves up to the worship of the works of their own hands—to these, also, Jesus came. That Jesus Christ was preached to the Gentiles at all was a wonder which it behoves us not to forget.

As Paul says, "Therefore remember, that you, being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands: that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus you who some times were far off are made near by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of two one new man, so making peace."

The Gentiles were brutalized with groveling vices and no form of spiritual faith had ever found footing among them. Was, then, the most spiritual of all religions to be taught to them and carried to them by no other means than that of *preaching*? This surprised our Apostle! And what surprises me still more is this—that Christ was preached to the Gentiles by *Jews*—that those whose bigotry at that time was invincible so that they could not imagine such a thing as a Gentile being in covenant with God were the very men who with indefatigable ardor went among the Gentiles to preach Jesus Christ!

If you had told an intelligent Jew that some of his fellow countrymen would become Apostles to the Gentiles, to declare that the wall which surrounded the favored nation was broken down, he would have smiled incredulously and exclaimed, "Impossible! You may cut the Jew in pieces first. The belief that his race is peculiarly favored of God lies in the very heart and marrow of the Israelite. He will never consent to become one with the Gentile dogs." Yet Jesus the King of the Jews, Israel's hope and consolation, was first published to the heathen by Jews, and chiefly by one who boasted that he was a "Hebrew of the Hebrews. As touching the law, a Pharisee."

Paul, the most ferocious of bigots, who counted that he did God's service when he hunted out the disciples of Christ, became the Gentile's friend and spiritual father! This is a startling fact. It is a most noteworthy fact in the history of our faith that Jesus is still preached among the nations, and the Church labors to make him known everywhere. What other religion spends so much energy in seeking converts?

If any of you were foolish enough to wish to become Jews, you would not be welcomed among the Jewish fraternity. No Israelite ever attempts to proselyte us to his opinions. It would be a novelty, indeed, to hear of Jewish missionaries sent out to convert the heathen from their superstitions, or to recover Christians from their errors! No, the Jew does not want us—he prefers to keep his heritage for himself and his heirs. How far different is it with the followers of Jesus, whose very watchword is “preach the Gospel to every creature!”

In the case of all other religions, the preaching to the Gentiles is absent. I am not aware of any Muslim society for the conversion of the world to the Prophet. I never saw in the streets of London a Brahmin, come from far, to convert the crowds of London to the doctrines of the Shasters. Nor have I ever seen a Buddhist thrusting himself into the midst of peril to win the savage to his creed. Can any other faith than the Christian show me a man traversing alone the center of Africa, like Livingstone, or dwelling alone with Bushmen, as Moffat has done? The fact is that the spirit of false creeds is rather monopoly than extension. But as for the religion of Christ, it is expansive as the arch of Heaven!

If I could, I would have all men saved! If it were possible, I would have every one of you partakers of Christ Jesus this very morning. And we would cheerfully lay down our lives if we could extend the kingdom of Jesus Christ to the utmost bounds of the earth. What is it that keeps up this incessant preaching of Christ? Nothing but the real force of our faith. O you heathens, if your religions are true, why do you not promulgate them? Gods of the heathen, if you are gods, why do you not command your worshippers to convert the nations to your allegiance?

But no, they confess the worthlessness of their system in that these systems are not preached among the Gentiles, and have no vitality to secure their spread. When these religions do attempt to spread themselves, which is rare enough, how do they do it? Mohammed put a scimitar into the hand of each one of his followers, and said, “That is the strength of Islam—use that sharp argument upon the nations.” But Christ refused all carnal weapons and chose the simple preaching of the Word. What other faith can dare to depend upon preaching—upon one man’s testimony to other men about Truth precious to himself? Surely this goes to show that the things which we believe are powerful and worthy to be considered with attentive respect.

5. Another great part of the mystery is that Christ is believed on in the world. I will acknowledge that I have often wondered at this sentence, and have asked why Paul should write it down as a great mystery that Christ should be believed on in the world. And yet it is a marvel of marvels! If you think how sunken the world was in vice—how darkened the understanding of man was with ignorance—it is astounding that such men should receive so holy and so spiritual a religion as that which Jesus Christ preached by His servants.

We come to you who are fond of sin and we tell you that you must give up your favorite pleasures, that cherished vices must be abandoned, that holiness which is distasteful to you must rule your life—and yet obnoxious as these things are to flesh and blood, when the Holy Spirit comes with the Word—you believe them and accept them joyfully. The Apostle, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, uses the following language: “Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate,

nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

“And such were some of you: but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” Was not this extraordinary that such horrible characters should become lovers of the pure and holy Jesus? Must not a religion which can change such as these be something more than a cunningly devised fable?

In another place, we are told of all mankind, “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.” Is it not a wonder that such depraved minds should perceive beauties in the Lord Jesus and yield their full confidence to Him? Indeed, to every saved man it is the greatest miracle of all that he is himself a Believer! When I come to look at the Truths of God upon which I rest, they are very simple, indeed, and yet around them so many doubts are cast by the evil of my own heart that I stand amazed my faith retains her hold!

I believe that Christ died for my sins with much more assurance than I believe anything else. No fact in history is one-half as certain to me, and yet, at times, it is so hard to believe it that it is clear to me that true faith is not of man but is a fruit of the Spirit. Great must be the Truth which forces itself upon the conviction of minds so dark and so benighted as ours. The Apostle winds up his summary of the mystery by reminding us that Christ was “received up into glory.” This is no small Truth, surely, that the Apostle and High Priest of our profession has not gone from us into obscurity, but is at this day sitting upon the Throne of God!

At this hour Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords, upholding all things by the word of His power. He shall shortly come to be our Judge. He shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the trump of the archangel and the voice of God, and all men shall be gathered before Him to receive their final sentence. This is no small Truth, but a great one to be proclaimed with zeal! Thus, throughout, the burden of our religion is far from trivial. “Great is the mystery of godliness.”

II. I must now detain you with a few NOTES UPON THIS SUMMARY. Paul has here given us an outline of the Christian faith and we note upon it as follows—First, it is all concerning Christ. Out of these six articles of Paul’s creed, they all speak of Christ, from which I gather that if we are to preach the Gospel faithfully. We must preach much concerning Jesus Christ. My dear Brothers, this must be the first, the middle and end of our ministry. That man of whom it cannot be said that he preaches Christ does not behave himself aright in the house of God. He evidently is not a messenger sent from Heaven.

It is our business here to cry with John the Baptist, “Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.” Brothers and Sisters, as it is ours to preach Christ, so it is yours to receive Him. If you have received a Gospel of which Christ is not the top and bottom, throw it away! If you are resting on anything beside Christ Jesus, you are resting upon a rotten foundation. Get off from it lest you be deceived at the last! But if Christ is All in All to you, and His work and Person are the sum and substance of your hope, then be of good cheer—where Jesus is honored, souls are safely sheltered.

I notice, in the second place, that there is not here a single word upon Sacramentarianism. Now, in these days we are perpetually told by men who are manifestly in earnest that the great thing is the sacrament. According to their teaching God has committed to bishops and priests the fullness of His Divine Grace which we meekly and reverently may receive at their venerable hands. We are told that in connection with a few drops of water, sprinkled by the successors of the Apostles, children become regenerate! We are assured that through the laying on of these same blessed hands, we afterwards become confirmed in the faith and assured of our salvation!

We are told that through priestly power we are made partakers of the very *body* and *blood* of Christ, which, according to them, becomes *literally present* through *their* operation. When we come to die, they can anoint us with oil, consecrated by *their* power, and by this unction all our sins are forgiven us! The top and the bottom of the system is the *priest*, the *priest*, the *priest*! A man like ourselves, and not a whit better, but 10,000 times worse for his infamous impudence in pretending to be what he is not—this man, dressed out in as many colors as the peacock—is the divinely appointed medium of grace!

If this is the Truth of God, Paul did not know it, for, if he had known it, he would say, “Great is the mystery of godliness: God dwells in the priests. Hasten and kiss their feet, for by their ceremonials you get salvation.” Paul says nothing of the kind! He has nothing to reveal about candles, and capes, and pompous processions! All he has to say is this, “God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory,” and that is all. How different this simple Gospel from the complex machinery of Popery and Anglicanism!

I want you to notice, still further, that in this summary there is no exhibition of mere doctrine. I believe, most firmly, in the doctrines commonly called Calvinism, and I hold them to be filled with comfort to God’s people. But if any man shall say that the preaching of these is the whole of the preaching of the Gospel, I am at issue with him. Brothers, you may preach those doctrines as long as you like, and yet fail to preach the Gospel! And I will go further and affirm that some who have even *denied* those truths, to our great grief, have nevertheless been Gospel preachers for all that, and God has saved souls by their ministry.

The fact is, that while the doctrines of election, final perseverance, and so on, go to make up a complete ministry, and are invaluable in their place, yet the soul and marrow of the Gospel is not *there*, but is to be found in the great fact that “God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit,” and so on. Preach Christ, young man, if you want to win souls! Preach all the doctrines, too, for the building up of Believers, but still the main business is to preach *Jesus* who came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost. The Apostle tells us in the Corinthians that first of all he delivered unto us as soul-saving Truth, “how that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again on the third day, according to the Scriptures.” Facts about Christ Jesus, and the promise of life through Him—these are the faith of the Gospel!

Let me also say that I do not perceive anything in this summary tending remarkably to exalt prophecy. I would not make this remark were it

not that there is a certain troublesome sect abroad nowadays to whom the one thing needful is a perpetual speculation upon prophecy. All the bells in their steeple ring out, "Prophecy! Prophecy! Prophecy!" They plume themselves upon an expected *secret rapture*, and I know not what vain imaginings beside! Where prophecy is preached in connection with their shibboleth, there the Gospel is preached, but all ministers beside their own, however honored by God, are railed at by them as part of Babylon against whom men are to be warned.

They, indeed, are wise men, and can afford superciliously to look down upon their fellow Christians as the slaves of sect and system, being, I venture to say, far more sectarian than the worst of us, and more bigoted to their system than Romanists themselves! My dear Friends, if you have any time to spare and cannot find any practical work for Jesus, study the dark places of prophecy, but do not read *modern* prophetic works, for that is a sheer waste of time and nothing better. Hold off as you would from a serpent the idea that the study or preaching of prophecy is the Gospel, for the belief that it is so is mischievous beyond conception.

The Gospel which is to be vehemently declared is this—"God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." So long as London is reeking with sin, and millions are going down to Hell, let us leave others to prophecy. Let us go with anxious hearts to seek after souls and see if we cannot, by the Spirit's power, win sinners from going down into the pit.

You will, doubtless, have observed that this summary of the Gospel is very simple. Whenever you meet with teaching which is cloudy and complicated, you may generally conclude that it is not the Gospel of your salvation, for the Truth of Christ is so plain that he who runs may read, and the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err. Perhaps some of you have been thinking that conversion and salvation are dark and mysterious things, and that you have to pass through many singular operations and feelings in order to be saved. Now, Beloved, the whole of our faith lies in a nutshell—he that believes in Jesus Christ the Incarnate God, is saved. These few Truths of God, if grasped by the *mind*, received and trusted in by the *heart*, will save you.

It is at the Cross that salvation must be found. We have not written over our religion, "Mystery, mystery, mother of harlots," that is the sign of Babylon. But we have this to tell you, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He that believes not shall be damned." And the things which you have to believe are just these simplicities—Jesus the Son of God has come into this world as Man to save men. He has bled and died. He is proclaimed and preached. He is to be received and believed in. He has gone up to Glory to prepare a place for them that trust Him—and that is all!

III. THE INFERENCES I draw from this are just these. If this is a great Gospel, then how important it is for us to receive it! If the Gospel were a laborious system of ethics there are many in this house who never could be saved, for they could not understand it. But since it is so simple, why do men refuse it? "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." O will you not lay hold upon *that* Truth of God? I do pray the Spirit of God to take your minds off all philosophies and mysteries that you may come to Jesus only!

Trust in Christ and you are saved! Receive this simple truth! God calls it great. Angels think it great. The Holy Spirit attests it to be great. We who preach it feel it to be great. They who receive it acknowledge it to be great. Christ in Glory bears witness that it is great! O accept this great salvation! May the Spirit lead you to believe in the great Savior of great sinners!

Again, if it is so great, how important it is for us to spread it! It does not require us to go to college in order to tell of Jesus—we can, each in our sphere, publish His fame abroad. If this simple Truth is the message of God to perishing sinners, then in the name of common humanity, and above all, in the name of the love of Christ, let us deliver it! How this text ought to encourage us to spread the Gospel! When I am preaching the Gospel, many may say, “Oh, he is only telling us commonplace Truth.” Just so, I know that. And yet I feel within myself as if I were wheeling up God’s great cannon which will yet blow the gates of Hell to pieces! What? None of the venerable mysteries of Rome? What? None of the new philosophical discoveries? None of the imposing ceremonies? No, Brothers and Sisters, not *one* of them—they are all wooden guns, shams and counterfeits—and if ever they are fired off they will go to shivers.

This plain Truth of God, that “God was made flesh and dwelt among us,” is God’s great battering ram against which nothing can stand! Never lose heart in the Gospel, my Brothers, but think you hear the Apostle calling across the ages, “Great is the mystery of godliness.” Look for nothing greater, the Gospel is great enough! Keep to it. Never think you have told men enough times about it. As Napoleon told his warriors at the pyramids, “A thousand ages look down upon you!” Bleeding martyrs, from their graves, call to you to be faithful. Confessors who ascended to Heaven in fiery chariots implore you to be steadfast. Hold fast that you have received. Attempt not to mend the Truth! Venture not to shape it according to the fancy of the times, but proclaim it in all its native purity.

By this hammer the gods of Rome and Greece were dashed to shivers. By this lever the world was turned upside down! It is this Gospel which has brought glory to God, filled Heaven with redeemed souls, and made Hell to tremble in all its palaces of flame. Bind it about your heart and defy the hosts of Rome or Hell to unloose its folds! Wrap it about your loins in death and hold it as a standard in both your hands in life. This simple Truth of God, that “Jesus Christ has come to seek and to save that which is lost,” and that, “whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life,” must be your jewels, your treasure, your life!

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THE PROFIT OF GODLINESS IN THE LIFE TO COME NO. 946

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 19, 1870,
BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.”
1 Timothy 4:8.

WE endeavored, this morning to prove the profitableness of godliness as to the life which now is, and to discriminate as to what the promise of this life really is. We tried to prove that “the promise” of the life that now is—its real and highest beauty and excellence—consists in peace of mind, peace with God, contentment, and happiness of spirit. And while we pointed out that godliness did not ensure wealth, or health, or even a good name—for all these, even to godly men, might not be granted—yet we showed that the great end of our being, that for which we live and were created, that which will best make it worth while to have existed, shall certainly be ours if we are godly.

We did not think it an unimportant matter to expound the bearing of true religion upon this present state. But I trust we did not exaggerate that view so as to keep those in countenance who dream that this world is the main consideration—and that the wisest man is he who makes it the be-all and the end-all of his existence.

Beloved Friends, there is another life beyond this fleeting existence. This fact was dimly guessed by heathens. Strange as their mythology might be, and singular as were their speculations us to the regions of bliss and woe, even barbarous nations have had some glimmering light concerning a region beyond the river of death. Hardly yet have we been able to discover a people with no idea of an after-state. Man has scarcely ever been befooled into the belief that death is the finis of the volume of his existence.

Few, indeed, have been so lost to natural light as to have forgotten that man is something more than the dog which follows at his heel. That which was dimly guessed by the heathen was more fully worked out by the bolder and clearer minds among philosophers. They saw something about man that made him more than either ox or horse. They marked the moral government of God in the world, and as they saw the wicked prosper, and the righteous afflicted, they said, “There must be another state in which the GREAT AND JUST ONE will rectify all these wrongs—reward the righteous, and condemn the wicked.”

They thought it proved that there would be another life. They could not, however, speak with confidence. For reason, however right her inferences, does not content the heart, or give “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen.” That is reserved for *faith*. The

best light of heathens was but twilight. Yet was there so much light in their obscurity that they looked beyond the stream of death and thought they saw shades as of creatures that had once been here and could not die. What was thus surmised and suspected by the great thinkers of antiquity has been brought to light in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

He has declared to us that we shall live again, that there will be a Judgment and a Resurrection both of the righteous and of the wicked, and that there will be awarded to the righteous a reward that shall know no end, while the wicked shall be driven into a banishment to which there shall be no close. We are not left, now, to speculate nor to rely upon unaided reason. We have been told upon the authority of God, sometimes by the lips of Prophets, at other times by the lips of His own dear Son, or by His inspired Apostles, that there is a world to come, a world of terrors to the ungodly, but a world of promised blessing to the righteous.

My dear Hearer, if it is so, what will the world to come be to you? Will you inherit its promise? You may easily answer that question by another. Have you godliness? If you have, you have the promise of the life that is to come. Are you ungodly? Do you live without God? Are you without faith in God, without love to God, without reverence to God? Are you without the pardon which God presents to believers in Christ Jesus? Then you are without hope, and the world to come has nothing for you but a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation which will devour you.

I. GODLINESS CONCERNING THE LIFE TO COME POSSESSES A PROMISE UNIQUE AND UNRIVALLED. I say a unique promise, for, observe—infidelity makes no promise of a life to come. It is the express business of infidelity to deny that there is such a life, and to blot out all the comfort which can be promised concerning it. Man is like a prisoner shut up in his cell, a cell all dark and cheerless unless there is a window through which he can gaze upon a glorious landscape.

Infidelity comes like a demon into the cell, and with desperate hands blocks up the window, that man may sit forever in the dark, or at best may have the boasted light of a farthing rush-light called free-thinking. All that infidelity can tell him is that he will die like a dog. Fine prospect for a man who feels eternity pulsing within his spirit! I know I shall not die like the beast that perishes. And let who will propound the theory, my soul sickens and turns with disgust from it. Nor would it be possible by the most specious arguments so to pervert the instincts of my nature as to convince me that I shall thus die, and that my soul, like the flame of an out-burnt candle, shall be quenched in utter annihilation.

My inmost heart revolts at this degrading slander. She feels an innate nobility that will not allow her to be numbered with the beasts of the field, to die as they must do without a hope. Oh, miserable prospect! How can men be so earnest in proclaiming their own wretchedness? Enthusiasts for annihilation? Why not fanatics for Hell itself? Godliness has promise of the life that is to come, but infidelity can do nothing better than deny the ennobling revelation of the great Father and bid us be content with the dark prospect of being exterminated and put out of being.

Aspiring, thoughtful, rational Men—can you be content with the howling wildernesses and dreary voids of infidelity? Leave them, I pray you, for the goodly land of the Gospel which flows with milk and honey! Abandon extinction for immortality! Renounce perishing for Paradise!

Again, let me remark that this hope is unique because popery in any of its forms cannot promise us the life which is to come. I know that it speaks as positively as Christianity does about the fact that there will be another life. But it gives us no promise of it—for what is the expectation of the Romanist, even of the best Romanist? Have I not before remarked to you that we have heard—and therefore it is no slander for us to say it—of “masses” being said for the repose of the souls of the most eminent Romanists?

Cardinals distinguished for their learning, confessors and priests distinguished for their zeal, and even Popes reputed to be remarkable for holiness and even infallibility, have, when they died, gone *somewhere*! I know not where, but somewhere where they have needed that the faithful should *pray for the repose of their souls*! That is a very poor look-out for ordinary people like ourselves. For if these superlatively good people are still uneasy in their souls after they die, and have in fact, according to their own statements, gone to purgatorial fires or to purgatorial chills—to be tossed, as certain of their prophets have informed us—from icebergs into furnaces, and then back again, until by some means, mechanical, spiritual, or otherwise, sin shall be burnt out, or evaporated from them. If that is *their* expectation, I think I should be inclined, as the Irishman said, to become a Protestant heretic, and go to Heaven at once, if there is so sorry a prospect for the Catholic.

Godliness has the promise of the life which is to come, but it is altogether unique in possessing such a promise. No voice from the Vatican sounds one-half so sweetly as that from Patmos, which we unabashedly accept—“I heard a voice from Heaven saying unto me, Write, 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.” Our sorrow for the departed is not embittered by the absence of hope, for we believe that “them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.” Neither superstition on the one hand, nor unbelief on the other, so much as *dares* to offer a promise as to the life to come.

No system based upon human merit ever gives its votaries a promise of the life to come which they can really grasp and be assured of. No self-righteous man will venture to speak of the assurance of faith. In fact, he denounces it as presumption. He feels that his own basis is insecure, and therefore he suspects the confidence of others to be as hollow as his own. He lives between hope and fear—a joyless, unsatisfied life. While the believer in Jesus, knowing that there is no condemnation to him, awaits the hour of his entrance into Heaven with joyful expectancy. What is never promised to man’s fancied righteousness is secured to all who possess the righteousness of Christ Jesus. “Come, you blessed,” is their assured welcome—to be with Jesus—their entailed portion.

Godliness has a monopoly of heavenly promise as to the blessed future. There is nothing else beneath high Heaven to which any such

promise has ever been given by God, or of which any such promise can be supposed. Look at vice, for instance, with its pretended pleasures—what does it offer you? It offers pleasure in the life that now is. But as it speaks, you detect the lie upon its face, for even in the life that now is vice gives but a hasty intoxication, to be followed by woe and redness of the eyes. It is true it satiates with sweets, but in all its tables there is vomit. Satiety follows its gluttony, dissatisfaction comes with discontent, loathing, remorse, and misery—like hounds at its heels.

Vice dares not say, it never has had the effrontery yet to say, “Do evil and live in sin, and eternal life will come out of it.” No, the theater at its door does not proffer you eternal life—it invites you to the pit. The house of evil communications, the drunkard’s settle, the gathering place of scorners, the chamber of the strange woman—none of these has yet dared to advertise a promise of eternal life as among the gifts that may tempt its votaries. At best, sin gives you but bubbles, and feeds you upon air. The pleasure vanishes, and the misery is left. Even this side of the tomb the hollowness of sinful mirth is clear to all but the most superficial, and he said truly who sang concerning merry worldlings —

***“They grin. But why? And how long the laugh?
Half ignorance, their mirth. And half a lie
To cheat the world, and cheat themselves, they smile.
Hard either task! The most abandoned own
That others, if abandoned, are undone—
Then, for themselves, the moment reason wakes,
Oh, how laborious is their gaiety!
They scarce can swallow their ebullient spleen,
Scarce muster patience to support the farce,
And pump sad laughter till the curtain falls.
Scarce did I say? Some cannot sit it out;
Oft their own daring hand the curtain draws,
And shows us what is their joy by their despair.”***

If such is the failure of the mirth of fools this side of eternity, of what little benefit can it prove hereafter?

So with other things not sinful in themselves—there is no promise of the life that is to come appended to them. For instance, birth. What would not some men give if they could but somehow trace their pedigree up to a distinguished Crusader, or up to a Norman knight reported of in the battle-roll of Hastings? Yet, nowhere in the world is there a promise of eternal life to blood and birth. “For when he dies he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him. Though while he lived he blessed his soul: and men will praise you, when you do well to yourself. He shall go to the generation of his fathers. They shall never see light.”

Genealogies and pedigrees are poor things. Trace us all up far enough, and we are all descended from that naked sinner who tried to cover his shame with fig leaves, and owed his first true garment to the charity of offended Heaven. Let the pedigree run through the loins of kings, yes, and of mighty kings, and let every one of our forefathers have been distinguished for his valor—yet no man shall pretend, because of this, that eternal life will be secured thereby. Ah, no. The king rots like a slave and the hero is devoured by the worm as though he had been but a swinehe-

rd all his days. Yes, and the flame unquenchable kindles an earl, and duke, and millionaire, as well as a serf and peasant.

And it is equally certain that no promise of the life that is to come is given to wealth. Men hoard it, and gather it, and keep it, and seal it down by bonds and settlements as if they thought they could carry some thing with them. But when they have gained their utmost, they do not find that wealth has the promise even of *this* life, for it yields small contentment to the man who possesses it. "Their inward thought is that their houses shall continue forever, and their dwelling places to all generations. They call their lands after their own names. Nevertheless man being in honor abides not."

As for the life to come, is there any supposable connection between the millions of the miser's wealth and the glory that is to be revealed hereafter? No, but by so much more as the man lives for this world, by so much more shall he be *accursed*. He said, "I will pull down my barns and build greater." But God calls him a fool, and a fool he is, for when his soul is required of him, whose shall these things be which he had prepared? No, you may grasp the Indies if you will. You may seek to contain within your estates all the lands that you can see far and wide, but you shall be none the nearer to Heaven when you have reached the climax of your avarice. There is no promise of the life that is to come in the pursuits of usury and covetousness.

Nor is there any such promise to personal accomplishments and beauty. How many live for that poor bodily form of theirs which so soon must molder back to the dust! To dress, to adorn themselves, to catch the glance of the admirer's eye, to satisfy public taste, to follow fashion! Surely an object in life more frivolous never engrossed an immortal soul. It seems as strange as if an angel should be gathering daisies or blowing soap bubbles! An immortal spirit living to dress the body! To paint, to dye, to display a ribbon, to dispose a pin—is this the pursuit of an immortal? Yet tens of thousands live for little else. But ah, there is no promise of the life to come appended to the most noble beauty that ever fascinated the eye. Far deeper than the skin is the beauty which is admired in Heaven.

As for earth's comeliness, how do time, and death, and the worm together make havoc of it! Take up yonder skull, just upturned by the sexton's careless spade, "and get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her, though she paint an inch thick, to this complexion she must come at last." All her dressing shall end in a shroud, and all her washings and her dainty ornaments shall only make her but the sweeter morsel for the worm. There is no promise of the life to come to these frivolities—why, then, waste your time and degrade your souls with them?

Nor even to higher accomplishments than these is there given any promise of the life to come. For instance, the attainment of learning, or the possession of that which often stands men in as good place as learning, namely, cleverness, brings therewith no promise of future bliss. If a man is clever, if he can write interesting stories, if he can sketch the current fashions, if he can produce poetry that will survive among his fellow men—it matters not. Though his pen never wrote a line for Christ, and

though he never uttered a sentence that might have led a sinner to the Cross. Though his work had no aim beyond this life, and paid no homage to the God of the Gospel, yet even professed Christians will fall at the man's feet! And when he dies, will canonize him as a saint, and almost worship him as a Demigod!

I reckon the meanest Christian that loved his God, though he could only speak with a stammer the profession of his faith, is far nobler than he who possessed the genius of a Byron or the greatness of a Shakespeare who only used his ten talents for himself and for his fellow men, but never consecrated them to the great Master to whom the interest of them altogether belonged. No. There is no promise of the life that is to come to the philosopher, or to the statesman, or to the poet, or to the literary man, as such. They have no preference before the Lord. Not *gifts* but *Divine Grace* must save them. Humbly, penitently, and believingly they must find the promise of eternal life in godliness. And if they have not godliness, they shall find it nowhere.

Godliness has that promise, I say, and none besides. I saw in Italy standing at the corner of a road, as you may frequently see in Italy, a large Cross, and on it were these words, which I had not often seen on a Cross before—"Spes unica"—the only hope, the one unique hope, the one only hope of mankind. So would I tell you that on Christ's Cross there is written this day, "Spes unica"—the one hope of men. "Godliness has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." To nothing else anywhere—search for it high or low, on earth or sea—to nothing else is the promise given save to godliness alone.

II. I pass on to notice, in the second place, that THE PROMISE GIVEN TO GODLINESS IS AS COMPREHENSIVE AS IT IS UNIQUE. I have not time on this occasion to go into all the promises of the life that is to come which belong to godliness—who shall give an inventory where the treasure is boundless, or map out a land which has no limit? It will suffice if I give you the heads of this great theme. That promise is something of this kind. The godly man, unless Christ shall come, will die as others die, as to the matter of outward fact, but his death will be very different in its essence and meaning.

He will pass gently out of this world into the world to come, and then, at that instant, he will begin to realize the promise which godliness gave him. For he will enter then, no, he has entered *now*, upon an eternal life far other than that which belongs to other men. The Christian's life shall never be destroyed—"Because I live, you shall live also," says Christ. There is no fear of the Christian's ever growing aged in Heaven, or of his powers failing him. Eternal youth shall be to those who wear the unfading crown of life. Yon sun shall become black as a coal. yonder moon shall fail until her pale beams shall never more be seen. The stars shall fall like withered figs—even this earth, which we call stable, terming it terra firma, shall, with yonder heavens, be rolled up like a vestment that is worn out, and shall be laid aside among the things that were, but are not.

Everything which can be seen is but a fruit with a worm at the core, a flower doomed to fade. But the Believer shall live forever, his life shall be

coeval with the years of the Most High. God lives ever, ever, ever, and so shall every godly soul. Christ, having given him eternal life, he is one with Jesus, and as Jesus lives forever, even so shall he. In the moment of death the Christian will begin to enjoy this eternal life in the form of wonderful felicity in the company of Christ, in the Presence of God, in the society of disembodied spirits and holy angels. I say in a *moment*, for from the case of the dying thief we learn that there is no wait upon the road from earth to Heaven—

***“One gentle sigh the fetter breaks—
We scarce can say, ‘He’s gone!’
Before the willing spirit takes
Its mansion near the Throne.”***

How does Paul put it? “Absent from the body.” But you have hardly said that word, when he adds, “present with the Lord.” The eyes are closed on earth and opened again in Heaven! They loose their anchor, and immediately they come to the desired haven. How long that state of disembodied happiness shall last it is not for us to know, but by-and-by, when the fullness of time shall come, the Lord Jesus shall consummate all things by the resurrection of these bodies. The trumpet shall sound, and as Jesus Christ’s body rose from the dead as the first fruits, so shall we arise, every man in his own order.

Raised up by Divine power, our very bodies shall be reunited with our souls to live with Christ, raised however, not as they shall be put into the grave to slumber, but in a nobler image. They were sown like the shriveled seed, they shall come up like the fair flowers which decorate your summer gardens. Planted as a dull unattractive bulb, to develop into a glory like that of a lovely lily with snowy cup and petals of gold. Sown like the shriveled barley or wheat, to come up as a fair green blade, or to become the golden ear. “It does not yet appear what we shall be, but when He shall appear we shall be like He is, for we shall see Him as He is.”

Come, my Soul, what a promise is given you in God’s Word of the life that is to come! A promise for my soul, did I say? A promise for my *body*, too. These aches and pains shall be repaid. This weariness and these sicknesses shall all be recompensed. The body shall be remarried to the soul, from which it parted with so much grief, and the marriage shall be the more joyous because there never shall be another divorce. Then, in body and in soul made perfect, the fullness of our bliss shall have arrived.

But will there not be a judgment? Yes, a judgment certainly. And if not a judgment for the righteous in a set ceremony, as some think, yet certainly in spirit. We shall gather at the Great White Throne, gather with the goats or gather with the sheep. But there is this promise to you who are godly, that you shall have nothing to fear in that Day of Judgment—you shall go to it with the blood-bought pardon in your bosom, to be shown before the Judgment Seat. You shall go to that judgment to have it proclaimed to men, to angels, and to devils, that “there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus,” none being able to lay anything to the charge of those for whom Jesus Christ has died, and whom the Father justifies.

You need not fear the judgment, you need not fear the conflagration of the world, or whatever else of terror shall be attendant upon the coming of Christ as a thief in the night. You have the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. Listen to me! You have the promise that you shall enjoy forever the high dignity of being priests and kings unto God. You sons of toil, you daughters of poverty—you shall be peers in Heaven, you shall be courtiers of the Prince Imperial—yourselves being princes of the royal blood!

Your heads shall wear crowns, your hands shall wave palms of triumph. And as you shall have glorious rank, so shall you have companions suitable to your condition. The worldling's haunt, the synagogue of Satan, shall be far away from you. No more shall you sojourn in Mesech and dwell in the tents of Kedar. No idle talk shall vex you, no blasphemies shall inflict themselves upon your ears. You shall hear the songs of angels. And as they charm you, you shall also charm them by making known unto them the manifold wisdom of God. The holiest and best of men, redeemed by Jesus' precious blood, shall commune with you, and, best of all —

***“He that on the Throne does reign
You for evermore shall He feed;
With the tree of life sustain,
To the living fountain lead.”***

You shall have unbroken fellowship with God and with His Christ. What ravishing joy this will be! We shall better be able to experience than to imagine. Communion with Jesus here below uplifts us far above the world, but what its delights are in the unclouded skies of face-to-face fellowship, has not yet entered into the heart of man.

Hearken yet more, Beloved. You shall have suitable occupation. I know not what you may have to do in Heaven, but I do know it is written, “They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads, and His servants shall serve Him.” They serve Him day and night in His Temple. You would not be happy without occupation. Minds made like yours could not find rest except upon the wing—delightful and honorable employment shall be allotted you—suitable to your perfected capabilities. But, mark you, you shall have rest as well as service. No wave of trouble shall roll over your peaceful bosoms. You shall forever bathe your souls in seas of blissful rest—no care, no fear, no unsatisfied desire. For all desires shall be consummated, all expectations be fulfilled. God shall be your Portion, the infinite Spirit your Friend, and the ever-blessed Christ your elder Brother.

Into the joy of Heaven, which knows no bounds, shall you enter, according to His Words, “Enter you into the joy of your Lord.” And all this, and infinitely more than my tongue can tell you, shall be yours forever and forever, without fear of ever losing it, or dread of dying in the midst of it. “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man, the things that God has prepared for them that love Him, but He has revealed them unto us by His Spirit.” All the kingdom which the Father has prepared, and the place which the Son has prepared, are yours, O Believer, by the promise of the Lord. For “whom He justified, them He also glorified.”

The promise goes with godliness, and if you have godliness there is nothing in Heaven of joy, there is nothing there of honor, there is nothing there of rest and peace—which is not yours. For godliness has the promise of it, and God’s promise never fails—

***“Lo! I see the fair immortals,
Enter to the blissful seats;
Glory opens her waiting portals,
And the Savior’s train admits.
All the chosen of the Father,
All for whom the Lamb was slain,
All the Church appear together,
Washed from every sinful stain.
His dear smile the place enlightens
More than thousand suns could do;
All around, His Presence brightens,
Changeless, yet forever new.
Blessed state! Beyond conception!
Who its vast delights can tell?
May it be my blissful portion,
With my Savior there to dwell.”***

Perhaps within the next ten minutes we may be there! Who knows? I had half said, “God grant it to me!” No doubt, many anxious spirits would be glad to end so soon life’s weary journey and rest in the Fathers Home!

III. Now, very briefly, consider another point. I have shown you that the promise appended to godliness is unique and comprehensive, and now observe that IT IS SURE. “Godliness has promise.” That is to say, it has *God’s* promise. Now, God’s promise is firmer than the hills. He is God, and cannot lie. He will never retract the promise, nor will He leave it unfulfilled. He was too wise to give a rash promise—He is too powerful to be unable to fulfill it. “Has He said, and shall He not do it?”

Already tens of thousands to whom the promise was made have obtained a measure of this bliss in the glorification of their perfect spirits. We are on the road to the same happy state. Some of us are on the river’s brink. Perhaps the Lord may come suddenly, and we shall be changed, and so perfected without dying. Be that as the Lord wills, it is not a question which disturbs us. By God’s Grace, our faith is strong and firm. We are sure that we, too, shall enter into the rest which remains, and with all the blood-washed multitude shall in wonder and surprise adore the God before whose Throne we shall cast our crowns.

IV. But I shall not tarry upon that, for there comes a fourth thought. This promise is A PRESENT PROMISE. You should notice the participle, “having promise.” It does not say that godliness after awhile will get the promise, but godliness has promise *now*—at this very moment. My dear Hearer, if you are godly, that is, if you have submitted to God’s way of salvation. If you trust God, love God, serve God—if you are, in fact, a converted man—you have NOW the promise of the life that is to come. When we get a man’s promise in whom we trust, we feel quite easy about the matter under concern. A note of hand from many a firm in the city of London would pass current for gold any day in the week.

And surely when God gives the promise, it is safe and right for us to accept it as if it were the fulfillment itself, for it is quite as sure. We have

the promise, let us begin to sing about it! What is more, we have a part of the fulfillment of it, for, "I give unto My sheep eternal life," says Christ—shall we not sing concerning that? Believe in Jesus—you have eternal life NOW. There will be no new life given to you after death. You have even NOW, O Christian, the germ within you which will develop into the Glory-life above. Grace is Glory in the bud. You have the earnest of the Spirit. You have already a portion of the promise which is given to godliness.

Now, what you should do is to live now in the enjoyment of the promise. You cannot enjoy Heaven, for you are not there, but you can enjoy the *promise* of it, Many a dear child, if it has a promise of a treat in a week's time, will go skipping among its little companions as merry as a lark about it. It has not the treat yet, but it *expects* it. And I have known in our Sunday schools our little boys and girls, months before the time came for them to go into the country, as happy as the days were long, in prospect of that little pleasure. Surely you and I ought to be childlike enough to begin to rejoice in the Heaven that is so soon to be ours! I know tomorrow some of you will be working very hard, but you may sing—

***"This is not my place of resting,
Mine's a city yet to come;
Onward to it I am hasting
On to my eternal home."***

Perhaps you will have to fight the world's battles, and you will find them very stern. Oh, but you can sing even now of the palm branch, and of the victory that awaits you! And as your faith looks at the crown that Christ has prepared for it, you will be much rested even in the heat of the battle. When a traveler who has been long an exile returns home, it may be after walking many miles he at last gets to the brow of the hill where he can see the Church of the little town, and get a bird's-eye view of the parish. He gazes awhile, and as he looks again and again, says to himself, "Yes, that is the High Street there, and yonder is the turning by the old inn, and there—yes, there, I can see the gable of the dear old house at home."

Though his feet may be blistered, the way may have been long, and the sweat may be pouring from his face, yet he plucks up courage at the sight of home. The last mile down hill is soon over, for he has seen his long-loved home. Christians, you may see it, you may see the goodly land from Nebo even now—

***"How near
At times to faith's far-seeing eye,
The golden gates appear!"***

When the Crusaders first came in sight of Jerusalem, though they had a hard battle before them before they could win it, yet they fell down in ecstasy at the sight of the holy city. And do not you and I say, "Soldiers of the Cross, my fellow Crusaders in the holy war of righteousness, will you not in prospect of the coming glory sing—

***"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!?"***

When the brave soldiers, of whom Xenophon tells us, came at last in sight of the sea, from which they had been so long separated, they cried out, “Thallassé! Thallassé!”—“The sea! The sea!” And we, though death appears between us and the better land, can yet look beyond it and see the—

***“Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood
Arrayed in living green,”***

and bless God that a sight of what is to be revealed renders the burdens of the way light as we march towards Glory. Oh, live, live in the foretaste of Heaven. Let worldlings see that—

***“The thought of such amazing bliss
Does constant joys create.”***

V. Last of all. This promise which is appended to godliness is A VERY NEEDFUL ONE. It is a very necessary one, for ah, if I have no promise of the life that is to come, where am I? Where am I? And where shall I be? Where shall I be? I live, I know. I die, I know I must. And if it all is true as this old Bible, my mother’s Bible, tells me—that there is a hereafter. If I have no godliness, then woe is the day to me! Oh, how much I want the promise of the life to come, for if I have not that I have a curse for the life to come.

I cannot die, God has made my soul immortal. Even God Himself will never annihilate me, for He has been pleased to create me an immortal spirit, and on I must live forever. There are some who say, and I think the doctrine is full of unnumbered perils to the souls of men, that God made man naturally mortal, and the soul can become extinct. And they go on to teach that sinners are made to live after death on purpose to be tormented for a longer or shorter time, and then at last are annihilated. What a God must He be to give them a life they need not have—on purpose—that He might torment them! I know no such God.

But HE, whom I adore, in His unbounded goodness, gave to mankind what was in itself a wondrous blessing—immortality. And if you, my Hearer, choose to turn it into a curse forever, it is *you* that are to be blamed for it! Not God who gave you the immortality which, if you believe in the appointed Savior, will be to you an eternity of bliss. You are now past all recall an immortal being, and if you die without hope in Christ there will remain only this for you—to go on sinning in another state as you have gone on sinning here. But you will get no pleasure from it as you think you do sometimes, here—on the contrary, you will be tortured with remorse concerning it. And you will be vexed with angry passions to think that you cannot have your will, passions that will make you struggle yet worse against your God, and make your misery consequently the greater.

The worm that never dies will be your own furious hatred of God. The fire that never shall be quenched is probably the flames of your own insatiate lust after evil. I say not that there will not be bodily pains, but the natural results of sin are the deepest Hell to the *soul*. Sin has made you unhappy now. It will ripen. It will increase. When everything that checks it shall be taken off, your true character will be developed, and with that development will come enlarging wretchedness. Separated from the company of the righteous, and placed among the wicked, you will go on to be

worse and worse, and every stop in the increase of sin necessitates an increase of misery.

It is not true that God will punish you in mere caprice. He has ordained, and right enough was He to ordain it, that sin should punish itself—that sin should be its own misery, and its own anguish. Sin will be to you a never-ending death. O why will you die? Why will you die? Why will you, by the love of sin, bring upon yourselves an eternity of sin, an eternity of suffering? Turn unto Christ! I pray His Spirit to turn you. Come now, come now, and lay hold on eternal life!

I have been thinking while I have been preaching to you, this evening, of my own self, awhile, and I shall turn my thoughts to myself and any others who are preachers or teachers, and who try to do good to others. Years ago Hamburgh was nearly half of it burned down, and among the incidents that happened, there was this one. A large house had connected with it a yard in which there was a great black dog, and this black dog in the middle of the night barked and howled most furiously. It was only by his barking that the family was awakened just in time to escape from the flames, and their lives were spared.

But the poor dog was chained to his kennel, and though he barked and thus saved the lives of others, he was burned himself. Oh, do not you, who work for God in this Church, perish in that fashion! Do not permit your sins to enchain you, so that while you warn others, you become lost yourselves! See to it that you have the godliness which has the promise of the life that is to come.

And now, you who really desire to find godliness, remember, it is to be had in Christ, and only in Christ. I was in Windermere some three weeks ago on a hot, dusty day, and I saw a little gushing stream of water, and a chain with a ladle to it for the passerby to drink. I wanted to drink, and I went to it, but the ladle was cracked quite through, was very rusty, and would not hold a drop of water. Neither was the water, if it had been held in it, fit to drink. There are ways of salvation chosen by some that are equally as deceptive. They mock the traveler.

But oh, my Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, is a river of mercy, deep and broad. You have but to stoop and drink, and you may drink as much as you will, and none shall tell you stop. Have you not His Word for it, “Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely”? God grant you may with your heart believe the Gospel of Jesus, for our heart believes the Gospel of Jesus, for Christ’s sake.

[Sermon #937, *The Profit of Godliness in This Life*, is the sermon Brother Spurgeon alluded to at the beginning of this sermon.]

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 PROFIT OF GODLINESS IN THIS LIFE

NO. 937

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 19, 1870,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Bodily exercise profits little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance.”
1 Timothy 4:8, 9.

YOUR attention will be the more readily given to this passage, because Paul declares it to be a “faithful”—a most true and certain saying—and “worthy of all acceptance,” that is to say, worthy to be received and practiced by us all. Paul has four of these faithful sayings. The first, occurs in 1 Timothy 1:15, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” The second is our text. The third is in 2 Timothy 2:12, “It is a faithful saying, if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him.” And the fourth is in Titus 3:8, “This is a faithful saying, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works.”

We may trace a connection between these faithful sayings. The first one lays the foundation of our eternal salvation in the free Grace of God, as shown to us in the mission of the great Redeemer. The next affirms the double blessedness which we obtain through this salvation—the blessings of the upper and nether springs of time and of eternity. The third shows one of the duties to which the chosen people are called—we are ordained to suffer for Christ with the promise that “if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him.” The last sets forth the active form of Christian service, bidding us diligently to maintain good works. Thus we have the root of salvation in free Grace.

Next, we have the privileges of that salvation in the life which now is, and in that which is to come. And we have also the two great branches of suffering with Christ and serving with Christ, loaded with the fruits of the Spirit. Let us treasure up these faithful sayings. Let them be the guides of our life, our comfort, and our instruction. The Apostle of the Gentiles proved them to be faithful. They are faithful still, not one word shall fall to the ground. They are worthy of all acceptance, let us accept them now and prove their faithfulness. Let these four faithful sayings be written on the four corners of your house.

Today we consider the second of the four, and we will read the text again, “Bodily exercise profits little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” In the days when Paul wrote this Epistle, the Greeks and others paid great attention to physical culture, the development of the muscles, the proportion of the limbs, the production of everything in the body

which might conduce to the soundness of manhood. The philosophy of Greece all looked that way, and therefore at the various gymnasia bodily exercises of an athletic and even violent kind were undergone by men with the view of developing the body, and so assisting the soul.

It may be that Timothy, being yet a young man, fancied that there was something in this philosophy. And something, indeed, there is. In the original the Apostle Paul admits that it is so, for the passage might be read thus—"Bodily exercise verily profits a little," or thus, "Bodily exercise profits for a short time." Physical training is of some service—attention to it is not sinful nor to be condemned. It is of some use and has its proper place, but still it has no very eminent position in the Christian system. It occupies a place far in the background in the teaching of Christ and His Apostles. It is but a minor part of a complete education. It profits a little, a little, for a little time.

But *godliness*, the worship of God, the fear of God, has a long and wealthy entail of blessing, having the promise both of the life that now is and of that which is to come. Its profiting is not little but great. Its benefit is not confined to the body, but is shared by the body and the soul. It is not limited by this mortal life, but overleaps the grave and brings its largest revenue of profit in the world where graves are all unknown.

This morning I am about to try and speak upon the profit of godliness to a man in this life. We will consider its having the promise of the life to come, in the evening, if God spares us.

With regard to this life, let it be remarked that the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ neither undervalues nor overvalues this present life. It does not sneer at this life as though it were nothing. On the contrary, it ennobles it, and shows the relation which it has to the higher and eternal life. It does not overvalue it by making this life, and the secular pursuits of it, the main object of any man. It puts it into an honorable but yet a secondary place, and says to the sons of men, "Seek you first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness. And all these things shall be added unto you."

It is not, however, very easy to keep to the middle point of exact truth as to a due estimate of this present life—he who does so is taught of God. There are many who undervalue this life—let me mention some of them to you. Those undervalue it who sacrifice it to indulge their passions, or to gratify their appetites. Too many, for the sake of momentary gratifications, have shortened their lives and rendered their latter end bitterly painful to themselves. They conceived that the pleasures of the flesh were better than life. They were mistaken in their estimate. They made but a poor exchange when they chose lust and death, rather than purity and life.

The drunkard has been known to take his cups, though he knew that in so doing he was virtually poisoning himself. The man of hot passions has been seen to plunge into uncleanness, though the consequences of his folly have been plainly set before him. Men who for a morsel of meat, or a flash of merriment, are selling this world as well as the world to come, are fools, indeed. He that would have pleasure must not pursue it too furiously. Temperance is the rule here—moderation and the use, not excess

and the abuse—will secure to us the pleasure even of this mortal life. Value not, I pray you, the transient joys which the animal appetites can bring to you. At least value them not so much as to shorten life for their sakes.

Some evidently undervalue their lives because they make them wretched through envy. Others are richer than they are, and they think it a miserable thing to be alive at all while others possess more of this world's goods than they. They walk, they say, and toil while yonder person, who has no more deserts than they, is riding in his chariot. So, indeed, they count the *chariot* the main thing and not the life, and they will not enjoy their life because they cannot have a certain coveted addition which another possesses.

Haman is not grateful for all the mercies of life while unbending Mordecai sits in the king's gate. He counts his honey to be bitterness because he cannot lord it at his will. God gets no thanks at all from the man for the innumerable mercies which he has. These are nothing. He pines for some particular supposed mercy which he has not. He considers that the fact of his being alive, and being favored of God in many respects, is nothing at all to be considered, because he has not all that big avarice might wish for. O poison not life by the envy of others, for if you do so, you miserably undervalue it!

The slaves of avarice undervalue their lives, for they do not care to make life happy, but pinch themselves in order to accumulate wealth. The miser who starves himself in order that he may fill his bags may well be reasoned with in this way—"Is not the life more than the meat, and the body than raiment? Skin for skin, yes, all that other men have will they give for their lives. But you give your life for this wealth, this glittering dust. You are willing to forego all the enjoyments that this life might afford you, that you may have a heap to leave to your uncertain heirs, who will probably squander it, and certainly forget the hands that scraped the hoard together."

Why should I throw away myself for the sake of dying rich? Is it true success in life to have enjoyed nothing, to have poisoned all my existence merely that the world might be informed in a corner of the Illustrated News that I died worth so many thousands of pounds? This is to undervalue life, indeed.

So, also, do they undervalue it who in foolhardiness are ready to throw it away on the slightest pretext. He that for his country's sake, or for the love of his fellow creature, risks life and loses it, truly deserves to be called a hero. But he, who, to provoke laughter and to win the applause of fools, will venture limb and life without need is but a fool himself, and deserves no praise whatever. He undervalues life who will display an art which endangers it, or who will run the risk of it for anything whatever short of the laudable motive of preserving liberty to his country, or life to his fellow men.

Holy Scripture never teaches us to undervalue our own lives. He that said, "You shall not kill," meant that we were not to kill *ourselves* any more than others. We ought to seek by all we can do in the surroundings

of our habitations, by our cleanliness, by carefully observing sanitary laws, by never encouraging dangerous exhibitions, and by every other means to show our care of the life that now is, for it is a precious thing.

Yet, my Brethren, there can be such a thing as *overvaluing* this life, and multitudes have fallen into *that* error. Those overvalue it who prefer it to eternal life. Why, it is but as a drop compared with the ocean, if you measure time with eternity. Seventy or eighty years of dwelling here below—what are they when compared with infinite ages of existence in the Presence of the Most High? I reckon that this present life is not worthy to be compared with the Glory that shall be revealed in us.

When men in fearful moments have denied the faith for the sake of saving their lives, they have overvalued this life. When to preserve themselves from the sword, or the fire, or the tortures of the rack, they have denied the name of Jesus, they have made a mistake and exchanged gold for dross. Alas, how many of us, in like condition, might have fallen into the same error? They overvalue this life who consider it to be a better thing than Divine love, for the love of God is better than life—His loving kindness is better than life itself.

Some would give anything for their lives, but they would give nothing for God's love. If their lives were in danger, they would hasten to the physician, but though they enjoy not the love of God they yet sit at ease, and seek not the priceless benefit. They who feel aright think it a cheap thing to die, but an awful thing to live apart from God. They recognize that life would be but death unless God were with us, and that death itself is but the vestibule of life while God is our joy and our strength! Let us never set the present life before Divine love, and never let it be compared even for a moment with the pursuit of God's Glory.

Every Christian man is to feel that he is to take care of his life in comparison with any earthly glory. But if it comes to a choice between God's Glory and his life, he is to have no timorous hesitation in the matter, but at once sacrifice his life freely at his Lord's altar. This has been ever the spirit of true Christians. They have never been anxious to die, nor have they been fearful concerning the loss of life. They have not thrown away their lives—they have known their value too well—but they have not withheld their lives for Christ's sake. They have esteemed Him to be better than life itself. So you see the Scripture teaches us that there is a proper middle course in estimating this present life, and if we follow its instructions, we shall neither undervalue nor overvalue it.

It appears from the text, that godliness influences this present life, puts it in its true position, and becomes profitable to it.

I. First, let me observe that **GODLINESS CHANGES THE TENURE OF THE LIFE THAT NOW IS.** It has "the promise of the life that now is." I want you to mark the words—"it has the promise of the life that now is." An ungodly man lives, but how? He lives in a very different respect from a godly man. Sit down in the cell of Newgate with a man condemned to die. That man lives, but he is reckoned dead in Law. He has been condemned. If he is now enjoying a reprieve, yet he holds his life at another's pleasure, and soon he must surrender it to the demands of justice. I, sitting by the

side of him, breathing the same air, and enjoying what in many respects is only the same life, yet live in a totally different sense. I have not forfeited my life to the Law. I enjoy it as far as the Law is concerned, as my own proper right—the Law protects my life, though it will destroy his. The ungodly man is condemned already, condemned to die, for the wages of sin is death. And his whole life here is nothing but a reprieve granted by the longsuffering of God.

But a Christian man is pardoned and absolved. He owes not his life now to penal justice. When death comes to him it will not be at all in the sense of an infliction of a punishment. It will not be death, it will be the transfer of his spirit to a better state, the slumbering of his body for a little while in its proper couch to be awakened in a nobler likeness by the trump of the archangel. Now, is not life itself changed when held on so different a tenure? To live because I am now protected by the Law—is not that better than to be living at the sufferance of the Law?

To live the life of an absolved man, of a free man, the life of God's own child even in this present life—is not that a different thing from living the life of one to whom each hour measures out a nearer approach to the capital sentence, and to the execution of well-deserved punishment? The first is a life of pleasure—the second, disguise it as you may, is death in life, a life overshadowed with the darkness of eternal wrath.

“Godliness has the promise of the life that now is.” That word changes the tenure of our present life in this respect, that it removes in a sense the uncertainty of it. God has given to none of you unconverted ones any promise of the life that now is. You are like squatters on a common who pitch their tents, and by the sufferance of the lord of the manor may remain there for awhile. But at a moment's notice you must up tents and away.

But the Christian has the promise of the life that now is. That is to say, he has the freehold of it. It is life given to him of God, and he really enjoys it. He has an absolute certainty about it. In fact, the life that now is has become to the Christian a foretaste of the life to come. Do you say that it is uncertain to the Christian whether he shall die or live? I grant you in one sense his remaining here is uncertain. Yet this is certain to him—he shall never die until it is best for him to die. He shall never depart this life till he is ripe for the life to come—he shall never, in fact, be removed from his present tabernacle till he himself, if he knew all, would be perfectly willing to be removed.

Willing! Yes, far more! *Overjoyed* that his tabernacle should be dissolved that he might enter into his “House not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” The tenure is very different between the uncertainty of the ungodly who has no rights and no legal titles, and the blessed certainty of the child of God who lives by promise.

Let me add that this word seems to me to sweeten the whole of human life to the man that has it. Godliness has the promise of life that now is—that is to say, everything that comes to a godly man comes to him by promise. Whereas if the ungodly man has any blessing apparent, it does not come by promise, it comes overshadowed by a terrible guilt which

curses his very blessings and makes the responsibilities of his wealth and of his health and position redound to his own destruction. It works as a savor of death unto death through his willful disobedience.

Everything that comes to the Christian comes by promise. He sees his daily bread, and he says, "It has my Father's mark on it. He said my bread should be given me. Here comes the water from the crystal stream, it is flavored with the love of God. He said my water shall be sure." He puts on his raiment, and it may not be so comely as the dress of others, but he says, "This is the livery my Father promised me." He sleeps, and it is beneath the canopy of Divine protection. He wakes and he walks abroad with angels, according to the promise, bearing him up in their hands.

Afflictions come to him by promise, the broad arrow of the great King is set on each one of them, for was it not said of old, "In the world you shall have tribulation, but in Me you shall have peace"? He can see everywhere the trace of Divine faithfulness in the keeping of the Covenant promise. He lives not the life of Ishmael, who by-and-by may be banished to the wilderness with the bondwoman, his mother. No, he lives the life of Isaac, the child of the promise, who is before long to inherit all things, and who even now is the darling child of his father, and rejoices in his father's love.

There is a vast difference between having the life that now is, and having the promise of the life that now is—having God's promise about it to make it all gracious, to make it all certain, and to make it all blessed as a token of love from God.

II. It is time that we pass on to THE BENEFIT WHICH GODLINESS BESTOWS IN THIS LIFE. Perhaps the fullness of the text is the fact that the flower of life, the crown of life, the highest blessedness and bliss of life, is secured to us by godliness. I have no doubt you have often heard interpretations of this text, very excellent—and it is not for me to judge or censure them—which lead to the belief that the way to make the best of both worlds is to be a Christian.

I also subscribe to that, but I must demur to the way in which it is generally put. There is an excellent sermon by that notable Divine, Saurin, in which he urges this text as a proof that the best hope of success in the world is enjoyed by the Christian. I demur to that being the teaching of this text. There may be some truth in it, but I do not think it is much to be insisted on. It has been said that he who fears God has the best guarantee of health. It is true, there is nothing in godliness to destroy the health of the body. The true Christian is preserved from many of those passions, and excitements, and indulgences, which tend to produce disease and to bring on early death.

That much is true, but I do not believe that godliness inevitably ensures good health. I believe, rather, that some godly men absolutely require for the highest perfection of their godliness, that they should be visited with sickness. It seems to me to be a very strange theory, to teach that godliness guarantees health, for it would lead to the supposition that all people who are unhealthy must necessarily be or have been deficient in godliness. And this is all the more untenable when we observe that some of the best people we have ever met have been those who have for years

been bedridden by affliction which they certainly never brought upon themselves by any kind of sin.

I would say to every young man, there is nothing in the pursuit of godliness that can injure your health, but I would not say to him, "If you are godly you have the promise of being a healthy man," for I do not believe it, since unhealthiness may come from a thousand other sources besides impropriety of conduct. I will go farther, and affirm that godliness, when carried to its highest and most honorable degree of excellence, might sometimes render it necessary for a man to place himself where he would of necessity become unhealthy. I know that it was the highest godliness which made our missionaries fix their abodes among the fever marshes of Fernando Po and Old Calabar to preach the Gospel.

When I heard from one of our missionaries, as I did personally, that he had at last become so acclimatized that he did not have the fever oftener than about two days out of three, I could not think that godliness in his case necessarily involved *health*. But I gathered that it might so happen that an eminently godly man might feel it necessary to go where he might say, "Farewell, Health, you are not, after all, the promise of the life that now is. I can bear to suffer, I can bear to creep about this world sick and ready to die if I may but have what is better than health—the luxury of winning souls for Christ—the honor and joy of instructing the ignorant in the faith of the crucified Redeemer."

It were wicked to think that a man has less of godliness who sacrifices his health for Christ's sake. He certainly would not be the man to miss the promise, and yet if health were such a promise he would evidently have missed it.

Again, we have heard it argued that the godly man has the best prospect of wealth in this world. Now I will also grant that as godliness delivers us from a multitude of expenses into which riot and dissipation would lead us, and as godliness creates habits of sobriety and economy, as godliness begets honesty, and honesty is even in a *worldly* sense the best policy, there are some reasons why Christian traders should grow rich, and godly men have much in their favor.

But I also cannot help recognizing that while trade is as it is, there are many things which a Christian man cannot do, and dare not do, which some have done, and are to this day rich for having done them—dirty acts, mean, low, and groveling—which have brought wealth to the creatures who have practiced them. And yet more—I have known the best of Christians, and men, too, whose outward conduct has been fully conformable to their profession—who have lived and died poor. Now, if wealth is the promise of the life that now is, I venture to say that godliness does not infallibly or even generally secure it. The God-fearing man may have as fair an opportunity as any other in the race of life, but all things considered, this is all we can say. It may be that the godly man may be a poor man, and from a dozen circumstances not connected with his religion or his morals, may live and may die poor in this world, but rich in faith.

It has also been said that godliness has the promise of the life that now is, in the sense that a Christian man is the most likely to have a good

name, fame, and reputation among his fellow men. That also is true in a measure. In well-regulated society, the believer in Christ, through the holiness of his character, will be had in esteem, and even among the worst of men the excellence of his conduct will command a measure of respect. But for all that, I do not believe that repute among men is the promise of the life that now is—for what is it after all? Good repute among men, if it is deserved, I shall not decry. But if by any chance slander should come and take away the good man's name—and it has often done so—shall I say pity the calumniated saint as one who has lost the promise of the life that now is?

I dare not think it! Far rather would I bid him rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for so persecuted they the Prophets that were before him. And who is the most likely person to be slandered? Is it not the man who is most consistent with his profession, and most zealous in the spread of the faith? The Apostle Paul certainly never accounted riches to be the promise of the life that now is, for he had nothing. He had learned to be poor, and to labor with his hands. He certainly never reckoned health to be the promise of the life that now is, for he was in such circumstances of peril by land and sea, and among false brethren, that his life was in jeopardy for the Gospel. And as to a good name, he never regarded that as the promise of the life that now is, for he was willingly accounted as the off-scouring of all things—some thought him mad, others thought him base, his repute with the multitude was gone.

I will repeat what I have said, lest I be misunderstood. Under ordinary circumstances it is true that godliness wears a propitious face both towards health, and wealth, and name—and he who has respect to these things, shall not find himself, as a rule, injured in the pursuit of them by his godliness. But still I disdain altogether the idea that all these three things together are, or even make up a *part* of the promise of the life that now is. I believe some persons have the life that now is in its fullness, and the promise of it in its richest fulfillment, who have neither wealth, health, nor fame. Being blessed with the suffering Master's smile and Presence, they are happier far than those who roll in wealth, who luxuriate in fame, and have all the rich blessings which health includes.

Let me now show you what I think is the promise of the life that now is. I believe it to be an *inward* happiness, which is altogether independent of outward circumstances. It is something richer than wealth, fairer than health, and more substantial than fame. This secret of the Lord, this deep delight, this calm repose, godliness always brings in proportion as it reigns in the heart.

Let us try and show that this is so. A godly man, my Brethren, is one who is at one with his Maker. It must always be right with the creature when it is at one with the Creator. The Creator is Omnipotent, All-Just, All-Holy. When the creature is out of gear with the Creator it will always be dashing itself against the pricks, and wounding itself. As the Creator will not change, if the creature runs not parallel to the Divine will, the creature must suffer, must be unhappy, must be restless. But when godliness puts our will into conformity with the Divine will, the more fully it

does so, the more certainly it secures to us happiness even in the life that now is.

I am not happy necessarily because I am in good health, but I am happy if I am content to be out of health when God wills it. I am not happy because I am wealthy, but I am happy if it pleases me to be poor because it pleases God I should be. I am not happy because I happen to be famous, but I am happy if, being all unknown, I count it my highest fame to be accepted in the Beloved. A heart reconciled to the Divine will has full possession of the promise of the life that now is, for such peace with God is perfect happiness where it perfectly exists—conformity to God's will is Heaven below. I pray that godliness may work in all of you a conformity to the Divine will, and then I am sure, whatever your outward lot may be, you will win the promise of the life that now is.

The Christian man starting in life as such is best fitted for this life. He is like a vessel fittingly stored for all the storms and contrary currents that may await it. The Christian is like a soldier who must gladly go to battle, but he is protected by the best armor that can be procured. He wears the helmet and the breastplate. He wears the entire Divine panoply which heavenly wisdom has prepared to protect him from every dart of his adversaries. He has the promise of the life that already is, just as the man with a good sword and good armor has the best promise of success in battle.

O that God may grant us Grace to know and feel that the best instruments and weapons of the warfare of this life are to be found in the arsenals of holiness, in the armories of confidence in God! In this sense we have again the promise of the life that now is. With a Christian all things that happen to him work for good. Is not this a rich part of the promise of the life that now is? What if the waves roar against him—they speed his boat towards the haven! What if the thunders and lightning come forth? They clear the atmosphere and promote his soul's health.

He gains by his losses, he grows healthy by his sicknesses, he lives by dying, he is enriched by being despoiled of his goods. Do you ask for any better promise than this? Is it not better that all things should work for my good, than that all things should be as I would wish to have them? They might all work my pleasure, and yet might all work my ruin. But now if they do not always please me—yet if they always benefit me—is not this the best promise of the life that now is?

The Christian enjoys his God under all circumstances. That, again, is the promise of the life that now is. I spoke of his being reconciled to God—he is much more than that—he delights himself in his God. He finds God in Nature. The landscape glows for him with a more Divine color than any other eye can see. As for the heavens, with their starry glories, there is a light in them which has not yet been beheld by the natural man. He sees God in his solitude, and peoples his loneliness with the spirits that are akin with the Most High. He is, wherever he may be, never debarred from the society he loves best. A wish will find his God, a tear will bring him his best Beloved.

He has but to sigh and cry when on the bed of sickness, and God comes and makes his bed for him. Blessed man, he has, indeed, the promise of the life that now is, for in it all, and over it all, he sees the Divine love shining for him with a supernal splendor and making earth but the porch of Heaven. This is to have the life that now is in the fullness of the promise. I am sure you will agree with me that the genuine possessor of godliness has the promise of the life that now is in his freedom from many of those cares and fears which rob life of all its luster.

The man without godliness is weighted with the care of every day, and of all the days that are to come—the dread remembrance of the past, and the terror of the future as well. The godly man knows that all the past is forgiven, his transgressions are blotted out. As for the present, he casts that burden on the Lord. As for the future, he would not pry into it with anxious eye, but he leaves God to rule and govern as He wills. He sits down, calmly content that his Father's will is right and good towards him. And as he is thus free from care, so is he free from the fear of men.

Ungodly men, many of them, are servile to their fellow men. It is to them a most important question whether they are smiled upon or frowned at by their fellow worms. The godly man has learned to lift his head above the common race of mankind, and when he lives as he should, he neither thinks a thing the better because men praise it, nor the worse because they censure it. His rule is not popular opinion, nor the dictates of the philosophy of the hour. He believes what God tells him to be true, and what God prescribes he knows to be right. And he does this careless of man's judgment, for none can judge him but his Master.

That man has the promise of the life that now is who is in full enjoyment of the sweets of a clear conscience. He can afford to snap his fingers in the face of all mankind and declare that if the heavens themselves should fall, he would do the right, and dare all things for God. Oh, to have the yoke of human judgment from off your neck, and the bondage of man's domineering opinion from off your spirit! This is to receive the promise of the life that now is.

Moreover, the fear of death has gone from the Christian. This with many deprives the life that now is of everything that is happy and consoling. They are afraid in their merriest moments that the skeleton will disturb the feast. And when the dance is merriest, they think they hear the sound of the trumpet that will silence all. But the Christian is not afraid. To him the prospect of departure is rather joyous than grievous, and the breaking up of this mortal state is an event he looks for as the clearing away of multitudes of sorrows and the bringing in of mighty joys.

Brothers and Sisters, to be free from the fear of death is to make life truly life—and he has it who leans wholly upon Christ—and knows that Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life. Put these things together—peacefulness with his fellow men, peace with God, a sense that all things are working for his good, fearlessness of man's judgment, communion with the Most High—and surely you have described in a few words the very flower of life—the thing that makes it worth while to live.

This does not lie, as I have said before, in accumulated treasure. It does not blush in the rosy cheek. It does not dwell in the trump of fame. It resides *within*, when the man walks with God and subdues the earth beneath his feet. When the soul communes with the spiritual, and makes the visible to glow in the light of the unseen. When the man's peace and joy all stream from the deep springs of God's love, and the man lives in God, and God lives in him. Herein lies the highest kind of life—it is the flower of the life that now is—and GODLINESS it is that has the promise of it.

I must not detain you longer, except to make an application of the subject to the present assembly. Brothers and Sisters, you who have godliness, and live in the fear of God, let me entreat you to believe that there is provided for you in godliness, comfort, joy, and delight for the life that now is. You need not postpone your feasting upon Christ till you see Him face to face. Feed on Him this day. You need not wait for the joys of the Holy Spirit till you have shaken off this cumbrous clay. The joy of the Lord is your strength today. You need not think that your peace and rest remain as yet in the future, hidden from you. Eternal life with its blessings is a present possession.

They that believe do enter into rest, and may enter into rest *now*. The clusters of Eshcol are before you, brought to you by a Divine hand before you cross the Jordan—

***“The men of Grace have found
Glory begun below,
Celestial fruits on earthly ground
From faith and hope do grow.”***

We do not say that godliness has made all Believers rich, for some here will be content always to be poor. The whole body of the faithful cannot claim that godliness has brought them earthly treasure, for some of the greatest of them have written that if in this life only they had hope, they would have been of all men the most miserable. But without exception, the whole of us can unanimously declare that we have found in godliness the highest happiness, the supreme delight, the richest consolation.

I pray you, therefore, who profess godliness, be not content unless you have the promise of the life that now is. Believe that you can not only make this life sublime, but make it joyous. Believe that you can now be raised up together and made to sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. You cannot find a Heaven in things below, for the moth is there, and the rust that corrupts. But you can, while here, if you set your affections upon things above, and not on things on the earth, find Glory begun *within* you, and a young Heaven already shining about your path. The life that now is—claim it! Up, you sons of Israel, and slay the Amalekites that would take away from you your comfort! Arise, you men that fear the Lord, and demand that doubts and fears, like the accursed Canaanites, shall be chased from the land. For the promise of God ought to be believed, and in the believing of it, your peace shall be like a river, and your joy shall overflow.

Another application of the text is this. There is a bearing of it upon the sinner. It is quite certain, O ungodly man, that the promise of the life that

now is belongs only to those who are godly. Are you content to miss the cream of this life? I pray you, if you will not think of the life to come, at least think of this. You desire to be happy. You have intelligence enough to know that happiness does not consist in externals, but in the state of your mind. I assure you, and there are thousands of my Brethren who can affirm the same, that after having tried the ways of sin, we infinitely prefer the ways of righteousness for their own pleasure's sake even here, and we would not change with ungodly men even if we had to die like dogs.

With all the sorrow and care which Christian life is supposed to bring, we would prefer it to any other form of life beneath the stars. There is no man like the Christian, after all. Happy are you, O Israel, a people saved of the Lord! We do not come to you and tell you that godliness will make you rich, although there is no need that it should make you poor. We do not tell you it will make you healthy. It certainly will not make you the reverse. But these are not the things with which we would bribe you—these are inferior blessings, which we dare not set before you as worthy of your seeking after in the first instance.

But we do tell you that if you will but seek the Lord while He may be found, and put your trust in His Christ, who came to put away sin, you shall have the happiest, best, noble, most desirable life that can be enjoyed on earth! Now many of you believe this. I know you do. In your hearts you envy Christians—even poor Christians. You feel that you would gladly be as sick or as poor as yonder pious saint, if you might have his hope, if you might have his God. Well, if you know which is best, have which is best. “May I have it?” says one. Who said you might *not*? Does not the Lord invite you to taste and see that He is good?

Has not He even *commanded* you, and are not these His Words, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved”? Simply to trust, and to rely—this is to begin the Divine life, and this will introduce you into a nobler sphere than mortals know of. They rejoice when corn and wine fill their barns and their vats, but you will say, “Lord, lift up the light of Your countenance upon me,” and in that you will find a richer joy than they. “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.” God bless you, for Christ's sake.

[Sermon #946, *The Profit of Godliness in the Life to Come*, is the sermon Brother Spurgeon preached in the evening of June 19, 1870, and is the companion sermon to this one.]

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“TRUST IN THE LIVING GOD”

NO. 2964

**A SERMON
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**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 5, 1875.**

***“We trust in the living God.”
1 Timothy 4:10.***

IF we are inclined to grieve because everything around us changes, our consolation will be found in turning to our unchanging God. If we lament the ills of mortality, it will be wise for us to turn to Him “who only has immortality.” If our earthly joys fade and die, it is a blessed thing for us to be able to go to the fountain of undying joy and there to drink deep draughts of bliss which shall cause us to forget our misery.

Without any further preface, I ask you to follow me while first, in a very simple manner, I speak upon *the great truth of the existence of the living God*. And then, secondly, while I draw *practical inferences from that existence*. Before I close my discourse, I shall have a question to put to you.

I. First, for a little while, let us think of THE GREAT TRUTH OF THE EXISTENCE OF THE LIVING GOD. Paul wrote to Timothy, “Therefore we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God.”

He meant, by that expression, first, *that God is truly existing and not like the dead gods of the heathen, which are no gods at all*—which, in fact, have no existence as gods. Vast multitudes have bowed down before images of wood, or stone, or ivory, or gold—but of them all it might truly be said, “Eyes have they, but they see not; they have ears, but they hear not; noses have they, but they smell not; they have hands, but they handle not; feet have they, but they walk not; neither speak they through their throat.” It is a sure sign that a man’s understanding is dead when he can worship a dead god! But you and I, Beloved, “trust in the living God.” He is the God who made Heaven and earth and all that is in them. He is the God who supports the whole universe by the power of His almighty arms. He is the God who rules and overrules in Nature, Providence and Grace. He is the true God, the only real God—no dream God, no phantom or myth conjured up by imagination, but a real God, the only living and true God! May we worship Him, then, with real worship, real adoration and true sincerity of heart! What a blessing it is for us that we are able to worship the true God! We might have been left, as our remote ancestors were, to seek after God, if haply we might find Him, or to worship gods that are no gods and be lost in the mazes of

superstition, unable to find the Most High. But “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” and, therefore, “we trust in the living God,” the real God!

A second meaning of this expression, I have no doubt, lies in *the fact of God’s self-existence and independence*. “We trust in the living God,” who is “living” in a very emphatic sense. You and I are living, but our existence is entirely dependent upon the will of God. Although He has given us immortal spirits, yet that immortality only comes to us by reason of the Divine decree. And the glorious immortality of Believers comes to them by virtue of their vital union with their ever-living Head, their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We have no independent immortality—it is not inherent in us and it must be sustained by perpetual emanations of the Divine Power. It is a fire which could not maintain its own glow. It must be fed, or it would go out. But God is self-existent, the great I AM—and if all His creatures would cease to be, He would be just as completely God without them as with them—

**“He sits on no precarious throne,
Nor borrows leave to be.”**

His is a fire which burns without fuel—a sun which scatters light without itself diminishing! God is independent, self-existing, the only really “living” being in the entire universe in the fullest and most emphatic sense of the word, “living.”

What a joy it is to worship such a God as this, because nothing can diminish His life, His force, His power! If His courts are sustained, not by the tribute of men, but by His own wealth. If His sovereign state stands, not by the might of armies, but by His own Omnipotence and if He, Himself, is All-Sufficient, not because He gathers up all things into Himself, but because all things are from Him, and are all in Him in their germ and seed—is He not a God whom we all ought to worship—in whom, worshipping, we may joyfully trust—and relying on whom we may be perfectly at rest, for He cannot fail us, neither can He fail Himself in any respect or degree?

A third meaning of the expression, “living,” in Paul’s declaration, “We trust in the living God,” I have no doubt is to be found *in the fact of the existence of God through all eternity*. There was a time when you and I, who are now alive, were not alive. And there will be a time when, as far as this world is concerned, we shall be numbered with the dead. But there never was a period in which God did not live. He always was and always is and always will be “the *living* God.” Let your thoughts fly back to eternity if you can—for, mark you, all our ideas of eternity are very shallow and superficial. We cannot form any clear notion of what, “eternity,” means, and the very fact that we speak of a “past” eternity proves that we have to bring it down to our finite apprehension and to use inaccurate words to express our imperfect and incorrect ideas! But far back, when the sun, moon and stars—and the whole universe slept in

the mind of God, as a forest sleeps within an acorn cup—even then God was “the living God.” Before the first ray of light had broken in upon the pristine darkness—yes, before there *was* any darkness—before anything was created—God was “the living God!” And He was just as great and as glorious as He is now. Without an angel to sing His praise, or a human being to look up to Him with holy reverence or with tearful repentance—yet still independent of them all, He was “the living God!” What a blessing it is for us that it was so! There was never a period in which Satan could plot and plan against us, but that God had eternally existed before him. That evil spirit is but the infant of a day compared with God, the Eternal of all the ages, the Everlasting Father who was always able to anticipate everything that could possibly occur, knowing beforehand all that might be detrimental to us, countermining every mine of the archenemy and baffling all the old serpent’s cunning in such a way as, in the end, to add still more to His own Glory!

And as He was “the living God” in the past, so He is “the living God” in the present, and just as truly living as He was ten thousand millions of years ago—to speak of eternity after the fashion of men. Dr. Watts hit the mark when he sang—

***“He fills His own eternal NOW,
And sees our ages pass.”***

Ages and years are past, or present, or future to us—but they are all present to Him. When a man looks upon a map, he can cover a whole country with his hand. But a traveler has to journey many weary miles before he can cross that country from one end of it to the other! But on the map your hand covers it all. And all eternity is under the hand of God like that country on the map covered by a human hand. God is “the living God” now as much as He ever was—as powerful, as wise, as loving, as tender, as strong as He ever was, blessed be His holy name!

And so He will be throughout the whole of the future. We cannot tell all that will yet happen in this world, but one thing we know—God will always be “the living God.” It is probable that once powerful nations will be utterly destroyed and that there will be terrible disasters beyond anything that has yet been experienced. We know that the present dispensation will utterly pass away and that “the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed.” But this fact is sure, that He who has been the dwelling place of His people in all generations, will be the dwelling place of His people in all the generations that are yet to come. There will never be a funeral knell to tell us that our great Lord is dead. There will be no need for weeping among the blessed spirits above because He who was their Creator, Protector, Preserver, and Friend has ceased to be, for He will always be “the living God.” So, because of His eternal existence, He is right worthy to bear this title—yes, and to monopolize it, for it belongs to Him alone—

***“Great God! How infinite are Thee!
What worthless worms are we!***

***Let the whole race of creatures bow,
And pay their praise to You.
Your Throne eternal ages stood,
Ere seas or stars were made.
You are the ever-living God,
Were all the nations dead.
Eternity, with all its years,
Stands present in Your view.
To You there's nothing old appears—
Great God! There's nothing new.”***

The fourth meaning of the text seems to me to be this. *God is called “the living God” as being always Himself really and truly God in the full capacity of His Being.* Sometimes we say of a man that he is “all alive.” At another time, he does not appear to be fully quickened. He has life to some extent, but not in its fullness. We say of the man, by-and-by, that he is dead—not that he has ceased to exist, for man will no more cease to exist than will God, Himself, but we speak of him as dead because his body, which is part of his being, lies moldering in the tomb. But God is all life and only life. No portion of Him, (I must use human language, though the words are incorrect which I am using, as our words always must be when we speak of God), no faculty, no power, no attribute of God can be smitten by any paralysis, or can, in any degree, or in the slightest measurer, be subject to any failure which is at all akin to death. God is all alive and altogether life and nothing but life. God’s wisdom is always Infallible, His power is always almighty, His energy is at all times efficacious for everything that needs His attention. There can never come a time when He will be bowed down with age, or wearied with toil, or affected by suffering. “The living God” is the whole God, or, as the holy beings in Heaven call Him—and it means the same thing—“Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was and is, and is to come.” He is the whole God! Whatever the word, “God,” means—and we do not know, nor shall we ever know all that it means—it is too vast to be conceived by anyone but God, Himself—but, whatever that is, that is what God always is to the full measure, never in any degree diminished by what we call, “death.” He is evermore “the living God.”

I like to think of this Truth because God, Himself, speaks of it again and again. The Lord said to Moses in the wilderness, “Is the Lord’s hand waxed short?” In the prophecy of Isaiah we read, “Thus says the Lord, Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver?” And, a little later, this Prophet was Inspired to write, “Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save.” And today He is as mighty as He was in those glorious days when, in the van of Israel’s host, He led His people in safety through the depths of the Red Sea and delivered them forever from the iron bondage of Pharaoh. Yes, blessed be His holy name, He is still “the living God” as full of life and power as He ever was!

Another meaning of this expression is that *God is active and energetic and not a mere name*. There are plenty of people who are willing to believe in a god of a certain sort, but I hardly know how to describe their god. They are not atheists—they would be horrified if we called them by that name—but their notion is that everything is regulated by what they call, “the laws of Nature.” If you ask them what, “Nature,” is, they give you some curious answers. One man says, “I do not go into your places of worship and sit there, and hear you talk about God. I like to walk about and worship Nature.” If it is in London that a man talks like that, I should like to ask him what he calls, “nature.” Does he mean these miles of brick walls and the dark lanes and alleys at the back of them? If he means that, I should not like to worship his “Nature.” Or does he mean the grass in the meadows and the flowers of the field? If so, I hardly think that I should like to worship what cattle eat—it seems a degradation for a man to stoop as low as that! But they will say and do anything to get rid of the idea of the living and true God. “Nature”—“Providence”—and so on, are the expressions they use, just as if “God” did not enter into their calculations—or as if He had gone out of the business and left the whole concern to go on by itself! I should not like to be the child of a father who, the moment I was born, had me washed and dressed by machinery—and had a cradle ready for me to be rocked by machinery and fed me by machinery—who, all the while that I was under his roof, dressed me by machinery, fed me by machinery and taught me by machinery—but I never saw him. In fact, I only knew that there was some mysterious force about somewhere, but I never saw him or it—and never knew anything about his personality. That is the kind of dead force that many men call, “god.” But *our* God, in whom we trust, is a God with a great, warm, loving heart! He is a thinking God, an active God, a working, personal God who comes into the midst of this world and does not leave it to go on by itself. Although He is a stranger in the world, even as His people are also strangers and foreigners by reason of the revolt that men have made against their liege Lord and Sovereign, yet it is still His world and He is still in it!

I like to think of “the living God” being in this world which He created, for, now when I look at the cowslip or the daffodil, I know that it is God who paints these flowers of the spring so delicately. When I gather the geranium or the fuchsias, I know that it is God’s pencil which has been at work and I love to look at the blossom and feel that I am near to God—just as I should feel if I were to go into a friend’s studio and see there some of his sketches and paintings. I know that he has been there and that no other hand than his could paint that picture so well. And, in like manner, I know that no other hand but that of my God could paint these pictures of Nature so beautifully. Thus I am brought very near to “the living God.” O dear Brothers and Sisters, it is such a joy to me to remember that God is not a mere dead force—an abstract something or

other which gives energy to the world, or which did give energy to it ages ago, but has now gone away and left the old energies to work till they wear themselves out! Oh, no. I believe that the Lord God still walks among the trees of this garden—that the Lord God, like a shepherd, still watches over His sheep—that the Lord God still speaks to us in the thunder, smiles upon us in the sunlight, scatters His blessings down in the dew and the rain—that He gives us the fruitful fields of harvest and the golden days in which the sheaves can be gathered into the garner—yes, and that He is just as truly at work for us in the winter months, sweetening the clods by the winds and the frost, and so preparing the earth to bring forth food for man and grass for the cattle. We delight to think that in all these ways, God is still “the living God.”

Yet once again, God is “the living God” in that *He is the Source of life, the Giver of life and the Sustainer of life*. We are living creatures, but He is the living Creator. We are living dependent, but He is “the living God” upon whom we all depend. He spoke us out of nothing and He could speak us back to nothing if He pleased to do so. We are the creatures of His will, living on His estates as tenants who may, at any moment, be dismissed at His pleasure, receiving the very breath that is in our nostrils at His absolute discretion! But God is Life, itself, and after all the streams which have flowed from Him to His creatures, there is as much life in Him as at the first. And when He says, “Return, you children of men,” and we go back to Him, He will have no more life than He has now, but He will be as He has always been, “the living God.”—

***“Let them neglect Your Glory, Lord,
Who never knew Your Grace.
But our loud songs shall still record
The wonders of Your praise.
‘Twas He, and we’ll adore His name,
That formed us by a word!
‘Tis He restores our ruined frame—
Salvation to the Lord!”***

Now, in the six ways I have brought out only one thought—which I want to impress on your minds because it has been such a sweet thought to me. I have, in imagination, looked upon all whom I know upon the earth and I have said of them all, “They are dying creatures.” This is always true, but it is often forgotten. Yet, when one is taken away who has been very precious to us, we begin to realize this truth. Thinking over this matter, I seem to see a procession going past me. I can remember many of those who have passed me. They have gone by while I have remained here and I shall never see them here anymore—a long array of my Master’s servants, some of them bearing His banner aloft and others marching with their swords drawn because of fear in the night. Some of them were weak and feeble folk who had to be guarded on both sides by sturdy champions. And now, those of you who are before me as I speak, are also passing away—and there are more coming on, but they are only coming that they may go! I said, just now, that I was

looking on at this procession, but that was a mistake, for *I am in the procession and I am passing on with the rest!* What shadows we all are! What fleeting things! What mists—what paintings on a cloud! We can scarcely say that we live, for, the moment we begin to live, that moment we begin to die and—

**“Every beating pulse we count,
Leaves but the number less.”**

This earth is not “the land of the living.” This world is a dying world! The living world is beyond Death’s cold river. Here are graves innumerable. What part of the globe is there that has never yet been a cemetery? Every particle of dust which is blown in your face in the street may have once formed a portion of some living being! O Death, you rule over all! No, you do not, for there is One who rules over even you, O Death! You can have no power over “the living God.” You are His servant, permitted to work out His purpose, for it is through death that we pass into life. By the death of our redeeming Lord, we have been redeemed from destruction and, therefore, we can turn away from everything that wears the aspect of death and change, and turn to Him who is always the same and of whose years there is no end—the Eternal, in whom we trust!

II. Thus have I set forth, as best I could, the great Truth of the existence of “the living God.” Now, in the second place, LET US DRAW SOME PRACTICAL INFERENCES FROM THIS GREAT TRUTH.

And the first inference is this—*an inference of reverential awe and holy trembling.* What a great God He is whom we have professed to worship! When a poor pagan bows down before his wooden god, I should not wonder if what little sense he has should make him loathe and ridicule himself. But we have gathered here to worship “the living God.” Moses tells us, in the 5TH of Deuteronomy, verse 26, that the Israelites said, when the Law of God was given to them, “Who is there of all flesh that has heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived?” Well might they stand there trembling because “the living God” had come down and touched the mountains so that they smoked like great altars of incense. This is the God whom we worship! Far from us be all trifling! Vain thoughts, be gone! Before “the living God” we should prostrate ourselves in the very dust. “O you who profess to serve the Lord, mind that you serve Him faithfully, for it is “the living God” whom you serve, the God who is not to be mocked with hypocritical service! O you who know that you are not reconciled to Him, remember that it is to “the living God” that you are not reconciled! And recollect that solemn and true declaration, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” And that other, “Our God is a consuming fire.” So I say that our first inference should be that of reverential awe and holy trembling.

The next should be, to God’s people, *an inference of holy courage.* Are we on the Lord’s side? Then, my Brothers and Sisters, let us never fear, for we are on the side of “the living God.” Who can successfully defy Him?

Who dares to throw down the gage of battle against Him? You remember what young David said to Saul concerning Goliath of Gath, “Your servant slew both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God.” It was grandly put, as though he had said, “This big fellow is only the servant of a dead god and he and his god may both come out against me, and I, little as I am, yes, less than nothing in myself, will go to him in the name of the living God and bring back his head as the trophy of victory! Let no man’s heart fail because of him.” So now, if the biggest Goliath that ever lived at Rome or anywhere else should come stalking out against us, let us say, “Who is he, that he should defy the armies of the living God?” If the God of Israel is not now living, all is over with the cause of truth and righteousness. But we may say, as David did on another occasion, “The Lord lives; and blessed be my Rock.” As long as He lives, we may boldly say, “If God is for us, who can be against us?”

This, too, should be *our great security in time of danger*. I like to recall that incident in the life of Hezekiah when he took that abominable Assyrian letter, “and spread it before the Lord.” Do you ever take your letters to the Lord, Brothers and Sisters? That is the best thing in the world to do with them when they are evil ones. Hezekiah spread his letter before the Lord and said, “Lord, bow down Your ear and hear: open, Lord, Your eyes and see: and hear the words of Sennacherib, which has sent him to reproach the living God.” That was the point and the king felt quite sure that Sennacherib would be overthrown because he had defied the living God. If God had been a dead god, Sennacherib might have done with Him as he did with other idol gods. He asked, “Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed?” He did not realize that they were all broken to pieces because they were mere idols. But this time, he was defying “the living God.” If, Brothers and Sisters, “the living, God” is on your side, “no weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn.” If you, Beloved, are walking before “the living God” in all sincerity, even if Sennacherib with a mighty host should come against you, the Lord your God would send His holy angel and smite your foes, and you should surely be delivered! Have no doubt or fear, if your God is “the living God.”

And this Truth of God, Brothers and Sisters, *should always make us fearless of men*, for, after all, what are men? Remember what the Lord said to His servant, the Prophet Isaiah, “Who are you, that you should be afraid of a man that shall die?” The most powerful and most cruel man who ever dares to threaten you is only a man that shall die! And the Lord Jesus says to you, “Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.” Herod is soon eaten of worms. Persecuting monarchs soon disappear when God condemns them. Therefore, while “the living God” is your God, never be afraid of a dying man—

**“Fear Him, you saints, and you will then
Have nothing else to fear.”**

Another inference from this Truth is this. *It should bring relief to us in times of bereavement.* Sorrow is natural to us, but to push sorrow to an extreme is wrong. I have heard of a good woman who had lost her husband and who continued sorrowing over her loss for a very long time. Her little boy saw her weeping day after day and, at last, plucking her by the gown, he said to her, “Mother, is God dead?” “No, dear,” she said, “but your father is.” But that question made her stop her grieving, as it well might, for if God is not dead, our best Friend still lives! So let us be of good cheer. If people had to come here and say, “That good woman whom God so greatly blessed in the Church’s work is dead. And that dear Brother whom we all loved, is dead. And the Pastor, too, is dead,” who could help sorrowing? But even then it would still be true that “the Lord lives!” Always get back to that great fact, “the Lord lives.” We shall have to put our Beloved ones into the grave, but, “the Lord lives,” blessed be His name! And as long as God lives, we need never ask, “What shall we do?” It is true that we shall not do much, but God will. We must never say, “Oh, there is such a great gap, it cannot be filled.” God is alive and He can fill it, so you must not give way to despondency or despair. We may grieve, for even Jesus wept, but let us never distrust the Lord, for as surely as He takes away one worker, He knows how to raise up another! And if the Lord should take your husband from you, He will, Himself, be your Husband. If He should let you be fatherless, He will be your Father. And if He should leave you childless, good woman, He will say to you, “Am I not better unto you than ten sons?” He can fill up every gap! Yes, and make your soul to overflow with supreme content—

**“Lo, I am with you,’ says the Lord,
My Church shall safe abide,
For I will ne’er forsake My own,
Whose souls in Me confide.
Through every scene of life and death,
This promise is our trust.
And this shall be our children’s song,
When we are cold in dust.”**

This truth ought also to keep us from grieving too much over our losses and crosses in business. You have had a great loss today, Friend, and your face looks very long over it. Or you have heard of someone who was the means of bringing you much business who has moved or is dead. Well, “the Lord lives.” “Trust in the living God.” There have been times in the little business I have had to do for the Lord in connection with the Orphanage and the College, when the funds have been very short and sometimes we have run quite out. I have scraped the bottom of the meal barrel a good many times and I have had to squeeze the cruse to get a drop more oil out of it. But we have trusted in the living God and, up till now, we have always found Him worthy of being trusted! And we believe we always shall. There have been failures and mistakes on our part and

on the part of our friends, but never any on God’s part. We must all bear that testimony. Let us, therefore, all “trust in the living God.” If an ill wind blows upon us, let us believe that somehow or other, it will blow us some good. And if a rough tide comes up, let us believe that it will in some way or other wash us nearer to our desired haven.

Once again, “we trust in the living God,” and *this gives us the richest consolation concerning our departed Christian friends.* As “the Lord lives,” and He is their God, they are not dead! You remember Christ’s argument with the Sadducees, it was this—God has said, “I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” So that the dead saints are not really dead. Whenever there comes out a new error, it generally breeds another, for errors are very prolific. Some people started the notion that the soul of man is not immortal—that the soul of the wicked would die. I was quite sure that when they got as far as that error, they would go still further and so the next notion was that every part of us will die when we die—that there is no soul that is immortal, or no soul at all—and that the righteous dead are all in their graves—souls and bodies and everything! That is the beautiful materialistic notion that after having received Christianity, we are expected to imbibe. But we are not such idiots, whatever they may think of us! We shall never believe that all our beloved friends, who, according to the Scriptures, have been with Jesus these many years, have never been with Jesus at all! In fact, do not exist at all, except whatever may be found of them in their coffins or in their graves! How could that be if God was their God and if Christ’s Words are true—“God is not the God of the dead, but of the living”? They are alive, Brothers and Sisters—as much alive as they were alive here, with the exception of that mortal part which they have left behind to be prepared for immortality, as Dr. Watts truly wrote—

**“Corruption, earth, and worms
Shall but refine this flesh
Till my triumphant spirit comes
To put it on afresh.”**

We go down to our graves, as Esther went to her bath of spices, to be prepared for the embrace of the great King! And, in the morning of the Resurrection, this poor body of ours, all fair and lustrous, shall be reunited with our glorified spirit and we shall behold the face of the King in His beauty and be with Him forever and ever! “God is not the God of the dead” and, therefore, those of whom He is the God will never die! The inference is clear and forcible. Believe in it, hold to it and rejoice in it, for it will comfort you to know that as He is your God, you will never die. “God is not the God of the dead.” Then, blessed be His holy name, I am not dead, though once I was dead, for He has quickened me into life! And I shall never be dead any more, for Jesus said, “Because I live, you shall live also.” “The living God” is not the Father of dead souls, but He has an innumerable host of living children to be His heirs and to dwell with Him

forever! Did you ever notice that passage where Joshua tells the people to be ready to go over the Jordan and says that when the priests' feet shall touch the river, it shall divide and the Ark shall be carried across? “And then,” he said, “hereby you shall know that the living God is among you and that He will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Hivites, and the Perizzites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Jebusites.” The joyful triumphs of Believers in death, when they metaphorically cross the Jordan are proofs to us that God is with His people, that He will drive out all our enemies before us and give us a triumphant entrance into the promised land above! Glory be to the name of “the living God” forever!

III. Now I finish with the question which I said I might ask. It is this—**IS “THE LIVING GOD” YOUR GOD?**

If so, *then remember how near He is to you*, for Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 6:16, “You are the temple of the living God.” I will not dwell on that sentence, though I am tempted to do so, but what a wonderful thing it is that “the living God” should be willing to dwell inside our bodies! Oh, let us keep these bodies pure and let us see to it that we never fall under that terrible curse, “If any man defiles the temple of God, him shall God destroy.” But may our body, soul and spirit be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ!

And, dear Brothers and Sisters, if “the living God” is really ours, *let us thirst after Him*. Let us say, as did the writer of the 42nd Psalm, “As the hart pants after the water-brooks, so pants my soul after You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.” He is “the living God,” so thirst after Him and keep on thirsting after Him—and do not be content to try to live without Him, for, to live without “the living God” is to have death in life and not truly to live at all! Think, child of God, “the living God” dwells within you! Seek to realize His Presence, long and pant to realize it more and more!

Are any of you obliged to answer my question truthfully by saying, “No, the living God is not mine”? Then I must repeat to you those two texts that I quoted earlier in my sermon—“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” “For our God is a consuming fire.” That latter text has often been spoilt by being misquoted. I have many times heard it quoted, “God, *out of Christ*, is a consuming fire.” That is *not* the text at all. It is “*our* God”—the Christian’s God—God *in* Christ “is a consuming fire”—and if He is a consuming fire to His own people, what will He be to the ungodly? That is a wonderful question that is asked in Isaiah 33:14. “Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?” And the answer is, “Nobody can except the man that walks righteously, and speaks uprightly,” and so on. The Prophet goes on to describe the man who has been renewed by Grace, for he is the only man who can live in the everlasting burnings of the Divine majesty and purity. He can live there

because the devouring fire will only burn up everything in him that is unlike God—but the new life that is in the Christian, the Grace that the Holy Spirit puts into us will endure the fire. Everything that appertains to man and to man’s work must be tried by fire, and if God has built into us the gold, silver and precious stones of His Grace, and if we have built upon them our life work, both we and our work will endure the trial by fire!

But, Sinner, you will also have to go through that fire! And seeing that there is nothing in you but the wood, hay and stubble of self and sin—nothing in you but that which is foul and obnoxious to God, unholy and unrighteous—or self-righteous, which is really unrighteous—the fire will consume it! All your glory, your peace, your happiness, everything that makes life to be life will be taken from you and there shall remain for you nothing but existence! And this is the description of that existence—“These shall go away into everlasting punishment.” Oh, may the Lord who alone can give you life, give it to you now! For, if not, there will remain nothing but an everlasting death to be your portion! From that may you now be delivered by His infinite mercy, through trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ! Amen.

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HOW TO READ THE BIBLE

NO. 3318

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 1912.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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ON THURSDAY EVENING JUNE 21, 1866.

“Till I come, give attendance to reading.”
1 Timothy 4:13.

OF course this counsel and exhortation is intended primarily as a direction to Christian ministers and especially to young Christian ministers. They must read much if they are to be profitable to others as preachers. There used to be a very stupid conceit in some sections of the Church, that if a minister read extensively, he would only give forth stale truth, or what some simpletons called, “dead men’s brains.” Men have now learned, however, that he will be most fresh and original in his own thoughts who most diligently cultivates his mind by studying and pondering the thoughts of other minds. He who never quotes, will never be quoted, and he who does not read is not very likely to be read. Of course the first thing the minister needs is to be taught of the Spirit, but then the question is—How does the Spirit teach? He teaches, no doubt, mainly through the Word and through our own experimental acquaintance with that Word. But if He pleases to reveal a Truth of God to another man, and I will not read that Truth as it has been recorded by that other man, I have neglected the teaching of the Spirit of God. You know, with regard to the Savior’s miracles, that there was not one of them that was unnecessary. He never did a thing by miracle which could have been performed by the ordinary laws of Nature. So it is with the teaching of the Spirit—I have no right to expect that the Spirit will reveal Truth to me without the use of a book when I can find it out for myself with the book. “The Holy Spirit helps our infirmities,” but not our idleness! He is given to us on purpose that He may help us when we are weak, but not that we may be indulged where we are slothful. I have sometimes had the unutterable misery of listening to a sermon which has been professedly dictated by the Spirit of God, but in which it was clear that the preacher had never thought upon the subject before he spoke—and I can only say that I was quite at a loss to perceive any peculiar beauty in the sermon, nor did I see anything at all which made it a source of edification superior to a sermon which had been prepared by someone else. I thought I detected a good many traits of human ignorance—and but very few traces of the working of the Holy Spirit.

There are many young fellows here tonight who are preparing for the ministry. I shall not, however, enlarge on this point, but shall only press

on their earnest consideration and their most devout meditation. This Inspired exhortation, which is not mine, nor even an Apostle's only, but the exhortation of the Holy Spirit of God through the Apostle—"Give attendance to reading." If, Brothers, you would bless God's Church and train up a band of really intelligent Christians, do not be always appealing only to the emotions, but also give out good, sound, strong Gospel Doctrine—and illustrate the Doctrine, so as to expound and comment to others. Do this especially by reading the words of the greatest masters in Scripture theology—and these will prove your delightful and dear companions and your splendid helpers in making your ministry richly profitable to your hearers.

This, however, is not our special subject for tonight. This same exhortation so peculiarly suitable to the minister, will suit all his hearers, too, because the ministry is not a religious caste peculiar to some few, but we are, all of us, to teach others according as God shall teach us! And in order that we may be useful in our sphere, as the minister is in his, we must adopt the same means to fit ourselves for our high privilege and to prepare us to be used by God. As the minister without reading will have but little power, so will it be with Christians in general. "Give attendance to reading" is an exhortation which I would press upon most of you, especially those of you who have leisure and who are not called to exhausting labors which take up all your time.

I am not, however, going to keep so closely to my text as merely to exhort you to read. I want to ask you to read God's Word! That seems to me to be the Christian's book. You may read other books and your mind may thereby be well-furnished with spiritual things, but if you keep to the Word of God, though you may be deficient in many points of a liberal education, you will not be deficient in the education that will fit you for blessed service here, for the service of skies, for communion with God on earth and communion with Christ in Glory!

My objective this evening is to say a few things about how to read the Bible. Last Thursday night we spoke at length upon God's Word as to its excellencies. *Tonight* I think it fitting that we should speak a little about how to read that Word with greatest profit to our souls. In doing so we shall hope to consider seven precepts all bearing powerfully upon this important matter. Our first precept shall be—

I. READ AND DEPEND *on the Spirit of God.* How often do we open the sacred Book and read a Chapter through, perhaps at family prayer, or perhaps in our own private devotions and, having read from the first verse to the last, we shut up the book thinking we have done something very right and very proper—and in a vague way somehow profitable to us? Very right and very proper, indeed, and yet, right and proper as the thing is, we may really have gained nothing thereby! We may, in fact, have only drilled ourselves in the merely external part of religion and may not have enjoyed anything spiritual, or anything that can be beneficial to our souls if we have forgotten the Divine Spirit through whom the Word has come to us!

Ought we not even to remember that in order to properly understand the Holy Word we need to have the Holy Spirit *to be His own Expositor*? The hymn says concerning Providence—

**“God is His own interpreter
And He will make it plain”**

and certainly it is so with regard to the Scriptures! Commentators and expositors are very useful, indeed, but the best expositor is always the author of a book, himself. If I had a book which I did not quite understand, it would be a very great convenience to me to live next door to the author, for then I could run in and ask him what he meant. This is just your position, Christian! The Book will sometimes puzzle you, but the Divine Author, who must know His own meaning, is always ready to lead you into its meaning! He dwells in you, and shall be with you, and Christ Jesus said, “When He, the Spirit of Truth is come, He shall lead you into all Truth.”

But to understand the Word is not enough. We also need that He *makes us to feel its power*. How can we do this except through the Holy Spirit? “Your Word has quickened me,” O God, but it is only as *You* did quicken me through it. The Word of God is to be read literally, but, “it is the letter that kills.” Only “the Spirit gives life” and, excellent as are its statements, yet even they have no spiritual force in themselves! Unless the Holy Spirit shall fill them, even they shall become as wells without water and as clouds without rain. Have you not often found it so yourselves? I appeal now to your own experience. You have sometimes read a portion of Scripture and the page has seemed to glow, your heart has burned within you and you have said that the Word came home to you with power.

Just so, but it was the Holy Spirit who was bringing it home to your spirit in its true power and making it a sweet savor of life unto life to you! At other times, you may have read the very same page and painfully missed the sweetness which once you had tasted—and lost the lovely light that once flashed from it upon your mind’s eye!

Everything must depend upon the Spirit speaking through it, for even the light of the Word of God is, to a great extent, but moonlight. That is to say, it is a reflection of the light which streams from God, Himself, who is the one true source of light. If God shines not upon the Word when we read it, then the Word shines not back upon us, but becomes a dark Word to us, or as one says, “rather an obscuration than a Revelation, rather concealing God from us, than revealing Him to us.” Look up, reader! The next time the Book is in your hands, look up before you open it—and while your eyes are running down the page, look up and pray that God would shine upon it! And when the Chapter is finished and you put the Book away, take a minute, again, to look up and ask His blessing. If by reading the Scriptures we were only always reminded of the Holy Spirit. If we got no other good from the Scripture, itself, except the turning of our souls to think upon that Divine and blessed One, that would be, in itself,

an inestimable blessing! Do read, then, thoughtfully remembering the great Author.

Our second precept is—

II. READ AND MEDITATE.

There is no exercise more out of fashion, nowadays, than meditation! And yet, to use Brookes' expression, "it is a soul-fattening duty." The cattle crop the grass, but the nutrition comes from the chewing of the cud! Reading is the gathering together of our food, but meditation is the chewing of the cud, the digesting, the assimilating of the Truth of God! I quarry out the Truth when I read, but I smelt the ore and get the pure gold out of it when I meditate! Ruth gleaned, but afterwards she threshed. The reader is the gleaner, but he who meditates is the thresher, too. For lack of meditation the Truth of God runs by us and we miss and lose it. Our treacherous memory is like a sieve—and what we hear and what we read runs through it and leaves but little behind—and that little is often unprofitable to us by reason of our lack of diligence to get thoroughly at it. I often find it very profitable to get a text as a sweet morsel under my tongue in the morning and to keep the flavor of it, if I can, in my mouth all day!

I like to turn it over and over again in my mind, for any one text of the Scriptures you will find to be like the kaleidoscope. Turn it one way and you say, "What a fair Truth of God is this!" Turn it another way and you see the same Truth, but under how different an aspect! Turn it yet once more—and keep doing it all day—and you will be amazed and delighted to find in how many lights the same Truth will appear and what wonderful permutations and combinations you can find in it! When you have been doing this all day, you will be compelled to feel that there is an infinity about even one text, so that you can never completely comprehend it but find it still is beyond you! If you get a passage of Scripture given you, do not quickly give it up because you do not immediately seize its force and fullness. The manna which fell in the wilderness would not keep sweet beyond one day—if kept over unto the second, it bred worms and stank. But there was one portion of manna which was put into a golden pot and laid up in the Ark of the Covenant which never lost its sweetness and heavenly nutriment! And there is a way of keeping the precious portions of God's Word that are given you today, in such a manner that you may go in the strength of it for forty days and continue to find fresh food in the same text day after day, and even month after month! But this is only to be done by *meditating* upon it. Our hymn has a fable in it when it says that the—

**"Spicy breezes
Blow soft over Ceylon's isle."**

Voyagers who have been there, tell us that they have never smelt "the spicy breezes," for the cinnamon yields no perfume till it is bruised and broken! And certainly God's Word is exceedingly full of perfume, but not till it has been graciously bruised by reverent and loving meditation. You cannot get the sweetness and fragrance from it till you have smitten it

again and again in the mortar of thought with the pestle of recollection. Meditate, then, upon these things!

“But how can we meditate,” asks one, “when we have so many things to think of?” But “one thing is necessary,” and it is necessary that the Christian should meditate upon the things of God! I know you must give your minds to many things and I cannot ask you not to do so, but whenever you have time to rest, then let your minds come back to the old home. The birds of the air are all day long picking up their food, but they go straight away to their roost at night, and so when the day’s business is over and the daily bread has been gained, fly to your nest and rest your soul in some precious portion of God’s Word. During the day, too, whenever you are freed from anxiety, let your mind dart upwards—and it will help you to do so if you take a text and make it as wings that enable you to fly to ponder heavenly things. Read and meditate!

The third rule for our guide should be—

III. READ AND APPLY. What I mean is just this. Do not read the Bible as a Book for other people. Do not read it merely to say, “Yes, it is true. Very true. I believe *its Doctrines* to be the Revelation of the Infallible Mind of God, Himself.” But also endeavor in reading a *page* of the Scriptures, always to see how much it *belongs to you*. For some of you there is very little in the Word of God except threats. Pray God to help you to feel the solemnity even of the threats, for if you feel deeply the threats, now, you may be delivered from the tragic fulfillment of them by-and-by! If you are made to tremble under God’s *Word*, you may never be made to tremble under God’s *hand*. If you feel the wrath to come, now, you may never have to feel it in the next world. Ask God that His threats may drive you out of your sins and drive you to seek pardon in Christ. Then when you read descriptions of the human heart and the Fall, the corruption and the depravity of our nature, look and see yourselves as in a mirror and say of each man as you hear of his sin, “I am such a man as this was, and if I do not fall into precisely the same sin, yet the possibility and peril of it is in my heart and I could do so, but for God’s restraining Grace.” Take the very histories home to your heart and find a point in them, either of encouragement or of warning for yourselves. As for the Doctrines, remember that a Doctrine kills except as it is personally grasped and as you feel your interest in it. I have known some rejoice greatly in the Doctrine of Election who were never elected, and some who were very pleased with the Doctrine of Justification by Faith, but who had no faith by which to be justified! I have known of some, too, who gloried in Final Perseverance, but who, if they had finally persevered would certainly have been in Hell, for they were on the road there! It is one thing to know these Truths of God, and even to fight for them with the zeal and bitterness of a controversialist, but it is quite another thing to enjoy them as our own heritage and our portion forever! Ask the Lord to show you your interest in every Truth and do not be satisfied until you have an assured personal interest in them! Especially let this be so with *the promises*. “I

will never leave you, nor forsake *you!*” Well, it is a very fine promise, but if it is read to me thus—“I will never leave *you*, nor forsake *you*,” what a transformed and glorified promise it then becomes! Stout old Martin Luther used to say, “All vital religion is in the personal and possessive pronouns.” Is it not so? “When *you* pass through the river I will be with *you*, the floods shall not overflow *you!*” Oh, truly, such a promise is as a cluster of Eshcol, but it is in Eshcol’s valley and I cannot reach it there! The promise applied is the cluster *brought to me just where I am* and I can receive it and delight myself in its luscious sweetness!

Take care, none the less, to seek for the application of *precepts*. Some are always looking out for other people’s duty and are great judges and critics for what others ought to do. “Who are you that judges another man?” To his own master he stands or falls. See what precepts are binding upon *yourself* and then, as a child of God, be your feet swift to run in the way of His commandments. Read the Bible as a man reads his relation’s will—to find what legacy there is in it for himself. Do with the Bible as the sick man does with the doctor’s prescription—follow it by personally doing what it bids you. Ask God not to let your Bible be another man’s Bible, but your own Bible—God’s own mouth speaking to your soul of the things which make for your peace.

Fourthly—and this is very hard work—**IV. READ AND PRACTICE.** If you do not do this, you are reading to your own condemnation! If you read, “He that believes on Him is not condemned,” if you believe not, then you are “condemned already,” because you have not believed on the Son of God! The Gospel is a very solemn thing to every man because if it is not a savor of life unto life, since it must always be a savor of some sort—it therefore becomes a savor of death unto death! Some seem as if they read the Bible in order to know how *not* to do—the more God commands, the more they will not obey! Though He draws them, they will not come to Him. And when He calls them, they will give Him no answer. A sorry, sorry heart is that which so uses God’s Word as to make it an aggravation of its sin! Our life ought to be—and if God’s Grace is much in it, it will be—a new translation of the Bible. Speak of bringing the Bible down into the vernacular! Well, this is it! The worldling’s Bible is the Christian. He never reads the Book, but he reads the disciple of Christ and he judges the Christian religion by the lives of its professors! The world will learn better and will more likely be brought to know Christ when the lives of Christians are better, and when the Bible of the Christian Life shall be more in accordance with the Bible of Christian Doctrine! God make us holy! Sanctify us, spirit, soul and body, and then we shall be made finely serviceable both to the Church and to the world! Read and practice! But we shall only be able to do this as God the Holy Spirit shall help us. Then let us—

V. READ AND PRAY. This is, perhaps, coming back almost to the first point, that is, read with dependence on the Holy Spirit. But I desire to impress a rather different thought upon your souls. Martin Luther says he learned more by prayer than he ever learned in any other way. A

stone-breaker was one day on his knees breaking flints when a minister came by and said, "I see you are doing what I often do, breaking up hard things." "Yes, Sir," was the answer, "and I am doing it in the way in which you must do it, on my knees."

A passage in Scripture will often open up when you pray over it, which will defy mere criticism or looking to expositors. You put the text into action and then you comprehend it. I suppose if a man were studying anatomy and had never seen the body in life, he might not be able to know what a certain ligature was for, or such a bone—but if he could set that body moving, then he might understand the use of all the different parts, supposing he were able to see them. So when a text of Scripture lies, as it were, dead before us, we may not be able to understand it—but when by prayer the text grows into life and we set it in motion—we comprehend it at once! We may hammer away at a text sometimes in meditation and strike it again and again, and yet it may not yield to us, but we cry to God, and immediately the text opens and we see concealed in it wondrous treasures of Divine Wisdom and of Grace!

But the prayer should not be merely that we may understand the text. I think we should pray over every passage in order that we may be enabled to get out of it what God would impart to us. A text is like a treasure chest which is locked—and prayer is the key to open it—and then we get God's treasure! The text is God's letter, full of loving words, but prayer must break the seal. When reading goes with praying and praying goes with reading, then a man goes on both his feet, the bird flies with both his wings! To only read is unprofitable—to pray without reading is not so soul-enriching, but when the two run together, they are like the horses pulling the chariot and they speed along right merrily!

Read and pray Christian! But take care you do not read without watering your reading with your prayer. Paul may plant and Apollos may water, but God gives the increase! And even in this blessed Book, Moses may plant and David may water, but prayer must cry to God or else the increase will not come! Now in the sixth place—

VI. READ AND TRY. Try what you hear. Try what you profess. Try what you read. Goldsmiths keep bottles of acid by which they test everything that is offered them for sale, to see whether it is gold or merely tinsel. And the Christian should keep God's Word near at hand and treasured in the soul, to test thereby all that he hears. "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." Many hearers believe all that is said because of the person who declares it to them. This is not according to Christ's mind! We ought to receive nothing as vital religious truth except it is sent us from above! And however much we may respect the pastor or the teacher, we must not so give up our judgment to any man as to receive his teaching merely because he chooses to utter it. Bring every form of the Truth of God that is delivered to you, though it may glitter with oratory and seem reasonable and proper, to the test of Scripture! It is very difficult, however, to get men to do this. They seem to fancy that you

have sinister motives the moment you tell them so. There is a conservatism in the nature of us all with regard to our religious faith which is right enough if it were balanced by another principle. To hold fast what I know is right, but to be willing to receive or to do anything that God would teach me to receive or do is more right still. I must know what it is to which I hold fast, or else I may be injuring myself by the fixedness by which I stand to what I have learned. The woman of Samaria said, "Our fathers worshipped God in this mountain." That is the argument of numbers of persons. "Our fathers did so-and-so." This would be a capital argument supposing that our fathers were always right, but a very absurd argument supposing that they were wrong! I hope we are not like that early Saxon who asked where his father and all his ancestors had gone—and when he was told they were no doubt lost—he replied to the missionary that he would rather go where they were than become a Christian and be separated from them!

There are some who seem to be of this blood and boast in it. Their ancestors believed this or that, and they desire to follow them. Many there are who profess doctrines they have never learned and which they do not really know and grasp. They have the shell but they never reach the kernel. Is not this the case with many of us here tonight? If you even have a Doctrine of God in your mind, find out the text or texts which prove it! If there should happen to be other texts which seem to point the other way, do not cut and pare any of them down, but accept all and wait until the Spirit reveals wherein they really agree! Scripture is not to fit your opinions, but your opinions to conform to the blessed Word! There is a fable of a foolish gardener who had a tree that would persist in growing oddly. He did not like to restrain it and, therefore, had a wall built for it to grow upon. I think the man was far wiser who let the wall alone and changed the tree! There are people who are very apt to alter Scripture to suit their views, pulling out one word until it is never so long, dropping another, or completely changing the meaning of it, though everybody knows that it is the forced and unnatural one, or else tinkering up a text till it will fit some crank or peculiarity of theirs. This is not reverence! It is not treating God's Word as it ought to be treated. God's Word is no nose of wax to be shaped according to our fancies—or anybody else's. Though nobody else should say what he means, God always does. He would not have us talk in language that is capable of half-a-dozen meanings—and He does not talk so Himself. He speaks so plainly that if we are candid and desire to know what He means, it is not difficult to do so, especially if we go to Him for it. Let us, then, take this advice and try the spirits whether they are of God and, like the noble Bereans, search the Scriptures whether these things are so—and so read the Scriptures and try what we read.

And, lastly, the text is significantly followed by, "Give attendance to reading, to exhortation." I will, therefore, say in the seventh place—

VII. READ AND TELL OUT *what you read.*

This will be an effectual way of imprinting it upon your own memory. When you read a passage of Scripture and have any enjoyment therein,

go to your sick neighbor and tell what God has said to you. If you meet an ignorant one when you know somewhat of the things of God, tell them to him. Nations are enriched by the interchanges of commerce and so are Christians! We each have something that another has not and he has something that we need. Let us trade together. "Then they that feared the Lord spoke often, one to another," and it is very good that they should do so. Our talk is, alas, too often very frivolous—there is much chaff but little wheat. If we would but talk more of Scripture and establish it as a fashion among Christians, we would grow much faster and stronger, and be wiser in the things the Kingdom.

I know one who, when he was a young man, read all day until evening came and then went every evening and preached. The preaching in the evening of what he had read during the day stamped and fastened the Truths of God upon his own mind and made them unspeakably profitable to him! When you have read for an hour or so, spend another half-hour in communicating to a child, or a servant, or a seeker, or to some bed-ridden saint the thing that has enriched and helped you.

How I would press this upon you, everyone, my dear Brothers and Sisters, who are members of this Church. We owe very many of the conversions that have been worked here to the personal exertions of our Church members. God owns *our* ministry, but He also owns *yours*. It is to our delight at Church Meetings that when converts come, they often have to say that the Word preached from the pulpit was blessed to them, and yet I think that almost as often they say it was the Word of God spoken in some of the classes, or in the pews—for not a few of you have been spiritual parents to strangers who have dropped in! Continue doing this! Let our congregation be full of these spiritual sharpshooters who shall pick out, each man his man, and who shall fire with the gun of the Gospel directly at each individual!

Of course, if you know nothing, you can tell nothing. If you have never read anything which by the blessing of God has been brought powerfully home to your own soul, do not attempt to speak to others. There must be something begun in your own soul, first, but if you have been brought into personal contact with Divine Truth, let it be the first impulse of your soul to—

***"Tell to the sinners round
What a dear Savior you have found."***

The woman of Samaria left her water pot and went into the city, and said, "Come, see a Man that told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?" My Beloved, let us do the same! I do not know a living thing, even a wild flower in the hedge, but seeks to prolong the existence of its species. The foxglove sheds its seeds all down the banks—no matter how tiny the flower may be, it seeks to produce its like. So you, Christian, who are the noblest work of God, should not be satisfied unless your life is a continually spreading around of the Truth of God which has been made vital to you and will be new life to others!

What a grand crown and close to this night's service it would be could we be used of God to bring a soul from darkness to light, and from slavery to liberty! We cannot do it of ourselves, but God may help us. Would you not walk a mile, yes, many miles to do it? Well, you need not walk miles! It is quite possible that the very person who, as it were by chance, is sitting next to you tonight, is the person whom God has predestinated to be blessed and to be blessed *by you!* At any rate, try it. There shall be nothing lost, there may be much gained. Why has God taught the Truth to you? For your own good? Yes, but you are not to be selfish! Be you, at least, as unselfish as the three lepers who, when they found the Syrian camp deserted and an abundance of gold and silver, said, "We do not well to stay here. This is a day of good tidings; let us go in the city and tell." Dear Friend, you do not well if you read only for yourself! Having read, go out and tell what you have read, and the blessing shall come into your own bosom, even if it goes not out to others! And you shall be blessed and God shall be glorified!

I would press this, in conclusion, upon some of you who are not converted. Often men have come to Christ by reading the Scriptures. Attend upon a preached ministry, but do also read and search the Scriptures. I recollect when I was seeking Christ. I read Doddridge's *Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*, but the book muddled me much, though it is a very admirable book in some respects. Then I read Alleine's *Alarm*, and then Baxter's *Call to the Unconverted*, and all these only plowed my heart more and more. But the comfort which I got came out of God's Word. It was from that precious text, "Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth." Then I got light! Turn you away from all human books to the Divine Book, and from all human helpers to Him upon whom help is laid and who is mighty to save! Read God's love in the Book of Atonement upon the Cross, written in the crimson lines of the Savior's flowing blood and streaming veins! Look to Christ and trust in Him, and you shall live! May God bless you for Jesus' sake.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 119:105-115.**

Verse 105. *Your Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.* We are walkers through the city of this world and we are often called to go out into its darkness—let us never venture there without the light-giving Word of God, lest we slip. Each man should use the Word of God personally, practically and habitually, that he may see his way and see what lies in it. When darkness settles down upon all around me, the Word of the Lord, like a flaming torch, reveals my way. We would not know the way, or how to walk in it, if Scripture, like a blazing flambeau, did not reveal it. It is a lamp by night, a light by day and a delight at all times! David guided his own steps by it and also saw the difficulties of his road by its beams.

106. *I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep Your righteous judgments.* Under the influence of the clear light of knowledge he had firmly made up his mind and solemnly declared his resolve in the sight of God. Perhaps mistrusting his own fickle mind, he had pledged himself in sacred form to abide faithful to the determinations and decisions of his God. Whatever path might open before him, he was sworn to follow that only upon which the lamp of the Word of God was shining.

107. *I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O LORD, according unto Your Word.* According to the last verse he had been sworn in as a soldier of the Lord, and in this next verse he is called to suffer hardness in that capacity. Our service of the Lord does not screen us from trial, but rather secures it for us! The Psalmist was a consecrated man and yet a chastened man. Quickening is the best remedy for tribulation—the soul is raised above the thought of present distress and is filled with that holy joy which attends all vigorous spiritual life—and so the affliction grows light.

108. *Accept, I beseech You, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O LORD, and teach me Your judgments.* He offers prayer, praise, confession and testimony—these, presented with his voice in the presence of an audience—were the tribute of his mouth unto Jehovah. He trembles lest these should be so ill-uttered as to displease the Lord and, therefore, he implores acceptance. When we render unto the Lord our best, we become all the more concerned to do better. If, indeed, the Lord shall accept us, we then desire to be further instructed that we may be still more acceptable.

109. *My soul is continually in my hand: yet do I not forget Your Law.* He lived in the midst of danger. He had to be always fighting for existence—hiding in caves, or contending in battles. This is a very uncomfortable and trying state of affairs, and men are apt to think any expedient justifiable by which they can end such a condition. But David did not turn aside to find safety in sin. They say that all things are fair in love and war—but the holy man thought not so—while he carried his life in his hand, he also carried the Law of God in his heart!

110. *The wicked have laid a snare for me: yet I erred not from Your precepts.* Spiritual life is the scene of constant danger—the Believer lives with his life in his hand, and meanwhile all seem plotting to take it from him—by cunning if they cannot by violence. We shall not find it an easy thing to live the life of the faithful. Wicked spirits and wicked men will leave no stone unturned for our destruction. David was not snared, for he kept his eyes open and kept near his God.

111. *Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart.* He chose them as his lot, his portion, his estate. And what is more, he laid hold upon them and made them so—taking them into possession and enjoyment. David's choice is our choice. If we might have our desire, we would desire to keep the commands of God

perfectly. To know the Doctrines, to enjoy the promises, to practice the commands—be this a kingdom large enough for me!

112. *I have inclined my heart to perform Your statutes always, even unto the end.* He was not half inclined to virtue, but heartily inclined to it. His whole heart was bent on practical, persevering godliness. He was resolved to keep the statutes of the Lord with all his heart, throughout all his time, without erring or ending! He made it his end to keep the Law unto the end and that without end.

113. *I hate vain thoughts: but Your Law do I love.* The opposite of the fixed and Infallible Law of God is the wavering, changing opinion of men! David had an utter contempt and abhorrence for this—all his reverence and regard went to the sure Word of Testimony. In proportion to his love to the Law was his hate of man's inventions. The thoughts of men are vanity, but the thoughts of God are Truth.

114. *You are my hiding place and my shield: I hope in Your Word.* To his God he ran for shelter from vain thoughts! There he hid himself away from their tormenting intrusions and in solemn silence of the soul he found God to be his hiding place. When called into the world, if he could not be alone with God as his hiding place, he could have the Lord with him as his shield—and by this means he could ward off the attacks of wicked suggestions.

115. *Depart from me, you evildoers: for I will keep the commandments of my God.* If we fly to God from vain thoughts, much more shall we avoid vain men. Evildoers make evil counselors. Those who say unto God, "Depart from us," ought to hear the immediate echo of their words from the mouths of God's children, "Depart from us. We cannot eat bread with traitors."

—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.**

ACCOMPLICES IN SIN

NO. 3055

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 29, 1907.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 30, 1873.

“Neither be partaker of other men’s sins.”
1 Timothy 5:22.

WE have all abundant reason to look at home and see about our own sins. Nothing can be more absurd than for a man to take his hoe and weed everybody else’s garden—and leave all the thorns and thistles to flourish on his own plot. The old parable of the man who carried two bags, one behind and one in front, and who put other people’s faults into the one in front, and his own into the one at his back, is a very correct representation of the folly of those who have their eyes wide open to see the faults of their neighbors, but are totally blind to their own imperfections. If, as our proverb puts it, “Charity begins at home,” so should criticism—and criticism concerning character had better stop there. There is so much dirty linen in our own house needing to be washed that none of us need to take in our neighbor’s washing. “Mind your own business,” is a command that might have been spoken by Solomon, himself, and the Apostle Paul was inspired to write to the Thessalonians, “Study to be quiet and to do your own business.” And he and Peter very sternly condemned those who were “busybodies in other men’s matters.”

So it is not my intention to bid any of you to cease to look to your own affairs, but at the same time, I want to remind you that we cannot, in this world, live altogether to ourselves. He who is most bent upon minding his own business cannot help knowing that his next door neighbor has something to do with his garden. Even if he looks diligently after his own plot, thistle seeds from the left and the right may blow over into his garden and trouble will come to him from the very fact that he has neighbors! Our dwelling places in this life are not all detached—many of us have to live on streets and if our neighbor’s house is on fire, it is not at all unlikely that the flames may spread to our dwelling. Let us never be so concerned about our own interest as to be selfish, for even if we try to be wholly wrapped up in ourselves, we shall be compelled to notice the actions of others with whom we are more or less intimately linked—whether we wish to do so, or not. Hence, the message of the text is necessary, not to take us away from our own duty, but to help us to make sure that we are not “partakers of other men’s sins.”

The connection in which this text stands must be noticed. Timothy was exhorted by Paul to “lay hands suddenly on no man.” There were certain upstarts who wrongly thought that they could preach—and there were others who thought that they could rule in the churches. These persons probably gained a few or many partisans to support their claims. There were some of their relatives in the church who thought a great deal of their sons, or brothers, or uncles, or cousins, or there were friends who heard some man speak on a certain occasion with considerable fluency and, being unwise, they judged him to be man of master-mind and would have put him into the front rank of the army at once if the power to do so had rested with them! Paul tells Timothy, whom he had sent to exercise a general oversight over the officers and members of the church, not to be in a hurry to lay his hands upon these men, so as to endorse their claim, but to let them wait awhile until they were tried and tested—because if he allowed them to take office in the church and they committed faults or follies, he would be responsible for them and everybody would say, “We wonder that Timothy should have sent out such men as these.” So he was bid to be cautious lest he should become, in any way, “a partaker of other men’s sins.” None of us are exactly in Timothy’s position so we are not likely to fall into the fault against which Paul warned him—at least not in precisely the same form. Yet the text has a message to us and we may say to one another, “Be not partakers of other men’s sins.”

I. I shall first try to show you HOW WE CAN BE PARTAKERS OF OTHER MEN’S SINS and, in doing that, I am afraid that the various ways in which we can do this will seem to be very many. And that if I am not very careful, you will think that my sermon is like Ezekiel’s valley of vision in which the bones were “very many” and “very dry.” I will not be more wordy than I can help, but at the same time I must deal with the subject somewhat in detail.

As to how we can become accomplices in other people’s sins—the preacher must first say to himself that he will be such a man if he is not true to his trust. If he shall teach false Doctrine, or if, teaching the true Doctrines, he shall teach them erroneously—if he shall keep back unpalatable Truths of God—if he shall allow sin to pass without reproof—if he shall see a great deficiency of spiritual life and service and not point it out—if, in brief, he shall be an unfaithful servant of Christ and his hearers shall thereby be kept in a low state of Divine Grace, inconsistent with their profession—and the unconverted shall be hindered from coming to Christ, he will become a partaker in other men’s sins. Indeed, I know of no man who is more likely to fall into the fault indicated in the text than a minister of the Gospel is! Oh, what Grace we need and what help from on high lest if we fail in faithfulness to God and our hearers, the doom of souls should be laid at our door and we should be partakers of other men’s sins! Brothers and Sisters, pray for us that this may not be our unhappy lot—

“Tis not a cause of small import

***The pastor's care demands,
But what might fill an angel's heart
And filled a Saviors hands!
They watch for souls for which the Lord
Did heavenly bliss forego,
For souls which must forever live
In raptures or in woe.
May they that Jesus, whom they preach,
Their own Redeemer see—
And watch YOU daily over their souls,
That they may watch for THEE.”***

That piece is especially intended for myself and my Brother ministers. The rest of my discourse will be for you as well as myself. So next I must remind you that we can, all of us, be partakers of other men's sins *by willfully joining with them in any act of sin and doing as they do*—like those sinners mentioned by Solomon in the Book of Proverbs, who said, “Cast in your lot among us; let us all have one purse.” We must have nothing to do with such men! God forbid that we should! If we sin alone, it is bad enough, but if we sin in company, we have not only to answer for our own sins, but also for the sins of others, at least in part. If hand joins with hand in sin, there is a multiplication of its guilt, for each man who has helped to lead a fellow creature into iniquity will have his own transgression increased by the transgression of that other sinner. By their combination, the two will become capable of even greater guilt than they would have committed individually. God save us all from being accomplices in the sins of others by uniting with them in their sinful acts and deeds!

Further, we may be partakers in other men's sins *by tempting them to sin*. This is a most hateful thing and makes the man who practices it to become the devil's most devoted drudge, servant and slave. I have known such tempters of others—old men who, from their youth up, had sinned in such a shameful way that their very looks were full of lechery. There was a leer about their eyes that was almost enough to destroy all chastity that came beneath their glance. And their speech was full of the *double entendre*, insinuations and innuendoes which were almost worse than open profanity. I have known one such walking mass of putrefaction defile a whole parish—and when I have seen a boy walking with such a demon incarnate, or sitting down with him in the public-house, I knew that the boy's character would be ruined if that vile doctor in devilry could only instruct him in the vices with which he is, himself, so shamefully familiar. There are such fiends in London and we could almost wish to have them all buried straightaway, for they are Satan's servants spreading wickedness all around them! I do not suppose I am addressing one such dreadful creature, yet I know that some great sinners of that sort do come within these walls and they will, of course, be very angry because of my allusion to them. Yet I never knew a thief who was fond of a policemen and I do not expect or wish to secure the approval of scoundrels whose evil character I am exposing. If, Sir, I have

described you and you will not repent of your sin, I tell you that the hottest place in Hell is reserved for you, for you have led young men to the alehouse and taught them to drink the devil's drugs and to repeat your foul blasphemies and to imitate your scandalous lasciviousness! Yet before it is too late, I beseech you to repent of your sin, that it may be blotted out by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, which cleanses from all sin! But if not, "other men's sins" will cry out against you for judgment at the bar of the Almighty! I solemnly charge all of you who have not committed this iniquity, to never do so—take care that you never say a word which might stain the innocence of a child's mind and that you never let fall an expression which might, in any way, be the means of leading another person into sin—for it is an easy thing for us to become partakers of other men's sins by tempting them to commit iniquity.

If there is any evil worse than that, I think it is that of *employing others to sin*. It was one of the basest parts of David's great sin that when he wanted to have Uriah killed, he did not slay him, himself, but got Joab to expose him in a position where he was certain to be killed. It is horrible when a man is determined to be dishonest, yet gets someone else to commit the sin for him! It is a shameful thing that there are professedly "religious" employers who try to get their young men to say across the counter what they know is not according to truth. Are there not some of these so-called "Christian" employers who want young men who are not "too particular"? Do I not hear, every now and then, of young men who have been found to be too scrupulous and who have been told that they had better get situations somewhere else? They objected to describe the goods as their employer wanted them to do because they knew it would be a lie. They were told, "It is the custom in the trade and, therefore, must be so here." That is to say because other persons were liars and cheats, these young men must be knaves—and their master must make money by their lying to his customers! Now, if I meant to thieve or deceive, I would do it myself—I would not employ young men and women, or old ones either, to lie and cheat for me! If any of you have done so, I pray God that He may lead you to repent of such abominable wickedness, for the sin is not one-half theirs and the other half yours—it is partly theirs, but it is far more yours if they are doing wrong at your bidding! God save us all from being "partakers of other men's sins" in that way!

Some commit this great crime *by driving other men into sin* by the fears which they have inspired, or by oppressing them in their wages, or by setting them to do what must involve them in sin. I remember the case of a man who was employed where it was well known that some of the parcels which he collected on his way and carried to their destination would never be booked by him, but the price paid for the carriage would be secretly dropped into his own pocket. The man's wages were so small that nobody, unless an idiot, ever believed that he lived on them, so, tacitly, the understanding was that the man would be sure to pilfer on

his own account, so his wages were cut down below the point at which he could earn an honest living. I fear that there are many men who are dishonest for this reason—I will not excuse them, but I hope that if they are ever sent to prison for stealing, their masters will be sent with them, for they are equally guilty!

Yet again, we may become partakers of the sins of others *by a misuse of our position over them*. This is especially the case with parents. When a father is a man of loose habits, if his son follows his evil example, who is to blame? If a drunken father sees his child become a drunkard, whose fault is it? If he is a swearer and his son uses profane language, who taught the boy those oaths? Is not the guilt of that swearing largely the father's? "Oh!" some of you say, "we would not teach our children either drunkenness or profanity." Yet you are not, yourselves, Christians—you may be moral and truthful, and so on, but you are not Christians. And if your children are not converted, will they not say, "Our father was never converted, so why should we be?" "But we always take them to a place of worship." I know you do. And your children say, "Father goes to a place of worship, but he does not believe in Christ and he never prays." So if they grow up in the same way, who is to blame? You say that you trust they will not do so—then ask the Lord to make you a Christian, for then it will be more likely that your children will also be Christians. When you blame your children for wrongdoing, you ought to blame yourselves even more, for after all, what are they doing but what you yourself are doing?

Plato, the philosopher, one day saw a boy in the street behaving in a very shameful manner, so he walked straight into the house where the boy's father lived and began to beat him. When he said to Plato, "Why do you beat me?" the philosopher replied, "I found your boy doing wrong. I did not beat *him*, but I beat you, for he must have learned it from you, or else it was your fault because you did not exercise proper discipline upon him at home." Have you never felt, when you have seen the faults of your own children, that you ought to lay the rod on your own back because, in some way or other, you were an accomplice in your children's sins? How much of the ruin of many children's souls lies at their parents' door! How sad it is that in many cases the influence of the mother and father is damning to their children! Men and women who have boys and girls at home who are very dear to you—can you bear the thought that you may, one day, have to say, "Our unchristian example has ruined our own children"?

"Oh, but we are members of the Church," say some. Yes, I know you are, yet I speak to you as well as to others, for there are some of you who are bringing up your children in an improper manner. I do not see how they can be expected to love religion when they see your own household ordered so badly, or not ordered at all. The professor of religion who does not live consistently with his profession does more injury to the cause of Christ than a non-professor does! There are some who hang out the sign of, "The Angel," but the devil keeps the inn! Someone has truly said that many a man's house is like Noah's ark in that it is pitched within and

without with pitch. There is pitch in the dining-room—gluttony and drunkenness. And pitch in the bed-chamber—lasciviousness and wantonness. Pitch in the drawing-room—talk which is not even fit for the stables. And pitch in the shop, for much that is “dirty” goes on there. How can anyone expect good children to come out of such a house as that? May none of us, like Eli, be accomplices in our children’s sins through neglecting to rebuke them, or like David, through our evil example leading them into sin! On the contrary, let us pray for them, as Abraham cried to the Lord, “O that Ishmael might live before You!” I like to present to God the petitions and pleas which are so well worded in that hymn in *“Our Own Hymn Book”* which is attributed to Rowland Hill—

***“You, who a tender Parent are,
Regard a parent’s plea—
Our offspring, with an anxious heart,
We now commend to Thee.
Our children are our greatest care,
A charge which You have given—
In all Your Graces let them share,
And all the joys of Heaven.
If a centurion could succeed,
Who for his servant cried,
Will You refuse to hear us plead
For those so near allied?
On us You have bestowed Your Grace,
Be to our children kind—
Among Your saints give them a place,
And leave not one behind.”***

The injunction of the text of course applies, in a measure, to the teacher of a class as well as to the parent of a family. If the teacher is inconsistent and his scholars imitate him, the guilt of their wrong-doing will, at least in part, rest upon the teacher. The same principle applies to all persons who are in positions of influence in the land. If I were preaching to the House of Commons and the House of Lords, I would probably have to say some things which they would not wish to hear again. Certain “honorable gentlemen” and “noble lords” talk very glibly about the necessity for the nation to be religious, yet their lives are not remarkably religious, so their talk is all hypocritical and great sin lies at their door! God will certainly punish princes and so-called “nobles” if their example is not such as the common people can safely follow.

But even though we may not be of royal or exalted rank, all of us will become “partakers of other men’s sins” *if we set them bad examples*. If they can quote us as having done certain wrong things which they have imitated, we must share in the guilt of their sin. Yet it is always a bad thing to follow a bad example. If I see anyone’s example to be bad, it ought not to be a temptation to me—and I am a partaker of that man’s sins if, knowing that he has done amiss—I also do amiss simply because he has done so first. If I know that his course is wrong, I ought to shun the rock on which his boat has been wrecked.

We can also be “partakers of other men’s sins” *by countenancing them* and there are many ways in which that may be done—for instance, by associating with ungodly men as though we did not think there was much harm in them. And worst of all, by laughing at and with them when their mirth is not pure fun. I fear that many a wicked man has been hardened in his sin because a professing Christian has laughed at his filthy jests.

We may also be “partakers of other men’s sins” *by joining a church that holds unscriptural doctrines, or that does not act according to Apostolic precedent.* Some people say, “We belong to such-and-such a church, but we don’t approve of its teaching or its practice.” What? You belong to it and yet you do not approve of its principles? Out of your own mouth you are condemned! If I unite with a church whose creed and catechism I do not believe, and whose ordinances I do not practice, I am guilty of my own share in all the error that is there! It is no use for me to say, “I am trying to undo the mischief”—I have no business to be there! If I join a pirate’s crew, I shall be responsible for all that is done by the whole crew. I have no business to be on that vessel at all and I must get off it at the first opportunity, or even fling myself into the sea rather than have a share in the pirates’ wrongdoing!

But supposing you have joined a church whose doctrines are Scriptural, you may be “partakers of other men’s sins” if the discipline of the church is not carried out as it should be. If we know that members are living in gross sin and do not deal with them either by way of censure or excommunication in accordance with the teaching of Christ and His Apostles, we become accomplices in their sin. I often tremble about this matter, for it is no easy task where we count our members by the thousands. But may we never wink at sin, either in ourselves or in others! May you all, Beloved, exercise a jealous oversight over one another and so help to keep one another right! And let each one pray Charles Wesley’s prayer which we have often sung—

***“Quick as the apple of an eye,
O God, my conscience make!
Awake, my Soul, when sin is near,
And keep it still awake.”***

Further, we may be “partakers of other men’s sins” *by not rebuking them for sinning* if it is our duty to do so, or *by not doing all we can towards their conversion.* For instance, by living in a certain neighborhood and never trying to bring the Gospel to the people in that neighborhood, or by not maintaining our consistent Christian walk as the separated people of God. In brief, let each one sing, from the heart, the rest of that hymn from which I began to quote just now—

***“I need a principle within
Of jealous godly fear.
A sensibility of sin,
A pain to feel it near!
I need the first approach to feel
Of pride, or fond desire***

**To catch the wandering of my will,
And quench the kindling fire.
That I from You no more may part,
No more Your goodness grieve—
The filial awe, the fleshy heart,
The tender conscience give.
If to the right or left I stray,
That moment, Lord, reprove
And let me weep my life away,
For having grieved Your love.
Oh may the least omission pain
My well-instructed soul
And drive me to the blood again,
Which makes the wounded whole!”**

II. I must not say more upon this part of the subject lest I should weary you. So I pass on to ask, in the second place, WHY SHOULD WE SEEK TO AVOID BEING PARTAKERS OF OTHER MEN’S SINS?

This will be a sufficient answer—*Because we have more than enough sins of our own and cannot also carry other people’s. And also because if we are partakers in their sins, we shall also partake in their plagues. And because we do other men an injury by being accomplices with them—we steel and harden them in their sins.* The weightiest reason of all is this—we should not be “partakers of other men’s sins” *because, by so doing, we should grieve our holy and gracious God—and no true lover of Christ ought ever to do that!* Remember what Paul wrote to the saints at Ephesus, “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption.”

III. My next question is—HOW CAN WE AVOID BEING PARTAKERS IN OTHER MEN’S SINS?

And I reply—Only by the help of God’s Spirit! First, *be very jealous about other men’s sins.* I wish all parents acted as wisely as Job did concerning his children. They went to one another’s houses and feasted, so Job “rose up early in the morning and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.” O parents, do likewise, for that is the way to keep yourselves from participation in your children’s sins!

Next to being thus jealous with a holy jealousy, *be always on the watch lest you should be “partakers in other men’s sins.”* The man who wants to avoid certain diseases will take care not to go to an infected house. So, go not where sinners go, lest you should catch the infection of their sin. Remember how careful Abraham was not to take anything from the King of Sodom, “from a thread even to a shoelace,” even though it was his lawful share of the spoils of war. Be you equally careful concerning even the least sin.

The next way to keep from being an accomplice in sin is *by prayer.* Augustine used to offer a short prayer which I commend to you all, “O Lord, save me from my other men’s sins!” Put this down among your other confessions, “O Lord, I confess unto you my other men’s sins! I

mourn over my other men's sins, I repent of my other men's sins, I grieve on account of my participation in other men's sins." This will be a good way of keeping from committing them.

I think I had better close by saying that I do not think we have, any of us, escaped from the meshes of this sermon. If we have done so, it is either my fault or the fault of our own consciences. I have tried to fire red-hot shot in all directions, not omitting myself—and most of us have felt that there was a shot specially meant for us. What had we better do then? I will call to your minds a verse which we often sing and which we will again sing almost immediately—

***“There is a Fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins—
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains!”***

We are all stained with at least splashes from other men's sins as well as our own, so let us all go to the Fountain and wash. Let us renew our faith in the precious blood of Jesus, for if we never had any faith in it before, may God graciously grant it to us now! If we had rebelled against the Queen and had been at last subdued by force—and if there had been an Act of Oblivion passed for all who wished to claim an interest in it—perhaps some would say to themselves, “We do not know that we took any great part in the rebellion, yet it may be that we did—and the safest thing for us all to do is to put down our names and so secure the benefit of the Act of Oblivion.” So I, as one of the guilty ones, confessing that it is so, desire to say to the great King, “My Lord, I am guilty of sins of my own, sins of my children, sins of my servants, sins of my neighbors, sins of my Church and sins of my congregation—but You have said, ‘I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins.’ You have promised to blot out all sin from those who believe in Jesus Christ, Your Son. Lord, I believe in Him, so I claim the benefit of that Act of Oblivion.”

Dear Hearer, will not you say the same? Will you not now obey that Divine command, “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth”? Though you have gone to the ends of the earth, yet God says to you, “Look unto Me, and be you saved.” Look! *Look!* LOOK! It is little that you have to do! Indeed, it is nothing that *you* have to do, for God gives you Grace to do all that He requires of you. So trust in Him, rest in Him—the Lord help you to do so and then, whatever your sins may have been, though they may have been “as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.” Though they may have been “red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” God bless you and save you, for His name's sake! Amen.

Now let us all sing the verse that I quoted just now—

***“There is a Fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins—
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains”—***

and let all who can sing it from the heart join in the well-known chorus—
“I do believe, I will believe,

***That Jesus died for me!
That, on the Cross, He shed His blood
From sin to set me free!"***

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 73.**

You may have noticed that the 73rd Psalm and the 37th Psalm are on the same subject. It will help you to recall this fact if you remember that the figures are the same, only reversed.

Verse 1. *Truly God is good to Israel.* Settle that matter in your hearts. Whatever doubts may distress or disturb your mind, fix this point as certain—“Truly God is good to Israel.”

1, 2. *Even to such as are of a clean heart. But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well near slipped.* He was a good man, one of the leaders in Israel, yet he had to make this confession, “My feet were almost gone; my steps had well near slipped.”

3, 4. *For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm.* Many of them have so stifled conscience that it does not trouble them even in that last dread hour—and they pass into eternity with blinded eyes, self-deluded to the last.

5. *They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men.* They are not the children of God—and that is why they escape the rod of God. The rod is not for strangers, but for the children of the family. Yet the Psalmist began to envy these people because, said he, “they are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men.”

6. *Therefore pride compasses them about as a chain.* They wear it gladly and think it to be an ornament.

6-9. *Violence covers them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens.* As though they would blow them down, as the wind blows the clouds that are full of rain.

9. *And their tongue walks through the earth.* Like the ravaging lion of the pit, seeking characters that they may destroy or devour. There is no end to the mischief that such people can do. If they are not in trouble, they make much trouble for other people and while they set themselves on so high a pinnacle, they are mean enough to slander the characters of the good.

10. *Therefore his people return here: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them.* They have to drink of the bitter cup again and again—it seems to them to be always full. And the wicked have their full cup—filled, as it seems, with the juice from the very finest fruit!

11. *And they say, How does God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?* They admit that there is a God, but they ask, “What does He know, and how does He know?”

12-14. *Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence. For all day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.* It was one of his greatest sorrows that the more holy he was, the more troubled he seemed to be—and the more closely he endeavored to follow his God, the more it seemed as if God only frowned upon him. Yet the Psalmist’s was no exceptional case, of which there is only one in all history—there have been many such and there are many such to this day!

15. *If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of your children.* You know that some people have made up a kind of proverb like this, “If you think it, you may as well speak it.” But it is not so. Bad thoughts should never be spoken! If a man has a bottle of whisky in his house, or in his pocket, that is bad enough, but if the cork is never taken out, it will do no very great hurt to anybody. So if a man has evil thoughts but does not utter them, the mischief will not be so great as if he were to make them known to others.

16. *When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me.* He could not bear the thought of offending God’s children, but at the same time, the problem itself, concerning the righteous and the wicked, until he could solve it, was too painful for him.

17. *Until I went into the sanctuary of God.* When he went into God’s holy place—when he began to understand God’s purposes and plans and looked beyond the present life into the dreadful future of the ungodly, he could say.

17. *Then I understood their end.* And understanding their end, his difficulty ceased, his puzzling problem was solved!

18. *Surely You did set them in slippery places.* As if they stood upon a ridge of ice from which they must slip down—who wishes to be lifted up upon an Alp of prosperity from which he may be dashed down at any moment? If you knew that there was a man standing on the top of the Cross of St. Paul’s at this moment, I do not suppose that any of you would envy him—certainly I would not. Let him have a patent for standing there and let nobody else ever attempt it. And an ungodly man, in the elevated places of prosperity, is in such a perilous position that we need not envy him.

18. *You cast them down into destruction.* Down they go! If not in this life, yet in the next, and who will envy them then?

19, 20. *How they are brought into desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awakes, so, O Lord, when You awake, You shall despise their image.* When a man wakes up, the image that was before his mind, in his dream, is gone. And when God wakes up to judgment, these wicked men who were but as images in a night dream, shall pass away.

21. *Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins.* In the most tender and most vital parts of his being, he felt an inward and terrible pain.

22. *So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before You.* Judging as the beast judges that can only see the little grass around itself, and fattens itself, knowing nothing of the shambles and of the butcher's knife that is being sharpened to kill it there. "So," says the Psalmist, "I was like that, I forgot about the future, I did not judge as an immortal being should judge concerning the infinite and the eternal, but I judged things as a beast might judge by the narrow compass of its little grazing ground.

23. *Nevertheless.* This phrase is most delightful, coming in connection with his previous confession, "I was as a beast before you. Nevertheless."

23. *I am continually with You: You have held me by my right hand.* That is your portion also, Christian! However few your pounds, however short your supplies, you are continually with God and He holds you by your right hand. Will you envy the ungodly after that?

24. *You shall guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to Glory.* There is where your chief possession lies, locked up in that which is marked, "Afterward." Not today, possibly not tomorrow, but, "afterward," is your inheritance! "Afterward You will receive me to Glory."

25. *Whom have I in Heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside You.* Here is the Christian's heavenly and earthly portion and treasure. He has his God, both here and hereafter—and this is better than all that can fall to the lot of the worldling!

26, 27. *My flesh and my heart fails; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. For, lo, they that are far from You shall perish: You have destroyed all them that go a whoring from You.* That is, setting their hearts on unlovely things and forgetting to love God.

28. *But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all Your works.* The Psalm ends jubilantly, as it began, though part of it had been in a minor key.

—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.**

“LAY HOLD ON ETERNAL LIFE!”

NO. 2226

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY,
OCTOBER 18, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 19, 1891.**

*“Lay hold on eternal life.”
1 Timothy 6:12.*

PAUL was very anxious about Timothy, his own son in the faith. He loved him greatly and he had much confidence in him, but still he felt that the work of preaching the Gospel was such a responsible undertaking that he could not be too prayerful for him, nor too earnest in exhorting him to continued steadfastness in those things which he had received. So “the old man eloquent,” whose very pen seems to have borrowed some of the burning fervor of his heart, pours out his very soul to young Timothy in the earnest desire that he may find in him a true successor—one who, when Paul is compelled to lay down his trusteeship—will take it up and be faithful to his Lord and to the Gospel when his father in Christ is taken away from him. We cannot be too anxious about our young Brothers who are to preach the Gospel of the Grace of God. Always pray for students! Let them continually be mentioned in your private prayers than when those who have borne the burden and heat of the day shall rest with their fathers, God may raise up better men than they, who shall yet more faithfully proclaim His Word.

This passage of Scripture, “Lay hold on eternal life,” is suggestive from its connection. In the same verse Timothy is told to, “Fight the good fight of faith.” From this it is evident that if he lays hold on eternal life, he will have to fight for it and that if he has to fight, he can only fight by laying hold upon eternal life with a tenacious grip. Every Christian man is a soldier and no man will war a good warfare unless he lays hold upon eternal life with all his heart and soul. A man may fight the battles of earth with the life of earth, but our warfare is of a different kind—“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” With such foes we can only contend successfully when we are made invulnerable by the reception of the life of God within our souls. In a classic story we read of one who was dipped in the river Styx before he went forth to the battle so that the arrows of the foe might fall harmless about him. That fable becomes a fact for us when we “lay hold on eternal life.” The fiery darts of the wicked are quenched by our shield of faith!

The whole chapter forms a sort of preface to the text. Three classes of people seem to have existed in the community where Timothy was called to labor—each with different views of the best method of teaching those around them. First of all, there were some who intermeddled with social politics. They told the slaves that they might conspire against their masters and try to rectify the unquestionable wrongs which existed in that day. Paul desires, as much as anybody could, that injustice should come to an end and especially that *slavery* should be swept off the face of the earth, as it has largely been by the influence of the Gospel. But, taught of God, and seeing that it was by the proclamation of the Gospel that these evils would be most surely overcome—rather than by any hasty social change—he says to Timothy, “Leave that matter alone. Lay hold on eternal life! You are not sent to cleanse the Augean stable of politics and to set things socially right—let it be sufficient for you to lay hold on eternal life and to call upon the people to do the same. Every man to his own calling and this is yours, “Lay hold on eternal life.” Today many a young preacher and, perhaps some of the older ones, would do well to take heed to this advice of Paul given by the Spirit, for while every real social improvement, based on the principles of right and justice must have the sympathy of all Christian men, depend upon it that, in the long run, the surest way to raise men is to preach the Gospel to them! This will change their character and regenerated lives will soon result in altered social conditions.

Round about Timothy, too, there buzzed a set of men full of questions and difficulties—and discoveries of a false science which Paul calls, “profane and vain babblings.” These were in a most unhealthy state, “sick about questionings and disputes of words,” as the Apostle’s language in verse four may be literally rendered. Concerning such, he says to Timothy, “Do not answer such wrangling of men corrupted in mind and bereft of the Truth of God. Do not worry yourself about them! Let the bees or the wasps buzz as much as they like. As for you, lay hold on eternal life! Stick to your business. Go in for the one thing for which God has called you, the glorious work of saving souls! Let those who like such questions fight them out to the bitter end, but, as for you, lay hold on eternal life!”

Then Paul had noticed that, at Ephesus, there were certain men who were striving to be rich. Certain men, even of the members of the Church, who seemed to be sacrificing everything else for gain. They were counting that gain was godliness and that if they could get rich, they really were the better men for it. But Paul says to Timothy, “Leave money alone. Having food and raiment, let us be content. Your hand is not big enough to lay hold of two things. Therefore, since you can only have one, see that it is the *vital* thing. Lay hold on eternal life!” To use the rough old proverb, “Let the cobbler stick to his last.” “Timothy, stick to your business! Lay hold on eternal life—that is your main concern—Whereunto you are also called and have professed a good profession before many witnesses.”

I like this plain dealing of the Apostle. He seems to say, “Come to the all-important point, Timothy, and stick to it. Let others go in for this, and that, and the other—but as for you, set before yourself the highest aim. Say to them, as I wrote to the Philippians last year from Rome, ‘This one thing I do’—‘Lay hold on eternal life.’”

The great complaint which we have to make against many is that they seem to be looking after the odds and ends, the paraphernalia, the minor affairs of life. They do not seem to aim at this point—*eternal life*! Is it not so in praying? Is there not much that passes by the name which is not real prayer? We might often say, “Get to the point, Man, and ask of God what you need! Come to real prayer and downright grips with the Angel! Wrestle with Him and prevail!”

Paul seems, also, to hint that there was in the preaching, even in his day, a great deal that was extraneous, ornamental, superfluous—and so he says to young Timothy, “Aim at the center of the target. Go in for this, the main business, first of all—lay hold on eternal life!”

How much there is of our prayer which is only language. How much of our praise which is only music! How much there is in our Churches which is something that may have to do with the betterment of the people, but is not salvation, not winning souls for Christ! How much there is of teaching which may be Christian teaching, but is not the teaching of Christ! But here we clearly see that the Apostle focused *everything* to this one point and brought Timothy to this one thing—that he should “lay hold on eternal life”—and having laid hold on it, himself, should then set it forth before others with such vehemence and strong emphasis that they, also, might be persuaded to lay hold on it and be saved!

Oh, my dear Hearers! What does it matter what I have preached to you unless you get eternal life? What does it matter how I have said this or that to you, unless you have received, at the hand of my Master, that life-giving stream which shall be in you “a well of water springing up into everlasting life”? With all your getting, I beseech you, get the understanding of the great mystery of godliness and become wise as to the life which is life, indeed!

I am now going to take this exhortation and press it upon each one here present, asking God to bless it. “Lay hold on eternal life.”

I. First, then, WHAT IS ETERNAL LIFE?

In attempting to answer this question, I remark what should be perfectly obvious—it is a *gift of God*—the fruit of a Divine operation upon the heart. One of the first works of the Grace of God is to put within us eternal life. No man can create it, either in himself, or in his fellow men. Just as our physical life was bestowed upon us apart from any effort of our own, the Divine life cannot be evolved by any device of man—it must be imparted by the Spirit of God. At first, God created man “and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” And when, in Christ, man becomes a new creation, the work is as wholly and as really God’s. Eternal life is what no man has by nature, for he is dead in sin. No man can earn it, for carnal works cannot purchase a spiritual gift. And if a man toiled for a whole eternity, he would be no nearer the possession of eternal life than when he began.

That it does not come by *effort* is clear, for how shall the dead, by any kind of effort, if effort they could make, attain to life? It does not come by outward *ceremonies*—these could never purchase that which God bestows freely. Yet how natural it is to the proud heart of man to seek to make *payment* for that which is to be obtained without money and without

price! It is strange that men should expect God to take *their* gift when they refuse to accept His! If they would but remember that all their giving cannot enrich God—that they cannot give Him anything that He does not already possess—it would be quite evident to them that eternal life can come in no other way than by the gift of God! It is foolish to try to fill an already full vessel! It is profane as well as foolish to seek to be saved by giving to God instead of receiving from Him, or by anything we can bring to attempt to buy this eternal life. This is to imitate Simon Magus, to whom Peter said, “Your *money* perish with you, because you have thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.” Neither with money nor with *ceremonies* can it be purchased. It is purely and solely the *gift* of God by Jesus Christ. “The wages of sin is death; but the gift”—the *free* gift—“of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”—

**“Life is found alone in Jesus,
Only there ‘tis offered thee—
Offered without price or money’
‘Tis the gift of God sent free!
Take salvation,
Take it now and happy be.”**

This eternal life, given thus freely, is *a present possession*. “Eternal life” may sometimes be employed to set out the glories of Heaven, but not often—it is a thing possessed *here*. In the day in which we are regenerated, we receive the first germs of this everlasting life. When we are born again, it is, “not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which lives and abides forever.” It is a gift of God, a gift not reserved for the future, but given *now*, the moment a sinner believes in Christ! One of the first tokens of eternal life being given is the cry of prayer—and then come repentance of sin—and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. This is eternal life—the gift of God and a present possession. Have you received it? I do not ask you whether you know exactly the day or the hour when you received it, but are you alive unto God with a life you had not by nature, but which has been planted in you by God the Holy Spirit?

This life is, in fact, *the life of God in the soul*. The Holy Spirit comes and breathes God’s life into dead men. There is nothing everlasting in itself but *God*—and there is no life that is everlasting except that which comes from the Everlasting One! The gift of God is not only the gift God gives, but *God is the gift* that is given! He it is who breathes into us this eternal life which is really Christ living in us! He, Himself, is “that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.” The Holy Spirit comes and dwells in the man! “We will come to him,” says Christ, “and take up Our abode with him.” The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, each in a certain way, comes and dwells within the man—he becomes a Temple of the Holy Spirit and so he is alive unto God.

Again, eternal life is *a life which never dies*. We speak very positively here. Eternal life cannot have an end! If it can come to an end by any process, whatever, then it is *not* eternal! This is as clear as words can make it. The life, then, which God gives to every soul in its regeneration, can never die! Hear these words of Christ—“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.” We

do not teach that if the life of God in a Believer were to die out, he could, nevertheless, be saved. No Scripture teaches that!

We teach that if there is the life of God in a man, it is eternal—not only that it is *going* to be eternal, but that *now*, in its nature and essence, it is eternal and can be nothing but eternal life and, therefore, can never come to an end! It may be lessened; it may be sick; it may be obscure; but if it is there, since it is *eternal life*, it cannot come to an end! If it did, it could by no possibility be correctly said to be eternal life at all. Do you see, then, what a blessing is yours if you have received the gift of God? If by Grace you have received life through Jesus Christ, you have a life which will never die, a life which will outlast the sun and moon! You will see this world turned to a black coal. You will see all things expire, but your life and the life of God shall run on forever and ever. Well might Paul urge Timothy and well may we urge you to lay hold on such a life as this. So—

**“Take, with rejoicing, from Jesus at once
The life everlasting He gives!
And know, with assurance, you never can die,
Since Jesus, your righteousness, lives.”**

Once more, this eternal life is *the life that is perfected in Glory*. It goes on developing and matures, even in this world, to a very high degree. There is a very great difference between the new-born babe and the full-grown man and there is a great difference between the Believer who has just received eternal life and that riper saint who has come to the fullness of the stature of a man in Christ Jesus. But it is the same life! It is the same life that says, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” which afterwards says, “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.” It is the same life, but a fuller measure thereof. One is life, the other is life more abundant. As certainly as the eternal life begins, even in the tiniest bud, so will it blossom and become fruitful until it comes to its full perfection in Glory. The life of Believers in Heaven, the life that never sins, the life that is absolute obedience, the life that is undiluted bliss is exactly the same life that is in the Believer right now! The same life that God gave him when he first believed is that with which he beholds the face of God—without a veil between them—as he treads the golden streets of the New Jerusalem!

This, then, is eternal life—a new principle, a Divine principle, an inexhaustible, unquenchable, immortal principle. He that has it is blessed, indeed, among the sons of men! He that has it not is dead while he lives!

Having thus considered the nature of this possession, we come back to the question we have already asked —Have we this eternal life? Have we received it as God’s gift? Is it, within our hearts, a lamp burning there, never to be put out? Do we know its present power and reality and have we joy therein? Yes, do we delight ourselves in God, who has brought us out of death into life—out of the region of the Valley of the Shadow of Death into that great light which is the beginning of Heaven, the dawn of the day that shall never end? If we do, let us unitedly lift up our hearts in praise and say, “Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!” Can we ever cease to adore His name, since He has bestowed such a treasure

upon us? But if you have not yet become a possessor of it, I beseech you at this moment to hold out your empty hands and take the gift so freely offered! “And this is the record, that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that has the Son has life, but he that has not the Son of God has not life.”

II. In the second place, the Apostle tells us to “lay hold on” eternal life. That is the main point of my present discourse. How DO WE LAY HOLD ON ETERNAL LIFE? There are degrees in the reception of this life, but happy is the man who fully apprehends that for which he is also “apprehended of Christ Jesus.” The Spirit of God lays hold of us in order that we may lay hold on eternal life! How we are enabled to do this is our present subject for consideration.

First, if you would grasp this gift, *believe in it as true*. The very beginning of our hope is when the Lord leads us to believe that there is such a thing as eternal life—and that it is a *tangible* thing, not a dream or a vision—but a reality to be laid hold of. I certainly believe in the existence of a thing that I can lay hold upon. If “seeing is believing,” laying hold is even a more thorough mode of believing! Believe, then, that there is a higher life than Nature can ever create. If unconverted, you do not know anything about this in your own experience, but there is such a thing. There is life in Christ which He can give you. There is life by the Holy Spirit which He can work in you. He can strip you of those grave clothes of sin and raise you from your tomb. The words which Christ once addressed to Martha still sound in our ears—“I am the resurrection and the life: he that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?”

Answer this question of my Master, “Do you believe this?” If you do, there is hope that you shall yet be a partaker of His Grace. Nothing can hinder when He begins to work! Though you feel as if you did not feel at all. Though you seem paralyzed and unable to repent or to believe—this life shall be given to you and it shall be given to you *now* if you look unto Him who was lifted up upon the Cross, that, “whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Believe, my Brothers and Sisters, you that have this eternal life, in the power and reality of it! And whenever Satan tempts you to think that it is a fiction, a dream, a piece of enthusiasm, an idea born of fanaticism—resist him by the plain testimony of the Word of God—and the abundant witness of those who have gone before you, rejoicing in the power of it! Every child of God has times when he questions himself, but he can still truly say, “I am not what I used to be. I have feelings both of pain and joy that come not of the old life, but of the new, which has come to me by God’s gracious gift.”—

***“Lord, I was dead. I could not stir
My lifeless soul to come to Thee!
But now, since You have quickened me,
I rise from sin’s dark sepulcher.”***

If any of you have not yet experienced such a change, begin, as I have told you, by believing that there is such a thing as eternal life. I wish that you who have not yet obtained this blessing would make a point of regu-

larly attending some place where the Gospel is preached, saying, “It is to be had and I will have it. It is to be had by faith. ‘Faith comes by hearing.’ I will be an earnest hearer! ‘Hearing comes by the Word of God.’ I will take care to read and hear only the Word of God, so that faith may come to me and life may come by faith, for there is such a thing as receiving a new and spiritual life that shall make me far other than by nature I am. I believe it is true.” That is the first way of laying hold.

But you do not lay hold of a thing by simply believing that there is such a thing! You must go farther. *Appropriate it.* There is a book and I believe that it is there, but if anybody told me that it was a present for me and said, “All that you have to do in order to have it is to lay hold upon it,” I should understand that he meant not only that I was to believe in its existence, but that I was to take it up and carry it home with me. That is how you are to “lay hold on eternal life.” Strange as it is, this is a thing which, though it is so simple, we cannot make awakened sinners understand! That eternal life is God’s free gift put within their reach and that they are to take hold of it for their own salvation seems harder for some to grasp than if it were the most intricate puzzle! Yet this is, perhaps, the clearest aspect of the great matter of salvation.

It was Dr. Chalmers, I think, who used to say that he had no such comfort in the Gospel as when he viewed it as a simple offer on the one side, and a simple acceptance on the other. God gives—and we take! The Lord who has been chastening you, making you feel your sinnership and showing you that you are condemned and only fit to die, now says, “Lay hold on eternal life. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Take Him to be yours. Accept Him as your Substitute, bearing the death justly your due and, having given His life *for* you, now giving it *to* you. Make the exchange! Christ took your death—take His life! He bore your evil—take His good! *Appropriate it. Lay hold on eternal life.*” When people are sinking in the water and there is a life buoy or a rope near, they do not need much exhorting to lay hold upon it, nor any elaborate explanation of the way! They simply grip anything that gives them half a hope of being saved from the devouring deep. Now, Soul, you are not to bring anything with you. That would be to fill your hands and then you could not lay hold of anything else! You are to come empty-handed, just as you are, to Christ, who is set before you. Be bold enough to take Him and let Him be yours! You need no worthiness. How could *you* be worthy of *Him*? He gives Himself freely to your unworthiness and sinnership! Confess these and lay hold on eternal life—appropriate it to yourself.

The exhortation means more than that, however. Having appropriated it, keep it. *Hold to it* and never let it go. Hide it in your heart as a choice treasure and, if any would rob you of it, or frown you out of it, or laugh at you because you prize so highly what they so lightly esteem, lay hold on it still more! This is the work of the Grace of God which enables you, first, to take and then to keep it! Oh, what efforts will be made from within and from without to get you to give up eternal life! But here comes, in the exhortation, “Cling to it. Hold fast by it constantly. As with a death grip, grasp it with new energy. If you have held it with one hand, hold it with both hands. Yet more and more lay hold on eternal life.”

And then, furthermore, *keep yourself upon it*. According to the text, you have to “Fight the good fight of faith.” Every now and then you will get an ugly knock, a bruise, a bleeding wound from your enemy. What are you to do? Always lay hold on eternal life, again, and it will strengthen you, stanch your wounds and make you, once more, strong in the day of battle. I would have you think much of this. If you believe in Christ, there is a life within you, like the life of God, which will never die—a life within you which will bring you to stand before the glorious Throne of Christ, “without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.” Do not, therefore, ever give up hope! Do not be staggered by what you may have to suffer here. In the midst of all the agony of the way, keep your heart upon God and upon the gift He has given you. “Lay hold on eternal life.” If between here and Heaven you could be burned as a martyr every day, it would be worth your while to bear it, laying hold on eternal life—

***“The King above in beauty,
Without a veil is seen!
It were a well-spent journey,
Though ten deaths lay between.”***

If between here and Heaven you had nothing to bear but the cruelty of men and the unkindness of the enemies of Christ, you should bear it right manfully, and even *joyfully*, because you can say, “I know in myself that I have in Heaven a better and an enduring substance. Even here I have a life which the world did not give me and cannot take from me—therefore I hold to it, still, and I comfort myself with this sweet thought, that it is mine, the gift of God to me! It bears me up amid seas of grief. My flesh and my heart fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.”

Further, I think that the Apostle, by the exhortation, “Lay hold on eternal life,” meant, *let other things go*. Here is a Brother, lately converted, who has been accustomed to keep his shop open on Sundays. He lives in a street where the best business is to be done on that day and if he closes his shop he will very likely be a great loser. What should he do? I thank God that the man has not asked anybody what he should do—he has done the right thing and trusted in his God! The Apostle seems to say, “Let anything else go, let everything else go, but lay hold on eternal life. Hold to that.” “Oh, but I should lose a living!” Yes, but if you lost a living and saved your life, what would you lose? Have you ever heard of the one who had a bag of gold on board a ship coming home from Australia? The ship was sinking and he went down to his cabin, put as much gold as he could into a belt, and then fastened the belt around his waist. When he leaped for the boat and missed it, it was not possible to pick him up, for he sank with the weight of his own gold round his loins! There was no hope for him—his treasure was his ruin!

And many a man, in like manner, is, by all his toil, but preparing sure destruction for himself—toiling and working hard only that he may effectually ruin his own soul! Let these things go. “For what is a man advantaged if he gains the whole world and loses himself, or is cast away?” Even for the fleeting life of the body, a man will sacrifice all, thankful if he can get out of the burning house alive, though all his worldly goods are de-

stroyed—glad to escape from the hands of the brigands, though they strip him of every possession. “All that a man has will he give for his life.” If this is wise for a transient life, how much more for the life which is eternal! We shall be gainers by losing everything, if by the loss we gain everlasting bliss! Let all that opposes go—friends, kindred, comfort, this present life—let them all go if, by the sacrifice, we may more firmly lay hold on eternal life! To keep that—and hold fast to it amidst the stress of temptation—is the main business of the Christian man! “Lay hold on eternal life.”

And it means, in my text, more than that. Fight, and as you fight, lay hold upon the victory. While you are running for Heaven, often *anticipate the joys of Heaven*. I think you and I do not go to Heaven often enough. “Well” says one, “I thought we should go there when we died.” Yes, if you are a Believer in Christ, that is secure, but why not go there *now*? The Christian’s position is unique—he is in two worlds at once! Our Lord has quickened us, “and has raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenlies in Christ.” Do you not know that the lower ends of all the streets of Heaven are near here? Victory—that is Heaven! Well, we even now overcome through the blood of the Lamb! Peace with God—that is Heaven! And at this moment, “Being justified by faith we have peace with God.” Holiness—that is Heaven! Yes, but we are made holy, now, by the work of the Spirit of God in our hearts. Communion with God—that is Heaven! But even today, “Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.”

Is it not good, sometimes, to sit down and anticipate the day when you will come into your inheritance? You have heard of the young prince, who, when his father wakened one morning, was found putting on the king’s crown. It was awkward in his case, but your Father will not object to your often putting on your crown! Try it and see how it fits. You will have a new song to sing—begin to sing it here! You will have holy work to do—“They serve God day and night in His Temple”—serve Him here! Christ is to dwell among us in Heaven—let us know that He dwells among us here! I like that verse of our hymn—

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

It was said of an old Puritan that Heaven was in him before he was in Heaven. That is necessary for all of us—we must have Heaven in us before we got to Heaven. If we do not get to Heaven before we die, we shall never get there afterwards. An old Scotchman was asked whether he ever expected to get to Heaven. “Why, Man, I *live* there,” was his quaint reply. Let us all live in those spiritual things which are the essential features of Heaven! Often go there before you go to stay there! If you come down tomorrow morning, knowing and realizing that Heaven is yours, and that you will soon be there, those children will not worry you half so much! When you go out to your business or to your work, you will not be half so discontent when you know that this is not your rest, but that you have a rest on the eternal hills where your heart has already gone—and that *there* your portion is in the everlasting dwellings! “Lay hold on eternal

life.” Get a hold of it now! It is a thing of the future and it is a thing of the present—and even your part of it that is future can be, by faith, so realized and grasped as to be actually enjoyed while you are yet here. “Lay hold on eternal life.”

I have not explained my text so fully or so clearly as I could wish. The life of which it speaks is beyond all language, but if you will obey the exhortation of the text, that will be the best exposition of it. Let him that has not this eternal life believe that it is to be had. Let the man whose heart aches for it, grasp it and appropriate it *now*—he need not be afraid that he will be repelled! Let him that has it, hold it fast as a jewel for which, sooner than part with it, he would sell house and home! Let him that has it, enjoy it even now. God help you in this manner to “lay hold on eternal life”!

III. Now I have to finish with just a special word. WHO ARE THE PEOPLE THAT OUGHT CHIEFLY TO LAY HOLD ON ETERNAL LIFE?

First, those who are called. This is the reason the Apostle gives to Timothy—“whereunto you are also called.” Beloved, there are some of you that have been called. A boy, who had come upon an errand, stood at my window this afternoon. Suddenly he ran away and I thought, “What made him go?” I found out that though I had not heard the voice, someone had called him and, therefore, he was gone. Imitate that boy! Go about this world as men who have been called by a voice that nobody has heard but you! Has God called you to Himself? He means you to come away from your old self and cease to live the old life—He would have you lay hold on eternal life! God never singles us out in this way unless He means to bless us! He never says, “Seek you My face,” in vain! Has God called you out from among men? Do you feel what your parents and friends at home do not feel? Is there a call to you like that call, “Samuel, Samuel,” and have you responded, “Here I am, for You did call me. Speak, for Your servant hears”? Oh, if God has favored you with a special and effectual call, then lay hold on eternal life with your whole heart and soul—and never let it go! Come what may, resolve that you will hold to this gift of God in life, in death and throughout eternity!

Next, *those who have confessed Christ* ought especially to lay hold on eternal life—“whereunto you are also called, and have professed a good profession before many witnesses.” Timothy had been baptized and probably there had been a great number of persons to encourage or watch him as he came forward to confess Christ. This, then, was a double reason why he should hold fast that on which he had laid hold. O you that have named the name of Christ and have put Him on by that wonderful symbol of death and burial and resurrection, “Lay hold on eternal life.” Do not play at Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Let these be stern, no, *sweet realities* to you! Lay hold, not only on the symbol, but on what the symbol means! Have you been “Buried with Him by baptism into death”? Then grasp the soul of the symbol. It is not a mere empty form, or only the badge of a sect, but a picture of the end of the old life of the flesh dying to the world and sin, that we may rise in “newness of life” to walk before God in the land of the living! Of all men, he who has been baptized should “lay

hold on eternal life,” for, in proportion as his Baptism is true, he has no other life to lay hold of, having died and been buried with Christ!

Then, also, we come to His Table and there we eat His flesh and drink His blood after a spiritual sort, receiving not merely bread and wine as memorials, but Himself, by faith, into our hearts! “Lay hold on eternal life,” for profession without eternal life is a fearful mockery. Without eternal life, to come to the Lord’s Supper will be to eat and drink condemnation to yourself, not discerning the Lord’s body! You that have professed Him before many witnesses, “Lay hold on eternal life.”

And, especially do I say this to *those who have been consecrated*, like Timothy, to the service of the Christian ministry. You that have been permitted in any way, even in the Sunday school, to speak of Christ to children. You to whom the Lord has committed His Gospel, that you may impart it to others, “Lay hold on eternal life.” You will never do much in this work unless you have eternal life within your own soul. See to that first. A dead preacher—what is he but a mocker of dead souls? A dead teacher—what can she teach? A dead instructor of a Bible class—how shall the Word of Life have free course and be glorified? A blind man teaching about colors, or a dumb man teaching music is not more out of place than a man without eternal life trying to tell out the Gospel! What can he do? “Lay hold on eternal life,” or else quit this false position lest, when the Lord comes, He should say to you, “What have you to do to declare My statutes, or that you should take My Covenant in your mouth?” Ah, I am speaking to myself, now, and I will take it home. Will you also open your heart to whatever in the sermon belongs to you? And when it is done and my voice is silent to your ears, I pray that you may hear, for many a day, a gentle whisper saying to you, “Lay hold on eternal life.”

You, poor Sinner, as you go after your follies and amusements, may the call, “Lay hold on eternal life,” come to you until you shall obey it and quit such trifles! And you, Christian, when you get into the world and are tempted to make gain by sin, while you will suffer loss by righteousness, may you hear a voice say, “Lay hold on eternal life”! And any of you who get the “cold shoulder” and the rough side of men’s tongues, when you begin to think that you cannot bear it, may you hear the voice saying, again, “Lay hold on eternal life.” Cling to that, for God, for Christ, for eternity, for Heaven! The eternal life is the only life worth living! God help you to live for it always and, if you do, it will be of His own Grace—and to Him shall be all the Glory, forever and ever! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 Timothy 6.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—567, 435, 538.**

MR. SPURGEON UPDATE:

The following letter from MR. SPURGEON to the congregation at the Tabernacle, will give the readers of his sermons the latest available information concerning him—

Eastbourne, October 10, 1891.

“Dear Friends—I was rightly directed to this place, for I have found a measure of appetite and feel much better. I think I shall soon be able to reach a warmer climate. This is the great desire of my doctor. The deaths of others cause anxiety about a chill, especially as I have lost one skin and the new one is exceedingly tender and would feel the influence of cold most readily. However, I am in those hands which control temperature and everything else! I am, indeed, happy in being borne up by the prayers of saints as by the hands of angels. I am relieved of great anxiety by the Lord’s plainly directing me to secure DR. PIERSON to fill the pulpit during my absence. He is a man after my own heart and a great winner of souls. He will not aim at anything but the Glory of God. He begs that the whole Church will grant him the aid of their united prayers and efforts. He is just now leaving America and will be ready to preach October 25, if the Lord wills. I shall be among you as soon as I feel that it would be right and wise—and then he will be ready to return to his own land. He has set aside everything to serve us. I was guided to him at the same moment that he was led of God to think of helping me.

“May our Lord be with you and grant you, each one, His Presence, power and peace! Oh, that many might yield to Jesus, now, that all may see that the Lord saves by every instrument! When MR. NEWMAN HALL bids sinners, ‘Come to Jesus,’ may the Holy Spirit draw them and the same in the evening! May you have a glorious day! MRS. SPURGEON’S company here makes me feel very happy, but when shall I meet with all the companions of my nearly 40 years’ service and feel that each one adds to my joy?

“Yours very heartily,

C. H. SPURGEON.”

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

ETERNAL LIFE WITHIN PRESENT GRASP

NO. 1946

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 6, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Lay hold on eternal life.”
1 Timothy 6:12.

*“Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against
the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.”*
1 Timothy 6:19.

“LAY hold on eternal life.” Observe that this precept is preceded by another—“Fight the good fight of faith.” Those who lay hold on eternal life will have to *fight* for it. The way of the spiritual life is no easy one—we shall have to contest every step of the way along which it leads us. “Contest the good contest of the faith” would be an accurate rendering of the passage and a contest it is against the world, the flesh and the devil! If we live unto God, we shall need to war a daily warfare and tread down the powers of death and Hell.

We fight the good fight by firm faith in the Lord our God—“This is the victory that overcomes the world, even your faith.” That fight is the fight of faith, fought for the faith and by the faith. The article should be inserted and then the words are—“Fight the good fight of *the* faith.” “Contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.” “Hold fast the form of sound words.” It is worth fighting for, even if we come to resistance unto blood! He who dies for the faith has laid down his life in a worthy cause and he shall find it unto life eternal. We can only hope that we shall be able to live unto God by faith in Him and faith in the great Truths which He has revealed to be the object of our faith. When I say unto you, “Lay hold on eternal life,” do not imagine that this is to be done in a dream, or accomplished without awakening your utmost energies, nor even then without that Divine assistance which only faith can receive.

As my text follows the command to “fight the good fight of the faith,” it teaches us that the best way of contending for the faith is for ourselves, personally, to lay hold on eternal life. You cannot defend the faith by mere reasoning—victory does not come through an array of arguments which have been, before, used by men of learning—you must, *yourself*, possess the inward life and exhibit the force and power of it in your daily conduct if you would be successful in the holy war. Men who forget the Divine Life soon cast away the Divine Truth. If the life is not in us, we may make what profession of orthodoxy we like, but we shall, in all probability, before long, turn aside like others, unto crooked ways. Well are the two commands joined together—“Fight the good fight of the faith, lay hold on eter-

nal life." It reminds me of our Lord's words, "I am the way, the truth and the life."

My Brothers and Sisters, *there is a higher and a better life than that which is known to the most of men.* There is an animal life which all possess; there is a mental life which lifts us up above the beasts, but there is another life as much above the mental life as the mental life is above the mere animal life! The bulk of men are not aware of this and when they are told of it, they do not believe the statement. Men whom they would believe upon any other subject—honest and true men—are, nevertheless, regarded as a sort of madmen when they begin to talk about a *spiritual* life. How should the carnal mind discern that which is spiritual? it can only be spiritually discerned. But there is such a life, as many of us assuredly know, and this is the eternal life which we are bid to lay hold upon. The life of Heaven is none other than the Divine Life which God's Grace imparts to Believers here below—only *it* is developed and brought to perfection. There is no jerk to the Believer in death—his line of life is unbroken. There is a change in his *condition*, for he drops this mortal body and those tendencies to sin which cling to it, but the same life is in him, in the body or out of it, unclothed or clothed. His life is the same day, only here it is the dawn, but in Glory it is full moon. His life is one and flows on like a river, widening and deepening until, at last, it swells into a sea of joyous, perfected life in Heaven!

Dream not that any of you will ever obtain eternal life hereafter unless you receive it in this life. Unless you are partakers of it *now*, tremble for the consequences! Where death finds you, eternity will leave you. Thus I read the Word of God. Let others read as they may. The only laying hold on eternal life that can be practiced by us must be commenced *now*—it is now brought to light by Christ Jesus in the everlasting Gospel—beware how you put it from you. Grip it *now*; lay hold of it *now* and hold on to it at all hazards! Do my expressions sound strange? Let me remind you of that exhortation of Holy Scripture—"Awake, you that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light." Once obtained, we may rest assured that this life will not be wrenched from us in the pangs of departure from the body nor in the Day of Judgment, nor throughout eternity! "Lay hold on eternal life." I would dwell upon this precept, entreating the aid of the Holy Spirit that I may speak of this true life in a living and true manner.

I. "Lay hold on eternal life," that is, BELIEVE IN IT. You cannot lay hold on it unless you know it to be a reality. We do not lay hold on shadows, or fictions, or fancies—there must be something substantial and tangible for us to lay hold upon. It is necessary, therefore, to begin by a realizing *faith*.

That we may believe in this life, let me say that *Holy Scripture constantly describes men unrenewed by Divine Grace as being dead*—they are "dead in trespasses and sins." They "shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on them." The natural life of fallen men, though it is cultivated to the highest degree so that they become sages and philosophers, is, nevertheless, nothing better than death as compared with the inner life which is called *eternal*. The life which you possess today, if you are ungodly men, will be taken from you. How suddenly none of us can guess! In this very

house we have lately had a solemn reminder of our mortality. But if God gives to you the new life, if there is infused into you the Divine Life, it is eternal—a living and incorruptible seed which abides forever. It is the life of Christ in you—the sap of the undying vine flowing into the branches! Without this heavenly quickening you are dead while you live and as the tendency of death is to corruption, you will grow more and more sinful. Men who are dead in trespasses and sins, by-and-by proceed to a further stage—and frequently become so corrupt that society itself cries out, “Bury my dead out of my sight.” Without the quickening Spirit you will remain in spiritual death forever.

The Scripture represents Believers everywhere as possessing everlasting life. “He that believes in Him has everlasting life.” Our death in sin has passed away when we have believed in Christ. That first look of the spiritual eyes is sure proof that we possess within us the life of God and, henceforth, we are so linked with Jesus that because He lives, we shall live, also. “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in Glory.”

This life is produced by the operation of the Holy Spirit within the heart. The Lord Jesus said to Nicodemus, “Except a man is born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.” It is by the new life worked of the Spirit that we enter the Kingdom. The infusion of the new life is the new birth and the entrance into the Kingdom. We are created anew in Christ Jesus, or, to use another expression, we are quickened and raised from among the dead! Beloved Hearers, do you know this change by personal experience? I know that many here present have passed from death unto life and I rejoice with them in Christ Jesus.

What a difference this quickening has made to those who have received it! What a marvelous life it is! It brings with it new perceptions, new emotions, new desires. It has new senses—there are new eyes with which we see the invisible; new ears with which we hear the voice of God, before inaudible! Then we have a new touch with which we lay hold on Divine Truths of God. Then we have a new taste so that we “taste and see that the Lord is good.” This new life ushers us into a new world and gives us new relationships and new privileges. The Lord Jesus, who makes all things new, sits upon the throne of the soul and is the center of new power and rule. Do you know this life? Some of us confidently bear witness of this life—but what does this avail to dead men? There is no change that can be comparable to that which is worked in men when they are quickened by the infusion of the Divine Life—it is as though the dead left their graves and much more than that!

The new life is a life of reconciliation. The possessor of it is at peace with God. We are no longer enemies, but friends of God; no longer heirs of wrath, but children of the Most High. The spirit of adoption within us cries, “Abba, Father.” We delight ourselves in God who becomes the spring of all our joys, the light of our delights. This delight in God draws us nearer and nearer to him in communion and fellowship—and this fellowship with God begets a new character in us like that of God. We are changed into the image of Him in whom we live and with whom we have communion! The new life has about it a spirituality, an elevation and a

purity which are never found anywhere else. Under its power the man loves the things which are akin to the life of God and he enters into sympathy with God. The spiritual life has instinctive aspirations after holiness, even as the old natural life has desires after evil. It has new pains and new passions; new joys and griefs. A heavenly fire burns upon the altar of the renewed soul which will utterly consume all that is contrary to holiness. As our God is a consuming fire, so is the life of God within the soul of man—ultimately it will destroy, by the spirit of burning—all the accumulated mass of original and acquired sinfulness. Much of smoke may blind our eyes and make us weep during the process, but the end is beyond measure to be desired. Do we know this life? Does God live in us? Are our bodies temples of the Holy Spirit? If not, since the Lord lives, we can never see His face till *we* live. He is not the God of the dead, but of the *living*—and only those that live unto Him in Christ Jesus can be in communion with Him.

I scarcely need to tell you that this life is one of high enjoyment. Truly it is a life of battle and of strife against the old death, but the life itself is as peaceable as it is pure. The spiritual life has in it all the elements of Heaven. There is a fullness of joy about it, inasmuch as it brings us into communion with the Ever-Blessed One. On high days and holy days some of us have said, as a dear Sister said to me last Thursday night, “I am happy as God, Himself, can make me.” We can say, “God, my exceeding joy.” The Lord’s visits fill us with such calm content and overflowing peace that we rejoice with joy unspeakable. Those who know this happiness may truthfully be said *to live*—but those who know it not have missed “the life which is life, indeed.”

I want you all to get this idea into your heads—I mean all of you who have not learned this fact as yet—there is a life superior to that of common men! There is a life eternal, to be enjoyed *here* and *now*! I want this idea to become a practical force with you. Stephenson got the notion of a steam engine into his brain and the steam engine soon became an actual fact with him. Palissy, the potter, had his mind full of his art and for it he sacrificed everything till he gained his end. So may you, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, lay hold upon eternal life as being a blessed possibility—and may you be moved to seek it! There *is* an eternal life! There *is* a life of God in the soul of man! And I trust that you will, each one, resolve, “If it is to be had I will have it.” Therefore direct your thoughts and desires this way. When the heart begins to value this life and to sigh after it, it is not far from the Kingdom of God! The quickening Spirit is moving upon the soul when it begins to be restless in its fallen estate and feels a hunger after higher things. Oh that the Lord, Himself, would convince you this morning that the life spiritual and eternal is no fancy of enthusiasts, but a literal fact, a matter worthy of your very best consideration! In this way you will begin to “lay hold on eternal life.”

II. But this is not enough—it is merely the doorstep of the subject. “Lay hold on eternal life”—that is to say, POSSESS IT! Get it into your soul—be alive! What am I saying? My Brothers and Sisters, this eternal life must come to you before you will come to it! The Holy Spirit must breathe upon you, or you will remain in your natural death. Behold, He sends me to cry,

“You dry bones, live!” And therefore I dare to speak as I have done. Apart from a Divine commission, I dare not speak thus to you!

How is eternal life grasped? Well, *it is laid hold of by faith in Jesus Christ*. It is a very simple thing to trust the Lord Jesus Christ and yet it is the only way of obtaining the eternal life. Jesus says, “He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?” By faith we have done with self and all the confidences that can ever grow out of self—and we rely upon the full Atonement made by the Lord Jesus, whom God has set forth to be a Propitiation. It is thus that we come to live! Faith and the new life go together and can never be divided! God grant that we may *all* lay hold on eternal life by laying hold of God in Christ Jesus!

This life once laid hold upon *is exercised in holy acts*. From day to day we lay hold on eternal life by exercising ourselves unto godliness in deeds of holiness and loving kindness. Let your life be love, for love is life. Let your life be one of prayer and praise, for these are the breath of the new life. We still live the animal and mental life, but these must be the mere outer courts of our being—our innermost life must be spiritual and wholly consecrated to God. Henceforth let devotion be your breathing, faith your heartbeat, meditation your feeding, self-examination your washing and holiness your walking! Let your best life be most thought of and most exercised. Be not content to use your eyes, but practice your faith in God. Neither be satisfied to exercise your limbs in moving your body, but in the power of the new life mount up with wings as eagles, run without weariness, walk without fainting! Lay hold on the eternal life by exercising it continually and never allowing it to lie dormant.

In laying hold upon it, remember that it *is increased by growth*. Zealously grasp more and more of it. Do not be afraid of having too much spiritual life! Lay hold on it, for Christ has come not only that we may have life, but that we may have it more abundantly. My Brothers and Sisters, we are, none of us, what we might be! Let us reach after something higher! “To him that has shall be given, and he shall have abundance.” Let us not forget this encouraging Word of our Lord. You that have much life have the promise of more! We may covet earnestly this heavenly treasure. We are quickened, but perhaps our life is sickly—let us bask in the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, for He has healing beneath His wings. Let us lay hold of the fullest measures of eternal life and go from strength to strength.

Remember that spiritual life is *enjoyed in the fullest sense in close communion with God*. “This is life eternal, to know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.” “Acquaint yourself with God and be at peace.” Do not think that those gates of Heaven cut us off from God, for they are never shut and we may enjoy daily fellowship with Him who reigns within! In Heaven or on earth we are in the same Father’s house—yes, we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever! We are not in Heaven yet, but Heaven may be in us. Men do not yet say of us, “He is with God,” but we know that God is with us. Let us endeavor to enjoy the eternal life now by abiding in the love of Christ. Then do we live, indeed, when He sups with us and we with Him. He, being raised from the dead, dies no

more. And we, being raised with Him, live with Him, for Him and like He! This Christ-life in us comes to the front and pushes back the lower order of things. We cry no longer, "What shall we eat?" Or, "What shall we drink?" Or, "How shall we be clothed?" But we cry, "Lord, what would You have me to do?" Oh, to say with Paul, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: 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"!

III. Thirdly, "Lay hold on eternal life." That is, WATCH OVER IT, guard it and protect it. Most men will preserve their lives at any cost. Unless they are drunk or mad, they will do anything for dear life—"Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has, will he give for his life." *Let every Believer regard the life of God within him as being his most precious possession, more valuable by far than the natural life.* It would be wise to lay down a thousand natural lives, if we had them, in order to preserve the spiritual life. It is infinitely better to suffer than to sin, to lose property than purity. God has given us this priceless jewel—let us guard it as the apple of our eye!

The other day we read in the newspapers of two persons in America being found dead from "starvation and cold." And we also read that each of these persons was possessed of a considerable sum of money. We say, "What fools!" Men with sums of money about their persons, or hidden away in their rooms, and yet suffering the ills of need till they actually die of hunger—what madness is this! Are those more sane who injure and dwarf their *spiritual* life for the sake of intellectual pride, or carnal joy, or the esteem of men? Is not the spirit infinitely more precious than the body? Brethren, if we starve at all, let us starve our bodies and not our spirits! If anything must be stunted, let it be the baser nature! Let us not live eagerly for this world and languidly for the world to come. Having the Divine Life within us, let us not neglect to feed it and supply its needs.

Here is a man that gives up attendance at religious services in the week because he hungers to increase his business—he buys brass with gold! Another quits the place where he enjoys a Gospel ministry to go at a larger salary to a place where his soul will be famished—he barter fine flour for husks! Another goes into all sorts of evil company where he knows that his character is injured and his soul imperiled—and his excuse is that it pays! O Sirs, is it so, after all, that this eternal life which you *profess* to possess is of trifling value in your eyes? Then I declare before you that you do not possess it at all! How could you thus play the fool if the Lord had made you wise unto salvation? "Lay hold on eternal life," for this is the chief good, for the sake of which you may quit inferior things. "Seek you first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." First and foremost, guard beyond everything your life, your *real* life, wearing always "the armor of light," "the whole armor of God."

Here is a sinking ship and none can escape but those who can swim. One man grasps a life belt and puts it about him. Sensible man! Another carefully secures his gold into a girdle and binds it about his waist. Madman! He is treating himself as cruel wretches treat a dog whom they sink into the water with a stone about him! This last individual is the portrait

of professing Christians who will be rich and, thereby, drown themselves in perdition and destruction. See the ninth verse of the chapter before us. Hold first and foremost onto eternal life and guard it with all your power, as being yourself, your all!

To that end the Apostle bade Timothy *flee from those things which are detrimental to that life*. “You, O man of God, flee these things.” A man that is very careful of his life will not remain in a house where fever has been rife. He looks to the drains and all other sanitary arrangements—and if these are hopelessly bad, he quits the house. No measure of cheapness or convenience will make him risk his life. Have you heard of men in their senses who will hunt for dens of fever and cholera and wantonly enter them? On the contrary, visitors are scared from a city or district by the mere *rumor* of cholera or other infectious disease. You who profess to be men of God must flee these things which are injurious to purity, to truth, to godliness, to communion with God—for these are detrimental to your best life.

Then the Apostle tells Timothy to *seek after everything that would promote his eternal life*. He says, “Follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness”—seek after that which will exercise and develop your highest life. Frequent those hills of holiness where the atmosphere is bracing for your new-born spirit. I notice how people who are sickly will leave their homes and journey far for health. Not only will they sojourn upon the sunny shores of the Mediterranean, but they will encounter the pitiless cold of the Alps in mid-winter at St. Maritz or Davoust in the hope of restoration. If physicians would only guarantee prolongation of life, men would emigrate to inhospitable Siberia or banish themselves to Greenland’s icy mountains! Men will do *anything* for life. Shall we not be eager to do all that we can to foster our *spiritual life*? Christian people, do nothing that will damage your Heaven-born lives! Act in this according to the highest prudence.

God help us to lay hold on eternal life and to that end *above all things lay hold on Christ!* We only live in Him—He is our life. To be divided from Christ is as surely death to us as it would be death to the body to be separated from the head. Make Jesus the Alpha and the Omega of your existence, for without Him you can do nothing, nor even live. “This is the true God and eternal life.” To believe in Jesus is to live! To love Him much is to have life more abundantly. Cling to Jesus! Rest in the Lord, for He is our peace. Dwell on Calvary. Live between the First and Second Comings of the Lord. Lay hold on eternal life as a drowning man lays hold upon a spar and will not relax his grasp. It is not a vain thing for you, for it is your life. “He that has the Son, has life; and he that has not the Son of God, has not life.” Let us, therefore, steadfastly abide in the Son of God and so know that we have eternal life.

IV. But now, fourthly (and with the same brevity)—“Lay hold on eternal life,” that is, FULFILL IT. Labor that the time of your sojourning here shall be occupied not with this poor, dying existence, but with the eternal life. *Fulfill the higher and the eternal life in every position of society.* The chapter opens with advice to servants who, then, were slaves. Their earthly life was wretched, indeed, but the Apostle bids them live, not for this present

life, but for the eternal life. Inasmuch as they could glorify God by continuing to bear the yoke and would *not* glorify Him by rising in insurrection against their masters, he bade them remain in their position until better times might come. He would have them, by Divine Grace, fulfill the relationship in which they found themselves.

Christianity is the deadly foe of slavery, but it took time to destroy it, and meanwhile, believing slaves were bid to glorify God in their station. And this is what the Gospel says to every one of us—Honor your station by glorifying God in it. When the famous Spartan warrior Brasidas complained that Sparta was so small a state, his mother replied to him, “My son, Sparta has fallen to your lot and it is your duty to adorn it.” Christian man, adorn the doctrine of God, your Savior, in all things! Wherever you are found, endeavor in that place to live out eternal life. Be not so anxious to change your position as to use it for eternal purposes. Are you a preacher? Seek not popularity by pleasing the times, but seek honor by pleasing God! Are you a master? Seek not to use your position to please self, but to bless your day and generation. Are you a servant? Be not perpetually lamenting because of your hard work and scant wage, but let all men see what Grace can do.

The eternal life should gild the lower life as the sun lights up the landscape. It is a sad pity when we let the lower life rise above us! Shall the horse ride the man? Shall the bullock drive the farmer? Let the position be bettered, if it may be, but if this cannot be improved, be you, yourself, improved—and a greater thing is done! Live not for time, but for eternity. What if I am a servant, yet I am the Lord’s freeman—let me live as such! What if I am poor, yet I am rich towards God, so let me enjoy my portion! Lay hold on eternal life all the more eagerly if in this temporal life you have little to lay hold on.

Fulfill this better life, also, by *leaving alone those questions which would swallow up the hour*. See how Paul destroys these devourers—“Questions and strifes of words, whereof comes envy, strife, railings, evil surmising, perverse disputes of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw yourself.” He speaks in the end of the Epistle of “profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called.” We are overdone with these canker worms at this hour! Brothers and Sisters, you can go and interfere in all the controversies of the day if you like, but beware of the consequences! You can be a party politician if you like, or you can be a man of culture, loving speculation better than Revelation, if you think fit, but, if you take my advice, you will do nothing of the sort, but “lay hold on eternal life.”

I like that expression of Mr. Wesley’s preachers, when they were asked to interfere in this or that political struggle, they replied, “Our work is to win souls and we give ourselves to it.” Oh that churches would listen to this just now! They are going in for amusements and the church is vying with the theater! Oh that we would lay hold on eternal life and seek the salvation of men! Eternal life in our churches would soon cast out the rubbish which is now defiling them! Jesus in the churches would purify the temple of the puppets, as once He cleansed it of the traders. We need to receive anew this conviction that our one great business here below is

to lay hold on eternal life, first making our own calling and election sure, and then seeking to bring others to Christ! Other questions compared with this are mere debates as to tweedledum and tweedledee! Let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth until they break each other in their anger! But we strive only for the Kingdom of Heaven which lies not in trivial things. It is ours to lay hold upon eternal life! As for the rest, the will of the Lord be done!

Further, the Apostle bids us *do this so as to surmount the temptations of selfishness*. He warns us that “they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” He whose life’s object is to accumulate money is not a Christian! No man can serve two masters—and if Mammon is his master, Christ is not his Master. To prosper in business with the sincere desire of using everything for the honor and glory of God is laudable and proper. But to make this the *end* rather than the *means* is a horrible prostitution and debasement of our energies. To live for this world is to be dead to the world to come.

The Apostle bids us “lay hold on *eternal* life” rather than on *this* life—to gain riches of *Grace* rather than riches of *gold*. Furthermore, he has a word for us if we become rich—for he supposes that such a thing may be and that it did happen in his own day. He says—“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God who gives us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.” As the alchemist was said to transmute brass and copper into gold, (though he did no such thing), so there is a *real* alchemy which can sublime gold and silver into everlasting treasure. These talents are not to be despised, but put out to interest for the Lord. They can be laid by where no rust does corrupt and where thieves do not break through and steal. They can be traded with in a heavenly market and turned to everlasting gains. We can use them for helping in the work of the Lord and by distribution to the poor and needy.

I would that all men at this hour abounded in almsgiving, but specially those who are followers of the loving Jesus. Regard your transactions from the standpoint of eternity. Weigh what you do, not as it may be thought of by men of the world, but as it will be judged by yourself when you behold in the heavenly country the face of Him you love! I do not want you to have to say when you come to die, “I have had large possessions, but I have been a bad steward. I have had a competence and I have wasted my Master’s goods. All I have done with my wealth was to furnish my house well, perhaps to buy expensive pictures and to allow myself luxuries which did me more harm than good.” I hope, on the contrary, you will have to say, “I am saved by Grace, alone, and that Grace enabled me to consecrate my substance and put it to the best uses. I can render up my

stewardship without fear. I did not live for the fleeting life which is now over, but for the life everlasting.”

Brothers and Sisters, some men spend so much upon themselves and so little for the Lord, that they seem to me to eat the apple and give Christ the parings! They hoard up the flour and give the Lord a little of the bran. Happy man who can carry out in life what he has dared to say in song—

***“All that I am and all I have,
Shall be forever Yours!
Whatever my duty bids me give,
My cheerful hands resign.
Yet if I might make some reserve,
And duty did not call
I love my God with zeal so great,
That I should give Him all.”***

The Apostle means, when he says, “lay hold on eternal life,” get beyond today and tomorrow. Leap out of this month and this year. Live for the future; for eternity. Live not as insects that die in a day, but as men that live forever. This life is as a prick made on paper by a pin—it is too small a thing to compare with the everlasting future. The for-ever, whether of misery or bliss, dwarfs this life to nothing.

Once more, let me say the Apostle urges us to fulfill the higher life by sundry arguments. He says, “whereunto you are also called.” Sovereign Grace has called us to eternal life—we are elect according to the foreknowledge of God from among men, in order that we may live unto Him. We are bound to make eternal life our first and last consideration, for God has called us thereto. Be not false to the call. If you are a minister or deacon, you have an official call. Be not unmindful of it, but live up to your high calling. The Apostle adds, “and has professed a good profession before many witnesses.” Many of you did this in your Baptism, when, as Believers, you were buried with Christ “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.” In that sacred act you professed that the old nature was then and there to be regarded as buried and you would live for Christ and like Christ. Oh, be not false to your solemn vows, but lay hold on eternal life—not upon the miserable wretchedness of the passing hour! Then the Apostle sets before us the great example, “I charge you in the sight of God, who quickens all things and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; that you keep this commandment.” Christ sacrificed everything for us. He gave *Himself* for us! He laid hold on things eternal—as for anything here below, He let it slip by for our sakes. Eternity was always pressing upon the heart of Christ, for the joy that was set before Him, He endured the Cross, despising the shame. Therefore, if you are a Christian, professing to follow Christ, lay hold on eternal life and let this fill your grasp.

V. Last of all, and I have done, *EXPECT ETERNAL LIFE*. By the two hands of faith and hope lay hold on eternal life as the great reward of the righteous. Look for the crown of life which fades not away. The time comes when this mortal life shall be utterly swallowed up in eternal life. Let me suggest to you, my beloved Brothers and Sisters, that we *think much about the life to come*. We shall soon be there in the endless home, let us

send our thoughts there like couriers in advance. Let the harps of angels ring out their music to our listening ears! Let the songs of the redeemed awaken us to unite with them in the praises of our Lord! You will soon be there—anticipate the joy! Put on your white robes by faith and even if a little imagination should come to the aid of faith, it will do no harm. Your heads will soon wear the crown—the crown which you will delight to cast at Jesus' feet! Today you know the straits of poverty, but you are going where the streets are paved with transparent gold! You now know the aches and pains of this frail flesh, but you are going where perpetual youth and rigor shall cause all pain to flee away! You are passing quickly along the journey—think much of that journey's end. Remember the rest which remains, the perfection which is promised, the victory which is secured, the communion which is provided, the Glory which is dawning! "His servants shall serve Him and they shall see His face." Think much of your home—every good child will do so.

When you think of it and your heart grows warm with the thought, then *count it very near*. Suppose you are to live a comparatively long life? Yet no human life is really long. Even to a young man, if he has to look forward to a gray old age, life is but a span. How brief it seems on looking back! When I remember the Brother who died in yonder pew last Sunday, I can but feel how near Heaven is to some among us. We have touched the celestial country! One Brother has just leaped on shore! The other day, all of a sudden, I saw the white cliffs of Dover. The swift ship had performed the passage so rapidly that the sea had been crossed before I had reckoned on reaching land. There were the cliffs. Just ahead, Brothers and Sisters, Heaven is just ahead! Run to the bows! Heaven ahoy! Do not forever continue gazing at the misty shores behind you. Look ahead! You are far nearer than you think, to the land of the immortal! We are within speaking distance of Heaven! The Lord hears our cry and we hear His promise—

***"How near to faith's far-seeing eye
The golden gates appear!"***

In this way lay hold on eternal life by confident expectancy.

Rehearse eternal life! Rehearse the service and joy of Heaven! They have rehearsals of fine pieces of music—let us have a rehearsal of Heaven's harmonies. The thing is practicable. We have often enjoyed rehearsals of temple music in this Tabernacle. In this pulpit I have been within half an inch of Heaven—and I hope you know the same nearness in the pews! Let us begin the music here and now. Glorified saints praise the Lamb—let *us* praise Him! They worship the great God with transports of joy—let *us* worship with them! They find their all in Jesus—where else have *we* anything? Let our Sabbaths be, each of them, a taste of the Sabbath that shall have no end! Thus "lay hold on eternal life."

"Ah," says one, "I wish I were already in Heaven." Do not be in a hurry. The best expectancy is that which waits with patience. Our esteemed Brother, Mr. Lockhart, tells a story of one of his members, of the name of Carey—a royal name *that!* She was very sick and near to die, but she expressed a desire to live, at which he was somewhat astonished, for he knew her to be so well prepared to depart. She wished to stay here a while

for a good and laudable reason. There was one thing which she could see here on earth—which she could not see in Heaven—and she wished to remain here to see it again and again. “What is that?” Mr. Lockhart asked. “It is the tear of repentance on the sinner’s cheek. I want to see a great many more of those before I go Home.” And so do I. O my unconverted Hearers, I would willingly stay out of Heaven to weep for you till you weep for sin! To see tears of repentance in all your eyes would be a Heaven to me!

My Brothers and Sisters around me would be willing to wait, also, even until Jesus comes, if we could, by our waiting, help to give you repentance. Tears of repentance bedewing the cheeks of sinners are the diamonds of angels and the jewels of saints! Oh, that my beloved helpers may see many drops of the dew of repentance this morning when they come round among you! And may Jesus see them and speak peace to repenting hearts. Poor sinners! We would stay out of Heaven for such as you, even as Jesus came out of Heaven for such as you! Believe on the one appointed Savior and enter into eternal life—and we will dwell in Heaven together! The Lord grant it. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 Timothy 6.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—885, 852, 229.**

My Sermon readers who, from week to week, learn what I have said to my congregation would greatly gratify me if they would take in my monthly magazine, “The Sword and the Trowel,” and so learn what is *done*, as well as what is said. I think they will be interested by this periodical and I feel sure that this would lead to their lending a hand in those many holy enterprises in which I am engaged for my Lord’s sake. If I have helped you, dear Readers, help me! Order the magazine and see what those works are by which I try to show that the Doctrines of the Grace of God are not fruitless things.—C. H. S.

[You can order a seven-volume set from Pilgrim Publications, P.O. Box 66, Pasadena, TX 77501. Phone (713) 477-4261 or order on-line at <http://www.pilgrimpub.org/>]

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