

ACHSAH'S ASKING—A PATTERN OF PRAYER NO. 2312

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 11, 1893.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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*“And Caleb said, He that smites Kirjathsepher, and takes it, to him will I give Achsah, my daughter, to wife. And Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, took it: and he gave him Achsah, his daughter, to wife. And it came to pass, when she came to him, that she moved him to ask of her father a field: and she lighted from off her ass; and Caleb said unto her, What will you? And she said unto him, Give me a blessing: for you have given me a south land; give me also springs of water. And Caleb gave her the upper springs and the lower springs.”
Judges 1:12-15.*

IN domestic life we often meet with pictures of life in the House of God. I am sure that we are allowed to find them there, for our Savior said, “If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?” God is a Father and He likens Himself to us as fathers. And we who are Believers are God's children and we are permitted to liken ourselves to our own children—and just as our children would deal with us and we would deal with them—so may we deal with God and expect God to deal with us! This little story of a daughter and her father is recorded twice in the Bible. You will find it in the 15th chapter of the Book of Joshua, as well as in this first chapter of the Book of Judges. It is not inserted twice without good reasons. I am going to use it, tonight, simply in this manner—the way in which this woman went to her father, and the way in which her father treated her. May it teach us how to go to our Father who is in Heaven—and what to expect if we go to Him in that fashion.

I would hold up this good woman, Achsah, before you, tonight, as a kind of model or parable. Our parable shall be Achsah, the daughter of Caleb—she shall be the picture of the true successful pleader with our Father in Heaven.

I. And the first thing that I ask you to notice is HER CONSIDERATION OF THE MATTER before she went to her father.

She was newly-married and she had an estate to go with her to her husband. She naturally wished that her husband should find in that estate all that was convenient and all that might be profitable. And looking it all over, she saw what was needed. Before you pray, know what you are

needing. That man, who blunders down on his knees, with nothing in his mind, will blunder up, again, and get nothing for his pains. When this young woman goes to her father to ask for something, she knows what she is going to ask. She will not open her mouth till first her heart has been filled with knowledge as to what she requires. She saw that the land her father gave her would be of very little use to her husband and herself because it needed water. So she, therefore, goes to her father with a very definite request, "Give me, also, springs of water."

My dear Friends, do you always, before you pray, think of what you are going to ask for? "Oh!" somebody says, "I utter some good words." Does God need your words? Think what you are going to ask for before you begin to pray and then pray like business men. This woman does not say to her father, "Father, listen to me," and then utter some pretty little oration about nothing. No, she knows what she is going to ask for and why she is going to ask for it. She sees her need and she prizes the blessing she is about to request. Oh, take note, you who are much in prayer, that you rush not to the holy exercise "as the horse rushes into the battle"—that you venture not out upon the sea of prayer without knowing within a little whereabouts will be your port! I believe that God will make you think of many more things while you are in prayer. The Spirit will help your infirmities and suggest to you other petitions—but before a word escapes your lips, I counsel you to do what Achsah did—*know* what you really need.

This good woman, before she went to her father with her petition, *asked her husband's help*. When she came to her husband, "she moved him to ask of her father a field." Now, Othniel was a very brave man and very brave men are generally very bashful men. It is your cowardly man who is often forward and impertinent, but Othniel was so bashful that he did not like asking his uncle Caleb to give him anything more—it looked like grasping. He had received a wife from him and he had received land from him, and he seemed to say, "No, my good wife, it is all very well for you to put me up to this, but I do not feel like asking for anything more for myself." Still, learn this lesson, good wives—prompt your husbands to pray with you. Brothers, ask your brothers to pray with you. Sisters, be not satisfied to approach the Throne of Grace, alone, but ask your sister to pray with you. It is often a great help in prayer for two of you to agree touching the thing that concerns Christ's Kingdom. A cordon of praying souls around the Throne of Grace will be sure to prevail. God help us to be anxious in prayer to get the help of others!

A friend, some time ago, said to me, "My dear Pastor, whenever I cannot pray for myself, and there are times when I feel shut up about myself, I always take to praying for you." God bless him, at any rate! "And I have not long been praying for you before I begin to feel able to pray for myself." I should like to come in for many of those odd bits of prayer. Whenever any of you get stuck in the mud, pray for me! It will do you good and I shall get a blessing. Remember how it is written of Job, "The Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends." While he prayed for himself, he remained a captive, but when he prayed for those unfriendly friends of his, then the Lord smiled upon him and loosed his captivity. So

it is a good thing, in prayer, to imitate this woman, Achсах. Know what you need and then ask others to join with you in prayer. Wife, especially ask your husband. Husband, especially ask your wife. I think there is no sweeter praying on earth than the praying of a husband and a wife together when they plead for their children, when they invoke a blessing upon each other—and upon the work of the Lord.

Next, Achсах bethought herself of this one thing, *that she was going to present her request to her father*. I suppose that she would not have gone to ask of anybody else, but she said to herself, "Come, Achсах, Caleb is your *father*. The gift I am going to ask is not of a stranger who does not know me, but of a father, in whose care I have been ever since I was born." This thought ought to help us in prayer. And it will help us when we remember that we do not go to ask of an enemy, nor to plead with a stranger, but we say, "Our Father, which are in Heaven." Do you mean it? Do you really believe that *God* is your Father? Do you feel the spirit of sonship in your heart? If so, this ought to help you to pray with a believing tone. Your Father will give you whatever you need! If there was anything that I needed and I should ask it of him, I expect that my dear father, old and feeble as he is, would give it to me if it were within the range of his possibility. And surely, our great and glorious Father, with whom we have lived ever since we were newborn, has favored us so much that we ought to ask very boldly and with a childlike familiarity, resting assured that our Father will never be vexed with us because we ask these things! Indeed, He knows what things we have need of before we ask Him!

So this good woman, Achсах, feeling that it was her father of whom she was going to ask, and seeing that her husband hesitated to join her in her request, made the best of her way to go and pray alone. "Well, well, Othniel, I would have liked you to have gone with me, but as you will not, I am going alone." So she gets upon the ass, which was a familiar way for ladies to ride in that day, and she rides off to her father. The grand old man sees his daughter coming and, by the very look of her, he knows that she is coming on business. There is a something about her eyes that tells him she is coming with a request. This was not the first time that she had asked something of him. He knew her usual look when she was about to petition him, so he goes to meet her, and she alights from her ass, a token of great and deep respect, just as Rebecca, when she saw Isaac, alighted from the camel. She wished to show how deeply she revered that grand man, of whom it was an honor to be a child. Caleb survived Joshua a little while and still, in his old age, went out to fight the Canaanites and conquered Hebron, which the Lord had given him. Achсах pays reverence to her father, but yet she is very hearty in what she is going to say to him.

Now, dear Friends, learn again from this good woman how to pray! *She went humbly, yet eagerly*. If others will not pray with you, go alone—but when you go, go very reverently. It is a shameful thing that there should ever be an irreverent prayer. You are on earth and God is in Heaven—multiply not your words as though you were talking to your equal. Do not speak to God as though you could order Him around and have your will with Him, and he were to be a lackey to you. Bow low before the Most

High! Acknowledge yourself unworthy to approach Him, speaking in the tone of one who is pleading for that which must be a gift of great charity. So shall you draw near to God aright. But while you are humble, have desire in your eyes and expectation in your countenance. Pray as one who means to have what he asks for. Say not, as one did, "I ask once for what I need and if I do not get it, I never ask again." That is unchristian! Plead on if you know that what you are asking for is right. Be like the importunate widow—come again, and again, and again! Be like the Prophet's servant, "Go again seven times." You will, at last, prevail! This good woman had not to use importunity. The very look of her showed that she needed something and, therefore, her father said, "What will you?"

I think that, at the outset of our meditation, we have learned something that ought to help us in prayer. If you put even this into practice, though no more was said, you might go away blessed thereby. God grant us to *know* our need, to *be anxious* to have the help of our fellow Believers, but to remember that, as we go to our Father, even if nobody will go with us, we may go alone, through Jesus Christ our Lord, and plead our case with our Father in Heaven!

II. Now, secondly, in this story of Achсах, kindly notice HER ENCOURAGEMENT. Here we have it—"She lighted from off her ass; and Caleb said unto her, What will you?"

"Oh!" one says, "I could ask anything if my father said to me, 'What will you?'" This is precisely what your great Father says to you, tonight—"What will you?" With all the magnanimity of His great heart, God manifests Himself to the praying man or pleading woman, and He says, "What will you? What is your petition and what is your request?"

What do I gather from that question, "What will you?" Why, this. First, you should know what you need. Could some Christians here, if God were to say to each of them, "What will you?" answer Him? Do you not think that we get into such an indistinct, indiscriminate kind of a way of praying that we do not quite know what we really need? If it is so with you, do not expect to be heard till you know what you need! Get a distinct, definite request realized by your mind as a pressing need—get it right before your mind's eye as a thing that you must have. That is a blessed preparation for prayer! Caleb said to his daughter, "What will you?" and Christ says to you, tonight, "Dear child of Mine, what do you want of Me? Blood-bought daughter, what do you want of Me?" Will you not, some of you, begin to find up a request or two if you have not one ready on the tip of your tongue? I hope that you have many petitions lying in the center of your hearts and that they will not be long in leaping to your lips!

Next, as you ought to know what you need, *you are to ask for it*. God's way of giving is through our asking. I suppose that He does that in order that He may give twice over, for a prayer is, itself, a blessing as well as the answer to prayer! Perhaps it sometimes does us as much good to pray for a blessing as to get the blessing. At any rate, this is God's way, "Ask, and you shall receive." He puts even His own Son, our blessed Savior, under this rule, for He says, even to Him, "Ask of Me, and I shall give You the heathen for Your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for

Your possession.” It is a rule, then, without exception, that you are to *know* what you need, and you are to *ask* for it. Will you do this, dear Friend, while the Lord says to you, “What will you?”

And when Caleb said, “What will you?” did he not as good as say to Achsa, “*You shall have what you ask for*”? Come, now, tonight is a sweet, fair night for praying! I do not know a night when it is not so, but tonight is a delightful night for prayer. You shall have what you ask for. “All things whatever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive.” Desires written in your heart by the Holy Spirit will, all of them, be fulfilled! Come, then, think of these three things—you must *know* what you need, you must *ask* for what you need and you shall *have* what you need! Your Father says to you, as Caleb said to Achsa, “What will you?”

And, once more, *it shall be a pleasure to your Father to hear you ask*. There stands Caleb, that good, brave, grand man, and he says to his daughter, “What will you?” He likes to see her open that mouth that is so dear to him! He loves to listen to the music of her voice! The father delights to hear his child tell him what she needs and it shall be no displeasure to your God to hear you pray, tonight! It shall be a joy to Him to have your petition spread before Him. Many fathers would quite as soon that their children did *not* tell them all their needs—in fact, the fewer their needs, the better pleased will their parents be! But our Father in Heaven feels a pleasure in giving to us *all* we need, for giving does not impoverish Him, and withholding would not enrich Him. He as much delights to give as the sun delights to shine! It is the very element of God to be scattering bounties! Come, then, and pray to Him—you will thus please Him more than you will please yourself! I wish that I could so speak, tonight, that every child of God here would say, “The preacher is talking to me. He means that I have to pray and that God will hear me, and bless me!” Yes, that is *precisely* what I mean! Take my advice and prove it to yourself, tonight, and see if it is not so, that God takes delight in your poor, feeble, broken prayer and grants your humble petition!

Thus we have seen Achsa's consideration before prayer and her encouragement to pray.

III. Now comes HER PRAYER itself.

As soon as she found that she had an audience with her father of the kindest sort, she said to him, “Give me a blessing.” I like that petition—it is a good beginning—“Give me a blessing.” I should like to put that prayer into every believing mouth here, tonight, “Give me a blessing. Whatever You do not give me, give me a blessing! Whatever else You give me, do not fail to give me a blessing.” A father's blessing is an inheritance to a loving child. “Give me a blessing.” What is the blessing of God? If He shall say, “You are blessed,” you may defy the devil to make you cursed! If the Lord calls you blessed, you are blessed! Though covered with boils, as Job was, you are blessed. Though near to death, like Lazarus, with the dogs licking his sores, you are blessed! If you should be dying, like Stephen, beneath the stones of murderous enemies, if God blesses you, what more can you wish for? No, Lord, put me anywhere that You will, as long as I get Your

blessing. Deny me what You will, only give me Your blessing. I am rich in poverty if You bless me!

So Achsah said to her father, "Give me a blessing." I wish that prayer might be prayed by everybody here, tonight. Printers here, tonight, pray for once, if you have not prayed before, "Lord, give me a blessing." Soldiers, pray your gracious God to give you a blessing! Young men and maidens, old men and fathers, take this prayer of Achsah's upon your hearts, tonight, "Give me a blessing." Why, if the Lord shall hear that prayer from everybody in this place, what a blessed company we shall be! And we shall go our way to be a blessing to this City of London beyond what we have ever been before!

Notice next, in Achsah's prayer, how *she mingled gratitude with her petition*—"Give me a blessing: for you have given me a south land." We like, when people ask anything of us, to hear them say, "You did help me, you know, Sir, a month ago." But if they seem to come to you and quite forget that you ever helped them, and never thank you, never say a word about it, but come begging again and again, you say to yourself, "Why, I helped that fellow a month ago! He never said a word about that." "Have I not seen you before?" "No, Sir I do not know that you ever have." "Ah," you say to yourself, "he will get no more out of me. He is not grateful for what he has had." I believe that ingratitude seals up the springs of blessing. When we do not praise God for what we *have received* from Him, it seems to me that He should say, "I am not going to cast My pearls before swine. I shall not give My precious things to those who set no value upon them." When you are praying, take to praising, also—you will gather strength thereby! When a man has to take a long jump, you have seen him go back a good distance and then run forward to get a spring. Go back in grateful praise to God for what He has done for you in days gone by, and then get a spring for your leap for a future blessing, or a present blessing! Mingle gratitude with all your prayers!

There was not only gratitude in this woman's prayer, but *she used former gifts as a plea for more*—"You have given me a south land; give me also." Oh, yes, that is grand argument with God—"You have given me, therefore, give me some more." You cannot always use this argument with men, for if you remind them that they have given you so much, they say, "Well, now, I think that somebody else must have a turn. Could you not go next door?" It is never so with God. There is no argument with Him like this, "Lord, You have done this to me. You are always the same. Your All-Sufficiency is not abated, therefore, do again what You have done!" Make every gift that God gives you a plea for another gift! And when you have that other gift, make it a plea for another gift—He loves you to do this. Every blessing given contains the eggs of other blessings within it. You must take the blessing and find the hidden eggs and let them be hatched by your earnestness—and there shall be a whole brood of blessings springing out of a single blessing!

But this good woman *used this plea in a particular way*—she said, "You have given me a south land; give me also springs of water." This was as much as to say, "Though you have given me the south land and I thank

you for it, it is no good to me unless I have water for it. It is a very hot bit of ground, this south land—it needs irrigating. My husband and I cannot get a living from it unless you give us springs of water.” Do you see the way you are to pray? “Lord, You have given me so much, and it will all be good for nothing if You do not give me more. If You do not finish, it is a pity that You did ever begin. You have given me very many mercies, but if I do not have many more, all Your generosity will be lost. You do not begin to build unless you mean to finish and so I come to You to say, ‘You have given me a south land, but it is dry. Give me, also, springs of water to make it of real value to me.’” In this prayer of Achsa's there is a particularity and a specialty—“Give me also springs of water.” She knew what she was praying for and that is the way to pray! When you ask of God, ask distinctly—“Give me springs of water.” You may say, “Give me my daily bread.” You may cry, “Give me a sense of pardoned sin.” You may distinctly ask for *anything* which God has promised to give, but mind that, like this woman, you are distinct and plain in what you ask of God—“Give me springs of water.”

Now, it seems to me, tonight, as if I could pray that prayer, “Give me springs of water.” “Lord, you have given me a south land—all this congregation, Sunday after Sunday, all this multitude of people—but, Lord, how can I preach to them if You do not give me springs of water? ‘All my fresh springs are in You.’ What is the use of the hearers if there is not the power of the Holy Spirit going with the Word to bless them? Give me springs of water.”

Now, I can suppose a Sunday school teacher here, tonight, saying, “Lord, I thank You for my interesting class and for the attention that the scholars pay to what I say to them. But, Lord, what is the good of my children to me unless You give me springs of water? Oh, that, out of myself, out of my very soul, might flow rivers of Living Water for my dear scholars and that I might have the power of Your Holy Spirit with all my teaching! Give me springs of water.” I can imagine a Christian parent here saying, “Lord, I thank You for my wife and my children. I thank You that You have given me servants over whom I have influence. I thank You for all these, but what is the use of my being the head of a family unless You give me springs of Divine Grace that, like David, I may bless my household and see my children grow up in Your fear? Give me springs of water.” The point of this petition is this, “O Lord, what You have given me is of little good to me unless You give me something more.”

O dear Hearers, if God has given you money, pray that He will give you Grace to use it aright, or else, if you hoard it up or spend it, it may, in either case, prove a curse to you! Pray, “Give me springs of water! Give me Grace to use my wealth aright.” Some here have many talents. Riches in the brain are among the best of riches. Be thankful to God for your talents, but cry, “Lord, give me of Your Grace, that I may use my talents for Your Glory. Give me springs of water, or else my talents shall be a dry and thirsty land, yielding no fruit to You. Give me springs of water.” You see, the prayer is not merely for water, but for *springs* of water. “Give me a perpetual, eternal, always-flowing fountain. Give me Grace that shall

never fail, but shall flow, and flow on, and flow forever! Give me a constant supply—"Give me springs of water."

This woman's prayer, then, I have thus tried to commend to you. Oh, that we might all have Grace to copy her!

IV. Now, lastly, see HER SUCCESS. Upon this I will not detain you more than a minute or two. "Caleb gave her the upper springs and the lower springs."

Observe, *her father gave her what she asked for*. She asked for springs and he gave her springs. "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?" God gives us what we ask for when it is wise to do so. Sometimes we make mistakes and ask for the wrong thing—and then He is kind enough to put the pen through the petition and write another word into the prayer—and answer the *amended* prayer rather than the first foolish edition of it! Caleb gave Achsah what she asked.

Next, *he gave her in large measure*. She asked for springs of water and he gave her the upper springs *and* the lower springs. The Lord "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask, or think." Some use that passage in prayer and misquote it, "above what we can ask or even think." That is not in the Bible, because you *can* ask or even *think* anything you like. But it is, "*above* all that we ask, or think." Our asking or our thinking falls short, but God's giving never does!

And *her father gave her this without a word of upbraiding*. He did not say, "Ah, Achsah, you are always begging of me!" He did not say, "Now that I have given you to your husband, it is too bad of him to let you come and ask for more from me, when I have already given you plenty." There are some gruff old fathers who would speak like that to their daughters, and say, "No, no, no! Come, come, I cannot stand this—you already have a good portion, my girl—and I have others to think of as well as you." No, Caleb gave her the upper and the lower springs and never said a word by way of blaming her. But I will be bound to say that he smiled on her, as he said, "Take the upper and the lower springs, and may you and your husband enjoy the whole! You have only asked, after all, what my heart delights to give you."

Now, may the Lord grant unto us, tonight, to ask of Him in wisdom, and may He not have to upbraid us, but give us all manner of blessings both of the upper and the lower springs, both of Heaven and earth, both of eternity and time, and give them freely, and not say, even, a single word by way of upbraiding us!

I have done with this last point when I have asked a plain question or two. Why is it that, tonight, some of you dear Friends have a very parched-up inheritance? The grass will not grow and the corn will not grow. Nothing good seems to grow. You have been plowing and turning the plot up, and sowing, and weeding—and yet nothing comes of it. You are a Believer, and you have an inheritance, but you are not very much given to song, not very cheery, not very happy. And you are sitting here, tonight, and singing, to the tune Job—

"Lord, what a wretched land is this,

That yields us no supply!

Well, why is that? There is no need for it. Your heavenly Father does not want you to be in that miserable condition. There is something to be had that would lift you out of that state and change your tone altogether. May every child of God here go to his Father, just like Achсах went to Caleb! Pour out your heart before the Lord, with all the simple ease and naturalness of a trustful, loving child.

Do you say, "Oh, I could not do that"? Then I shall have to ask you this question, "Are we truly the children of God if we never feel towards Him any of that holy boldness?" Do you not think that every child must feel a measure of that confidence towards his father? If there is a son in the world who says, "No, I-I-I really could not speak to my father," well, I shall not make any enquiries, but I know that there is something wrong up at his home—there is something not right either with the father or with the boy! Wherever there is a loving home, you never hear the son or daughter say, "You know, I-I-I could not ask my father." I hope that we have, none of us, got into that condition with regard to our earthly fathers! And let none of us be in that condition with regard to our heavenly Father—

***"My soul, ask what you will,
You cannot be too bold
Since His own blood for you He spilled,
What else can He withhold?"***

Come, then, while in the pew, tonight, before we gather at the Communion Table, and present your petition with a child-like confidence and expect it to be heard, and expect, tonight, to have fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ!

And you, poor Sinners, who cannot pray like children, what are you to do? Well, you remember how the Savior said to the Syrophenician woman, "It is not right to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs." But she answered, "Yes, Lord; yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs." You come in for the crumbs, tonight, but if a man is satisfied to eat crumbs with the dogs, God will not be satisfied till He makes him eat bread with the children! If you will take the lowest place, God will give you a higher place before long. Come to Jesus and trust in Him henceforth and forever. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.
MATTHEW 7.**

Verse 1. *Judge not, that you be not judged.* You are not called to judge—you are not qualified to judge. "God is the Judge: He puts down one, and sets up another." There is much better work to be done by us than that of setting up as judges of others.

2. *For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged: and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again.* Do not judge the whole character of a man by one single action. Do not attempt to judge his motives. You cannot read his heart—you are not Omniscient—you are not Infallible. You will very soon find other people judging *you* and when, one of these days, you shall be falsely judged and condemned, you

will not need to have any surprise if you have done the same thing, yourself—it will be only your corn measured back to you with the bushel you used in measuring other people's.

3. *And why behold you the mote that is in your brother's eye, but consider not the beam that is in your own eye?* There is something in yourself that is worthy of your consideration, something that you ought to consider—it is a big, blinding beam in your own eye! As for the mote that is in your brother's eye, there is no need that you should even see it. Why do you behold it? Charity is always a little blind to the faults of others, for it remembers so well its own.

4. *Or how will you say to your brother, Let me pull out the mote out of your eye; and, behold, a beam is in your own eye?* A blind man cannot be a good oculist. He should see well who tries to mend other people's eyes, but with a beam in one's own eye, it must be poor work to attempt to take motes out of the eyes of others. This does not prevent our using reproof and rebuke when they are needed. Even under the Law, the command was given, "You shall not hate your brother in your heart: you shall in any wise rebuke your neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him," as if it were a kind of hatred to avoid the duty of kindly and gentle rebuke. That is a very different thing from exposing the faults of others and aggravating and exaggerating the faults of others, as, alas, so many do! Oh, how much misery might be saved in the world if the scandal market were not so brisk! Perhaps tongues would not move so fast if eyes were used to a better purpose.

5, 6. *You hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of your own eye; and then shall you see clearly to cast out the mote out of your brother's eye. Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast you your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and tear you.* There are some holy enjoyments, some gracious experiences, some deep doctrines of the Word of God, which it would be out of place to speak of before certain profane and unclean persons. They would only make a jest of them—perhaps they might persecute you on account of them. No, holy things are for holy men and, as of old, the crier in the Grecian temple was known to say, before the mysteries were performed, "Far hence, you profane!" so sometimes, before we enter into the innermost circle of Christian converse, it would be well for us to notice who is listening.

7, 8. *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for everyone that asks receives.* This is invariably the rule of God's Kingdom, whenever the request is a right one, and is presented in a right manner.

8-11. *And he that seeks, finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son asks for bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven, give good things to them that ask Him?* The point is, not only that God gives, but that He knows how to give. If He were always to give according to our prayers, it might be very injurious to us—He might give us that with which we could do hurt,

as when a father should put a stone into a boy's hand. Or He might give us that which might do us hurt, as if a father were to give his child a serpent. He will do neither of these things, but He will answer us in discretion and, with prudence will He fulfill our desires. You know how to give to your children—how much more shall your infinitely wise Father, who from Heaven sees all the surroundings of men, give good things to them that ask Him?

12. *Therefore all things whatever you would that men should do to you, do you even so to them: for this is the Law and the Prophets.* “The Law and the Prophets” are here condensed into a single sentence. This is the golden rule, a handy rule, a perpetually applicable rule, useful in every condition—and it never makes a mistake.

13, 14. *Enter you in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many there are which go in there: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leads unto life, and few there are that find it.* It is a way of self-denial, it is a way of humility, it is a way which is distasteful to the natural pride of men! It is a precise way, it is a holy way, a strait way and, therefore, men do not care for it. They are too big, too proud to go along a narrow lane to Heaven—yet this is the right way. There are many broad ways, as Bunyan says, that abut upon it, but you may know them by their being broad, and you may know them by their being crowded! The Christian has to swim against the current—he has to do more than that, he has to go against himself—so strait is the road! But if you wish to go down to Hell, you have only to float with the stream and you can have any quantity of company that you like.

15. *Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing. Dressed like Elijah.*

15. *But inwardly they are ravening wolves.* Very Ahabs and Jezebels! And they will deceive you, if you are not Divinely guarded against them.

16. *You shall know them—How? By their eloquence? No. Some of the worst of teachers have had great persuasiveness. You shall know them by their earnestness? No. Some have compassed sea and land to make proselytes to a lie. You shall know them how, then?*

16. *By their fruits.* If their teaching makes you better, if it makes you love God, if it draws you to holiness, if it inspires you with noble and heroic sentiments so that you imitate Christ—then listen to them.

16-20. *Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree brings forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that brings not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you shall know them.* After all, this is the best test of any doctrine, the practice to which it leads. I remember discussing, one day, with a person about the doctrine of future punishment. We were arguing and the gentleman who owned the vessel on which we were, said, “Come up on deck and enjoy the fresh air, and leave that subject. But,” he said, “you, Sir, will kindly go as far as possible from my men, for they are bad enough as they are, and if you tell them there is no punishment for sin, they will be worse than ever. As for you, Mr.

Spurgeon, you may go where you like—you won't do them any harm." I thought that rough and ready mode of argument was about as good a commendation as I could wish to have!

21. *Not everyone that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that does the will of My Father which is in Heaven.* Not talking, but doing! Not loud profession, but quiet, practical godliness wins the day!

22, 23. *Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name? And in Your name have cast out devils? And in Your name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, you that work iniquity.* If Christ does not know us, it matters not what we do! Even if we work miracles, if we astound the world with our abilities—it is all *nothing* if Christ does not know us! Now, I think there are many here who can humbly but confidently say, "He knows me." He knows some of us, if by nothing else, by our constantly begging of Him. We have been at Him day and night in our necessities, pleading for His bounty, His mercy, His company—and He cannot say He does not know us. He knows a great deal about us through our prayers, if by no other way.

24. *Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock.* What a mercy there is a Rock to build on! We could not have made one, but there is the Rock.

25. *And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew.* For the best man will have his troubles.

25. *And beat upon that house.* For the best man will feel the troubles—they will come home to him.

25-27. *And it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And everyone that hears these sayings of Mine, and does them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended.* For the worst of men will have their troubles. There is no escaping the trials of life by sin.

27. *And the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.* There was no building it again—it was altogether gone, swept right away—no vestige of it remained.

28, 29. *And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His doctrine: for He taught them as One having authority, and not as the scribes.* He touched their conscience. His teaching came home to them. They could not help feeling that it was true. Besides, He did not keep on quoting Rabbi This and Rabbi That, but He spoke from His own knowledge—"He taught them as One having authority, and not as the scribes."

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CHARIOTS OF IRON

NO. 1690

**DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 28, 1882,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And the Lord was with Judah; and he drove out the inhabitants of the mountain; but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron. And they gave Hebron unto Caleb, as Moses said: and he expelled from there the three sons of Anak.”
Judges 1:19, 20.***

WE frequently use Canaan as a type of Heaven, and the Jordan, through which Israel passed, as a symbol of death. Dr. Watts has taught us to sing—

***“Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood
Stand dressed in living green;
So to the Jews old Canaan stood,
While Jordan rolled between.
Could we but climb where Moses stood,
And view the landscape o’er,
Not Jordan’s stream, nor death’s cold flood,
Should fright us from the shore!”***

This is thoroughly poetical and may be made exceedingly instructive, but it is not quite accurate if we undertake a careful consideration of the whole matter. If the New Testament is to expound the Old, then there is another lesson to be learned from the land which flowed with milk and honey. “We that have believed do enter into rest,” that is to say, all believers in Christ have crossed the Jordan and have come into the promised rest. The Covenant is already fulfilled to them in a great measure—they are living under Messiah’s sway within the bounds of His Kingdom—and every precious thing which God promised them is theirs.

They dwell in the “land which the Lord thinks upon.” “Your land, O Immanuel!” The type, therefore, may best set forth the case of the instructed and advanced Believer who has passed through the first, or wilderness stage, of his life, and has now come into a higher condition, actually enjoying spiritual privileges and sitting together with Christ in the heavenly places. To him, however, this condition of exalted privilege is not a state of undisturbed repose—on the contrary, he wars a constant warfare, wrestling with spiritual wickedness. The Canaanite is in possession and the Canaanite is to be driven out. Our natural tendencies and corruptions; our sinful habits and lusts; the warping and bending of our spirit towards evil—all this has to be overcome—and we shall not possess the land so as to enjoy undivided tranquility until sin is utterly exterminated.

What Joshua could not do, our Lord Jesus shall fully accomplish—the enemy within shall be rooted out and then shall dawn the day of our joy

and peace—when we shall sit, every man, under his own vine and fig tree, and none shall make us afraid. That perfect victory shall be ours, but not yet. Taking this as the Truth of God, which we shall illustrate by our text, we notice that the work of Israel was to drive out and to utterly exterminate those condemned races which were in possession of Canaan. One tribe was chosen to lead the van in the fierce campaign. Joshua, their heroic leader, was gone—who should lead the way? The power of the Canaanites, in his day, had been broken, but now that he was dead, the old races began to build up, again, even as we oftentimes find our sins, which we thought were all dead, suddenly finding fresh courage and attempting to set up their empire once more.

Then Israel went to God and enquired, “Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them? And the Lord said, Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into his hands.” The tribe of Judah, then, was commissioned to lead the way and we see three things in its conduct of the enterprise. First, the Lord’s power was trusted and magnified, for “the Lord was with Judah, and Judah drove out the inhabitants of the mountain.” Secondly, by this very tribe, this right royal tribe, the Lord’s power was *not* trusted and, therefore, restrained, for, “Judah could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron.”

Yet, as if to rebuke them, they had a singular incident set before them for the vindication of God’s power and, of that, we read in the 20th verse. Caleb, that grand old man who still lived on—the sole survivor of all who came out of Egypt—had obtained Hebron as his portion and he went up, in his old age, when his bones were sore and set, and slew the three sons of Anak, even three mighty giants, and took possession of their city. In this way the Lord’s power was trusted and vindicated from the slur which Judah had brought upon it!

I. Let us think upon our first head, which is, that by the tribe of Judah THE LORD’S POWER WAS TRUSTED AND MAGNIFIED. “The Lord was with Judah.” Oh that the Holy Spirit may be with us! The people had wisely consulted their God and it fell to Judah’s lot, by Divine appointment, to lead the van. In that work the tribe prospered. Read the chapter when you are at home and you will observe a series of great victories. “Judah went up; and the Lord delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hands: and they slew of them in Bezek ten thousand men. And they found Adonibezek in Bezek: and they fought against him and they slew the Canaanites and the Perizzites. But Adonibezek fled; and they pursued after him, and caught him, and cut off his thumbs and his great toes. And Adonibezek said, Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table: as I have done, so God has requited me.” Thus they overcame the monarch who had domineered over the land and had been a terror to all the little kings.

Next, the tribe attacked Jerusalem, Hebron, Debir and Hormah. Soon afterwards they fell upon the Philistines, who were men of war, and they took Gaza, Askelon and Ekron with their coasts. The Lord God, in this

way, had proved to Judah and to all Israel what He could do. It would have been wise, on their part, to have put unlimited trust in Him—then had they gone forward conquering and to conquer. Has not the Lord done the same with those of us who have believed in Him? What has your experience been, my Brothers and Sisters? I speak not to men of the world, nor to those who have just begun the Divine life, but I speak to those of you who have experience of the things of God and who have lived the life of faith for years.

Has not God revealed His power in you? Do you not possess Infallible proofs of it which you would scarcely like to tell, for they are as secret as they are sacred? Though you would never mention them in a mixed audience, lest you should cast your pearls where they would not be appreciated, yet they are laid up in your memories in the form of remarkable deliverances, special comforts and singular mercies for which, to this day, you cannot account upon any other theory than that the Lord God Omnipotent put forth His hands and especially helped you in your hour of need! Do not forget these things. If the Lord's power is proved to your own soul by God, Himself, then it is proved, indeed! I care very little for those evidences of the existence of a God which are fashioned for us by learned men—the priority argument, the argument from analogy and all the rest.

I have seen an end to them in my own doubts and fears. The most convincing evidence is found in another kind of reasoning, such as that which conquers all doubt by actual *experience*. When God has come to our soul and drawn near to us in the hour of our distress, we have needed no further argument! When He has said, "Peace," to our troubled spirit and stilled its raging, then have we received conclusive evidence of His power! When He has lifted us up into ecstasy and filled us with unspeakable joy and full of glory, we have laid up these evidences in our minds and our assurance has grown doubly sure! If we have not tied a bit of red tape round these briefs and hidden them away in our pigeonholes, we have taken better care of them than that—for we have locked them up in the inner chambers of our heart!

Mary pondered these things in her heart and we have done the same. God's goodness was thus proved to Judah, even as it has been to many of us in our degree—proven as clearly as if it had been worked out mathematically, like a problem in Euclid. But the Lord had also proved His power to Judah in numerous victories. The victories which He gave to them were singular and remarkable, even when not miraculous, and there were many of them. They had gone from city to city and smitten all their foes. It seemed as if God had said to Judah, as He said to Joshua, "No man shall be able to stand against you all the days of your life."

Now, repeated facts go to strengthen the inference drawn from former facts. According to the best practical philosophy, which is the inductive, you note a fact and then the inference from it is probable. You note another fact and the inference is *more* probable. You get six, seven, eight, 10, 20 similar facts and your deduction becomes more and more nearly *certain*. But when these facts come thick as hailstones—when they be-

come as many as the drops of dew or the beams of light—then the inference may be regarded as absolutely sure! When your *life* is crowded with displays of God's power with you, for you and in you, then that power cannot be doubted! It is impossible to argue a Christian out of the grounds of his faith when he has had long dealings with God!

There! You cavilers may boast that you can disprove a doctrine, if you like. I care nothing for your sophisms. You cannot disprove it to *me*. You can carp against the Old Testament or the New, if you like. I am sorry for you, for it is all clear enough to me, but I am not going to get into a great heat over it in order to combat you. It is not so very important what you prove, or do not prove, about the Book because the matter of fact still remains untouched. Those of us who have lived in the light of God's Countenance and have spoken with Him as a man speaks with his friend, and have had replies from Him, not once, nor twice, nor in years gone by, alone, but daily and continually—we, I say, are not to be moved from our belief!

We have another life into which a stranger can not intrude and a conversation with God which seems ridiculous only to those who never knew it, for it is sublime as sublimity, itself, to those who enjoy it every day! And, having such a life, it furnishes us with evidence which does not go to be debated—we believe and are sure. Disprove our sanity and you have done something. Only let me tell you that even then we shall remain sane enough to hold to what we do hold and shall not be so mad as to join the infidel ranks! We are satisfied to be fools if to be fools means to see God! We are satisfied to know nothing about the "culture" and the "thought" of this grand century, if that involves being far off from the Eternal Lord and ceasing to see His hand in Nature, in Providence and in Grace! We are content if we may but know Him, whom to know is eternal life!

Beloved Brothers and Sisters, I may say of many here present that God has proven His power and goodness to you by such overwhelming proofs that doubt, in your case, would be a grievous piece of folly and sin! God had especially favored Judah with remarkable assistance in what I may call, "brotherly action." "Judah said unto Simeon, his brother, Come up with me into my lot, that we may light against the Canaanites; and I, likewise, will go with you into your lot. So Simeon went with Him." (See verse 8). In communion with each other, these tribes had further proof of God's power, for He gave them the necks of their enemies. We, also, can narrate wonderful displays of God's power and Grace when we have had fellowship, one with another, in holy service! Our choicest experiences have been enjoyed in Christian society. When the disciples were met together, the doors being shut, then Jesus came into the midst of them and said unto them, "Peace be unto you."

The Lord is gracious to us when we are having sympathy with His poor and struggling people and entering into a mutual covenant that we will stand by each other and help each other in the midst of an ungodly world. The Lord is pleased with brotherly love and there He commands the blessing to rest as the dews on Hermon! If I could forget the major part of my

own personal experience at home, yet I can never forget the heavenly seasons spent in the Tabernacle with my beloved ones! In the Prayer Meetings, have not our hearts burned within us? At the banqueting table of celestial love—at the Lord's Supper—to which we delight to come every Lord's-Day, have we not attained a nether Heaven? Have we not passed into the vestibule of God's own house in Glory and felt that it needed scarcely the rending of the thinnest piece of tissue to let us actually stand in the unveiled Presence of God?

Yes, God has been with us and we have had proofs enough of His power and love! When together, we have gone forth to battle to struggle against the sin of the age, to bear testimony for neglected Truths of God, to bring our wandering Brothers back, or to reclaim fallen Sisters to the faith of Jesus. Have we not obtained, in that fraternal action, grand proofs of the Master's power to bless and save? I know that we have! There let it stand and let it witness against us if we, in the future, yield to unbelief!

Yet further, Brothers and Sisters, it so happened that to Judah, God gave great proofs of His Presence and power by raising up, here and there, a man in their midst who performed heroic deeds. I will not speak of Caleb, for you will tell me, "Ah, he was an old, old man and belonged to another generation! He was just going off the scene; we do not wonder that *he* did great things." Yes, but he had a nephew, one Othniel, a young man as yet unmarried. And when Caleb said, "He that smites Kirjathsepher, and takes it, to him will I give Achsah, my daughter, to wife," His nephew Othniel was the man for the city and the bride! The young hero stood forward, went up to the fortress and took the city. And he presented it into his uncle's hands and received the promised reward.

Oh, yes, and we have seen raised up—and shall see it more and more— young heroes who have been self-denying, self-distrustful, inconsiderate of themselves who have been willing, for Christ's sake, to be anything or *nothing*, and God has been with them and the power of the Most High has rested upon them. Has not unbelief been rebuked when we have been compelled to say, "Instead of the fathers shall be the children, whom You may make princes in all the earth"? This has been a blessed token of God's Presence and power. I know how it is with those who have been long in the Church—they wonder what is to become of it when the old folks die. "When the pastor is gone, what shall we do, then?" Wait till it happens, Brothers and Sisters! Wait till it happens and then you shall see that He who could find one servant, can find another!

The Lord was never short of instruments, yet, and He never will be! You and I, you know, if we wear out one tool, must wait till we send to the shop for a second. But the Lord grows new tools out of old ones. New springs are born out of the decays of the old year's autumn. I have seen a young tree growing out of the roots of the old one and fresh leaves unfold where those of last year had once been. In our advancing years we become better recruiting sergeants and so enlist our own successors. You who are now getting gray, once wondered what would become of the cause of God when the guide of your youth fell asleep in Jesus—but the immortal cause

has survived the death of the standard-bearer! We never hear of that good man, now! Indeed, he does not seem to have been so important as you thought. God will find messengers as long as He has errands.

When certain of us have gone Home, you young people will be leading in our place, and you will say, "I remember the old gentleman. We valued his ministry and we could not think what we should do without him. But we have done a deal better without him than ever we did with him, for God, in His infinite mercy, has raised up a worthy successor." Therefore be of good courage and let what you have seen as to the past be to you a prophecy of God's goodness in the future! Caleb shall be gathered to his fathers, but Othniel shall follow him, who shall be as brave as he. The reason why the men of Judah were successful was because they had full confidence in God. Up to a certain point Judah relied upon God. Jehovah had bid them to lead the way, and they led the way. He had conducted them from city to city—and they went, not doubting that God would be with them—and so success attended them, for they leaned upon the Lord.

Thus shall it be with us, for it is written, "According to your faith be it unto you." The Lord will not fall short of the measure—let us not make the measure short. Yet this is where we too frequently fail, for our faith is such a poor piece of business. We scarcely trust God as well as we trust a generous man! And when God does a great thing for His people, they say, one to another, "Is it not surprising? Is it not wonderful?" Many are *amazed* that God should keep His word! And so, when He answers prayer, they exclaim, "What a marvelous thing!" Is it, then, a marvel for God to be true? For God to keep His promise? I grant you that there *is* a side of it which forever must be marvelous, but I still fear that with the allowable marvel, there is often mixed such a degree of unbelief that the wonderment is not so much of admiring gratitude as astonished unbelief!

For God to hear prayer is as natural as for a cause to produce an effect! There is as much, and as certain, and as Infallible a connection between prayer that is worked in us by the Holy Spirit and the result of that prayer as there is between force in the steam engine and the motion of the train! Instead of the power of prayer being a mere fiction, it is the most practical and certain of all the forces that are in existence this side of the Eternal Throne. God works more by prayer than by anything else and if we would but enlarge the channel through which His mighty power would flow—by having more faith and more confidence in prayer—we should see greater things than these!

II. Now I come to the painful but important subject of THE LORD'S POWER RESTRAINED BECAUSE DISTRUSTED. The men of Judah could drive out the inhabitants of the mountain, but they could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley because they had chariots of iron. Some of our more flippant infidels have asserted that this verse says that the *Lord* could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, yet the antecedent is not God at all, but Judah. It is *Judah* that could not drive them out. "Well," they say, "but God was with Judah and they did drive out the people of

the mountain. Why could they not drive out the people of the plain by the same power?"

This is the hinge of the matter. They did not conquer the men of the iron chariots because God, in that business, was *not* with them. As far as their faith went, God kept touch with them and they could do anything and everything. But when they despondingly thought that they could not drive out the inhabitants of the wide valleys, then they failed utterly! They were afraid because of the chariots, which had poles between the horses armed with lances which cut their way through the crowd. And the axles of the wheels were fitted with great scythes—these inventions were novel and caused a panic and, therefore, the men of Judah lost their faith in God—and so became weak and cowardly. They said, "It is of no use; we cannot meet these terrible machines," and, therefore they did not pray or make an attempt to meet the foe.

They could not drive out the people. Of course they could not! If they had exhibited the same faith about the chariots of iron as about the men of the hills, the chariots of iron would have been no better than chariots of straw, for the Lord "breaks the bow, and cuts the spear in sunder, and burns the chariot in the fire." If they had believed in God and gone forth in His name, the horses would soon have fled, as, indeed, they *did* when God gave His people faith!

When Barak led the way with Deborah, then they smote Jabin who had 900 chariots of iron! They fled. They fled away, for the Lord was with Barak and gave them up to him as chaff to the whirlwind! God would have been with Judah if Judah had displayed faith, but, having no faith, they could not rout the chariots of iron. Their faith was imperfect. They retained too much confidence in *themselves*. Mark that, for if their confidence had been in God, alone, these chariots of iron would have been ciphers in the calculation! If God has to give the victory, then chariots of iron or chariots of fire are no item at all against an Omnipotent God.

They evidently thought that there were something, for their power went as far as smiting the men of the hills, but not so far as *attacking* the cavalry in the open plain where there was room for them to rush to and fro! Now, that is also your weakness and mine! We tacitly imply that God can help us up to a certain point. Does not that mean that we can help ourselves after that point? Being interpreted, the belief conceals a measure of self-trust and the next akin to self-trust is *distrust*. If you have passed out of yourself, where have you entered? Into the infinite! The man who has reached the infinite needs not to reckon any longer. It was of no use for Noah to keep a log of his vessel when there remained no more land—when it was all sea, it did not matter to him where he drifted! And so when you once get right away from self there are no limits.

God is unbounded—therefore trust Him without stint! Act like Samson, the strong, because the childlike, hero. If there is a Philistine to meet, he is ready for him. There are two of them—he is quite ready for both! There are 20 of them—it makes no difference! A thousand of them are before him! All right, there are only the more for the hero to kill, for he will slay

every mother's son of them and pile up their carcasses, heaps upon heaps! Numbers do not matter. "But, Samson, if you are to do this deed, you must wield a good Damascus blade." "Yes," he says, "if *I* am to do it, of course I must! But if the *Lord* is to do it, the jawbone of an ass will suffice." It made no difference to him, when he had thrown himself simply and nakedly upon God, whether foes were few or many, whether weapons were fit or feeble!

Herein is the failure of our faith if it rests not in God's bare arm. See this round world, how steadily it turns! How smoothly it moves along in its predestinated course! Why? Because God has hung it upon *nothing* and God's own will directs it. Suppose it were hung on a chain—would it be any the more secure? The strength of the chain would come from God, so it is better to have the power without the chain. Though a saint is sustained by nothing but the power of God, all the devils in Hell cannot stir him. The bare arm of God is the source of all power.

Next, the imperfection of their faith lay in this, as it may do in yours, my Brothers and Sisters—that they believed one promise of God and did not believe another. There is a kind of faith which is strong in one direction, but utter weakness if tried in other ways. It is curious that persons generally speak out the easiest promises to believe, while those which are greater and, therefore, are the more godlike, they cannot believe! Judah believed in smiting the men of the hills because he thought such warfare easy. But as to overcoming the cavalry with their chariots of iron, that was difficult, and so he did not believe up to that mark. Beware of being pickers and choosers of God's promises! You who are traders know that customers will turn all your stock over and keep on picking over packet after packet and never buy anything at the end.

Does this please you? When people pick the promises over they say—"That one? No, I cannot receive that." When they do believe a promise, it is the smallest in the Bible! Oh, for a faith that takes the promises in the bulk and knows nothing of choosing or refusing! Whatever God has promised, He is able, also, to perform! And if the promise is but suitable to my case, I am to grasp it and expect to see it fulfilled! Some believe God at one time and not at another. Do you not find that you believe the Lord a good deal on Thursday nights after a sermon? How about Friday nights? Ah, that is rather different, isn't it?

I have known friends who are wonderful Believers on Sunday. They go home singing—

***"Let the earth's old pillars shake
And all the wheels of Nature break!
Our steady souls shall fear no more
Than solid rocks when billows roar."***

You make a bad debt on Monday—how do you feel about it? Not quite so much like a pillar, I daresay, but rather more like the thistledown that is blown with the wind! Such faith is temporary. It is not unlike the faith mentioned in Aesop's fable when the stag stood looking into the water at his branching antlers and, tossing his head with defiance, said, "Why am I

afraid of the hounds? A dog come near *me*? Impossible! If the hound does but see my horns he will fear death! I shall rip him up or dash him to pieces. I will let the pack see what I am made of." Just then there was heard a bark and away went the stag like lightning, as terrified as ever!

How like us! We appear to be so grandly strong, so quietly believing—yet the first trouble that comes, scatters our courage! That is the reason why Judah could not drive out the dwellers in the plain—he heard the rushing of those chariots of iron and his heart failed him. There was a further reason for failure arising out of this imperfection of their faith—they could not conquer the chariots of iron because, first, they did not *try*. The Hebrew does not say that they could not drive them out. What the Hebrew says is that they *did not* drive them out. Some things we cannot do because we never make the attempt.

I wish we had among Christian workers the spirit of the Suffolk lad who was brought up in court to be examined by an overbearing lawyer. The lawyer roughly said to him, "Hodge, can you read Greek?" "I don't know, Sir," he said. "Well, fetch a Greek book," said the lawyer and, showing the lad a passage, he said to him, "Can you read that?" "No." "Then why did you not say that you could not?" "Because I never say I cannot do a thing till I have tried it." If that spirit were in Christian people, we should achieve great things—but we set down such-and-such a thing as manifestly beyond our power and, silently, we whisper to ourselves, "therefore beyond *God's* power," and so we leave it alone. No chariots of iron will be driven out if we dare not make the attempt!

Next, I suspect that they did not drive them out because they were idle. If cavalry were to be dealt with, Judah must bestir himself. If chariots of iron were to be defeated, they must enter upon an arduous campaign and so, taking counsel of their fears and their idleness, they said, "Let us not venture on the conflict." There are many things that Christ's Church is unable to do because it is too lazy. "What?" you ask, "Do you call us lazy?" No, Brothers and Sisters, I will not do anything of the sort! If any of you should happen to call *yourselves*, lazy, it will spare me the trouble. I am afraid that I should have to upbraid certain ministers for being indolent in God's work and I fear that many others of God's servants are none too diligent. Idleness refuses to sound the trumpet for the battle and the fight never comes on—and therefore the enemy is not driven out.

Then, again, they were not at all anxious to meet the men who manned those chariots, for they were afraid. These men of Judah were cowards in the presence of chariots of iron and what can a coward do? He is great at running away! They say that he, "may live to fight another day." Not he—he will live, but he will not live to fight, depend upon it—no more another day than he does today! His heart is in his heels and he will show his foeman his back whenever the fight is hot. We must cry mightily to God to deliver us from cowardice—and then we shall accomplish what we now think impossible!

Dear Friends, there was no excuse for this on the part of Judah, as there is really no excuse for us when we think any part of God's work to

be too difficult for us—for, remember, there was a special promise made about this very case. Kindly look at the 20th chapter of the Book of Deuteronomy, at the first verse, and you will see how the Lord says, “When you go out to battle against your enemies and see horses, and chariots, be not afraid of them: for the Lord your God is with you.” If there is a special promise made to meet an emergency, who are we that we should be cast down by the difficulty? Besides that, they received a special commission. Read the second verse of the chapter from which our text is taken—“The Lord said, Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into his hands.” Iron chariots or no chariots, God had delivered the country into Judah’s hands!

Besides that, their God had done greater deeds than this! He had divided the Red Sea and drowned the army of Egypt! He had divided the Jordan into halves and led His people through the river dry shod—and He had made the walls of Jericho to fall flat to the ground! Why, then, was He distrusted because of those wretched chariots of iron? Come, then, Brothers and Sisters, have you got into a tight fit in the matter of your personal affairs? And are you saying, tonight, “I cannot pray about it. I cannot trust God about it”? Is that right? Look your Bibles up and see whether there is not a promise *exactly* suited to your singular condition! Look back upon your own experience and see whether God has not *already* done for you and others of His people a greater thing than your present trial requires!

Why will you say that you cannot drive out the chariots of iron? Be of good courage and go forward! God is able to deliver you, therefore fear not! He will supply your needs—be not dismayed. Perhaps some holy work for God is your difficulty. You have done something, already, for which you praise God, but now a new work is laid at your door, of which you say, “No, I cannot undertake it. I do not feel at all equal to it.” What if the Almighty Lord has said, “I will be with you”? Do you answer, “I could do almost anything, but not *that*”? Are you sure, my Brother, that you could do almost anything? Do you not think that, if another task were set before you, it would be equally hard for you? If God commands, is it right to reason why, or even to ask a question? Let us get at the work, my Brothers and Sisters—and the greater the danger, the greater the labor, the greater the difficulty—so much the more fully let us cast ourselves upon our God and give to Him the Glory of the deed when the work is done!

You know not what you can do! You are Omnipotent if girt about with God’s Omnipotence! You are wise if God teaches you, strong if God upholds you! The capacities which are within a man are greater than he knows and the capacities with which God can endow a man are greater than he can dream! Therefore, forward in the name of the Most High! An unconverted person is here who has been thinking of coming to Christ, but he says, “I cannot give up all my sins. One of them I must retain—all the rest I can leave, but that one is invincible—for it has chariots of iron. I cannot drive it out,” That sin must die, or you will perish by it! Depend upon it, that sin which you would save from slaughter will slaughter you!

“But I am in such a strange connection and there are so many peculiar circumstances about my case.”

Yes, I know. Peculiar circumstances surround all men that go to Hell, but they do not quench the fire for them! “But, Sir, we must live.” Must you? I see no necessity for that in my own case. I know that I must serve God, but whether I live or not is a secondary matter! It is infinitely better that we should die than do wrong. This necessity of living is not quite so clear as people suppose. *Why* must you live? The martyrs did not. They felt that they must testify for Christ and His Truth—and they gloried to die, rather than to do anything that was wrong! You will not, perhaps, be brought to that, but you ought to be ready for it. Do not be in such a fever about this poor life. Is not the soul better than the body?

“Yes, Sir, but I cannot explain my difficulty.” No, and do not try! Turn the sin out. That is the only thing to do with it and the more you love it, the more speedily should you turn it out, for it evidently lies near your heart where it can do you great mischief. “Well, it is not one of the grosser sins.” No, it is one of those respectable sins which are so hard to get rid of! You *must* drive it out! I notice that if anybody picks my pocket it is sure to be a *respectable*-looking person. If a man is a rogue, he is sure to look like an honest man, to lead people to trust him. Sin must be driven out, even though it is a chariot of iron.

Certain Christians make up their minds that certain sins must be tolerated in their cases. I know one who has constitutionally a fiery temper and so, whenever he gets into a towering passion, he cries, “I cannot help it! I am so constituted.” Instead of weeping before God and vowing, “I will master this passion! God is Omnipotent and He can make my temper a reasonable one”—instead of that—he says that everything else can be conquered in him, but not *this* sin, for it is constitutional. So have I also known persons to be miserly and mean. The Grace of God has done everything for them except make them give away a shilling—and they suppose that they are to go to Heaven with their covetous nature, as if the Lord would let such people in there! Selfishness is put down by them as being one of the sins that have chariots of iron which they cannot overcome.

“You know that we all have our besetments,” says one. What do you mean by that? Some sin that you often fall into? Do you call that a besetting sin? If I were to walk, tonight, across Clapham Common and half-a-dozen men stopped me, I should say that I was beset. But, if at an appointed place, a party met me regularly, I should not say that I was beset! And so, the same which a man often indulges in is *not* his besetting sin—it is his *favorite* sin—a sin that will be his ruin! A besetting sin is one which forces itself upon a man—and if he is on his guard—it seizes him by the throat and throws him down. We must be watchful, so that the next time the temptation comes we may escape from it. Let us make war on the evil and say, “It is no use your attacking me—I will attack and overcome *you* by faith in Jesus Christ.”

The fact is, Brothers and Sisters, we must tolerate *no sin* in ourselves! If we make excuses for it in our Brethren, well and good, but let us *never*

make or accept an excuse for ourselves. Sin in us is 10 times worse sin than in others. If an unconverted man sins, it is bad enough, but when a man has tasted of the good Word of Grace and has leaned his head on Christ's bosom and *then* falls into sin, what excuse can be offered for him? None! Let us weep tears of blood because we thus offend. We will yet vanquish the chariots of iron! We will throw down the gauntlet tonight and in the name of God we will destroy them!

III. To close. Let us see THE LORD'S POWER VINDICATED. Just at that time, brave old Caleb, leaning on his cane, went up to Hebron. When he was a younger man, Moses sent him as a spy. And when he was on that business, he happened to come near Hebron and there he saw three tremendous fellows of the race of the giants. I suppose they were from eight to 10 or 12 feet high. He saw them and those that were with him were afraid. They said, "We were as grasshoppers in their sight." But Caleb was not a bit afraid! He said, "God is not with them and they will be easily overthrown."

When they came into the land 40 years later, Caleb did not ask for his city. But as an unselfish man, he fought to win cities for others. When that was done, he said, "Hebron was given to me. I must go and conquer it. And the giants that I saw years ago, I dare say, have not grown much shorter, so I must cut them down." Away he went and it proved as he had said—in his frail old age, he was able to slay those three sons of Anak—and to take possession of their city. I could tell you of holy women, sick and infirm, scarcely able to leave their beds, who are doing work which, to some strong Christians, seems too hard to attempt! Have I not seen old men doing for the Lord in their feebleness that which young men have declined? Could I not tell you of some with only one talent—certainly no more—who are bringing in a splendid revenue of Glory to their Lord and Master, while you fine young fellows with 10 talents have wrapped them all in a napkin and hid them in the earth?

I wish that I could shame myself, and shame every worker here into enterprises that would astonish unbelievers! God help us to do that which seems impossible! Let men be provoked to charge us with fanaticism! God bless the fanaticism which, being translated, means nothing but a true faith in the living God! May we be helped to trust the Lord as He ought to be trusted and march on till we drive out all His enemies despite their chariots of iron, that unto God may be Glory forever and ever! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 78:10-59.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—
63 (SONG III), 106 (PART II), 87 (SONG II).**

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BOCHIM—OR, THE WEEPERS

NO. 1680

**DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 10, 1882,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“And it came to pass, when the Angel of the Lord spoke these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice, and wept. And they called the name of that place Bochim: and they sacrificed there unto the Lord.”
Judges 2:4, 5.*

LET me give an outline of the chapter, that we may put the text into its proper setting. God had brought His people out of Egypt and divided Jordan that they might march through, dry-shod, into the land which He had promised to their fathers. He charged them to drive out the Canaanites, a race that had become so loathsome in God’s sight that He decreed their destruction and appointed the tribes of Israel to be their executioners. It was for the good of the universal world that this pest-house should be broken up and that the filthy races should be destroyed—and God gave His people that charge to carry out.

Those who quarrel with this arrangement should remember that this is not the only instance of aboriginal tribes being driven out by a superior race. Our Anglo-Saxon nation drove out the original inhabitants of this island, who survived only in the mountains of Wales and Cornwall and in the highlands of Scotland. It certainly will not be wise, on our part, as Anglo-Saxons, to condemn Israel for doing, under Divine command, what our forefathers did for their own aggrandizement. Alas, in more modern times, lands have been seized and nations extirpated by the white man without Divine warrant or reasonable excuse. We do not justify all this, but if any complain of Israel for obeying the sentence of God, let them first raise their voices against the driving out of ancient races by colonists of our own race!

The order to slay the Canaanites had a second objective, namely, that Israel might dwell, alone, in the land and might keep themselves to themselves—the great nonconformists of the universe—separated from all the rest of mankind, both by residence and by manners, not following the customs of the nations round about them, or falling into their sins. That they might be sanctified they were to be separated. “The people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations.” Now, mark and note right well that it is an evil thing, under any pretext, whatever, to depart, in any degree, from the Commandment of the Most High God! Whatever may be the Law which God gives, either to the whole race or to His chosen, they will find their safety in keeping close to it.

But Israel forgot this. Soldiering was hard work—storming cities and warring with men who attacked them with chariots of iron was heroic service. All this required strong faith and untiring perseverance and, in these

virtues the Israelites were greatly deficient. And so, in certain places, they said to the Canaanites, "Let us be neighbors. Let us dwell together." They thought, perhaps, that they had abundant reason for this easy mode of ending the dispute, for those who would correct Infallible Wisdom have usually a great deal to say for themselves! Certain persons thought, in those days, that the religious notion of God's requirements was too severe, that He was, after all, a mass of mercy, and that the best thing that they could do was to be kindly tolerant of these Canaanites and make the best terms they could with them.

They said that perhaps, after all, it was a pity to be so old-fashioned and so rigid in carrying out the Divine order, and it would be better to learn something of the civilization of the Canaanites, something of their arts and sciences, something of their theory of religion—for men ought to have liberal views and believe that there is latent truth in all forms of worship. At any rate, it could do no harm to study their archaeology and go to their temples to see the gods they worshipped and get a general acquaintance with the advanced thought of the period—for the Canaanites were a greatly advanced people—they were the advanced thinkers of the period! They had thought out he-gods and she-gods, Baal and Ashtaroath. And their lesser deities were many. They were, in fact, a highly cultured people, always thinking out something fresh.

So Israel said, "It were a pity to carry out the Divine denunciation quite to the letter. Let us tone it down. There are many things to be learned from these people. No doubt they have their fine points and we must not be too hard upon their imperfections. Therefore let us enter into treaties with them and live with them." They *did* live with them and fell into their ways! Tolerance led to imitation and Israel became as vile as the heathen whom the Lord had condemned! And the Israelites became a mixed race in whose veins there flowed a measure of Canaanite blood. Yes, if you depart from God's Word by a hair's breadth, you know not where you will end. It needs but a little to degrade the Christian into a Ritualist and still less to turn the Ritualist into a Romanist! We shall go far if we once start on the downhill road.

I would to God that in these degenerate times we had back, again, somewhat of the stern spirit of the Cameroonians and the Covenanters, for now men play fast and loose with God and think that anything they please to do will satisfy the Most High. The offal and the refuse will suffice for sacrifices for Him. But as to strict obedience to His Word, they can by no means abide. Mischief will surely come of this lax state of things to the Churches of this day as surely as affliction came abundantly to Israel of old!

Note, next, that whenever one sin is allowed, we may say of it, "Gad, a troop comes." It seemed a pardonable sort of sin to be gentle to these people and not to obey God's severer Word, but then, what came next? Why, soon they, the children of Jehovah, were found worshipping before the horrible Baal! Soon they had gone farther and the unclean goddess, Ash-taroath, became their delight! And soon they forgot Jehovah altogether amid their deities and demons. With these errors in religion there had

come in all sorts of errors in morals, for every fashion of immorality and lewdness defiled the worshippers of Baal-Peer, Baal-Berith and Baal-Ze-bub. Soon the chosen people of God could scarcely be distinguished from the heathen nations among which they dwelt, or if distinguished at all, it was by their greater sin, inasmuch as they were transgressing against superior light and holding down their consciences which God had rendered by His teaching much more tender than the consciences of those about them!

I said before that if you turn aside from God's Words by a hair's breadth, you know not where it will end. The rail diverges but a little where the switches are turned, but before long the branch line is miles away from the main track. Backslide a little and you are on the way to utter apostasy! The mother of mischief is small as a gnat's egg—hatch it and you shall see an evil bird larger than an ostrich! The least wrong has in it an all but infinity of evil. You cannot say to sin, "Up to here shall you go, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stayed." Like the sea, when the dyke is broken, it stretches forth its hand to grasp all the surrounding country! The beginning of sin is like the beginning of strife and that is said to be as the letting out of water—no man knows what a flood may come when once the banks are burst.

So Israel went aside farther and farther from God because they regarded not their way and did not, in all things, obey the Lord. But then comes in a Truth of God which, though it may seem black in the telling, is bright in the essence of it. God did not leave His people without *chastisement*. Had He left them alone, to be given up to their idols, their case would have been hopeless. For mercy's sake they must be punished for their transgression, but this was a *gracious* punishment, that they might not lie and wallow in their transgression and become altogether like the swinish nations that surrounded them. God began to punish them by their own sin. He suffered the Canaanite nations to grow strong, so that they grievously oppressed Israel.

He put the Israelites under the yoke of those nations which they ought to have utterly destroyed. If they would not be conquerors, they would be conquered! If they would not lead captivity captive, they should be led captives, themselves! The Lord laid His blows upon them thick and heavy. But, before He did this, He sent a messenger to rebuke them. It is always the Lord's way to have space for repentance before He executes vengeance. The axes which were carried before the Roman magistrates by the lictors were bound up in bundles of rods. It is said that when a prisoner was before the magistrate, the lictor began to untie the rods and with these the culprit was beaten—meanwhile the judge looked in the prisoner's face and heard his defense. If he saw reason for averting the capital sentence because of the repentance which the offender expressed, then he only smote him with the rods and the axe remained unused.

But if, when every rod was taken out, the culprit was still hardened and the crime was a capital one and clearly proven, then the axe was used—and used all the more sternly because space had been given for repentance and the rods had been used in vain! When the rod is despised, the

axe is ready. It is certainly so with God—He waits to be gracious, but when patience cannot hope for penitence, then Justice takes her turn and her stroke is terrible. The Lord, on this occasion, commissioned a special messenger to rebuke these people, for He sent an Angel. I leave it to your own judgments to discover who this Angel was, if it is discoverable. It may have been an ordinary angel, but I think it must have been the Angel of the Lord. He is so styled in the fourth verse and, besides, He uses language which an ordinary angel could not have used!

He begins, “I made you go up out of Egypt.” Note, He does not say that the *Lord* said this or that, but the Angel, Himself, says it—“I made you go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swore unto your fathers.” Who could this have been, then, but that Covenant Angel who, on other occasions, appeared to holy men and who, on this occasion, preached a sermon to the assembled multitude at Shiloh? My Brothers and Sisters, you know that our Lord was here among men many a time before He came in mortal flesh to suffer and to die. He was here, “rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and His delights were with the sons of men.” He was with Abraham under the tree; with Jacob at Jabbok; with Joshua by the walls of Jericho; with Gideon at the threshing floor and with the three Holy Children in Nebuchadnezzar’s furnace.

He was not in such a body as God had prepared for Him when He took upon Himself the form of a Servant, but in such a form and fashion as seemed most congruous to His Divine Majesty and to the circumstances of those He visited. This Angel of the Divine Covenant, whom we delight in, came and spoke to this people. Such is the judgment of many who have thought most upon it, but I leave it to you to decide. At any rate, it must have been grand hearing to hear an angel preach! And grander hearing, still, to hear the Angel of the Covenant plead with the covenanted ones! Oh, what a sermon! What a sermon it must have been! Scarcely was such a Preacher seen on earth! And yet that sermon did not do as much good as when the seafaring man, Peter, preached at Pentecost!

The sermon at Bochim, if I were to sum up its results, ended in disappointment. When our adorable Christ, Himself, preached to the men of Nazareth, they would have cast Him headlong from the brow of the hill, so that all His eloquent words had fallen upon dead ears and no good result had come, even, from His instruction. Be not disappointed, servant of God, if sometimes you seem to fail! Do not say, “I will give it up.” Your bread has been cast upon the waters. Wait a while, for after many days, you may find it. If Israel is not gathered, God will reward you for your toil. It is yours to labor—it is God’s to give the results—and He does not always grant pleasing results to us at once. He did not allot great triumphs to this Angel of the Lord, as we shall have to show you.

It was a great congregation. It was a great Preacher and it was a great sermon! And yet there was not a great ingathering. Read the sermon through and note that though it is a short one, it is all the greater for its brevity. Sermons may grow little by being long and a sermon may be great through being short, if it is big with thought as this angelic sermon was. He began, first, by telling them what mercies they had received. Read the

chapter. "I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swore unto your fathers." Brothers and Sisters, this subject should most readily lead us to repentance—that God should have dealt so well with us should make us grieve that we have behaved so badly to Him!

Do I address a backsliding child of God? I do not think that any exercise is more likely to benefit your heart than to remember what God did for you in years gone by. He took you up out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay and set your feet upon a rock. He brought you out from the iron bondage of your despair and gave you liberty. He broke the yoke of sinful habits and the chains of furious passions. And now are you wandering away from Him? Are you making something else to be the god of your spirit? If so, be ashamed of your ingratitude and let this first head of the Angel's discourse have power upon your mind. "You use no other friend so ill"—and yet you have not a friend who can be compared with your God. "I beseech you, Brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice" unto your God and sin no longer against Him.

Then the angel passed on to mention the mercies guaranteed to them—"I said, I will never break My Covenant with you." Oh, that is a blessed theme! If, indeed, you are a Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord has pledged Himself to make you perfect and to bring you Home to Himself with exceedingly great joy! You shall not perish. Christ has said, "I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them to Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand." You see the two hands—one inside the other—and you are in the middle, enclosed within the palm of Omnipotent faithfulness! Jehovah says, "I have loved you with an *everlasting* love." He will never break His Covenant with you!

Will you wander away from Him who passes by your iniquity, transgression and sin, and does not let His anger smoke against you forever—He to whom you are joined in an everlasting wedlock which shall never know a divorce? Oh, cruel heart! Cruel heart! Can you offend against such love as this? Can you break with God when He declares that He will never break with you? The Angel pleads this longsuffering, eternally-enduring love, and pleads it well. I know of no two greater arguments than mercy received and mercy promised. Let us not sin against these! May the Holy Spirit hold us fast with these cords of love.

And then the Angel came to close grips with them and said, "You shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; you shall throw down their altars; but you have not obeyed My voice: why have you done this?" He came to their sin. He put His finger on their failure, their omission and their commission. He did not flinch from stating to them *exactly* what their transgression was, nor from demanding, "Why have you done this?" And oh, surely, this shall help to lead *us* to repentance, when God, "sets our iniquities before Him; our secret sins in the light of His countenance." When we see our sin, we ought to be distressed by it and to flee from it,

“hot foot,” as men say, and be clean rid of it once and for all. Oh, may the Spirit of God convicts any wandering one here of sin and may he then turn to God with a penitent heart!

The Angel expostulated in most chosen words, saying, “Why have you done this?” Why have you turned away from God? Why have you let your own enemies multiply upon you? Why have you been disobedient to the command which was given to you so positively? Know you not that cursed is he that does the work of the Lord deceitfully? You have acted disobediently and you have brought upon yourselves a terrible retribution! Why have you done this? Backslider, are you here tonight? Have you gone aside from Church fellowship and left the profession of religion? Why have you done this? Can you mention a reason which will bear the light? We know you cannot! There is no sense in sin, no justification for iniquity.

Ungodliness is madness! Irreligion is irrational. Disobedience to God is a breach of every Law of common sense and logic. In God’s creation it is unreasonable, unnatural, *monstrous* for the creature to rebel against the Creator! Why have you done this? “Turn you, turn you; why will you die, O house of Israel?” Then the Angel completed His discourse by declaring to them that further chastisements would surely follow. He was not sent to preach the Gospel and, therefore, mercy is not His theme. He was sent to preach the Law and He did preach it! Listen to the judgment which He denounces—“Therefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides and their gods shall be your ruin”—so some read the passage. It was a just but terrible threat that He thus thundered in their ears. Notice it! They were to be punished by their own sin. The Lord as good as said—“*You* would not drive them out and now *I* will not drive them out. Your negligence and time-serving shall come home to you and place thorns in your suffering flesh. Your omission shall sting you where you will feel it. You have sowed thistles, and thorns shall stuff your pillows.”

Then, next, He tells them how sharp and keen this sin should be to them. “They shall be as thorns in your sides,” pricking you in one of the most tender parts—in the very region of life, itself. Wherever you turn, these sins of yours—these enemies that you spared—shall prick you in the side and their gods shall be your ruin. You dote upon their false deities and think them your glory, but they shall be your dishonor! The heathen may trust in them, but you shall not be able to do so. They shall be a snare and a mischief to you. What a sermon that was! As I have said, there was a great occasion, a great congregation, a great Preacher, a great sermon, and, as far as one could see on the spot, a great movement produced.

Now I want you to notice what looks like a great result and we shall talk of it under two heads. The people, when they heard this solemn discourse, lifted up their voice and wept, yet they continued as they were. How hopeful! How disappointing!

I. First, HOW HOPEFUL. One could not desire anything better, apparently, than this. They were all attentive hearers. There was not one that looked about him, or that forgot the pointed words that were spoken. They

all seemed to open their ears wide and take in the Divine admonition. There they stood before the Lord, all of them amazed and confounded, while the Angel delivered His solemn message and then returned to Him that sent Him. It is a great thing to win people's attention and it is not everyone that can do it, for there are congregations that act as if the Word of God had nothing to do with them, leaving the poor preacher to prophesy to dead walls. These Israelites took the warning and drank in the Truth of God. They were attentive hearers and anybody would have said, "Blessed be God, that sermon has done a great work. Blessed be God for such an attentive congregation! The nails are fastened in a sure place."

Moreover, they were very feeling people, for they felt what they heard. What would you think, tonight, if the congregation should suddenly cry out? "They lifted up their voice and wept"—wept aloud! Orientals, you know, are generally louder in their demonstrations than we are of a chillier climate, but still it must have been a solemn sight to notice men and women, together, loudly lamenting their transgressions! I have no doubt that many who were there at that time were right with God and said, "What a wonderful opportunity! Glory be to God for such a revival! That one sermon has stirred the people through and through. Thank God that He has sent such a messenger with so fitting a message and blessed it so, for certainly these people are all converted, otherwise they would not cry out and weep."

They were all sorrowful hearers as well as attentive and feeling hearers. Out of the whole company there was not one that laughed, not one that was indifferent, not one who scorned and disregarded the message, but, as far as the text goes, the statement is that all unanimously lifted up their voice and wept. Heaviness was upon them! Their souls were exceedingly sorrowful! They expressed their sorrow in a great and bitter cry and, meanwhile, their tears flowed abundantly, even as when the rock was smitten in the desert and the waters gushed forth! They were all turned into weepers and they called the name of that place, Bochim, or, the Place of Weepers. You would think, "Surely this is full of promise—every eye is filled with tears as they stand before God!"

Alas, that such drops did not precede a shower of Grace, but passed away as the morning cloud! Yes, and they all became professing hearers, for as soon as ever that service was over, they held another and, "They sacrificed unto Jehovah." They avowed themselves to be Jehovah's servants and they took the sacrifice which He had appointed and offered it for their sins and *outwardly* they, all of them, became ardent worshippers of the Most High and true penitents! Well, dear Friends, all this looks very hopeful because it is what we may expect when God presses home the Law upon the consciences of men. When sin is laid before a man, should he not weep? Hope glitters in every tear! Oh that men were sane enough to weep for their transgressions!

I am amazed that some of you can read your Bibles with dry eyes. Unsaved, rejecting the Savior—can you read the four Evangelists without weeping? That Savior whom the Jews crucified you reject, and so, in fact, you crucify Him, too! Can you read the Ten Commandments without an

aching heart? You know that these are 10 great pieces of artillery, all aimed at you for your destruction, since you have offended God by the breach of His Law! Why, surely, you ought scarcely to sleep at night, lest God's mighty judgment should fall upon your guilty heads while you are asleep! It is not amazing at all that people should cry out and weep—the wonder is that every sanctuary where the Law is preached and where the Gospel is preached—should not become a Bochim, or a place of weepers!

Oftentimes this deep emotion does come with true conversion—often, though not always—as I shall have to show you. Men convinced of sin may well weep. I have seen a strong man weep under a sense of his guilt—weep as though the fountains of his eyes would be exhausted—and the eyes, themselves, would turn to coals of fire. Frequently people are unable to restrain themselves and break out, even, in the midst of the congregation, and cry to God for mercy! It is not amazing—it is what we should expect! It is not undesirable, for it is an effect which frequently accompanies real conversion to God. It may well go with sorrow for sin, and sorrow for sin is essential to eternal life. Repentance is an old-fashioned doctrine which, in these days, has been despised, but, if I stand alone, I will bear testimony for it!

They say that repentance is nothing at all—that it is merely, according to the Greek, a change of mind. That shows what little Greek they know! A little of such knowledge is a dangerous thing. A pity that they do not learn more. Repentance is a change of mind, but do you say that it is *only* a change of mind? That is a pretty big, “only.” A change of mind, a *radical* change of mind—from the love of sin to the love of holiness—is that a small affair? It is always attended with sorrow and regret for past sin and, if there is a man here who thinks that he will get to Heaven by a dry-eyed faith, he will be mistaken! He that never mourned for sin has never rejoiced in the Lord!

If I can look back upon my past life of sin and say, “I have no grief over it,” why, then I should do the same, again, if I had the opportunity! And this shows that my heart is as perverse as ever it was and I am still unregenerate. Dear Mr. Rowland Hill used to say that faith and repentance were his daily companions as long as he lived, and that, if he had any thought of regret at entering Heaven, it would be to think that he might have to part with his dear friend, Repentance, as he went through the gate! Godly sorrow is a blessed grief! Let no man speak evil of it. “Repent and be converted” is as much the Gospel as, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ,” and it is not to be omitted in our preaching at the hazard of doing damage to men's souls!

He who has experienced holy sorrow for sin will continue to feel it. I should wonder if he did not often pull up the sluices and let his soul flow in a flood of loving regret—

***“If tears of sorrow would suffice
To pay the debt I owe,
Tears should from both my weeping eyes
In ceaseless torrents flow.”***

A weeper in that sense, always repenting, is, also, always growing in Grace! So this place Bochim looks extremely hopeful, does it not?

II. Now let me turn to the other side and show you that there was nothing permanently good in Bochim's sudden water floods. These people were made weepers through hearing the Angel's sermon, but their weeping was VERY DISAPPOINTING. I half suspect that their tears and lamentations were produced as much by the Preacher's Person as by anything else. It was the Angel of the Lord and who would not be moved at His Presence? God gifts certain speakers with the power of moving the natural feelings and that gift abundantly rested upon the Covenant Messenger. Some men so preach that it were almost impossible to remain unsoftened. There is a pathos about them, or there is an earnestness so intense, so manifest, that for the heart of the hearer to be touched is a natural consequence!

Now, I dread lest any of you should be so moved by me, when I preach, that your feeling should arise from my tone or mannerism, or because you have an affection or esteem for me—for be sure of this—that which comes to you from a *man* will come to an end before long! A temporary cause cannot produce an everlasting change! "You must be born again," not of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but by the Spirit of God! Everything about the preacher's choice words, or musical tone, though proper enough as an accessory—if it becomes the principle and the power that moves you—will end in failure! That which begins with wind will end with whirlwind! That which comes of words will evaporate in words, by-and-by.

It may be a great blessing to you to hear a very useful preacher, but if you depend upon him in the least, it will be mischievous to you. Go and hear the Gospel from any of my Master's servants and never depend, in the least, upon any one man, whoever he may be! Seek that your repentance may be a repentance which is worked by the Spirit of God in your heart and conscience, for if it is not so, it will, one day, curdle into greater depravity! Sham religion is an injury rather than a benefit. I suggest to you that you ask your heart many a question and catechize it after the manner of Beddome's hymn—

***"Why, O my Soul! Why do you weep?
Tell me from where arise
Those briny tears that often flow,
Those groans that pierce the skies!
Is sin the cause of your complaint,
Or the chastising rod?
Do you an evil heart lament,
And mourn an absent God?
Lord, let me weep for nothing but sin,
And after none but Thee.
And then I would—oh, that I might
A constant weeper be."***

Again, I am afraid that the repentance of these people had a great deal to do with their natural softness. They were tender and excitable because there was little grit in their nature—their manliness was of a degenerate type. They feared to go to battle for God—they dreaded the noise and the slaughter. They were, moreover, easily moved by their fellow men, and took shape from those who lived near them. They went to worship Baal because their neighbors said, "Come and worship Baal." And they wor-

shipped Ashtaroth because their friends said, “Come, let us reverence the goddess.” They were malleable, pliable, ductile.

We have numbers around us of that kind. What shall I call them—men of wax? Creatures of India rubber? They go to be shaped, even, by your finger, like clay upon the potter’s wheel, not yet hardened in the fire. No one knows what their shape will be when they leave the wheel. Some have been here for many years and have often been moved and molded by the preacher—and yet they are not saved! While stout-hearted rebels have stood in the aisles with half a sneer and God has brought the hammer down upon their flinty hearts, broken them to pieces—and now they are saved by mighty Grace and rejoice in the Lord! Some have a natural tenderness which hinders the attainment of spiritual softness. Now, mark you, that which is natural may be used by God towards that which is spiritual, but still it is not, in itself, spiritual!

All that readiness to cry, all that readiness to receive the Word of God with joy and to leap at once into faith may be nothing but mental weakness. Some men weep profusely because they have been drunk and that gives them a drop in their eye—this is a miserable business! I like the strong man who cries within and is weary of the visible rain showers. I know really tender-hearted men who could not shed a tear for their lives, but feel a far deeper anguish than those whose griefs are shallow and watery. It is very beautiful to talk of the tears streaming down their faces, but many converts have never shed a tear and, perhaps, never will. But this does not prove that they are not converted—far from it—the tear is but a natural drop of moisture and soon evaporates! The better thing is the *inward* torrent of grief within the soul which leaves an indelible mark within. You know how we sang just now—

***“Tears, though flowing like a river,
Never can one sin erase;
Jesus’ tears would not avail you,
Blood, alone, can meet your case;
Fly to Jesus!
Life is found in His embrace.”***

One grain of faith is better than a gallon of tears. A drop of genuine repentance is more precious than a torrent of weeping.

There is another thing about the weeping of these people and that is that it was caused a great deal by threats of punishment. I am afraid that they did not weep because they sinned, but they wept because God said that He would not drive out any more Canaanites. They wished to conquer more of them—more of the most disreputable sort—but they did not wish to drive them *all* out. Yet they mourned because those whom they had spared would now get the upper hand! The more comfortable sort of Canaanites they were willing to save, but when they found that they were to have them for thorns in their sides—then they brought out their handkerchiefs—for there was reason for selfish grief.

Yes, and you may preach the fires of Hell till men are willing to abandon darling lusts of the more glaring sort. To such we would put searching questions. Is there any holy salt in your tears? Is it sin that you weep for? Is it sin that you repent of? Every murderer repents at the gallows,

they say—that is, he repents of being hanged, but he does not repent of having killed others. He might do the same thing again if he had the opportunity. We ought clearly to discern between the natural terrors that come of vivid descriptions of the wrath to come and that real spiritual touch of God, the Holy Spirit, which breaks and melts the heart and then casts it into another mold.

These people were deceived as to the depth and sincerity of their own feelings. Doubtless they reckoned themselves choice penitents when they were only cowardly tremblers, laboring under impressions which were as useless as they were transient! Their feeling was but as a meteor's blaze, shedding strong but momentary light—

***“What sadder scenes can angels view
Than self-deceiving tears?
They give you hope, a hope untrue,
Then deepen all your fears.”***

We are quite sure that these people, though they wept, were none the better for it, because if they had been, they would have cried, “Come, Brothers, get your swords! Let us go and fight these Hivites and Hittites and cast down their altars, and sweep away their images and groves.” No, they kept their idle swords in their scabbards and made treaties with the condemned races! They used not their axes to cut down the false gods, but they said, “Let us have respect to the religion of others. There is no doubt that their idolatry is wrong—in fact, their practices are questionable and we are very sorry for it—but we need not interfere, nor execute Jehovah's sentence with a bare literalness.”

In addition, they very likely confessed and deplored their own laxity and went the length of saying, “It is very grievous that we should be so obstinate. It is really a dreadful thing.” I heard one say, “It is an awful thing to be a slave to the wine cup. I wish that I had never tasted it. The first opportunity I get, I will turn over a new leaf.” He did not say what the new leaf would be, but he was going to do any quantity of reforming work. Alas, he never did anything at all, for he was drunk, again, the next day! A beautiful penitent to look upon, but a wretched hypocrite in due time, for he returned, like the dog, to his vomit, and the sow which was washed to her wallowing in the mire. If you repent of sin, down with sin! In God's name, down with sin! When repentance is hearty it is practical. When a man truly turns to God, he turns away from sin. If Satan is effectually driven out of a man, the emancipated one sweeps his house and purges himself of the filth which he formerly harbored. He plucks out right-eye lusts and cuts off right-arm sins, for he feels that he can no longer transgress against his God.

Next, these people had not repented, for they did not bring their children up rightly. The next generation, it is said, knew not the Lord, neither the mighty works of the Lord. That was because their parents did not teach them. Not that parents can teach children so that they know the Lord in their *hearts*, but God has so put it—“Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” That is the great general rule of God's moral government. If parents make known the things of God to their children, it cannot be said that the children do not

know the works of God. If parents teach with affectionate earnestness, their children learn, at least, the letter of the Truth of God. I do not believe in your repentance for sin if you tolerate your child's living in it! I cannot believe that you know the Lord unless you long for your offspring to know Him!

A man says, "Oh, it is an evil thing, but, you know, young people will have their own way and we must not be too strict." Sorrowfully do we foresee what will become of young people who have parents that do not love them enough to restrain them from doing evil! Well may you weep, for you are murdering the souls of your own flesh and blood! Woe unto you, with all your tears, if you have no regard for your household and no care to bring up your children in the fear of God! I know that these people did not repent aright because they went from bad to worse. They went from weeping before God to worshipping Baal—like some I have heard of who are found crying in the House of God on Sunday night—and are laughing at the theater on Monday night!

O base hypocrites! Penitents-at a dance! Broken-hearted sinners on Sunday, crying, "Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners," and whole-hearted drunkards before the week is up, yelling, "We won't go home till morning!" Look at the miserable sinners! See what they are at! Are these your weepers? These your men of tender conscience? Their Bochim is all a lie—a mere pretense! The more tender you are, if afterwards you harden yourselves, so much the greater will be your guilt. And if you humble yourselves before God in mere appearance, so much the more terrible will be your *doom* if that humbleness departs and you go back to the sin from which you professed to turn! I know that these people were not penitents because God did not take away the chastisement. The punishment which He threatened, He brought upon them. He gave them over to the spoilers and sold them to their enemies. But where there is a hearty repentance of sin, God will never lay punishment on a man. He will forgive him and receive him to His bosom and restore him.

To sum up, in a word, all that I have said, salvation lies not in *feeling*, but in believing! Salvation lies not in *weeping*, but in trusting in Christ! Repentance is not to be measured by outward manifestations of sorrow. The Prophet says, "Rend your *heart* and not your garments." Let your hearts be torn away from sin and from everything that leads to sin—and then shall you weep acceptably before God! The Lord bless this word to those it is meant for. I do not know who they are, but He does. And may He send His blessing by His Holy Spirit. Amen.

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A MESSAGE FROM GOD

NO. 3455

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 22, 1915.

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

*“I have a message from God unto you.”
Judges 3:20.*

CAN there be a person here present to whom God has never sent a message? Possibly the question may startle you. The very thought of the great invisible God sending such a message seems to you strange and unlikely. To me it is far more surprising that anyone should imagine He has never done so! Is He your Creator? And has He who made you launched you forth on the tempestuous sea of life to drift in solitude without compass or guide? We know that He has made you immortal—is it possible that during that short life which is a preface to eternity, upon which that never ending period depends—is it possible that He has left you without any sort of communication? Does it seem likely? You call Him, “Father,” because He is the Author of your being—can He be your Father and yet have no concern for your well-being—never have spoken to you, never have sent a message from His great Throne to your hearts? How improbable this sounds! Is not the question open to another solution? The truth of the matter, I think, is that you have been deaf to God’s messages! He has often desired to correspond with you, no, He has sent some communications to you, but you have resented and rejected them. Is it not likely that He has often spoken when you have not heard and that He has drawn near to you and called to you when you would not listen to Him? I think, from the analogy of nature, this looks like a correct statement of the case. It cannot be that God has left the world—it must be that the world has left God! It is not possible that God has ceased to speak to the soul. Surely the soul has ceased to listen to God, to acknowledge His messages, or to reply to them! I believe, my dear Hearers, and I especially address my remarks this evening to those of you who have not yet received Christ by faith and love into your hearts—I believe that the most of you, although still without God and without Christ, have had many messages from Him. Let me remind you of some of them. Then, let me admonish you that the Gospel, itself, is a distinct and direct message to you. And finally, let us occupy a few minutes in endeavoring to consider how we ought to treat that message.

I. WE HAVE NOT BEEN WITHOUT MESSAGES FROM GOD.

This Bible is in the house of every Englishman. You can scarcely find a house so poor that it does not now contain a copy of the Word of God. If

your Bible could speak to you—or rather, if you would listen to what it says to you—you would hear in the chamber where that Bible lies, the words, “I have a message from God for you.” Do but open it, look down its pages, let your eyes glance along its sacred verses and I think it would not be long before it would have communion with your spirit, and this would be its voice, “I have a message from God for you.” I am sure that each one of you would read some verse that is personally applicable to yourself, perhaps more applicable to you than to any other man! There is some one special Book in Scripture which was prepared specially for you. There is an arrow there that was intended for your heart—some oil and wine fitted to relieve your pain and heal your wounds! Whether your case is that of carelessness or of despondency, that Book says, “I have a message from God for you.” Shall I chide the indifference which neglects the Book? Shall I rebuke the levity which had rather turn to a novel, or to any frivolous magazine, than to this momentous volume which appeals to you as with the voice of God? Scarcely need I do so! Each man must be conscious that it is the height of guilt to slight the King’s proclamations and pursue the common and ordinary things of everyday life as if no Royal Mandate had been issued! How much more when it is the voice of Him that speaks from Heaven! Your unread Bibles shall rise up in judgment to condemn you! Attempt to alight from the railway car while the train is in motion, you are liable to a penalty of forty shillings. Do not say you are ignorant of the law! It was posted in the carriage that conveyed you. The angel of Time might surely write with his finger upon the dust of your Bibles the sentence of your condemnation! Beware, you who refuse to listen to Moses and the Prophets! If you will not hear them, you will not be converted, though one should rise from the dead and admonish you of your peril!

Other messengers you have had. Some of them have come to you in golden type—their words have been sweet as honey. I will call them *bountiful Providences*. I know not what you would call them. Perhaps a vein of luck. Have you been favored with success in business? A prosperous wind has filled your sails. In your families you have had welcome mercies. Children have been given you. Those children have been restored from beds of sickness when your heart has been sick with anxiety. In your own health of body you have not been strangers to God’s choice favors. Moreover, you have had times of gladness and of merry-making. Your hearts have held their festivals. The streets of Mansoul were illuminated, the houses decked with fair colors and the streets of your mind strewn with flowers! On those days did not these mercies seem to say, as they came trooping along down the streets of your soul, “We have a message from the Lord for you”? Oh, if you would but listen, each one of these parental gifts would have said, “My son, give Me your heart.” Surely such mercies should have been like the bonds of love and the cords of a man to have drawn you! Ought not the kindness and compassion extended to you in Providence to have led you to say, “How can I grieve

such a God? How can I provoke Him to anger? Does He not deal generously with me and lavish His treasures at my feet? How shall I forget Him? I will celebrate His favor with sacrifices of thanksgiving. I will bind my offerings to the horns of the altar.”

Other *messengers have come to you draped in black*. Their garments have been torn, sack-cloth has been about their loins, and ashes on their heads. They have spoken in hoarse notes, but solemn tones, and though they have not led you to repentance, their admonitions have stilled your pulse, chilled your blood and forced you to pause and think. Remember that sickness—fever, or cholera, or diphtheria—which prostrated your strength, disqualified you for your daily labor, or your ordinary business and summoned you in the quiet of your chamber to look back upon the past and look forward to the future? Can you forget the season when life trembled in the scale and the physician knew not which way it would turn—that hour, that silent hour, when they trod the room with gentle footsteps and the nurse closed not her eyes through all the still hours of the night? Then the noisy watch uttered the only sound that broke the silence of that room! Do you not remember those diseases that laid hold of your vitals and said, “We have a message from God for you”? And some of you have escaped from manifold perils by sea and by land, from shipwreck and from fire! You have been preserved in accidents and catastrophes in which others have died. All these strange, these terrible things, spoke to you in righteousness when you were careless and unconcerned! They had a message from God for you. Oh, deaf ears that will not listen when God speaks to you in such solemn tones and strikes you while He speaks that He may compel you to listen!

Another dark messenger has come to you. *Death has bereaved* you of friends and comrades. Those with whom you were most familiar have been suddenly called away. Have you not been startled by the news that a neighbor or acquaintance with whom you chatted a day or two ago is dead? “Dead?” you said. “Why, he was in my shop only a few days ago! Dead? Why, He seemed to be in good health, strong in body, vigorous in mind, full of plans and projects. I should have thought of any man dead sooner than he!” Do not you recollect the time when you heard the bell toll for a near relative, and when you stood over the open grave? Ah, then, when the dust fell upon the coffin lid, and the words were uttered, “Dust to dust, ashes to ashes,” each of those thundering morsels said, “I have a message from God for you!” Walk the cemetery and while every grave tells of our common mortality, how some graves speak to us of the precarious tenure by which our frail life is held! In all, what a warning message we may hear! Turn over the list of the friends of your youth, the companions of your healthy manhood—and you who have grown gray call to remembrance the names of those old acquaintances of yours who have passed from this land of shadows to the bar of God—let the ghosts of the departed start up before you and pass in solemn procession before

your eyes! Then let each one say, with all the pathos of their final exit, "I have a message from God for you!" Among them all, is there one who learned anything of vice or scoffing from you, young man? Is there a soul among the lost that you first led astray? Man, you who have blasphemed—are there some now regretting their bitter doom whose ruin you helped to precipitate? Oh, you base deceiver, are there those whom you did delude? Are there those whom you did ensnare who have gone their way before you to feel the terrible remorse and are waiting for the grim time when they shall look on you with eyes of fire and curse you because you lured them on to their eternal destruction? Those ghosts, of all others, must be the most startling! And their fingers of fire must point the most fearfully and make one feel that they have, indeed, a message from God to us from the place of torment! Let the remembrance of them make you pause, and think—and turn from your sins to the living and true God!

But though these messages have too often been unheard, the Lord, who desires not the death of a sinner, has sent to us by other and equally useful messengers. Oh, in what kind ways has He been pleased to select *the persons who should bring the tidings to us*. The first messenger that some of us had was that fond woman upon whose breast in infancy we hung. We should never breathe the word, "mother," without grateful emotions! How can we forget that tearful eye when she warned us to escape from the wrath to come? We thought her lips right eloquent—others might not think so—but they certainly were eloquent to us! How can we ever forget when she bowed her knees, and with her arms about our neck, prayed for us, "Oh, that my son might live before You"? Nor can her frown be erased from our memory, that solemn, loving frown when she rebuked our budding iniquities! And her smiles have never faded from our recollection, the beaming of her countenance when she rejoiced to see some good thing in us towards the Lord God of Israel! Mothers often become potent messengers from God. And I think each Christian mother should ask herself in secret whether the Lord has not a message to give through her to her sons and to her daughters. And did you despise that messenger? Had you the audacity to reject God when He spoke in this way, when He selected one so near and so dear, who could speak so well, and could talk to that tender instinct which respects and hallows a mother's love? Could it be? Ah, thus it has been up till now with some of you! God has spoken with other messengers to you. Was it your sister? Did she not write a note to you because her timidity would scarcely let her speak? Or, perhaps, it was a friend. It may have been that young man you ridiculed and called fanatical—you know how soon you shook off the impressions which those pointed remarks of his seemed to make upon you at the time. Or, possibly, it was a tract that met your eyes. Or a book like Doddridge's *Rise and Progress*, or Baxter's *Call to the Unconverted*, or Alleine's *Alarm*. Through these printed appeals God spoke to you!

Yet, again, it might have been through some preacher of the Gospel. God's ministers have been God's messengers to many thousands of immortal souls. Within this House of Prayer, sometimes, there are many who hardly know how to keep their seats when we try to ply the conscience with all the arguments of the Truth of God and seek to move inactive souls by some of the thunderbolts of the Almighty! Oh, how many men here have been rebuked and rebuked, times without number, but still they go on in their old sins? Take heed, take heed, men, for if you refuse God when He speaks by His servants, and by His Providence and by your friends, He will one day speak to you by a bony preacher who will deliver his message so that you must hear him! You know from where my text comes? "Ehud said, 'I have a message from God for you.'" It was a dagger which found its way to Eglon's heart—and he fell dead! So shall Death deliver his message to you. "I have a message from God unto you," he will say, and before you shall have time to answer, you shall find that this was the message, "Because I, the Lord, will do this, prepare to meet your God, O Israel; thus says the Lord, cut it down; why cumberst thou the ground? Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live." Oh, may you hear the other messengers of God before He sends this last most potent one from which you cannot turn away!

I have thus sought to refresh your memory by reminding you of the many warnings you have received. The intent of them all has been to awaken your conscience. But now, in the second place, we admonish you that—

II. THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD IS, IN ITSELF, A MESSAGE FROM GOD TO YOU.

Oh, how passing strange are the reasons, the extraordinary reasons why many people attend our churches and chapels! Some people go merely because everybody else goes. Others go because—well, perhaps it helps their business a bit! Some go when they happen to have fashionable clothes in which they like to make an appearance. Ask the large majority of men and women why they go—and even the best of people, were they to be candid, tell you that they suppose it is the right thing to do—it is their duty. But how few go with the idea that God will speak to them, there, and that the Gospel preached there will be a message from God to their souls! And, I am afraid, there are some ministers who hardly think that the Gospel is intended to come personally home to the people. They talk, as I read of one the other day, who said that when he preached to sinners he did not like to look the congregation in the face, for fear they should think he meant to be personal, so he looked up at the ventilator because there was no fear, then, of any individual catching his eye! Oh, that fear of man has been the ruin of many ministers! They never dared to preach right at the people. We have heard of sermons being preached before this and that honorable company, but preaching sermons *before* people is not God's way! We must preach sermons *at* the people, directly

to them, to show that it is not the waving of a sword in the air like a juggler's sport, but it is the getting of the sword right into the conscience and the heart! This, I take it, is the true mission of every minister of Christ. It is said of Whitefield that if you were the farthest away from him in a throng, where you could but hear the sound of his voice, you felt persuaded that he meant to speak to you! And of Rowland Hill it is said that if you got into Surrey Chapel, you could not hide in a corner there! If you did manage to get into a back seat, or were squeezed tight into the windows, you would still feel persuaded that Mr. Hill was addressing you and that he had singled you out for his expostulations as though no one else were present! Surely this is the perfection of preaching. Should it not be our aim to find men and make them feel that at the present moment they are, themselves, addressed? That there is a message from God to the soul?

Now, my Friend, the Gospel is a distinct message directed to you. I know it speaks to your neighbor and tells him that he is fallen. That is for him, not for you, to think of. Your portion is that which singles you out and tells you that *you* were in Adam when he sinned. That you fell in him and that as the result, your nature is corrupt! You are born in sin and prone to commit sin—there is no good thing in your natural disposition! Whatever seems good in your own eyes, or the eyes of others, is so tainted by the inherent vice of your own depravity that it cannot be acceptable in the sight of God! When we preach to sinners, never think that we mean the riff-raff in the streets. The Gospel, which saves a sinner, is a message from God to YOU! Think of your own sins and the evil of your own heart! I have heard of a woman who refused to believe that she was a sinner, and her minister, convinced that she did not know what she meant, thus exposed her folly. He said to her, "Well, if you *are* a sinner, of course, you have broken God's Law. Let us read the Ten Commandments and see which you have broken." So turning to the Decalogue, he began to read, "You shall have no other God before Me." "Did you ever break that?" "Oh, no! Not that she knew of." He proceeded, "You shall not make to yourself any engraved image," and so on. "Did you ever break that?" "Never, Sir," said she. Then, "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain." "Oh, dear, no," she had been very particular on that point. She did not know that she had *ever* offended in that respect in her life! "Remember the Sabbath, to keep it holy." "Oh," she said, "I never do any work on a Sunday—everybody knows how particular I am about that." "Honor your father and your mother." "Yes," she replied, she had been quite perfect in this matter. You might ask her friends if she had not been. "You shall not kill." "Kill anybody?" She wondered how the minister could ask her that! Of course, "You shall not commit adultery," must be passed without a question. "You shall not bear false witness." Much of a gossip though she was, she swore she never did backbite anybody in all her life! And as to the idea of coveting, well, she might some-

times have wished that she was a little better off, but she never wanted any of anybody else's goods—she only wanted a little more of her own.

So it turned out, as the minister suspected, that she really was not a sinner at all in her own estimation. It is marvelous how people who indulge in general confessions of sin attempt to exculpate themselves of each and every particular offense. Whatever the indictment is, they plead, "Not guilty." But the condemnation which the Gospel pronounces upon all who have transgressed the Law of God is a message from God to *you*! Oh, I would have those of you who have not fled to Christ feel and realize the terrors of the Law! How stern its precepts! How dreadful its penalties! How Divine its sanctity! And remember—it is a message from God to *YOU*! Where is the possibility of escape from the justice it metes out, the judgment it pronounces? I think I hear the cry of spirits lost without hope—mark the worm that never dies and witness the agonies of conscience never appeased—while the remembrance of opportunities haunts them and the wrath of God stirs the fire of remorse that never shall be quenched! Of that appalling spectacle I might speak at length to you, but I will not. Oh, my dear Hearers, I would have you remember that this is a message from God to you! As sure as you live, unless you repent, the everlasting burning must be your portion forever! You must make your bed in Hell if you continue in unbelief! Do, I pray you, forget your neighbor for a while. Think not of anything that is applicable to the person sitting next to you. To you, to your own self, is the thunder of God's threat sent—"If you repent not, you shall all likewise perish." If you turn not from the error of your ways, God will not turn from His righteous indignation. Your *destruction* slumbers not, though you are ever so drowsy! His wrath will burn like coals of juniper—forever and forever it will abide on you!

But *the Gospel tells of a Substitute*. It informs you that Jesus came and suffered in the place of the sinner. It says that He died for those who trust Him. It assures you that whoever believes on Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. Have you no anxiety that the Gospel should be a message from God to you? It will be of no use to you that Jesus died, unless He died for you. If He took your sin and carried your sorrow, it is all well—but though He should have died for all mankind, except you, by that omission you would perish! We know that He died for Believers. "Whoever believes on Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." The vital question is, "Do I believe in Jesus? Have I trusted in Him? Do I depend, now, upon His finished work? Having no other refuge, do I trust in Jesus, sink or swim? Do I commit myself to the tide, relying on His merits, expecting thereby to be borne on safe to the haven of His Glory?" If so, then there is evidence that He died for me. I am free from condemnation! He paid my debts—I am clear from the charges of the Law, for He bore my punishment. I am acquitted by His mediation. Therefore, being justified freely, I may go on my way rejoicing! But of what use is the Gos-

pel unless it thus becomes a message from God for *me*? Oh, the delight, dear Friends, of those who recognize the promise of God as a message of love to them! Hundreds of times did I hear the Gospel preached. I heard of pardon, full and free. I heard of a complete righteousness that wrapped the sinner from head to foot. I heard of full deliverance from the penal sentence of the Law of God. I heard of adoption, of communion with Christ, of the sanctification which the Spirit gives—but what were all these privileges to me when I had no interest in them? It was as though one should take up the title-deed of an estate and begin reading it in a social party by way of interesting them! What more dull—what more heavy reading? How the words are multiplied! How those lawyers seek to say the same thing over and over, till no flesh living can endure them! Ah, but, my Friend, if that title-deed refers to an estate which has been bequeathed to *you*, all those words delight you! Their repetition seems to clench your title! You like to have the thing made out in proper legal form. Your eyes sparkle over that little sketch in the corner. You take notice of the stamps and you are specially taken up with the signatures! Matters that would be of no interest at all under other circumstances seem to be exceedingly precious to you viewed in the light of your inheritance! It is just so with regard to the Word of God. When we come to read the Book and know that it confers blessings on us, our joy is full to overflowing. To us the message is sent. By us the message is received. The complete salvation it announces is ours! We are wholly saved from every peril, through Jesus' blood. We are delivered from sin. We are endowed with a righteousness, not of our own performing, but of His imputing. Thereby we are adorned—

**“With the Savior’s garment on,
Holy as the Holy One!”**

With what ineffable joy does this message from God make glad our spirit!

Be sure, of this, my Friends, let our case be what it may, *the Gospel preached is a message from God to our souls*. The hypocrite cannot long attend upon the means of Grace without finding that its doctrines are very heart searching. They pierce his thoughts. They hold a candle up to him and if he would but look, they would expose his desperate condition. The formalists, the men who delight in ceremonies, cannot long frequent God’s hallowed courts where His true ministers proclaim His name, without perceiving that there is a message from God to them! The most careless spirit will find in the Word of God a mirror held up to his face in which he can see a reflection of himself. There have been many messages like circulars from God to us, but the Gospel, faithfully preached, is a private and personal communication.

A minister once sent his deacon to attend a certain anniversary service. The discourse turned upon Diotrephes, who loved the pre-eminence. That deacon’s character was aptly described. He did not, however, agree with the preacher. He was, himself, a Diotrephes, though he failed to detect his own portrait for, with apparent indifference, he asked

a friend of his if he supposed there were such persons existing as those who had been described in the sermon? "I cannot think," said he, "who the preacher could have been aiming at." So his friend said. "Well, I think he must have been intending you and me." No better answer could have been given! I like each hearer to make the application to himself.

But Mrs. Jones thinks sometimes that Mrs. Brown must have felt very strange in one part of the sermon. And Mrs. Brown thinks that if Mrs. Smith had looked at home, she must have known that that which was said was meant for her—whereas the real truth was that it suited all three of them, and there was something meant for each, as well as for all! Take heed to yourselves, my Beloved. Be like the young lad who, when he was asked why he attended so earnestly, said, "Because I am in hopes that one of these days the Truth of God I hear will be blessed to my own salvation."

Brothers and Sisters, if you were thirsty, you would not stand by the rippling brook and marvel how it flowed on, to the river, and the river onward to the sea. You would not let your meditations be wandering to the meadows which it made green, or the mills which it turned, or the cities which employed it in mercantile industry! No, you would just stoop down and drink—and *then*, perhaps meditate on those grand uses it served. When there is a cry for bread in the streets, it is of no use telling the people that there is a large stock of wheat in the Baltic and that there has been a fine crop this year in the United States! Each man wants bread in his own hands and in his own mouth! It is amazing how personal people become when the thing has anything to do with money. I never knew a man short of cash who was relieved by the intelligence that there were millions of bullion in the bank. A little in his pocket cheered him more than the much that had accumulated at the fountainhead! How is it that people are not personal with religion? Why are they not looking to get, every man, a full share in the capital it represents? How is it they do not turn everything that comes in their way to God's account when the Gospel is preached? Why, when tidings are published, do they not say, "Lord, is this a message from You to me?" Now to close, my last point is this—

III. IF THERE IS SUCH A MESSAGE AS THIS FROM GOD TO US, HOW SHOULD WE TREAT IT?

Let the minister entertain this question. He ought to deliver it very earnestly. God's message is not to be preached with marble lips—it must not drop from an icy tongue. It ought to be spoken very affectionately. God's message is not to be announced unkindly. The kindling of human passion should never stir us. Rather let the Divine Flame of God-like affection burn within our souls. It should be proclaimed very boldly. It is not for the minister of God to smooth the stones, or pare down any of the angles of the Gospel! He should be tender as a lamb, but yet bold as a lion. It is as much as his soul is worth to keep back a single word! He

may have to answer for the blood of souls if he trims in the slightest particular. The withholding of any part of a sermon which should have been delivered, should he refrain himself lest he offend anyone, may bring down upon him a condemnation that he knows not how to escape—and he may have to, throughout eternity, bewail that he had God’s message and did not deliver it! I always feel quite easy in my own conscience if I have preached what I believe to be the Truth of God. If you send a servant to the door, you give him a message. If the person at the door should be angry, the servant would say, “It is of no use being angry with me! You should be angry with my master, for I have given you the message just as he gave it to me.” And if they should be angry with him, he would say, “I would much rather that the stranger at the door should be angry with me for telling the message, than that my master should be angry with me for keeping it back, for to my own master I stand or fall.” I think the minister of God, if he has preached faithfully, may say, “Well, I have delivered only what my Master told me! If you are angry with me, you must remember that you ought to be angry with my Master, for it was my Master’s message, but it is better for you to be angry with me than for my Master to be angry with me!” Baxter said, “I never rebuke myself for not having used fine flowery language when I am preaching, but I have rebuked myself full often for lack of earnestness in what I have delivered.” So we, each of us, must humble ourselves before the Lord on account of our coldness in this matter. Yet we must not handle the Lord’s message deceitfully, but go on boldly to deliver the message which God has given us, remembering that we only have to give an account to Him. There lives not a man under the cape of Heaven that should be so free from the fear of his fellow creatures as God’s minister! To him, prince or peasant, peer or beggar must be alike. To him, kings have no crowns, and queens no thrones. He speaks to men as men, going into all the world and preaching the Gospel to every creature! And being God’s ambassador to men, he must go right on and speak as he gets utterances from his Lord!

Yes, but if this is God’s message, the minister has not only to think how he should treat it, but you have to think how *you* should treat it! And *I have to ask those who are unconverted what they mean to do with it.* What do you mean to do with God’s message? Of all the bad things to do, do not do this—do not say, “Go your way for now. When I have a more convenient season I will send for you.” Do not say that! Better to say, “I despise the message and I will not obey it.” Talk not like the procrastinators, for procrastinators are the most hardened of men. To promise they will do—it quiets men’s consciences, whereas, if they deliberately said, “I will not,” perhaps conscience might be awakened and they might be led to do it. No, say either the one thing or the other! If it were possible for you to meet an angel on your way home—the thing will not occur—but if you could meet an angel and he should stop you, and should say, “Now, Man, not a step further until you have given me an answer!

God commands you to believe in Jesus Christ. He tells you to trust Him with your soul—will you or not?”

Suppose you were placed in the same position as King Antiochus. When the Roman ambassador met him and asked him whether it was to be peace or war, he said he must have time to consider. The ambassador, with his sword, drew a circle in the sand. “Give an answer,” he said, “before you move out of that circle, or if you step out of it, your answer is war.” I think there is such a phase in a man’s life when he must give an answer. I know what that answer will be, unless God the Holy Spirit makes you give the right one, but you must give it one way or the other! And if the man says, “No, I will give no answer,” yet if he answers not beyond that appointed hour, it is war between Him and God forever—and the sword shall never be sheathed, nor go back into its scabbard! He has thrown down the gauntlet by refusing to give a decisive pledge of obedience! The Lord has declared eternal war against him—peace shall not be made forever.

Before you go farther, which shall it be? Do you say, “I love my sins. I love the world, I love its pleasures. I love my own righteousness. I will not trust Christ”? That shows your depravity—look at the consequences and tremble! But if, from the depths of your soul, you say, “God be merciful to me a sinner. I would be saved!” Then trust Christ and you are saved now! Believe on Him—believe on Him, now, and you are now forgiven! Oh, may the Savior of His own Grace give us your salvation as a seal to our ministry—and to Him shall be glory forever and ever! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 119:119-126.**

Verses 119-121. *You put away all the wicked of the earth like dross. Therefore I love Your testimonies. My flesh trembles for fear of You; and I am afraid of Your judgments. I have done judgment and justice: leave me not to my oppressors.* Eastern kings cannot often say as much as this, but David had been a just king. This was for his comfort when he, himself, came under unjust treatment. “I have done judgment and justice: leave me not to my oppressors.” It is of the same tenor as another prayer—“Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.” God often deals with men as they deal with others—“With the forward, He will show Himself forward.” “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” May our conduct be such that, though we plead no merit, yet we may dare to mention it in prayer.

122. *Be surety for Your servant for good: let not the proud oppress me.* As nearly as I remember, this is the only verse which does not mention the Law or the Word of God. Here you have a “surety,” and that is something even better! If the Law fails us, the Surety stands us in good stead. How I like to think of God, the Surety of His people! When there is a trial

against them and the oppressor is heavy upon them, they can come to God to be a Surety for them in the great action of life. “Be surety for your servant for good: let not the proud oppress me.” My Master is Surety for His servants—His servant is sure enough.

123. *My eyes fail from seeking Your salvation, and for the word of Your righteousness.* I have looked until I have looked my eyes out! I am weary with waiting, with watching, with weeping—“My eyes fail for seeking Your salvation.” Some do not even look for Him. Here is a man who looked until his very eyes gave out!

124. *Deal with Your servant according unto Your mercy, and teach me Your statutes.* He is a just man. He can plead that he has done justly, but he does not ask to be dealt with according to justice—“Deal with Your servant according unto Your mercy”—as far as anyone of us can get. If you have been greatly sanctified, have walked very near to God, I would still not advise you to go beyond this prayer—“Deal with Your servant according to Your mercy.” Singular is the next sentence—“And teach me Your statutes.” It is a great mercy to be taught the ways of God, to understand His way, to understand the practical part of it, the statutes. To be made holy is a high honor, a great privilege. When you are seeking great favors of God, ask for great holiness!

125. *I am Your servant.* He called himself, “servant,” many times before. And in this wonderful passage this is the third time. He is delighted to be the “servant of God.” He says little about being a king! He says a great deal about being a servant—“I am Your servant.”

125. *Give me understanding, that I may know Your testimonies.* You know, generally, a teacher finds the teaching—the pupil has to find understanding. But here is a prayer—“Give me understanding.” The last verse he asked to be taught. Here he asks to have an understanding given to him. What a God we have to deal with! And when we are taught of the Lord, how effectually we are taught! He not only gives the facts, but gives the understanding with which to get at their meaning!

126. *It is time for You, LORD, to work: for they have made void Your Law.* When men begin to exercise a destructive criticism upon the Word of God, it is time for God to work! When God’s Law is held in small esteem, when men go their own way, call vice by the name of pleasure, “It is time for You, Lord, to work: for they have made void Your Law.”

—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.**

SIN SLAIN

NO. 337

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, JULY 29, 1860,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

***“And behold, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him and said unto him, Come, and I will show you the man whom you seek. And when he came into her tent, behold, Sisera lay dead and the nail was in his temples.”
Judges 4:22.***

If the story of the world's sufferings under different tyrants could all be written, there would be no man found who would be capable of reading it. I believe that even the despots themselves, who have committed the atrocities to which I refer, would not be sufficiently cold-blooded to sit down and read the account of the agonies which their own victims have endured.

I have been struck in passing through many lands with the horrible sufferings which in the olden times were endured by the poor at the hands of the rich kings and lords who were their oppressors. In almost every town in which you enter, you either have shown to you the rack, the dark dungeon, the thumb-screw, or the infernal machine, or instruments too horrible to describe—that make one's blood run chill at the very thought and sight of them. Verily, O earth, you have been scarred—your back has been plowed with many a furrow. From your veins have gushed forth plenteous streams of blood and your sons and your daughters have had to suffer agonies extreme!

But oh, my Brethren, I speak in sober earnestness when I declare that all the sufferings that have ever been exercised upon man have never been equal to the tyranny which man has brought upon himself—the tyranny of sin. Sin has brought more plagues upon this earth than all the earth's tyrants. It has brought more pangs and more miseries upon men's bodies and souls than the craftiest inventions of the most cold-blooded and diabolical tormentors.

Sin is the world's great Despot. It is the serpent in whose subtle folds earth's inhabitants are crushed. It is such a tyranny that none but those whom God delivers have been able to escape from it. No, such a tyranny that even they have been scarcely saved. And they, when saved, have had to look back and remember the dreadful slavery in which they once existed—they have remembered the wormwood and the gall. And at the remembrance the iron has entered into their souls. We have before us, in this chapter, a picture of the children of Israel attacked by a very wicked and powerful king—Jaban, the king of Canaan. It is but a faint emblem, a very indistinct picture of the oppression which sin exercises upon all mankind—the oppression which our own iniquities continually bring upon us.

I want to picture to you, tonight, if I can, three acts in a great history—three different pictures illustrating one subject. I trust we have passed through all three of them, many of us. And as we shall look upon them, while I paint them upon the wall, I think there will be many here who will be able to say, “I was in that state once.” And when we come to the last, I hope we shall be able to clap our hands and rejoice to feel that the last is our case, also, and that we are in the plight of the man with a description of whom I shall conclude.

First, I shall picture to you the sinner growing uneasy in his bondage and thinking about rebellion against his oppressors. Secondly, the sinner putting to rout his sins and seeking their entire destruction. And, thirdly, I shall seek to bring to you that notable picture of the open door and I shall stand at it and cry to those who are seeking the life of their sins—“Come here and I will show you the Man whom you seek. Here He lies—dead—slain by the hammer and the nail. Held not in the hand of a woman, but in the hand of the seed of the woman—the Man, Christ Jesus.”

I. First, then, let us try to picture THE SINNER GROWING UNEASY UNDER THE YOKE OF HIS SINS AND PLANNING A REVOLT AGAINST HIS OPPRESSORS.

It is said that when a man is born a slave, slavery is not near so irksome as when he has once been free. You will have found it, perhaps, in birds and such animals that we keep under our control. If they have never known what it is to fly to and fro in the air from tree to tree, they are happy in the cage. But if, after having once seen the world and floated in the clear air, they are condemned to live in slavery, they are far less content. This is the case with man—he is born a slave. The child in the cradle is born under sin and as we grow up we wear our manacles and scarcely know that they are about us.

Sin, we say, is second nature and certainly the evil nature we have received makes the usages of sin seem as if they were not so slavish as they are. No, some men have become so used to their bonds, that they live with no true idea of liberty and yet think themselves free. They take the names of freedom and call themselves libertines and free-thinkers and free-doers when they are the very worst of slaves and might hear their chains rattle if they had but ears to hear. Until the Spirit of God comes into the heart—so strange is the use of nature—we live contented in our chains.

We walk up and down our dungeon and think we are at large. We are driven about by our taskmasters and imagine that we are free. Once let the Spirit of God come into us—once let a word of life and liberty sound in our ears—once let Jehovah Jesus speak and we begin to be dissatisfied with our condition. Now the chain frets us. Now the fetter feels too small. Now we long for a wider march than we had before and are not content to be fettered forever to a sinful lust. We begin to have a longing for something better, though we know not what it is.

Now it is that the man begins to find fault with what he at one time thought was so passing excellent. He finds that now the cup which seemed to be all honey has traces of bitter in it. The cane once so sweet

and palatable has lost its lusciousness and he says within himself, "I wish I had some nobler food than these swine's husks. This is not fit food for me." He does not know that God has begun to kindle in him new life and a Divine nature—but he knows this—that he cannot be content to be what he was before. He frets and chafes like a lion in bonds that longs to range in the forest and wilderness. He cannot endure it.

And now, I say, it is that the man begins to act. His first action is the action of the children of Israel. He begins to cry unto the Lord. Perhaps it is not a prayer, as we use the term in ordinary conversation. He cannot put many words together. It is a sigh—a sigh for he knows not what. It is a groan after something—an indescribable something that he has not seen or felt—but of the existence of which he has some idea. "Oh God," he says, "deliver me! Oh God, I feel I am not what I should be, I am not what I wish to be. I am discontented with myself." And if the prayer does not take the actual shape of, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," yet it means all that, for he seems to say, "Lord, I know not what it is—I know not whether it is mercy or grace, or what the name of it may be. But I want something. I am a slave. I feel it all. Oh, that I could be free! Oh that I could be delivered!"

The man begins now, you see, to look for something higher than he has seen before. After this prayer comes action. "Now," says the man, "I must begin to be up and doing." And if the Spirit of God is truly dealing with him, he is not content with only prayer. He begins to feel that though it is little enough that he can do, yet he can do at least *something*. Drunkenness he forsakes—at one blow he lays that enemy in the dust. Then there is his cursing and his swearing—he tries to overcome that enemy, but the oath comes out when he least expects it. Perhaps it gives him weeks of struggling, but at last, that, too, is overcome.

Then come the practices of his trade—these, he feels, hurt his conscience. Here is another chain to be filed off—another rivet to be torn off. He toils, he strives, still crying evermore to God and at last he is free and that enemy is overthrown. He is like Barak. The Lord is helping him and his enemies flee before him. Oh my Brethren, I speak from experience, now. What a struggle that was which my young heart waged against sin! When God the Holy Spirit first quickened me, I scarcely knew of that strong armor whereon my soul could venture. Little did I know of the precious blood which has put my sins away and drowned them in the seas forever.

But I did know this—that I could not be what I was. That I could not rest happy unless I became something better—something purer than I felt. And oh, how my spirit cried to God with groans—I say it without any exaggeration—groans that could not be uttered! And oh, how I sought in my poor dark way to overcome first this sin, and then another. And so to do battle in God's strength against the enemies that assailed me and not, thank God, altogether without success, though still the battle had been lost unless He had come who is the Overcomer of sin and the Deliverer of His people and had put the hosts to flight.

Have I not some here tonight who are just in this position? They have not come to Mount Zion yet, but are fighting with the Amalekites in the

wilderness. They have not come to the blood of sprinkling, but somehow or other—they don't know exactly what condition theirs is—they are fighting up hill against a dread something which they would overcome. They cannot renounce the struggle, they sometimes fear they will be vanquished in the end.

Oh, my Brother or Sister, I am glad to find the Lord has done so much for you. This is one of the first marks of Divine life when we begin to fight against sin. Then courage, Brethren! There shall be another picture painted soon and that shall be your picture, too, when you shall be more than a conqueror, through Him that has loved you. But I dare say this is not the picture of all here. There are some of you who say you are not slaves and, therefore, you do not wish to be freed. But I tell you, Sirs, if any earthly potentate could command you to do what the devil makes you do, you would think yourselves the most oppressed beings in the world.

If there should be a law passed in Parliament and there should be power to put it into execution that you should go and sit several hours of the night until midnight and drink some vile poisonous stuff that would steal away your brains, so that you have to be wheeled home, you would say, "What vile tyranny! To force men to destroy their souls and bodies in that way." And yet you do it willfully of yourselves. And of the one blessed day of rest—the only one in seven that we have to rest in—if there were an enactment passed that you should open your shops on that day and pursue your trade, you would say, "This is a wretched land, to have such tyrants to govern it"—you would declare you would not do it.

And yet the devil makes you and you go and take down your shutters as greedily as if you would win Heaven by your Sunday trading. What slaves do men make of themselves when they most think themselves free! I have seen a man work harder and spend more money in seeking pleasure in that which makes him sick and ill—which makes his eyes red and his whole body feverish—than he would have done if a thousand acts of parliament had tried to drive him to do so.

The devil is indeed a cruel tyrant with his subjects—but he is such a tyrant that they willingly follow him. He rivets on them his chains and while they think they are going of their own free will, he sits grinning all the while and thinking how when their laughter will change to bitter tears, they shall be undeceived in the dread day in which Hell's fire shall burn up their delusion and the flames of the pit shall scatter the darkness that has concealed the Truth of God from their eyes.

Thus much, then, concerning the first picture—the sinner discontented and going to war with his sins.

II. And now we have the second picture—The SINNER HAVING GONE TO WAR WITH HIS OWN SINS, HAS, TO A GREAT EXTENT, BY GOD'S GRACE, OVERCOME THEM. But he feels when this is done, that it is not enough—that external morality will not save the soul. Like Barak, he has conquered Sisera. But, not content with seeing him flee away on his feet, he wants to have his dead body before him. "No," says he, "it is not enough to vanquish, I must destroy. It is not sufficient to get rid of evil habits, I must overcome the propensity to sin. It is not sufficient to put to

flight this sin or the other, I must trample the roots of corruption beneath my feet, that sin itself may be slain.”

Mark, my dear Hearers, that is not a work of the Spirit which is not a radical work. If you are content merely to conquer your sins and not to kill them, you may depend upon it, it is the mere work of morality—a surface work—and not the work of the Holy Spirit. Sirs, be not content with driving out your foes, or they will come back again to you. Be not satisfied with wearing the sheep’s skin. Be not content till your wolfish nature is taken from you and the nature of the sheep imparted. It is not enough to make clean the outside of the cup and the platter—Tit must be broken and a new vessel must be given. Be not satisfied with whitewashing the tomb. The morgue must be empty and where death reigned, life must reign.

There is no mistake, perhaps, more common in these dangerous times than to mistake externals for internals—the outward sign for the inward grace—the painted imitation of mortality for the solid jewels of spirituality. Up, Barak! Up, you son of Abinoam! You have routed the Sisera of your drunkenness. You have put the hosts of your sins to flight—but this is not enough. Sisera will return upon you with twice nine hundred chariots and you shall yet be overcome. Rest not content till the blood of your enemy stain the ground—until he is crushed and dead and slain.

Oh, Sinner, I beseech you, never be content until grace reigns in your heart and sin is altogether subdued. Indeed, this is what every renewed soul longs for and must long for, nor will it rest satisfied until all this is accomplished. There was a time when some of us thought we would slay our sins. We wanted to put them to death and we thought we would drown them in floods of penitence. There was a time, too, when we thought we would starve our sins. We thought we would keep out of temptation and not go and pander to our lusts and then they would die. Some of us can remember when we gagged our lusts, when we pinioned their arms and put their feet in the stocks and then thought that would deliver us.

But oh, Brethren all our ways of putting sin to death were not sufficient. We found the monster still alive, insatiate for his prey. We might rout his followers, but the monster was still our conqueror. We might put to flight our habits—but the nature of sin was still in us and we could not overcome it. Yet did we groan and cry daily, “Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” It is a cry to which we are accustomed even at this day and which we shall never cease to utter, till we can say of our sins, “They are gone.” Until we can say of the very nature of sin, that it has been extinguished and that we are pure and holy even as when the first Adam came from his Maker’s hands.

Well, I have some here, I have no doubt, who are like Barak pursuing after Sisera, but who are fainthearted. You are saying, “My sin can never be forgiven. It is too great—it must escape from me and, even if it were put to flight, it never could be overcome. I am so great a sinner, a sinner of such a double dye, a scarlet sinner I must always be. I was born in sin and I have grown up in it. And as the twig is bent the tree is inclined. Who can make straight such a gnarled oak as I am? Can the Ethiopian change

his skin, or the leopard his spots? If so, I, who am accustomed to do evil, may learn to do well.”

You begin to think that rivers might sooner run uphill than you could run to God and righteousness. You are tired of the battle and ready to lay down your arms and die. But you cannot, you must not go back to be the drunkard and the swearer that you were before and die in despair of ever overcoming the sin within. Nor must you think, “Oh, I have entered upon a fight that is too much for me, I shall yet fall by the hands of my enemy.”

III. Come here, I bring you to the third picture. I stand at THE DOOR today, not of a tent, but of a TOMB. And as I stand here, I say to the sinner who is anxious to know how his sins may be killed—how his corruption may be slain—“Come and I will show you the Man whom you seek and when you shall come in, YOU SHALL SEE YOUR SINS LAIN DEAD AND THE NAILS IN THEIR TEMPLES.”

Sinner, the sin you dread is forgiven when you have wept sorely before God and you have cast yourself on Christ and on Christ, alone. In the name of Him who is the Eternal God, I assure you that your sins are all forgiven. From the book of God’s remembrance they are blotted out. They are as clean gone as the clouds that floated through the sky last year and distilled their showers on the ground. Your sins are gone. Every one of them. The sin over which you have wept—the sin which caused you many a tear is gone and is forgiven.

Further—do you ask where your sin is? I tell you your sin is gone so that it never can be recalled. You are so forgiven that your sins can never have a resurrection. The nail is not driven through the *hands* of your sins, but through their temples. If you should live twice ten thousand years no sin could ever be laid to your charge again if you believe in Christ Jesus. You have no conscience of sin left. “As far as the east is from the west,” so far has He removed your transgressions from you. God has spoken and said—“Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven you,” and it is done. None can reverse the sentence. He has cast your sins into the depth of the sea and they can never be found again.

No, further, Sinner, for your peace and comfort, your sins are not only forgiven and killed so that they cannot rise again, but your sins have ceased to be. Their dead bodies, like the body of Moses, are brought where they never can be found. More than this, they do not exist. Again, O child of God, there does not remain so much as a shadow of sin—“Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?”—much less prove it against them? What dog can wag his tongue to accuse?—much less, what witness shall rise up to condemn? God has justified you, O Sinner! If you believe, and if you are so justified, you are as much accepted in God’s sight as if you had never sinned.

Had your life been blameless and your path been holy even to perfection, you had not been more pure in the eyes of Divine justice than you are tonight if your faith is fixed on the Cross of Christ. Right through the brain of all your sins, the hammer has driven the nail of Christ’s grace. The spear that pierced the Savior’s heart, pierced the heart of your iniquity. The grave in which He was buried was the tomb of all your sins.

And His resurrection was the resurrection of your spirit to light and joy unspeakable.

“Come and I will show you the Man whom you seek.” This is a refreshing sight, even to the child of God, who has seen it long ago and it will ever be solemn for us to contemplate the sin. It must ever be a direful spectacle, for an enemy, even when dead, is a ghastly sight. The head of Goliath, even though it makes us smile when it is cut off, is yet the head of a grim monster and he is a monster even when he is slain. God forbid we should ever glory in sin, but it is a theme for joy to a Christian when he can look upon his sins drowned in the blood of Jesus—

***“Plunged, as in a shoreless sea,
Lost, as in immensity.”***

My soul looks back to the days of my youth and remembers her former transgressions—she drops a tear of sorrow. She looks to the Cross and sees them all forgiven and she drops there tears of gratitude. My eyes run along the days of manhood and observe, with sorrow, omissions and commissions innumerable. But they light up with a smile most rapturous when I see the flood of Jesus’ blood swelling over the sands of my sins till they are all covered and no eye can behold them. Oh, child of God, come and see the Man whom you seek—here He lies slain before you. Come and see all your sins forever dead. Fear them not. Weep for them—avoid them in days to come and remember they are slain. Look at your sins as vanquished foes and always regard them as being nailed to His Cross—to His Cross who—

“Sang the triumph when He rose.”

But I hear you say, “Well, I have faith enough to believe that my sins are overcome in that way and that they are conquered and dead in that respect. But O, Sir, as to this body of sin within me—I cannot get it killed, I cannot get it overcome.” Now, when we begin the Divine life, we believe that we shall get rid of our old Adam entirely. I know most of you had a notion when you first started in the pilgrimage, that as soon as ever you received grace, depravity would be cast out—did you find it so, Brethren? I have heard some preachers laugh at the theory of the two natures. I never answered them, for I dare say they would not have comprehended me if I had tried the experiment, but one thing I know—that the theory of the two natures in a Christian is no theory to me, but a Truth of God which daily proves itself.

I cannot say with Ralph Erskine—

***“To good and evil equal bent,
And both a devil and a saint”—***

but if that is not the truth it is very near to it. It is next door to it. And while on the one hand I am able to see sin perishing within—on the other hand I cannot fail to see the struggle which my soul has to wage against it. And the daily warfare and fights necessarily ensue. I know that grace is the stronger principle and that it must overcome at last. But there are times when the old man seems for a little while to get the upper hand—Ishmael prevails and Isaac is cast to the ground. Though this I know—Ishmael has the promise and Isaac must be driven out.

Well, child of God, if you have to look upon the Sisera of your sins still fleeing from you—be of good cheer! It is the experience of all the people of

God. Moreover, there have been many who have said they did not feel this. But, my dear Brethren, they *did* feel it, only they did not use the same language as we do who have felt it. I know one or two good Brothers who say they believe in perfection, but I find all the perfection they believe in is the very perfection that I preach. It is perfection in Christ—they do not believe in perfection in *themselves*. Nor do I believe that any Christian who reads his own heart for a single day can indulge the idea of being totally free from the risings of depravity—and the risings of the heart after sin. If there is such, I can only say, “I wish I could change places with you, Brother, for it is my hard lot to have wars and fights day by day and it seems difficult to say sometimes which way the matter will end, or how the battle will be decided.”

Indeed, one could not know it at all except by faith, for sight seems to lead to an opposite opinion. Well, be of good cheer, Christian. Though the old man is not slain in you, as you know personally, yet I would have you remember that as you are in Christ, the old man is crucified—“knowing that your old man is crucified with Him.” And know this—the day shall come when the angels shall open wide the door and you that have been panting after your enemy, like Barak pressing after Sisera shall hear the welcome Spirit say, “Come and I will show you the Man whom you seek,” and there shall lie your old inbred lusts and he who is the father of them, old Satan himself, all chained and bound and cast into the Lake of Fire.

Then will you sing, indeed, unto the Lord, “Oh, sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously! His right hand and His holy arm has gotten Him the victory.” Till then, Brethren, pursue after your sins. Spare them not, neither great nor small and God speed you that you may fight valiantly and by His aid utterly overcome them.

As for you, poor Sinner whom I lately reminded that you can not slay your sins, nor work out your salvation—you CANNOT be your own deliverer—trust in your Master. Put your soul into the hands of Him who is able and willing to preserve and keep it and to protect it. And mark me, if tonight you will have nothing to do with yourself, but will give yourself to Christ entirely, then tonight you are saved. What if my Master should give me tonight some fishes at the first shaking of the net and what if some poor sinner should say within himself—

***“I’ll go to Jesus, though my sin,
Has like a mountain rose;
I know His courts, I’ll enter in,
Whatever may oppose.”***

Come, Sinner, come! Do you say you cannot come? “My sins, my sins!” Come and I will show you your sins nailed to the Cross of Christ. “But I must not come,” says one, “I have so hard a heart.” Come and I will show you your hard heart dissolved in a bath of Divine blood. “Oh, but,” still you say, “I dare not come.” Come and I will show you those fears of yours lulled into an eternal sleep and your soul resting on Christ shall never need to fear again, for you shall be His in time, His in life and death and His in an eternity of bliss.

May the Lord add His blessing now, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

SONGS OF DELIVERANCE

NO. 763

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 28, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“They that are delivered from the noise of archers in the places of drawing water, there shall they recount the righteous acts of the Lord, even the righteous acts toward the inhabitants of His villages in Israel: then shall the people of the Lord go down to the gates.”
Judges 5:11.*

DEBORAH sang concerning the overthrow of Israel's enemies and the deliverance granted to the tribes. We have a far richer theme for music—we have been delivered from worse enemies and saved by a greater salvation. Let our gratitude be deeper! Let our song be more jubilant! Glory be unto God! We can say that our sins which were like mighty hosts have been swept away—not by that ancient river, the river Kishon—but by streams which flowed from Jesus' side! Our great enemy has been overcome and his head is broken. Not Sisera, but Satan has been overthrown—the “Seed of the woman has bruised his head” forever. We are now ransomed from the galling yoke. We walk at liberty through the power of the great Liberator, the Lord Jesus.

The results which accrued from the conquest achieved by Barak are upon a small scale similar to those which come to us through the deliverance worked out by the Lord Jesus Christ. I shall take our text and spiritualize it—viewing its joyous details as emblematic of the blessings granted to us through our Redeemer. Those who went to draw water at the wells after Barak's victory were no longer disturbed by the robbers who lurked at the fountains for purposes of plunder. And instead of drawing the water by stealth and in hasty fear, the women joined their voices around the wellhead and sang of the mighty acts of God! And the citizens who had been cooped up within the town walls and dared not show themselves in the suburbs, ventured beyond the gates into the open country, transacted their business openly and enjoyed the sweets of security.

I think we can readily see that this is an instructive type of the condition into which our Lord Jesus Christ has brought us through the destruction of our sins and the overthrow of the powers of darkness. We shall, this morning, first, for a little time, think of the wells of salvation as cleared of enemies. Then we shall talk together upon the songs of praise to be rehearsed at the wells. And thirdly we shall have a little to say upon the visitation of the gates, which we can now enjoy with safety.

I. Our text tells us of WELLS CLEARED FROM THE FOE and speaks of those who “are delivered from the noise of archers in the places of drawing water.” We thank God that we who are the children of the Most High have wells to go to. The world is a wilderness—say what we will of it we cannot make it into anything else. “This is not our rest, it is polluted.” We are

passing through the desert of earth to the Promised Land of Heaven, and we praise God that we have wells to drink of on the road.

As Israel drank at Elim and as the Patriarchs drank at Beersheba, so have we wells of salvation out of which we joyfully draw the Living Water. Our great inexhaustible well is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is, indeed, the great “deep that lies under.” The “deep that couches beneath.” The secret spring and source from which the crystal streams of life flow through the wells of instrumentality and ordinance. “All my fresh springs are in You.”

Whenever we come to the Lord Jesus Christ we drink and are refreshed. No thirst can abide where He is. “He that drinks of the water that I shall give him,” He says, “shall never thirst.” Glory be to His name, we know the truth of this—

***“I came to Jesus, and I drank
Of that life-giving stream.
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
And now I live in Him.”***

As often as we muse upon His Person, commune with Him in holy fellowship, think of His wounds, triumph in His ascension and long for His second advent, so often does our spirit drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem and we lift up our head.

Arising out of this greatest Fountain we have wells from which we draw the waters of comfort. First there is this Book, this golden Book, this Book of God, the Word of God with its thousands of promises, suitable to every case, applicable to all seasons, faithful and true, yes and Amen in Christ Jesus. Oh, how frequently, when we have been fainting and ready to die, we have found that promise true, “I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground!”

When we have turned to the Word and searched there and found the promise, and fed upon it, as one that finds great spoil we have rejoiced in God’s Word! The doctrines of this Book are inexpressibly reviving to us. He that understands them shall find them to be a well of life and comfort. I need not instance those doctrines, for you know them—you feed upon them—they are your daily bread. Beloved, when we think of God’s eternal love to His people. When we meditate upon redemption by blood. When we consider the truth of effectual calling by the Holy Spirit. When we remember the immutable faithfulness of the Most High, the Covenant suretyship of our Lord Jesus. When we look forward to the perfection which will be ultimately ours, and to the haven of eternal rest to which every one of the Lord’s people shall be brought, we do indeed find that—

***“Here in the fair Gospel-field,
Wells of free salvation yield streams of life,
A plenteous store.
And our soul shall thirst no more.”***

As the Word read is thus precious, so is the Word preached. If we listen to one whom God helps to speak in His name we shall often find ourselves returning from the place of worship in a very different state from that in which we entered it. How often have you lost your burdens when you have been sitting in the assembly of the Saints! I know, you feeble ones, you have oftentimes been refreshed! You have bowed yourselves down to Siloah’s brook that flows hard by the oracle of God, and as you drank of

its cooling streams you have felt as though you could face the enemy once more, and go back to a world of toil and trouble, strong for labor and patient for the endurance of suffering.

Happy are you to whom the Word has come with demonstration of the Spirit and with power! The fruitful lips of the preacher who speaks experimentally, who speaks clearly, who speaks of that which he has tasted and handled of the good Word of Truth—those sanctified lips, I say—“drop as the rain,” and “distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb.” The mouth of the righteous becomes a well of life unto the people of God.

So, my Brethren, it is also with the well of the ordinances. I think we shall never forget the time when we drew water out of the well of Baptism—when we were baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit upon our profession of faith. We found Believers’ immersion to be a most instructive emblem of our death, burial, and resurrection with the Lord Jesus. And we have not forgotten, to this day, that we then avowed ourselves to be dead to the world, dead to the Law, dead to self, dead *with* Christ—nor has the thought of resurrection with Jesus, as typified by the uplifting out of the pool, been forgotten by us.

We know and feel that we are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God, and we rejoice that He “has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” The recollection of that happy day when we gave ourselves up publicly and unreservedly to Jesus is still fragrant. Oh, how sweet to sing humbly but heartily—

***“Tis done! The great transaction’s done!
I am my Lord’s, and He is mine:
He drew me, and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice Divine.”***

So with the Lord’s Supper. My witness is, and I think I speak the mind of many of God’s people now present, that coming as some of us do, weekly, to the Lord’s Table, we do *not* find the breaking of bread to have lost its significance—it is always fresh to us. I have often remarked on Lord’s-Day evening, whatever the subject may have been, whether Sinai has thundered over our heads, or the plaintive notes of Calvary have pierced our hearts—it always seems equally appropriate to come to the breaking of bread.

Shame on the Christian Church that she should put it off to once a month, and mar the first day of the week by depriving it of its glory in the meeting together for fellowship and breaking of bread, and showing forth of the death of Christ till He come! They who once know the sweetness of each Lord’s-Day celebrating His Supper will not be content, I am sure, to put it off to less frequent seasons. Beloved, when the Holy Spirit is with us, ordinances are wells to the Christian—wells of rich comfort and of near communion.

But I must not forget the Mercy Seat. What a well that is to the Christian when he can draw near unto God with true heart! It is a glorious thing to have such a well as that in the family, where, in prayer with the children, you can bring all the necessities of the household before God and mention each child, if you will, and all the troubles of the past, or all

the expected difficulties of the coming day. Let us never give up that well! But, as for *private* prayer, Brothers and Sisters, this world were dreary, indeed, if we could not pour out our sorrows into our Father's ear!

This is the poor man's riches! This is the sick man's medicine! This is the faint man's cordial! This is the weak one's strength! This is the ignorant man's school! This is the strong man's confidence! Neglect prayer and you will soon discover that all your spiritual powers wax weak—but be much in supplication—and he that is mighty on his knees is mighty everywhere! He that looks God in the face every morning will never fear the face of man! And he who looks Christ in the face each evening may well close his eyes in sweet repose, feeling that if he should never wake to this world of care, he shall wake up in the likeness of his Lord! Oh, yes, the Mercy Seat is a well of refreshment, indeed!

Over and above this, every form of fellowship with Jesus worked in us by the Spirit, is a well of salvation. This is an unknown thing to the ungodly—he enters not into this secret. But you, my fellow Christians, know what communion with God means, for oftentimes, even when we are in business, or taken up with the world's cares, our hearts are away with our Beloved on the mountains of myrrh and in the beds of spices! We get us away from the world's toils to lean our head upon His bosom, to sit in His banqueting house, and see the love banner waving over our heads.

Beloved, we are no strangers to Jesus Christ, blessed be His name, and He is no stranger to us! We have seen Him through the lattices of the ordinances! We have found the means of Divine Grace to be like windows of agate and gates of carbuncle through which we have beheld Him. We have Him in our hearts full often—He embraces our soul—we carry the fire of His love flaming on the altar of our affections. He is our dear Companion, our ever present help in time of trouble! Thus have I mentioned some of the wells.

Now, concerning them all, it may be said that they can never be stopped up by our foes. We read that in old times the enemies stopped up the wells, but neither Hell nor its infernal train can ever fill up one of the wells which the Lord has dug and filled by His Spirit! If outward ordinances are stopped, yet the great deep that lies under will find a vent *somewhere*—and if we were forbidden to draw near to the Lord's Table, or to meet to listen to the Word, yet, blessed be God, we could pray! And we could have secret fellowship with Jesus—and so the wells could not so be stopped that the thirsty Christian should be deprived of his drink in due season.

Moreover, as they cannot be stopped, so neither can they be taken away from us. The Philistine king, Abimelech, strove with Abraham and with Isaac to take away the wells—but these are ours by covenant engagements—these are given to us in the Eternal Council. They are guaranteed to us by the solemn league of the Eternal Three—and none of these Covenant blessings shall be wrested from the heirs of life, who are heirs of all things in Christ Jesus! Though these fountains cannot be stopped up or taken away, yet we can be molested in coming near to them.

It seems that archers and wells frequently go together. It was the blessing of Joseph—“Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well

whose branches run over the wall.” But what next? “The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him.” And so in the text—here are wells, but there is the *noise* of *archers* which greatly disturbs those who go to draw water. Brothers and Sisters—I think you know, but I will refresh your memories—you know what the noise of archers has been to you when you have tried to draw water.

Years ago, with some of us, our sins were the archers that shot at us when we would gladly come to Christ and drink of His salvation. When we bowed the knee in prayer, a fiery arrow would dart into our hearts—“How dare *you* pray? God hears not *sinner*!” When we read the Word of God, another barbed shaft would be shot against us—“What have *you* to do with God’s Word? There can be no promise there for such as *you* are. Don’t you know that you are a condemned sinner and that Book curses you solemnly? Turn away from it, of what service can it be to *you*?”

Do you not remember how you used to come up to this House sighing for comfort and though the preacher frequently invited you to Christ, and tried to exhibit a crucified Savior before your eyes, yet the noise of the archers prevented you drawing from the well? Arrow after arrow of remorse, conviction, terror, and alarm pierced your soul so that you could not obtain peace with God! You used to envy the very least of the Lord’s people when you saw them rejoicing in Christ, while you could not so much as hope yourself. You were told to believe, but faith seemed impossible to you! You were bid to rest upon the finished work, but you only could say, “I would, but cannot trust.”

The twanging of the bow and the whizzing of the shaft were a terrible noise which prevented all drawing of water! And sometimes Satan beat the big Hell drum in your ears—“The wrath to come! The wrath to come! The wrath to come!” And as you thought about the Judgment Day and the Great White Throne, and the Resurrection, and the dividing of the sheep from the goats and the, “Depart, you cursed,” and the everlasting fire, and all the terrors of a dread eternity—divested of every beam of hope it seemed impossible for you to draw water out of any one of the wells—though perhaps you tried them all, and tried them again and again, as I did, year after year—yet you could not obtain so much as a single drop to cool your parched tongue while it seemed as if it would cleave to the roof of your mouth in utter despair.

Ah, but Beloved you are delivered from the noise of archers now! Your sins, which are many, are forgiven you! Now you can come to Jesus! Now you can come to the ordinances! Now you can read the Bible! Now you hear the Word and you find that God’s paths drop fatness. There is to you a river, the streams of which make glad all your powers. Oh, how precious, now, these wells have become because you can, in unmolested peace, draw water! And though sometimes the devil would gladly shoot at you, yet you know you have a glorious Shield who is the Lord’s Anointed and has turned away all wrath from you so that none can lay anything to your charge—for you are accepted in the Beloved, justified by faith—and have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Will not you who are delivered from the noise of archers in the places of drawing water bless the Lord?

But I should not wonder if since that first race of archers called *sins* has died out, some of you have been much molested by another tribe of archers who trouble me a great deal at times, namely, the archers called *doubts* and *fears*. These sad villains will, if they can, attack every soul that desires to enjoy the means of Divine Grace and the Grace of the means. "Ah," says Satan, even to God's child, "remember your slips and your failures! Remember your shortcomings, your slackness in prayer, your indifference to God's glory, your hardness of heart! How can you think of receiving a promise?"

Just as you are going to grasp some Divine Word out of your Bible and suck out its honey, it seems as though something strikes your hand and you are obliged to drop the text altogether, lest you should be acting presumptuously. No hymn of joyful assurance suited you, but you began moaning out—

***"Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought,
Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I His or am I not?"***

It is poor work coming to the Lord's Table when you are afraid that you are none of His! It is wretched work even listening to the ministry when you dare not claim the precious things which are delivered! Yes, and even the Word of God is a comfortless book when you cannot feel that you have a saving interest in its promises.

Yet I thank God, when our faith is in exercise, and our hope is clear that we can see our interest in Christ. We come to Him just as we came at first and cast ourselves wholly upon Him. Then we no longer fear the archers but are rid of every fear! We "know whom we have believed, and are persuaded that He is able to keep that which we have committed unto Him." And, no longer disturbed by our enemies we sit by the well's brink and are refreshed. Yet I should not wonder if another band of archers has sometimes attacked you when you have been at the wells, namely, your *cares*.

Dear Mother, the thought of the children at home has frequently disturbed your devotions in the assembly of the Saints. Good Friend engaged in business, you do not always find it easy to put a hedge between Saturday and Sunday. The cares of the week will stray into the sacred enclosure of the day of rest and thus the cruel archers worry you. Yes, and perhaps in the case of those of us who are engaged in God's work, even our solemn engagements enlist against us a set of archers unknown to others. I mean anxieties about the right conducting of services and arranging the various departments of the Church.

We become, like Martha, cumbered with much *servicing* even though we are serving the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and this deprives us of the delightful sitting at His feet, which is Heaven below. It is well to be able to cast all our cares on Him who cares for us, and thus, by an act of faith in our heavenly Father to be delivered from the noise of these archers. One thing you have, dear Friends, for which you cannot be too thankful, namely, you have a deliverance from the archers of ecclesiastical discord.

We have peace within our borders. We have not this bickering and that division. We are not divided Brother against Brother as some of our Churches are, which are rent by schisms, torn in pieces by stripes which might well cause them great searching of heart. When we come together, we come to edify one another in peace, for we love each other in the Lord. We have not to lament that the House of God is a place of our sorest wounding—it is to us a place of rest—where our best friends, our kindred, dwell and where God, our Savior, reigns. We are delivered from that noise of archers at Church meetings. And you who know how sharply some can shoot may well be glad of rest.

Again, we are happily delivered from political persecutions. We have not to set scouts upon the mountains, as the covenants of old, when they met in some lonely glen for worship. We have not to put one of the deacons at the door to warn us when the constables were coming to arrest us, as the members of this very church did, according to our records, in years gone by. The minister has not to escape and hide himself from the officers, and the members have no need to hasten to their homes like scattered sheep hunted by the wolf in the form of an armed band. By God's Grace every man under his own vine and fig tree we sit, none making us afraid—for which we are not thankful enough, I am quite sure.

May God grant that, remembering our peaceful privileges in being now screened from persecutions, from ecclesiastical troubles, from carnal cares, from inward doubts, and above all, from the plague of sin, we may be like those who in the days of Deborah were delivered from the noise of archers in the places of the drawing of water!

Enough upon that, only make sure that you pay your need of gratitude to your gracious God. This reminding you of your mercies I am afraid is dull work to some of you, but if you had them taken away, you would think differently. One might almost sigh for a brush of persecution to wake some of you! Just a little salt cast here and there to make some of the sore places smart! Surely we go to sleep unless the whip is now and then laid on us. A stake or two at Smithfield might once again give back the old fire of enthusiasm to the Church.

But in these warm sunny days we forget our mercies. We go to sleep upon the bench instead of tugging at the oar. And when we ought to be serving God with all our might and soul, I fear that the most of us who are saved are dreaming our lonely way to Heaven, indifferent to a very great extent to the glory of God and forgetful of our indebtedness to Christ for what He has done for us.

II. Now we turn the subject and come, secondly, to notice THE SONGS BY THE WELL. As when the people came to the wells of old, they were apt to talk with one another if all was peaceful, so when we come up to the ordinances of God's House and enjoy fellowship with Jesus, we should not spend our time in idle chat, but we should rehearse the works of the Lord.

In Deborah's day, when one friend came to the well and met another, and half-a-dozen gathered together, one would say, "Delightful change, this! We could not come to the well a month ago without being afraid that an arrow would pierce our hearts." "Ah," said another, "our family went without water for a long time. We were all bitten with thirst because we

dare not come to the well.” Then, another would say, “But have you heard how it is? It was that woman, the wife of Lapidoth, Deborah, who called out Barak, and went with him to the battle! Have you not heard of the glorious fight they had, and how the river Kishon swept Jabin away, and Jael smote Sisera through the temple?” “The Lord has done it,” said another. “It was the Lord’s doing, and is it not marvelous in our eyes?”

And so, around the well’s brink, when they were delivered from the noise of archers, they recounted the works of God! And before they wended their way to their several homes, they said one to another, “Let us sing unto the praise of God who has set our country free.” And so, catching the tune, each woman went back to her village home bearing the pitcher for her household, and singing as she went. This is very much what *we* ought to do. When we come together we ought to recount the work that Jesus Christ has done for us—the great work which He did on Calvary! The great work which He is doing now as he stands before the Father’s Throne.

We should talk experimentally and tell one another of what we have known—what Christ has done for us—through what troubles we have been sustained. In what perils we have been preserved. What blessings we have enjoyed. What ills, so well deserved, have been averted from us. We have not enough of this recounting the works of the Lord. It was a sign of the Saints in the olden times, that “They that feared the Lord spoke often one to another. And the Lord hearkened, and heard.” O let us get back to that primitive simplicity of *conversation*, and let us recount, as the text says, the righteous acts of Jehovah!

Let us go through our recounting for the grand orchestra of the skies! Let us begin to praise God and stir each other up to gratitude here, that we may be getting ready to join the overwhelming hallelujah with the ten thousand times ten thousand who forever praise God and the Lamb! Around all the wells, whichever they may be, of which we drink, let our conversation be concerning Christ and His dying love—concerning the Holy Spirit and His conquering power—concerning the Providence of God and its goodness and its faithfulness! And then, as we wend *our* way to our different homes, let us go with music in our hearts and music on our lips to take music to our households, each man and woman magnifying the name of the Lord!

Did you observe carefully what it was they sang? “The acts of the Lord.” But there is an adjective appended, “The *righteous* acts of the Lord.” Righteousness is that attribute which the carnal man fears but he who sees the righteousness of God satisfied by the Atonement of Christ is charmed even by the severe aspect of God dressed as a Judge. The justified child of God is not afraid of the righteousness of God, for he can meet all its demands. He likens it to the golden lions which stood in pairs upon the steps of the throne of Solomon—not meant to drive away the petitioner, but to let him see how strong, how powerful—was that throne upon which Israel leaned.

I see the righteousness and holiness of God like huge colossal lions as I look at His Throne, and I delight, as I ascend the steps, to bow before the glorious Father’s face to know that His righteousness is engaged to save

those for whom Jesus died. Let us recount the righteous vengeance of Calvary, the terrors that God cast forth upon His Son when He cursed our sins by making Christ to be a curse for us though He knew no sin. This is a subject upon which we should delight to dwell.

Then, if you observe, it was the righteous acts of the Lord toward “the inhabitants of His villages in Israel.” Yes, the very marrow of the Gospel lies in special, discriminating, distinguishing Grace. As for your universal grace, let those have it who care for such meatless bones—but the special Gospel of electing love, of distinguishing Grace—this is the Gospel which is like butter in a lordly dish to a child of God, and he that has once fed on it will take no meaner fare.

I delight to believe in the universal *benevolence* of God—He is *good* to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works—but His Saints shall bless Him for they are not received with benevolence merely, but with *complacency*. They are not only His servants, but His sons—not so much the works of His hands as the children of His loins, the darlings of His bosom, the favorites of His heart, the objects of His eternal choice, the delight of His eyes, His peculiar treasure, His chosen portion, His precious jewels, His rest and delight! The Lord prizes His Saints above all the world beside.

He gave Egypt and Ethiopia for them—He did more, He gave His Son for them. He gave Heaven’s brightest jewel, Heaven’s glory, Heaven’s Heaven He gave that He might redeem them from all iniquity and to be His own peculiar people. Thus, my beloved Brethren, take care when you converse upon the Lord’s acts, that you speak of His peculiar favor towards Israel, His chosen, His elect. Note with care that the works which are to be recounted are done towards the inhabitants of the villages of Israel. Does not this suggest that we ought frequently to magnify the Lord’s choice favor and tender indulgence towards the least and feeblest of His family?

Those villagers, those who knew so little, those who possessed so little, those who could do so little, those who were so weak, so undefended—these were rescued by the Divine hand. Speak, then, of the mercy of God towards the little ones of Israel and you will have no narrow field of speech. Why, if there is a choice word in the Bible it is always for the weak ones! If there is a peculiarly precious promise, it is generally for the feeble-minded. The best carriage in all the world that I ever heard of is Jesus’ bosom, but then that is for the *lamb*—not for those who are strong—but for the tender and frail.

Those most compassionate of sentences in which Jesus seems to have most fully expressed His gentleness, and to have employed the most tender similes are evidently spoken with an eye to the trembling and timid. Take for instance that one, “The bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench.” “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” Such words as these we may well talk of together when we meet at the wells of ordinances, and so recount the praise of God and His righteous acts, even His righteous acts towards the villagers of Israel.

III. Lastly, the text says, “Then shall the people of the Lord GO DOWN TO THE GATES,” by which several things may be intended. First, when

the people of God are altogether delivered from their sins, and their cares, and their troubles by the great redemption of the Lord Jesus and the power of His Spirit, then they enjoy great liberty.

At times we are like Jeremiah who said, "I am shut up and cannot come forth." Or like another whose way was hedged up with thorns. But when we live in great nearness to Christ, the gates are all opened and we are the Lord's freemen. Instead of needing to keep within the limits which fear prescribes, we take our walks abroad in the fields of blessed liberty and Gospel privilege. We walk from Dan to Beersheba in Covenant mercies. Do you know what the liberty of a child of God is, dear Friends, or are you, all your lifetime, subject to bondage?

If you are a child of God you know something of it, but if you are not initiated into the mystery of the inner life you will very probably confound liberty with license. The liberty of the man of the world is liberty to commit evil without restraint. The liberty of a child of God is to walk in holiness without hindrance. When the Believer's ways are enlarged, he delights to run in the statutes of the Lord. *Obedience* is *freedom* to the Lord's servant. Christ's yoke is easy and His burden is light.

I fear that very many of you who are present this morning are slaves—some of you slaves to fashion, you wear the fetters most conspicuously. You are the serfs of custom and you have not the moral courage to rebel. You bow your necks to human dictation and admit that you must do what others do. You have neither the manhood nor the Grace to strike out a path of your own. Now the true child of God does not care one snap of his finger what others may do—to his own Master he stands or falls. He does what is right, and would sooner take the lion of Hell by the beard than do wrong.

If others like his integrity, so much the better for them. If they do not like it, they are condemned out of their own mouths. I take it that the genuine Christian who has once come to fear God fears nobody else and that he scorns to hamper himself with the sinful customs which sway the slavish hordes of mankind. He chooses for himself by the light of God's Word, and when he sees a thing to be right, he does it and he asks no man's liberty on that account. It is a most glorious liberty which a man possesses when he is no longer in bondage to men—to smart under their threats or to fatten in their smiles.

Glorious was that ancient father who threw back the threats of his enemies and laughed them to scorn. "We will banish you!" they said. "No," said the Christian hero, "you cannot do that, because I shall be at home anywhere! I am a citizen of Heaven! I am a stranger and a pilgrim upon earth." "But we will shut you out from all your friends!" "No," he said, "you are not able even to do that, since my best Friend will always be with me." "We shall deprive you of your goods!" "But," he replied, "that I know you cannot do, for I gave them all away to the poor but yesterday." "Well, we will take away your life!" "In that, too, I am undismayed," said he, "for death will only give me the life for which I long."

No wounds could be inflicted upon a warrior so invulnerable, and just so secure is every man who is clad in the armor of faith! He is above the molestation of mankind, for his life is hidden with Christ! His conversa-

tion is in Heaven! He is free from fear since he has nothing to fear—all his interests are secure. He has cast himself upon his God in Christ, and since God has made him free he is free, indeed. “He is the free man whom the Truth makes free, and all are slaves beside.”

You do not know what a joy it is to walk erect in conscious, mental, moral, spiritual, God-given freedom. Slaves of priestcraft, we pity you! Your chains we would not wear for all the wealth of India! Bond slaves of the Law, we mourn for you! For your service is heavy, and your captivity is terrible. Serfs of custom, you are more to be scorned than pitied! Break your bands asunder and wear the yoke no more. This day we feel as emancipated slaves must have felt when the last fetter fell to the ground! O glorious Liberty, no price can show your excellence and all the things which we can desire are not to be compared with you.

To go down to the gates, however, means something else, for citizens went down to the gates to exercise authority and judgment. He that is in Christ discerns spirits, and separates between the excellent and the reprobate. “The spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.” The Believers, being led of the Spirit, discern between the precious and the vile. They know the voice of their Shepherd, but a stranger they will not follow for they know not the voice of strangers. The Believers judge this world, and by their living testimony condemn its sin. “Know you not that we shall judge angels” in the day of the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ? Instead of being judged and following others, they who love God become the leaders in right, and are as God’s mouth rebuking iniquity.

To go down to the gates signified, also, to go forth to war. When a Christian man is saved he is not content with his own safety—he longs to see others blessed. He can now go out of the gates to attack the foe who once held him in bondage and therefore he girds on his weapons. When will the Church of God be inflamed by the sacred desire of carrying the war for Christ into the enemy’s territory? I think I see a great deal in our Churches now of a dangerously lethargic conservatism—a settling down contented with our Churches—delighted to strengthen our own hands, to keep together what we have, and careless about enlargement.

The object of many Churches of considerable age seems to be consolidation and nothing more. But rest assured that the truest consolidation is *enlargement*, the best conservatism is *progress*, the truest way to keep what you have is to *get more*, the best way to retain the Divine Grace you now possess is to crave for more and more of the blessed spiritual gift! Brethren, if Christ has delivered us from the noise of archers and we are at perfect peace with Heaven, do not let us fold our arms and say, “The work is done, let us sleep in peace.”

O you saved! Hasten to the armory! Array yourselves in the parade and grasp the sword, for now you are called by Christ to a holy warfare! If you are saved you must seek to save others! If you have received the Light, carry it into the dark places. If you have escaped from the jaw of the lion, and the paw of the bear, now go forth to fight with the monster and tear others from his power. I trust that the most of you are engaged in some Christian service, but so often as I come into this pulpit and think of the

numbers of Believers in this church, I feel concerned that we should not suffer any part of our territory to lie idle as waste ground—that we should not have a *single member* in this Church who is doing nothing.

I shall be satisfied, perfectly satisfied, if each one is doing what he can. We cannot expect more, neither does the Lord expect according to what a man has not, but according to what he has. But are you, my Brothers and Sisters who have been lifted up into the glorious position of saved souls, are you glorifying Christ and finishing the work which is given you to do? I fear that some of you are not. You can eat the fat and drink the sweet, but you make but small return unto your Lord. I speak to you as a loving Brother in Christ, and I pray you think how life will look in the light of its last hour.

Think of your residence on earth as you will view it from those summits of bliss beyond the river! Will you wish, then, to have wasted time, to have lost opportunities? If you could know regrets in the realm of blessedness, would not these be the regrets that you have not served Christ better, loved Him more, spoken of Him more often, given more generously to His cause, and more uniformly proved yourselves to be consecrated to Him?

I am afraid that such would be the form of the regrets of Paradise if any could intrude within those gates of pearl. Come, let us live while we live! Let us live up to the utmost stretch of our manhood! Let us ask the Lord to brace our nerves, to string our sinews and make us true crusaders, knights of the blood-red Cross, consecrated men and women, who, for the love we bear Christ's name, will count labor to be ease, and suffering to be joy, and reproach to be honor, and loss to be gain! If we have never yet given ourselves wholly to Christ as His disciples, hard by His Cross where we see His wounds still bleeding afresh and Himself quivering in pain for us—let us pledge ourselves in His strength that we give ourselves wholly to Him without reserve! And so may He help us, by His Spirit, that the vow may be redeemed and the resolve may be carried out—that we may love Christ, and dying may find it gain.

Brothers and Sisters, I cannot press this home to you as I would. I must leave it with your own consciences and with the eternal Spirit. If Jesus is not worthy, do not serve Him. But if He is right honorable, serve Him as He ought to be served! If Heaven and eternal things are not weighty, then trifle with them! But if they are solemn realities, I beseech you, as honest men treat them as realities. If there is a day coming when all your business, and your worldly cares, and your fleeting pleasures will seem to be mere children's toys. If there is an hour coming when to have served God will be glory—when to have won souls will be renown—then live as in the light of that Truth of God, and God help you by His blessed Spirit. Amen and Amen!

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“MAGNIFICAT”

NO. 340

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, OCTOBER 14, 1860,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.**

***“Awake, awake, Deborah! Awake, awake, utter a song. Arise, Barak
and lead your captivity captive, you son of Abinoam.”
Judges 5:12.***

MANY of the saints of God are as mournful as if they were captives in Babylon, for their life is spent in tears and sighing. They will not chant the joyous Psalm of praise and if there are any that require of them a song, they reply, “How can we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land?” But, my Brethren, we are not captives in Babylon. We do not sit down to weep by Babel’s streams. The Lord has broken our captivity, He has brought us up out of the house of our bondage. We are freemen. We are not slaves. We are not sold into the hand of cruel taskmasters, but, “we which have believed do enter into rest” (Heb. 4:3).

Moses could not give rest to Israel. He could bring them to Jordan, but across the stream he could not conduct them—Joshua alone could lead them into the lot of their inheritance and our Joshua, our Jesus, has led us into the land of promise. He has brought us into a land which the Lord our God thinks on. A land of hills and valleys. A land that flows with milk and honey. And though the Canaanites still are in the land and plague us full sore, yet is it all our own and He has said unto us, “All things are yours. Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours. And you are Christ’s and Christ is God’s” (1 Cor. 3:21-23).

We are not, I say, captives, sold under sin. We are a people who sit every man under his own vine and his own fig tree, none making us afraid. We dwell in “a strong city. Salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks” (Isa. 26:1). We have come unto Zion, the city of our solemnities and the mourning of Babylon is not suitable to the palace of the great King, which is beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth. Let us, “serve the Lord with gladness, and come before His presence with singing” (Psa. 100:2).

Many of God’s people live as if their God were dead. Their conduct would be quite consistent if the promises were not yes, and amen. If God were a faithless God. If Christ were not a perfect Redeemer. If the Word of God might, after all, turn out to be untrue. If He had not power to keep

His people and if He had not love enough with which to hold them even to the end, then might they give way to mourning and to despair. Then might they cover their heads with ashes and wrap their loins about with sackcloth.

But while God is Jehovah, just and true. While His promises stand as fast as the eternal mountains. While the heart of Jesus is true to His spouse. While the arm of God is unpalsied and His eye undimmed. While His Covenant and His oath are unbroken and unchanged—it is not comely, it is not seemly for the upright to go mourning all their days. You children of God, refrain yourselves from weeping and make a joyful noise unto the Rock of your salvation. Let us come before His Presence with thanksgiving and show ourselves glad in Him with Psalms—

***“Your harps, you trembling saints,
Down from the willows take;
Loud to the praise of love Divine,
Bid every string awake.”***

First, I shall urge upon you a stirring up of all your powers to sacred song. “Awake, awake, Deborah! Awake, awake, utter a song.” In the second place, I shall persuade you to practice a sacred leading of your captivity captive. “Arise, Barak and lead your captivity captive, you son of Abinoam.”

I. First, then, A STIRRING UP OF ALL OUR POWERS TO PRAISE GOD, according to the words of the holy woman in the text, “Awake, awake”—repeated yet again “Awake, awake.”

1. What is there that we need to awaken if we would praise God? I reply, we ought to arouse all the bodily powers. Our flesh is sluggish. We have been busy with the world, our limbs have grown fatigued, but there is power in Divine joy to arouse even the body itself, to make the heavy eyelids light, to reanimate the drowsy eyes and quicken the weary brain. We should call upon our bodies to awake, especially our tongue, “the glory of our frame.” Let it put itself in tune like David’s harp of old. A toil-worn body often makes a mournful heart. The flesh has such a connection with the spirit that it often bows down the soul.

Come, then, my Flesh, I charge you, awake! Blood, leap in my veins! Heart, let your pulsing be as the joy strokes of Miriam’s timbrel! Oh, all my bodily Frame, stir up yourself now and begin to magnify and bless the Lord, who made you and who has kept you in health and preserved you from going down into the grave.

Surely we should call on all our mental powers to awake. Wake up, my Memory, and find matter for the song. Tell what God has done for me in days gone by. Fly back, you Thoughts, to my childhood—sing of cradle mercies. Review my youth and its early favors. Sing of longsuffering grace,

which followed my wandering and bore with my rebellions. Revive before my eyes that gladsome hour when first I knew the Lord and proclaim again the matchless story of the, “Streams of mercy never ceasing,” which have flowed to me since then and which, “call for songs of loudest praise.”

Awake, my Judgment, and give measure to the music. Come forth, my Understanding, and weigh His loving kindness in scales and His goodness in the balances. See if you can count the small dust of His mercies. See if you can understand the riches unsearchable which He has given to you in that unspeakable gift of Christ Jesus my Lord. Reckon up His eternal mercies to you—the treasures of that Covenant which He made on your behalf, before you were born. Sing, my Understanding, sing aloud of that matchless wisdom which contrived—of that Divine love which planned—and of that eternal grace which carried out the scheme of your redemption.

Awake, my Imagination, and dance to the holy melody. Gather pictures from all worlds. Bid sun and moon stay in their courses and join in your new song. Constrain the stars to yield the music of the spheres. Put a tongue into every mountain and a voice into every wilderness. Translate the lowing of the cattle and the scream of the eagle. Hear the praise of God in the rippling of the rills, the dashing of the cataracts and the roaring of the sea, until all His works in all places of His dominion bless the Lord.

But especially let us cry to all the graces of our spirit—“awake.” Wake up, my Love, for you must strike the keynote and lead the strain. Awake and sing unto your Beloved a song touching your well-Beloved. Give unto Him choice canticles, for He is the fairest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely. Come forth, then, with your richest music and praise the name which is as ointment poured forth.

Wake up, my Hope, and join hands with your sister—Love. And sing of blessings yet to come. Sing of my dying hour, when He shall be with me on my couch. Sing of the rising morning, when my body shall leap from its tomb into her Savior’s arms! Sing of the expected advent, for which you look with delight! And, O my Soul, sing of that Heaven which He has gone before to prepare for you, “that where He is, there may His people be.” Awake my Love—awake my Hope—and you, my Faith, awake also! Love has the sweetest voice, Hope can thrill forth the higher notes of the saved scale. But you, O Faith—with your deep resounding base melody—you must complete the song.

Sing of the promises sure and certain. Rehearse the glories of the Covenant ordered in all things and sure. Rejoice in the sure mercies of David! Sing of the goodness which shall be known to you in all your trials yet to come. Sing of that blood which has sealed and ratified every Word of

God. Glory in that eternal faithfulness which cannot lie and of that Truth of God which cannot fail.

And you, my Patience, utter your gentle but most gladsome hymn. Sing today of how He helped you to endure in sorrows' bitterest hour. Sing of the weary way along which He has borne your feet and brought you at last to lie down in green pastures, beside the still waters. Oh, all my Graces, Heaven-begotten as you are, praise Him who did beget you. You children of His Grace, sing unto your Father's name and magnify Him who keeps you alive. Let all that in is me be stirred up to magnify and bless His holy name!

Then let us wake up the energy of all those powers—the energy of the body, the energy of the mind, the energy of the spirit. You know what it is to do a thing coldly, weakly. As well might we not praise at all. You know also what it is to praise God passionately—to throw energy into all the song and so to exult in His name. So do you, each one of you, this day. And if Michal, Saul's daughter, should look out of the window and see David dancing before the ark with all his might and should chide you as though your praise were unseemly, say unto her, “It was before the Lord, which chose me before your father and before all his house . . . therefore will I play before the Lord” (2 Sam. 6:21).

Tell the enemy that the God of election must be praised, that the God of redemption must be extolled—that if the very heathen leaped for joy before their gods, surely they who bow before Jehovah must adore Him with rapture and with ecstasy. Go forth, go forth with joy, then, with all your energies thoroughly awakened for His praise!

2. But you say unto me, “Why should we this day awake and sing unto our God?” There be many reasons. And if your hearts are right, one may well satisfy. Come, you children of God and bless His dear name. For does not all nature around you sing? If you were silent, you would be an exception to the universe. Does not the thunder praise Him as it rolls like drums in the march of the God of armies? Does not the ocean praise Him as it claps its thousand hands? Does not the sea roar and the fullness thereof? Do not the mountains praise Him when the shaggy woods upon their summits wave in adoration? Does not the lightning write His name in letters of fire upon the midnight darkness?

Does not this world, in its unceasing revolutions, perpetually roll forth His praise? Has not the whole earth a voice and shall we be silent? Shall man, for whom the world was made and suns and stars were created—shall he be dumb? No, let him lead the strain! Let him be the world's high priest and while the world shall be as the sacrifice, let him add his heart and thus supply the fire of love which shall make that sacrifice smoke towards Heaven.

But, Believer, shall not your God be praised? I ask you, shall not your God be praised? When men behold a hero, they fall at his feet and honor him. Garibaldi emancipates a nation and lo, they bow before him and do him homage. And You, Jesus, the Redeemer of the multitudes of Your elect, shall You have no song? Shall You have no triumphal entry into our hearts? Shall Your name have no glory? Shall the world love its own and shall not the Church honor its own Redeemer?

Our God *must* be praised. He shall be. If no other heart should ever praise Him, surely mine must. If creation should forget Him, His redeemed must remember Him. Tell us to be silent? Oh, we cannot. Bid us restrain our holy mirth? Indeed, you bid us do an impossibility. He is God and He must be extolled. He is our God, our gracious, our tender, our faithful God, and He must have the best of our songs.

You say, Believer, why should I praise Him? Let me ask you a question, too. Is it not Heaven's employment to praise Him? And what can make earth more like Heaven, than to bring down from Heaven the employment of glory and to be occupied with it here? Come, Believer, when you pray, you are but a man, but when you praise, you are as an angel. When you ask a favor, you are but a beggar, but when you stand up to extol, you become next of kin to cherubim and seraphim. Happy, happy day, when the glorious choristers shall find their numbers swelled by the addition of multitudes from earth! Happy day when you and I shall join the eternal chorus. Let us begin the music here. Let us strike some of the first notes, at least. And if we cannot sound the full thunders of the eternal hallelujah, let us join as best we may. Let us make the wilderness and the solitary place rejoice and bid the desert blossom as the rose.

Besides, Christian, do you not know that it is a good thing for you to praise your God? Mourning weakens you, doubts destroy your strength. Your groping among the ashes makes you of the earth, earthy. Arise, for praise is pleasant and profitable to you. "The joy of the Lord is our strength." "Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desire of your heart." You grow in grace when you grow in holy joy. You are more heavenly, more spiritual, more Godlike, as you get more full of joy and peace in believing on the Lord Jesus Christ.

I know some Christians are afraid of gladness, but I read, "Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King." If murmuring were a duty, some saints would never sin and if mourning were commanded by God they would certainly be saved by works, for they are always sorrowing and so they would keep his Law. Instead the Lord has said, "Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say, rejoice." And he has added, to make it still more strong, "Rejoice evermore."

But I ask you one other question, Believer. You say, “Why should I awake this morning to sing unto my God?” I reply to you, “Have you not a cause?” Has he not done great things for you and are you not glad thereof? Has he not taken you out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay? Has he not set your feet upon a rock and established your goings and is there no new song in your mouth? What? Are you bought with blood and yet have you a silent tongue? Loved of your God before the world began and yet not sing His praise?

What? Are you His child, an heir of God and joint-heir with Jesus Christ and yet no notes of gratitude? What? Has He fed you this day? Did He deliver you yesterday out of many troubles? Has He been with you these thirty, these forty, these fifty years in the wilderness and yet have you no mercy for which to praise Him? O shame on your ungrateful heart and your forgetful spirit. Come pluck up courage, think of your mercies and not of your miseries. Forget your pains awhile and think of your many deliverances. Put your feet on the neck of your doubts and your fears and God the Holy Spirit, being your Comforter, begin from this good hour to utter a song.

3. “But,” says one, “WHEN shall I do this? When shall I praise my God?” I answer, praise you the Lord, all His people, at all times and give thanks at every remembrance of Him. Extol Him even when your souls are drowsy and your spirits are inclined to sleep. When we are awake there is little cause to say to us four times, “Awake, awake, awake, awake, utter a song.” But when we feel most drowsy with sorrow and our eyelids are heavy—when sore afflictions are pressing us down to the very dust, then is the time to sing Psalms unto our God and praise Him in the very fire.

But this takes much grace and I trust, Brethren, you know that there is much grace to be had. Seek it of your Divine Lord and be not content without it. Be not easily cast down by troubles, nor soon made silent because of your woes. Think of the martyrs of old, who sang sweetly at the stake—think of Ann Askew, of all the pains she bore for Christ and then of her courageous praise of God in her last moments. Often she had been tortured, tortured most terribly. She lay in prison expecting death and when there she wrote a verse in old English words and rhyme—

***“I am not she that lyst
My anker to let fall,
For every dryslynge myst;
My shippe’s substancyal.”***

Meaning thereby, that she would not stop her course and cast her anchor for every drizzling mist. She had a ship that could bear a storm, one that could break all the waves that beat against it and joyously cut through the foam. So shall it be with you. Give not God fine weather

songs, give Him black tempest praises. Give Him not merely summer music, as some birds will do and then fly away—give Him winter tunes. Sing in the night like the nightingales, praise Him in the fires, sing His high praises even in the shadow of death and let the tomb resound with the shouts of your sure confidence. So may you give to God what God may well claim at your hands.

When shall you praise Him? Why, praise Him when you are full of doubts, even when temptations assail you, when poverty hovers round you, and when sickness bows you down. They are cheap songs which we give to God when we are rich. It is easy enough to kiss the hand of a giving God, but to bless Him when He takes away—this is to bless Him, indeed. To cry like Job, “though He slay me yet will I trust in Him,” or to sing like Habakkuk, “Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines. The labor of the olive shall fail and the fields shall yield no meat—the flocks shall be cut off from the fold and there shall be no herd in the stalls—yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”

Oh Christian, you ask me when you shall rejoice, I say today, “Awake, awake, O Deborah! Awake, awake, utter a song.”

4. Yet once more, you reply to me, “But HOW can I praise my God?” I will be teacher of music to you and may the Comforter be with me. Will you think this morning how great are your mercies? You are not blind, nor deaf, nor dumb. You are not a lunatic. You are not decrepit. You are not vexed with piercing pains. You are not full of agony caused by disease—you are not going down to the grave. You are not in torments—not in Hell. You are still in the land of the living, the land of love, the land of grace, the land of hope.

Even if this were all, there were enough reasons for you to praise your God. You are not this day what you once were, a blasphemer, a persecutor and injurious. The song of the drunkard is not on your lips, the lascivious desire is not in your heart. And is not this a theme for praise? Remember but a little while ago, with very many of you, all these sins were your delight and your joy. Oh, must not you praise Him, you chief of sinners, whose natures have been changed, whose hearts have been renewed? You sons of Korah, lead the sacred song!

Remember your iniquities, which have all been put away and your transgressions covered and none of them laid to your charge. Think of the privileges you enjoy this day—elect, redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, adopted and preserved in Christ Jesus. Why Man, if a stone or rock could but for a moment have such privileges as these, the very adamant must melt and the dumb rock give forth hosannas. And will you be still when

your mercies are so great!? Let them not lie—“Forgotten in unthankfulness and without praises die.”

Remember yet again how little are your trials, after all. You have not yet resisted unto blood striving against sin. You are poor, it is true, but then you are not sick. Or you are sick, but still you are not left to wallow in sin. And all afflictions are but little when once sin is put away. Compare your trials with those of many who live in your own neighborhood. Put your sufferings side by side with the sufferings of some whom you have seen on their dying bed—compare your lot with that of the martyrs who have entered into their rest. And oh, I say, you will be compelled to exclaim with Paul, “These light afflictions which are but for a moment are not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us.”

Come, now, I beseech you, Brothers and Sisters, by the mercies of God, be of good cheer and rejoice in the Lord your God, if it were for no other reason than that of the brave-hearted Luther. When he had been most slandered—when the Pope had launched out a new bull and when the kings of the earth had threatened him fiercely—Luther would gather together his friends and say, “Come let us sing a Psalm and spite the devil.”

He would ever sing the most Psalms when the world roared the most. Let us today join in that favorite Psalm of the great German, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed and though the mountains be carried in the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and are troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof” (Psa. 46:1-3). I say, then, sing to make Satan angry. He has vexed the saints. Let us vex him.

Praise the Lord to put the world to the blush. Never let it be said that the world can make its votaries more happy than Christ can make His followers. Oh, let your songs be so continual and so sweet, that the wicked may be compelled to say, “That man’s life is happier than mine. I long to exchange with him. There is a something in his religion which my sin and my wicked pleasures can never afford me.” O praise the Lord, you saints, that sinners’ mouths may be set a watering after the things of God.

Specially praise Him in your trials, if you would make the world wonder—strike sinners dumb and make them long to know and taste the joys of which you are a partaker. “Alas,” says one, “but I cannot sing. I have nothing to sing of, nothing without for which I could praise God.” It is remarked by old commentators that the windows of Solomon’s temple were narrow on the outside, but that they were broad within and that they were so cut, that though they seemed to be but small openings, yet the light was well diffused. (See Hebrew of 1 Kings 6:4.)

So is it with the windows of a Believer’s joy. They may look very narrow without, but they are very wide within. There is more joy to be gotten from that which is within us than from that which is without us. God’s grace within, God’s love, the witness of His Spirit in our hearts, are better themes of joy than all the corn and wine and oil, with which God sometimes increases His saints. So if you have no outward mercies, sing of inward mercies. If the water fails without, go to that perpetual fountain which is within your own soul. “A good man shall be satisfied from himself” (Prov. 14:14). When you see no cheering Providence without, yet look at grace within. “Awake, awake, Deborah! Awake, awake, utter a song.”

II. I now turn to the second part of my subject, but very briefly. I know not whether you feel as I do, but in preaching upon this theme, I mourn a scantiness of words and a slowness of language. If I could let my heart talk without my lips, methinks, with God’s Spirit, I could move you, indeed, with joy. But these lips find that the language of the heart is above them. The tongue discovers that it cannot reach the fullness of joy that is within. Let it beam from my face, if it cannot be spoken from my mouth.

And now the second part of the subject. “ARISE, BARAK AND LEAD YOUR CAPTIVITY CAPTIVE, YOU SON OF ABINOAM.”

You understand the exact picture here. Barak had routed Sisera, Jabin’s captain and all his hosts. She now exhorts Barak to celebrate his triumph. “Mount, mount your cart, O Barak and ride through the midst of the people. Let the corpse of Sisera, with Jael’s nail driven through its temples, be dragged behind your chariot. Let the thousand captives of the Canaanites walk all of them with their arms bound behind them. Drive before you the ten thousand flocks of sheep and herds of cattle which you have taken as a spoil.

“Let their chariots of iron and all their horses be led captive in grand procession. Bring up all the treasures and the jewels of which you have stripped the slain—their armor, their shields, their spears, bound up as glorious trophies. Arise, Barak, lead captive those who led you captive and celebrate your glorious victory.”

Beloved, this is a picture which is often used in Scripture. Christ is said to have led captivity captive, when He ascended on high. He led principalities and powers captive at His chariot-wheels. But here is a picture for us—not concerning Christ, but concerning ourselves. We are exhorted today to lead captivity captive. Come up, come up, you grim hosts of sins, once my terror and dismay. Long was I your slave, O you Egyptian tyrants. Long did this back smart beneath your lash when

conscience was awakened and long did these members of my body yield themselves as willing servants to obey your dictates.

Come up sins, come up, for you are prisoners now. You are bound in fetters of iron—no, more than this, you are utterly slain, consumed, destroyed. You have been covered with Jesus’ blood. You have been blotted out by His mercy. You have been cast by His power into the depths of the sea—yet would I bid your ghosts come up—slain though you are and walk in grim procession behind my chariot. Arise, celebrate your triumph, oh people of God! Your sins are many, but they are all forgiven. Your iniquities are great, but they are all put away. Arise and lead captive those who led you captive—your blasphemies, your forgetfulness of God, your drunkenness, your lust, all the vast legion that once oppressed you. They are all totally destroyed. Come and look upon them, sing their death psalm and chant the life psalm of your grateful joy—lead your sins captive this very day.

Bring here in bondage another host who once seemed too many for us, but whom, by God’s grace, we have totally overcome. Arise my trials—you have been very great and very numerous. You came against me as a great host and you were tall and strong like the sons of Anak. Oh, my Soul, you have trod down strength. By the help of our God have we leaped over a wall—by His power have we broken through the troops of our troubles, our difficulties and our fears. Come now, look back and think of all the trials you have ever encountered. Death in your family. Losses in your business. Afflictions in your body. Despair in your soul.

And yet here you are, more than conquerors over them all. Come, bid them all walk now in procession. To the God of our deliverances—who has delivered us out of deep waters—who has brought us out of the burning, fiery furnace, so that not the smell of fire has passed upon us—to Him be all the glory, while we lead our captivity captive!

Arise and let us lead captive all our temptations. You, my Brethren, have been foully tempted to the vilest sins. Satan has shot a thousand darts at you and hurled his javelin multitudes of times. Bring out the darts and snap them before his eyes, for he has never been able to reach your heart. Come, break the bow and cut the spear in sunder—burn the chariot in the fire. “Your right hand, O Lord, Your right hand, O Lord, has dashed in pieces the enemy. You have broken, You have put to confusion them that hated us. You have scattered the tempters and driven them far away. Come, children of God, kept and preserved where so many have fallen—lead now this day your temptations captive.

I think that you as a Church, and I as your minister, can indeed lead captivity captive this day. There has been no single Church of God existing in England for these fifty years which has had to pass through

more trial than we have done. We can say, “Men did ride over our heads.” We went through fire and through water and what has been the result of it all? God has brought us out into a wealthy place and set our feet in a large room and all the devices of the enemy have been of no effect.

Scarcely a day rolls over my head in which the most villainous abuse, the most fearful slander, is not uttered against me both privately and by the public press. Every engine is employed to put down God’s minister—every lie that man can invent is hurled at me. But up to now the Lord has helped me. I have never answered any man, nor spoken a word in my own defense—from the first day even until now. And the effect has been this—God’s people have believed nothing against me. They who feared the Lord have said often as a proof-verse, “Know that I am God. I will be exalted among the heathen. I will be exalted in the earth.”

Church of God, come forth with songs, come forth with shouting to your last battle. Behold the battle of Armageddon draws near. Blow the silver trumpets for the fight, you soldiers of the Cross. Come on, come on, you leaguered hosts of Hell. Strong in the strength of God most High, we shall dash back your ranks as the rock breaks the waves of the sea. We shall stand against you and triumph and tread you down as ashes under the soles of our feet. “Arise, Barak and lead your captivity captive, you son of Abinoam.”

Would to God that the joy of heart which we feel this morning may tempt some soul to seek the like. It is to be found in Christ at the foot of His dear Cross. Believe on Him, Sinners, and you are saved.

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ONE WAR OVER AND ANOTHER BEGUN

NO. 1679

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 17, 1882,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And when Gideon perceived that He was the Angel of the Lord, Gideon said, Alas, O Lord God! For I have seen the Angel of the Lord face to face. And the Lord said unto him, Peace be unto you; fear not: you shall not die. Then Gideon built an altar there unto the Lord, and called it Jehovah-Shalom.”
Judges 6:22-24.***

These Midianites were wandering Bedouins from Arabia and the East country round about the Holy Land. They were masters of the art of plundering and knew no hearts of compassion. They generally lived a hard life, themselves, and when they had an opportunity to feast on the spoils of others, they rioted without stint and left a famine behind them. Most fitly does the Scripture compare them to grasshoppers, for both in number and in destructive force they were like those terrible devourers. God had brought them upon Israel to scourge that nation because it had been so foolish and so ungrateful as to set up the gods of the heathen and to forget the one mighty God who was so especially and graciously their Patron and Defender. They were impoverished and ground down to the very last degree by these plunderers who left no food either for men or cattle.

The poor Israelites, creeping forth from their dens and caves, attempted to carry on the work of farming and sowed the land, but when the time came for reaping, the marauders came forth once more, took away their harvest and despoiled their pastures again. Then, as usual, Israel cried unto Jehovah and His ears were opened to their groaning. Their afflictions made them weary of their idols and caused them to say, “We will return unto our first husband, for it was better with us, then, than now.” God in His great mercy raised up for them a deliverer, Gideon, a mighty man of valor, who distinguished himself in various skirmishes with the foe! His name was already a terror to Midian, for he who dreamed of the barley cake which smote the tent, and it lay along, said to his fellow— “This is none other than Gideon, the son of Joash.”

Gideon's character has never been sufficiently admired—Scripture names, much less bright than his, have been preferred before him by the general ministry, yet he deserves far better treatment. He was a man gen-

tle and yet strong, cautious and yet venturesome. He was a searching inquirer and an intense Believer. While he was a sort of foreshadowing of David, he had much of the afterglow of Joshua. He was a truly great man, though his later days were overshadowed by a grievous religious error and a sad moral fault. Despite his failings, he was one of the greatest of the heroes of faith. He was not in a hurry to venture upon a pitched battle, but waited his time, and then, by a sudden and unexpected attack, he struck the whole host with panic so that they fled at once and Midian was smitten as one man.

The leaders fled—two of the minor ones, Oreb and Zeeb, the raven and the wolf—are first captured and, by-and-by, the greater generals, who had fled, first of all, are taken by the victorious band. The leaders were ahead of all the others in flight. In later days the destruction of their mighty ones became a proverbial curse, “Make their nobles like Oreb and like Zeeb—yes, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunna.”

Let us think for a while of Gideon in order that we may see that we, ourselves, are, or may be, somewhat parallels with him. We may not have to smite the Bedouin as he did, but unto a spiritual warfare God has called many of us. And though He intends to use us and to get unto Himself victory by us, yet it may be that at this moment we are in fear. We are now passing through the same mental processes as those which educated Gideon and we are being prepared, thereby, for future conflict and conquest. I shall begin by asking you to dwell, for a minute, upon Gideon’s sigh for peace, for he loved not war, but pined for quiet. He called the name of the altar, “Jehovah-Shalom,” which the margin reads, “The Lord Send Peace.” You see, therefore, that deeper down in his spirit than any desire for warlike honor, there was a yearning after peace.

Gideon wanted not the spoils of princes. He only desired to plow, sow and reap in peace. And do you wonder at it, when the evils of war were all around? He had, for a long time, seen, in the cases of his friends and neighbors, the desolating effects of war—their property was taken from them, their bread was stolen out of their mouths, their children were slain—and they, themselves, made to hide away upon the tops of mountains or in caverns among the hills. Life became intolerable amid such privations and dangers. Gideon must have felt his heart swell with grief and indignation as he looked upon the remnant of Israel hunted like partridges upon the mountains—though once they had dwelt safely—every man under his vine and under his fig tree.

The Bedouin styled the valley of Jezreel, “the meadows of God”—how grievous to see those fat pastures trod down by the feet of the invaders! Ah, little can you and I imagine the horrors of war! We read of it and our sympathies are touched, but we know not the multiplied murders, the

painful wounds, the desolating rapine and the fierce crimes which attend the track of armies. If we saw battle with our own eyes, we would, with burning fervor, cry, "Send us peace in our days, good Lord." Moreover, Gideon had not only *seen* war, but he sighed for peace because he was, himself, feeling the mischief of it. The dread of the conflict had come to his own mountain farm at Abiezer.

There he was, threshing wheat by the wine press, in an unusual place, in an inconvenient place—that he might hide a little grain for winter's food—from the Midianites who were eager to devour it. Yes, and when carnage smokes at your own door and rapine is at your own gate—when you, yourself, are straitened and are hiding for fear, then comes from the deep recesses of the spirit the cry, "Oh, that God would send us peace, for this is a weary oppression; these ravens and wolves utterly devour us." The way of peace was sufficiently well known to Gideon—the Prophet of the Lord had indicated to the people that the only way of peace was for Israel to return to Jehovah, her God. The great sin of departure from the glorious living God was set before them and they could readily draw the inference that they would never have peace from their enemies till, first of all, they had made their peace with God.

They must surrender to their Sovereign, renew their loyalty and *then* He would drive out the foe from their land. They must confess their transgressions and renew their covenant and *then* they would obtain deliverance. Then would the ancient promise be fulfilled, "One should chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight." Gideon probably knew this before the Prophet came—it was deeply imprinted on his thoughtful spirit and, as he was a man of faith in God, he did not doubt but that if Israel returned to Jehovah, then peace would follow. While Gideon is meditating and working, an angel appears to him and gives him the assurance that with him, at least, God was at peace.

The Covenant Angel said to him, "Jehovah is with you, you mighty man of valor." I think his spirit ought greatly to have rejoiced at that assurance and, perhaps, it did, for what better thing can happen to any man than to receive such a token for good? If God is for us, who can be against us? We know how sweet is the assurance that being justified by faith we have peace with God. It is well with us when we are assured that the Lord is with us, our helper, our shield, our portion forever and ever! But there arose in Gideon's mind a grave anxiety. His was a very careful, thoughtful soul, for he was a man of prudence—large-hearted, far-seeing and given to look at things coolly and steadily—and there arose in his heart a question, serious and vital, "Is this the voice of God to me, or am I deluded? Is God at peace with me, or am I like the rest, plunged in a horrible warfare against the living God?"

Therefore he puts a question and he asks for a sign that he might make sure of what he was about. Brothers and Sisters, in spiritual matters you and I had need be sure! If we have peace within our spirit, let us make certain that it is the peace of *God*, for there are still voices that cry, "Peace, peace," where there is no peace. Siren songs still charm men to ruin with their dulcet notes. Still does the fatal river flow most smoothly as it approaches the dreadful cataract. Beware of that Word of the Lord, "When they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction comes upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape."

None are more quiet than the ungodly when they are given up to a strong delusion. The Psalmist says of them, "There are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men." It was no so with Gideon—his anxiety made itself visible. He was not the man to leap at a shadow—he sought for substance. If he was to have peace, he must have it from God. If he was to be delivered, he longed to have victory plain and permanent. The favor which he asked was requested because anxiety troubled him and he wished to make assurance doubly sure. He desired to know from God, Himself, that his mission was authentic and his success certain.

I believe that many of us have been and, perhaps, are, in Gideon's position. Of course we have not his errand, but we have one of our own and we are troubled because we are not personally sure of our peace. We are grieved by our past sins and their consequences. This is the lot of many men. "Conscience makes cowards of us all"—and when the mighty Spirit of God convicts us of sin—then sin becomes a second sorrow. No, worse than that, for if sorrow chastens us with whips, sin scourges us with scorpions. We are consumed by God's anger, but by His wrath we are troubled. The mind is tossed to and fro and is confounded, but even in its confusion it seeks the true rest and longs to gain peace in God. Like the needle in the compass, it is agitated and disturbed, yet still it knows its pole and trembles towards it.

It will never be still till it reaches the point of its rest. Have you ever been in that condition? I know you have if the Lord has loved you and ordained you to His work! Has God, at such a time, sent you a message of mercy? Have you searched the Scriptures and found a precious promise? Have you heard a faithful servant of God preach under his Master's anointing and have you been comforted? Even then, I should not wonder if the darkening thought has arisen like a cloud, "Is this the right comfort for me? May I really enjoy it? Will it be presumption or assurance?" There is often a fine line, thin as a razor's edge, between the two—and woe unto

him who makes a mistake about it! O God, save us from carnal security! Prevent our crying, "Peace, peace, where there is no peace."

Better that we write bitter things against ourselves, if they are true, than that we say smooth things and flatter ourselves to destruction. Therefore, I should not wonder if you are asking the Lord to give you a token for good. You are praying to Him and saying, "I will not be comforted except You comfort me—Your dove shall find no rest for the sole of her foot except it is in the Ark with the true Noah, in whom is rest." As for me, I will take no cup of consolation except that which Jesus proffers when He gives it me with His own pierced hands. If washed, it shall be in Jesus' blood! If clothed, it shall be in His righteousness!

From Gideon's longing, panting desire to obtain peace with God and then peace for his country, we turn to look a little further into Gideon's fear which he met with in the way of peace. "An angel" appeared to him—so says the text in the Authorized Version—but in truth it was the Angel of Jehovah and this should have comforted him, even as it has comforted us! One would have thought that Gideon would have leaped for joy when he beheld his God veiled in angelic form, but instead, the shadow of death fell upon him! Here was a man panting for peace and firmly following the way of peace, and yet afraid with a deadly fear!

Peace cannot be had except by our drawing near to God and the Lord's drawing near to us, but as soon as this process commences, poor humanity shrinks from the interview and is melted with fear. "When Gideon perceived that He was the Angel of the Lord, Gideon said, Alas, O Lord God! For because I have seen the Angel of the Lord face to face." It usually happens that when God is bringing men into peace with Himself—while the operation is going on thoroughly and soundly—there is a degree of trembling in the soul. I suspect that conversion which has no trembling in it! Note the prodigal's cry, "I am not worthy to be called your son." Note Peter's bitter weeping and the three days' darkness of Saul of Tarsus.

Even to Believers, the visitations of God are not without overwhelming awe. Jacob cries, "How dreadful is this place!" Job abhors himself; Moses does exceedingly fear and quake, and Isaiah cries, "Woe is me!" Why was Gideon afraid? Not because he was a coward—you will scarcely meet with a braver man in all Scripture than this son of Joash—but because even brave men are alarmed at the Supernatural! He saw something which he had never seen before—an appearance celestial, mysterious, above what is usually seen of mortal men and, therefore, as he feared God, Gideon was afraid. When the living God draws very near to a soul, even though it is in the Person of Christ Jesus, that soul is struck with awe and trembles before the Lord. It cannot well be otherwise.

Remember how it was with the beloved John. “When I saw Him,” says John—that was, his own dear Master, upon whose breast he had leaned his head—“when I,” the disciple whom Jesus loved, “saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead.” You do not wonder, therefore, if a poor soul full of doubt and anxiety, vexed with a sense of sin and greatly troubled by affliction, is full of fear when Jesus draws near! Though He comes with no feeling but of love, no thought but of mercy, no sentence but of free forgiveness, yet the heart is awe-struck at the wondrous sight! Alas, some of you know not what it is to have the Lord drawing near to your spirits. If you did, you would not think it strange that certain awakened ones have acted in a singular way and, for a while, have forgotten to eat bread!

Daniel says, “I was left alone and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption and I retained no strength.” When this glorious God comes near to the soul, it is a solemn visitation, and the mind is bowed under it! Moreover, Gideon had been ill-taught by *tradition*. There was a rumor abroad which was derived from the Truth of God and yet was false, namely, that no man could see a heavenly Being and live. It is true that the Lord expressly told His servant Moses that he could not see His face and live. But He did not say, “You cannot see an angel and live.” Nor had He said, “You cannot see My veiled Presence and live.” The tradition was an accretion to the Truth and a corruption of it. We may not see the face of God, but we may see Jesus. In fact, we live *because* we see Him!

Beware of the moss which grows upon a Truth of God! Many a heart bleeds because it is wounded by its own imperfect ideas of God and so, when God does draw near—when the great Almighty overshadows us—there is a slavish dread for which there is no need. “I shall die,” he says, “I shall die.” He sees his sin and, therefore, he thinks that God has come in anger to punish him. He feels his weakness and, fainting under it, he groans, “I shall die.” No, Soul, if God had meant to slay you, He would have left you alone! Whom God destroys, He first leaves to the madness of his own conceit. He does not take the trouble to show a man his sin and reveal to him his transgression, unless He means to pardon and save him. If the Lord has taken to strip you, He will clothe you! If He makes your righteousness to fade like the leaves of autumn, it is because He has a glorious robe with which to array you! Therefore be not afraid.

Besides, Gideon was in a state of mind in which he could be easily cast down. He was a brave man, but long affliction had cast a tinge of sadness over him. His usual conduct in life is well pictured by the two signs which God gave him. When all the people around him were, with excitement, like the threshing floor, heated and dry, he, like the fleece, was cool and composed. And then, again, when all around him like the wet floor, were

dampened with discouragement, he, alone, remained in his ordinary condition, with not a drop of cowardice within him. That was the kind of man Gideon was—calm, quiet, determined, brave.

But, at the moment recorded in our text, he was smarting under a cruel oppression, conscious of God's anger for Israel's sin, and overshadowed by God's own Presence and, therefore, his mind was ready to rush from one fear to another. Only see the beauty of it—that he always tells his fear to God, always goes to Him for comfort and, therefore—always obtains succor! The brave man is not he who sees no fear, but he who, seeing the danger, rises superior to it. Such was Gideon, tossed to and fro from one fear to another, but never tossed off from his God and so, always sure to right himself. One thing is noteworthy, namely, that Gideon's greatest fear arose out of a sign which he had, himself, asked for. He said, "Show me a sign," and when he had that sign, namely, God's coming to him, then it was that he was afraid.

Be very cautious how you ask for signs, for they may work your discouragement rather than your comfort. I have known some say, "I shall not believe I am a child of God unless I feel a deep sense of sin." And when they have entered into that feeling, they have exclaimed, "I will never again ask for this!" I have heard of others who thought they could come to Christ if they were gently drawn—and the Lord has been gently drawing them—and then they have wished that they had been more troubled and distressed! They imagine that they could have believed more readily had their despair been greater—certainly a strange notion! We are always busy in manufacturing fresh doubts—and for raw material we use the very tokens for which we so earnestly besought the Lord!

We cry aloud, "Show me a token for good," and when the token is given, we are amazed at being heard and fall to fearing more sadly than before. Therefore pray for such gifts with bated breath and say twice over concerning such things, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." All this while Gideon had one Truth before him which ought to have prevented all his fears, for the Lord had spoken to him, and said, "Go, in this your might, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent you?" Look, he goes home fearing that he will die, and yet that could not be! How could he die if he was to deliver Israel? He must be a live man to do that and yet, you see, he forgets to reason for his own comfort, but takes care to argue for his fears.

Have I never seen my Hearers doing this? I have often caught *myself* at it—refusing to use my logic for the strengthening of my faith—but perverting reason in order to assist my unbelief! Is not this foolish and wicked? Too often we are industrious in the fabrication of discomfort and utterly idle in the search for joy. This is folly and yet, better men than we are

have fallen into this fault, too. The Lord save us from it! In drawing near to God is our peace and if, in that process, a sense of the Presence of God casts us down and creates a more poignant sorrow than we had at the first, let us not, therefore, shrink from the process, but push on with all our might! As our safety lies in coming to God, to Him we must approach at all hazards. If He seems to stand before us with a drawn sword in His hand, let us run upon the point of it! If even our God is a consuming fire, let us still draw near to Him, for this is, indeed, the high privilege of saints. "Our God," that is our God in Christ Jesus, "is a consuming fire." Who, then, shall dwell with the devouring fire?

Now let us spend a few minutes in considering God's comfort of His servant. "The Lord said unto him, Shalom—peace be unto you; fear not: you shall not die." The Lord would not have His Gideons disturbed in mind. If we are to trouble the enemy, we must not be troubled, ourselves. Notice, Brothers and Sisters, the great power of God in speaking home the Truth. Suppose I salute you with, "Brothers and Sisters, peace be to you." That would be a sweet word, but when the Lord says it, you feel the peace, itself! Suppose Peter had stood up in that boat which was tossed upon the Galilean Lake and had said to the waves, "Be still"—the waves would not have taken much notice of him—and the whistling blast would have defied him!

But when Jesus said, "Peace, be still," the rampant lions of the sea crouched at His feet and there was a great calm. "Peace!" The word is *shalom*, the word which Gideon borrowed and applied to the altar which he raised in obedience to the Lord's bidding. It signifies not only quiet, but prosperity, success—"good fortune"—as the multitudes say. When God spoke that word home to His dear servant's heart, a great joy was born within him to prepare him for his great warfare. The Lord also cheered him with, "Fear not." Oh, that charming word—as full as it is short—"Fear not." What is there to fear? If God is with you, of whom can you be afraid? Gideon feared himself, dreaded his own unfitness and unworthiness, feared in the awful Presence of God. But the Lord said, "Fear not," and Gideon's heart grew calm.

Then the Lord added, "You shall not die," thus meeting the special form of his dread. This is what the Lord says to every poor trembler who is holding to Him by the desperate grip of faith—"You shall not die. You shall not die the second death. You have no sin to die for, for I have laid your transgressions on My only-begotten Son. You shall not die, for Jesus died. Your spiritual life cannot expire, for your 'life is hid with Christ in God' and, because Jesus lives, you shall live also."

Let us now look at Gideon's memorial. His fears being banished and being at perfect peace, Gideon now goes to work. Are any of you questioning

whether you are saved or not? Do not go out preaching, yet, for you may, perhaps, put others into bondage! Are any of you half afraid that you are not at peace with God? Be careful what you do! Strive after peace lest you weaken your testimony. I remember the lesson which I learned from my Sunday school class—I was taught, if the other boys were not. Though yet a youth, I was teaching the Gospel to boys and I said, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” One of them asked, somewhat earnestly, “Teacher, are you saved?” I answered, “I hope so.” The boy replied, “Teacher, don’t you know?” As if he had been sent to push the matter home to me, he further inquired, “Teacher, have you believed?” I said, “Yes,” “Have you been baptized?” I said, “Yes.” “Well, then,” he argued, “you are saved.” I was happy to answer, “Yes, I am”—but I had hardly dared to say that before!

I found that if I had to teach other people the Truth of God, I must know and believe its sweet result upon myself. I believe that you will seldom comfort others except it is by the comfort with which you, yourself, are comforted of God. God would have His people be at peace with Him and *know* that they are so, for if they are fretted within, and worried in reference to their God, how can they fight the battles of life? When Gideon is fully at peace, what does he begin to do for God? If God loves you, He will use you either for suffering or service—and if He has given you peace, you must now prepare for war. Will you think me odd if I say that our Lord came to give us peace that He might send us out to war?

Gideon’s first work was to go and cut down his father’s sacred grove which stood on the top of the hill, and enclosed an altar to Baal. He could not effect this business by day because the foolish worshipers would have rallied to the defense of their dumb idol and have overpowered the reformer. Therefore, with his 10 men, he performed the work by night. I think I see him and his people in the dim darkness, with their axes and saws, doing the work as quietly as they could, felling all those trees. A splendid clearance was made that night. “Now,” he cries, “over with that detestable altar to Baal!” Some people would have said, “Spare it as a fine piece of antiquity.” Yes, and leave it to be used again! I say, down with it, for the older it is, the more sin it has caused, and the more likely is it that it will be venerated again!

I often wish the Reformers had been more thorough in their destruction of idolatrous images and Popish trumpery. In many a parish church of this land, everything is ready for the restoration of the Roman idolatry. But see, by the Lord’s bidding, Gideon piles a new altar of earth, or unhewn stone! And when that is done, he fetches his father’s bullock and slays it for a sacrifice! How steadily they went about this reestablishment of the pure faith! Look, they use the wood of the grove for burning the sac-

rifice and the heavens are red with the blaze! I think I hear the gallant leader say, "Let them wake now; they cannot prevent our worshipping the Most High, nor can they cause the grove to grow again. By yon beacon-fire, Israel shall gather together to fight against Midian and victory shall be ours."

Beloved, if God has given you peace, go home and begin your reform! I would preach up the overthrow of every sin. Down with every idol. Have you one left? Over with it and present a sacrifice to God. But to pull down is not enough. Plenty of people can do that. Gideon, as we have seen, builds an altar to Jehovah. When you are at perfect peace with God, think what you can do for Him—think of a new plan of work, or consider how to do the old work better—advance any part of Divine Truth that has been forgotten, any ordinance that has been neglected, any virtue that has been despised. Especially make prominent Christ Jesus, the Altar and Sacrifice so dear to God. When he had built his altar, he called it "Jehovah-Shalom," which was done by way of thanksgiving for peace received. The inscription declares that "Jehovah is our peace." Blessed be His name this day! We have entered on the battles of peace, for the Lord God is with us and with His people we will go forth to win the peace which He has promised!

It was a Psalm in two words. It was a song of one verse, infinitely sweet. "Jehovah-Shalom"—The Lord Our Peace. Moreover, it was a prayer, as the margin puts it—"Jehovah, send peace." If you have peace with God, let your next prayer be, "Lord, give peace to all Your people." "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem." Work it, O Holy Spirit of Peace! Then ask for peace by conquest of an ungodly world for Jesus till the first Christmas carol shall be sung again, "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, goodwill toward men."

See, Brothers and Sisters, and with that I finish, there may sit here, this morning, a young man who does not know what God is going to make of him. The capacities of service that God can infuse into a single individual are marvelous! At present you are disturbed in mind, afflicted in heart, ill at ease—you need perfect peace, but you have not found it, yet. Rest not till you have it. At God's own altar, where Jesus died, you will find it, and only there. When Jesus' blood makes peace with God, *there* is your peace. Rest not till you are assuredly at peace with the Lord of All, so that your soul lies down in green pastures and is led by the still waters.

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THE DREAM OF THE BARLEY CAKE

NO. 1873

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 22, 1885,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And when Gideon had come, behold, there was a man that told a dream unto his companion and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, that the tent lay along. And his fellow answered and said, This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: for into his hand has God delivered Midian, and all the host.”
Judges 7:13, 14.

THE Midianites were devastating the land of Israel. These wandering tribes purposely kept away during the times of plowing and sowing and allowed the helpless inhabitants to dream that they would be able to gather in a harvest. But no sooner did there come to be anything eatable by man or beast, than these Bedouin hordes came up like locusts and devoured everything! Imagine a country like Israel which had, at one time, been powerful, so greatly reduced as to be unable to keep off these desert rangers! They were brought so low that the cities and villages were empty and the inhabitants were hidden in the hills, in the watercourses and in the huge caverns of the rocks. God had forsaken them for their sins and, therefore, their own manhood had forsaken them and they hid themselves from enemies, whom, in better days, they had despised.

In her extremity, the guilty nation began to cry to Jehovah, her God, and the answer was not long delayed. An angel came to Gideon and announced to him that the Lord had delivered Midian into his hands and that he should smite them as one man. Gideon was a man of great faith—his name shines among the heroes of great faith in the 11th Chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews—and you and I will do well if we attain to the same rank in the peerage of faith as he did. But for all that, the best of men are men at the best—and men of strong faith are often men of strong conflicts—and so it was with Gideon. This man's great faith and great weakness of faith both showed themselves in a desire for signs. Once assure him that God is with him, and Gideon has no fear but hastens to the battle, bravest of the brave!

With a handful of men, he is quite prepared to go against a host of adversaries, but he pines for a sign. Again and again he asks for it. The anxious question seems to be constantly recurring to him, “Is the Lord with us? If the Lord is with us, where are all His miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?” Therefore his frequent prayer is, “If now I have found Grace in Your sight, show me a

sign.” He began with this, and this ill beginning colored his whole career. I have known many persons like this son of Joash—they say, “Let me but know that God is with me and my fear is gone.” But their repeated question is, “Is the Lord with me? Is Jesus mine and am I His? Let me but know that I am a true Believer and I am sure that I shall not perish, for God will not forsake His own—but then, am I a Believer? Have I the marks and evidences of a child of God?”

Hence the practice of severe self-examination and therefore,, also, the weakening habit of craving for tokens and feelings. How many are crying, “We see not our signs,” when they ought to say, “But we see Jesus!”? How many are praying, “Show me a token for good,” when the Lord Jesus has given *Himself* for them and has, thereby, given the best token of His Grace?

So it happened to Gideon, that the Lord, knowing his hunger for signs and yet knowing the sincerity of his faith, bade him, on the night of the great battle which was to rout Midian, go down as a spy into the camp with his servant. And there Gideon would receive a token for good which would effectually quiet all his fears.

I picture Gideon and his attendant creeping down the hill in the stillness of the night when the camp was steeped in slumber. It was about the end of the first watch, when they were soon to change sentinels. The two brave men, with stealthy footsteps, drew near the pickets and even passed them. From long habit they had learned to make no more sound with their footsteps than if they had been cats. As they move along, they come near to a couple of men who are talking, together, and they listen to their conversation. Whether they were inside the tent, lying on their beds, or whether they were sitting by the campfire whiling away the last half-hour of their weary watch, we do not know. But there they were and Gideon remained breathless to hear their talk. One of them told his companion that he had dreamed a dream and he began the telling of it. Then the other ventured an interpretation and Gideon must have been awe-stricken when he heard his own name mentioned and his own success foretold!

Do you not see him with streaming eyes and clasped hands silently worshipping God? His assurance overflows and, motioning to his servant, they steal away through the shadows and quietly ascend the hill to the place where the little band of three hundred lay in hiding. They look down upon the sleeping camp and Gideon cries, “The Lord has delivered into your hands the hosts of Midian.” Obedient to their leader, they descend with their trumpets and with torches covered with pitchers. At a signal they break the pitchers, display the lights, sound the trumpets and shout, “The sword of the Lord and of Gideon.” Imagining that a vast army is upon them, the tribes of the desert run for their lives and, in the darkness, fall foul of one another. Midian is scattered! Israel is free!

In quiet contemplation let us now play the part of spies. With all our wits about us, let us thread our way among the sleepers and listen to this dream and the interpretation thereof.

I. The first thing that I shall bring under your observation is THE STRIKING PROVIDENCE which must have greatly refreshed Gideon. Just as he and Phurah stealthily stole up to the tent, the Midianite was telling

a dream, bearing an interpretation so appropriate to Gideon. It may appear to be a little thing, but an occurrence is none the less amazing because it appears to be insignificant. The microscope reveals a world of marvels quite as surprising as that which is brought before us by the telescope. God is as Divine in the small as in the stupendous—as glorious in the dream of a soldier as in the flight of a seraph!

Now observe, first, the Providence of God that *this man should have dreamed just then* and that he should have dreamed that particular dream. Dreamland is chaos, but the hand of the God of order is here! What strange romantic things our dreams are!—fragments of this and broken pieces of the other strangely joined together in absurd fashion—

***“How many monstrous forms in sleep we see,
That neither were, nor are, nor ever can be!”***

Yet observe that God holds the brain of this sleeping Arab in His hand and impresses it as He pleases. Dreams often come of previous thoughts—see, then, the Providence which had taken this man’s mind to the hearth and the cake baking. The Lord prepares him when he is awake to dream aright when he is asleep. God is Omnipotent in the world of mind as well as in that of matter—He rules it when men are awake—and does not lose His power when men fall asleep. The heathen ascribed dreams to their gods. We read of one, that—

***“Pallas poured sweet slumbers on his soul,
And balmy dreams, the gift of soft repose.”***

Thin as the air, inconstant as the wind, the stuff that dreams are made of is vanity of vanities! And yet the Lord fashions it according to His own good pleasure. The man must dream, must dream then and there, and dream that dream which should convey confidence and courage to Gideon! Oh, believe it, God is not asleep when we are asleep! God is not dreaming when we are! I admire the Providence of God in this—do not you? Is it not especially well ordered that this man shall dream and therein declare a truth as deep as any in the compass of philosophy?

Further, I cannot but admire *that this man should be moved to tell his dream to his companion*. It is not everybody that tells his dream at night—he usually waits till morning. We are grossly foolish, sometimes, but we are not always so and, therefore, we do not hurry to tell such disjointed visions as that which this Arab had just seen. What was there in it? Many a time, no doubt, this son of the desert would have cried, “I have had a dream—past the wit of man to say what dream it was.” But this time he cannot shake it off. It burdens him and he must tell it to his comrade by the campfire! Look into the face of Gideon as he catches every syllable. Now, if this dream-telling had been arranged by military authority and if it had been part of a program that Gideon should be present in the nick of time to hear it, there would have been a failure somehow or other.

If the man had known that he had a listener, he might not have been punctual with his narrative. But he did not know a word about being overheard and yet he was punctual to the tick of a clock! God rules men’s idle tongues as well as their dreaming brains and He can make a talkative soldier in the camp say just as much and just as little as will subserve the purposes of wisdom.

It is remarkable that *the man should tell his dream just when Gideon and Phurah had come near*. Just think a minute of the many chances against such a thing! We are on the side of the hill and we glide down among the trees and the great rocks till we are nearly in the grasslands in the valley. Here lie the Midianites in their long lines of black tents and the hush of deep slumber is over all, but where a few maintain a sleepy watch. Why does Gideon go to that particular part of the camp? Going there, why does he happen to drop on this particular spot where two men are talking? If he was spying out the camp, he would naturally wander along where there was most quiet, in order that he might not be discovered, for if the warriors had suddenly started up and snatched their spears, these two men would have had small chance of life. It was amazing that out of tents so countless Gideon should alight upon the very one in which were the two wakeful sentinels and that he should come just as they were talking to one another about Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel!

Considering that there were 50,000 other things that they might have talked of and, considering that there were 50,000 other soldiers upon whom Gideon might have lighted, there were so many chances against Gideon's hearing that singular talk that I do not hesitate to say, "This is the finger of God!" If this were but one instance of the accuracy of Providence, it might not so much surprise us. But history bristles with such instances! I mean not only public history, but our own private lives. Men sometimes make delicate machines where everything depends upon the touching of a certain pin at a certain instant—and their machinery is so arranged that nothing fails. Now, our God has so arranged the whole history of men, angels and the regions of the dead, that each event occurs at the right moment so as to effect another event—and that other event brings forth a third—and all things work together for good.

I think if I had been Gideon, I would have said to myself, "I do not so much rejoice in what this dreamer says as I do in the fact that he has told his dream at the moment when I was lurking near him! I see the hand of the Lord in this and I am strengthened by the sight. Verily, I perceive that the Lord works all things with unfailing wisdom and fails not in His designs. He that has ordered this matter can order all other things." O child of God, when you are troubled, it is because you fancy that you are alone, but you are not alone—the Eternal Worker is with you! Listen and you will hear the revolution of those matchless wheels which are forever turning according to the will of the Lord! These wheels are high and dreadful, but they move with fixed and steady motion and they are all "full of eyes roundabout." Their course is no blind track of a car of Juggernaut, but the eyes see, the eyes look towards their end, the eyes look upon all that comes within the circuit of the wheels!

Oh for a little heavenly eye salve to touch our eyes that we may perceive the Presence of the Lord in all things! Then shall we see the mountain to be full of horses of fire and chariots of fire round about the Prophets of the Lord. The stars in their courses are fighting for the cause of God! Our allies are everywhere. God will summon them at the right moment.

II. But now, secondly, I want to say something to you about THE COMFORTABLE TRIFLE which Gideon had thus met with. It was a dream and, therefore, a trifle or a nothing—and yet he took comfort from it. He was solaced by a dream, a gypsy's dream and a poor dream at that. He took heart from an odd story of a barley cake which overturned a tent! It is a very curious thing that some of God's servants draw a very great deal of consolation from comparatively trivial things. We are all the creatures of sentiment as well as of reason and, therefore, we are often strongly affected by little things. Gideon is cheered by a dream of a barley cake. When Robert Bruce had been frequently beaten in battle, he despaired of winning the crown of Scotland, but when he lay hidden in the loft among the hay and straw, he saw a spider trying to complete her web after he had broken the thread many times. As he saw the insect begin again and yet again, until she had completed her net for the taking of her prey, he said to himself, "If this spider perseveres and conquers, so will I persevere and succeed." There might not be any real connection between a spider and an aspirant to a throne, but the brave heart made a connection and, thereby, the man was cheered. If you and I will but look about us, although the adversaries of God are as many as grasshoppers, yet we shall find consolation. I hear the birds sing, "Be of good cheer," and the leafless trees bid us trust in God and live on, though all visible signs of life are withered! If a dream were sufficient to encourage Gideon, an everyday fact in Nature may equally serve the same purpose to us!

But what a pity it is that we should need such little bits of things to cheer us up when we have matters of far surer import to make us glad! Gideon had already received, by God's own angel, the word, "Surely I will be with you and you shall smite the Midianites as one man." Was not this enough for him? Where is it that a boy's dream comforts him more than God's own Word? O child of God, how you degrade yourself and your Master's Word when you set so much store on a small token! Your Lord's promise—is that *little* in your eyes? What surer pledge of love do you desire than the blood of Jesus spilt for you? When Jesus says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you," what more can you require? Is not the Word of the Lord *absolute* Truth? What seal do you need for the handwriting of God? The Lord may grant us further tokens for good, but we ought not to *require* them.

I have said that our gracious God does condescendingly grant us even trifles, when He sees that they will cheer us—and this, I think, calls for adoring gratitude—and also for practical use of this comfort. God grant us Grace to do great things as the result of that which, to others, may seem a trifle. Let us not make a sluggard's bed out of our tokens, but let us hasten to the fight as Gideon did. If you have received a gleam of comfort, hasten to the conflict before the clouds return! Go to your consecrated labor before you have lost the fervor of your spirit. May the Holy Spirit lead you to do so.

III. I have been brief upon that point because I want you to notice, thirdly, THE CHEERING DISCOVERY. Gideon had noticed a striking Providence. He had received a comfortable trifle. But he also made a very cheering discovery—which discovery was that the enemy dreamed of dis-

aster! You and I sometimes think about the hosts of evil and we fear we shall never overcome them because they are so strong and so secure. Listen—we overestimate them! The powers of darkness are not so strong as they seem to be! The most subtle infidels and heretics are only men. What is more, they are bad men, and bad men at bottom are weak men! You fret because in this war you are not angels—be comforted to think that the adversaries of the Truth of God are also men! You sometimes grow doubtful and so do they. You half despair of victory and so do they. You are, at times, hard put to it—so are they. You sometimes dream of disaster—so do they. It is natural to men to fear and doubly natural to bad men.

It must have been a great comfort to Gideon to think that the Midianites dreamed about him and that their dreams were full of terror to themselves. *He* did not think much of himself—he reckoned himself to be the least of all his father's house and that his father's house was little in Israel—but the foes of Israel had taken another gauge of Gideon—they had evidently the notion that he was a great man whom God might use to smite them and they were afraid of him. He that interpreted the dream made use of the name of, "Gideon, the son of Joash," evidently knowing a great deal more about Gideon than Gideon might have expected. "This," said the soldier, "is the sword of Gideon, the son of Joash, a man of Israel: for into his hand has God delivered Midian and all the host." Notice how his words tallied with those which the Lord had spoken to Gideon. The enemy had begun to dream and to be afraid of him who now stood listening to their talk! A dread from the Lord had come upon them. Let us say to ourselves, "Why should we be afraid of sinners? They are afraid of us!"

A Christian man, the other day, was afraid to speak about his Lord to one whom he met. It cost him a deal of trouble to get his courage up to speak to a skeptic. But when he had spoken, he found that the skeptic had all along been afraid that he would be spoken to! It is a pity when we tremble before those who are trembling because of us. By lack of faith in God, we make our enemies greater than they are!

Behold the host of doubters, heretics and revilers who, at the present time, have come up into the inheritance of Israel, hungry from their deserts of rationalism and atheism! They are eating up all the corn of the land! They cast a doubt upon all the Truths of our faith. But we need not fear them, for if we heard their secret counsels, we should perceive that they are afraid of us! Their loud blustering and their constant sneers are the index of real fear. Those who preach the Cross of our Lord Jesus are the terror of modern thinkers! In their heart of hearts they dread the preaching of the old-fashioned Gospel and they hate what they dread! On their beds they dream of the coming of some Evangelist into their neighborhood. What the name of Richard was to the Saracens, that is the name of Moody to these boastful intellects! They wish they could stop those Calvinistic fellows and those evangelical old fogies! Brothers and Sisters, so long as the plain Gospel is preached in England, there will always be hope that these brigands will yet be scattered and the Church be rid of their intrusion. Rationalism, Socinianism, Ritualism and Universalism will soon take to their legs if the clear, decided cry of, "the Sword of the Lord and of Gideon" be once more heard!

There is nothing of which a child of God need be afraid either on the earth or under it. I do not believe that in the lowest depths of Hell we should hear or see anything that need make a Believer in the Lord Jesus to be afraid. On the contrary, tidings of what the Lord has worked have made the enemy to tremble! Goodness wears in her innocence a breast-plate of courage, but sin genders cowardice. Those who follow after falsehood have a secret monitor within which tells them that theirs is a weak cause and that the Truth of God must and will prevail over them. Let them alone—the beating of their own hearts will scare them. The Lord lives and while He lives let none that trusts in His Word suffer his heart to fail him, for the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but the Word of the Lord endures forever! Our adversaries are neither so wise, nor so brave, nor so influential as we think them to be. Only have courage and rely upon God and you will overcome them! David, you need not fear the giant because of his size—the vastness of his shape will only make him an easier target for your smooth stone. His very bulk is his weakness—it were hard to miss so huge a carcass! Be not afraid, but run to meet him—the Lord has delivered him into your hands!

Why should the servants of the Lord speak doubtfully when their God pledges His honor that He will aid them? Let us change our manner of speech and say with the Psalmist, “Ascribe you strength unto God: His excellency is over Israel. Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered; let them, also, that hate Him flee before Him.” We have received a kingdom which cannot be moved! We have believed the faith once delivered unto the saints and we will display it as a banner because of the Truth of God! Yet shall this song be sung in our habitations—“The Lord gave the Word: great was the company of those that published it. Kings of armies did flee apace: and she that tarried at home divided the spoil.”

IV. Lastly, and most important of all, let us think for a little of THE DREAM, ITSELF, AND OF ITS INTERPRETATION.

The Midianite in his dream saw a barley cake. Barley cakes were not much valued as food in those days, any more than now. People ate barley when they could not get wheat, but they would need to be driven to such food by poverty, or famine. Barley meal was rather food for dogs or cattle than for men and, therefore, the barley cake would be the emblem of a thing despised. A barley cake was generally made upon the hearth. A hole was made in the ground and paved with stones. In this a fire was made and when the stones were hot, a thin layer of barley meal was laid upon them, covered over with the ashes, and thus quickly and roughly baked. The cake, itself, was a mere biscuit. You must not interpret the dream as having in it a large *loaf* of barley bread tumbling down the hill and smashing up the tent with its own weight. No, it was only a cake, that is to say, a *biscuit*—of much the same form and thinness as we see in the Passover cakes of the Jews.

It may have been a long piece of thin crust and it was seen in the dream moving onward and waving in the air something like a sword. It came rolling and waving down the hill till it came crashing against the pavilion of the prince of Midian, and turned the tent completely over, so that it lay in ruins. Perhaps driven by a tremendous wind, this flake of barley

bread cut like a razor through the chief pole of the pavilion and over went the royal tent. That was his vision—an odd, strange dream enough! His companion answered, “The dream means mischief for our people. One of those barley-cake eaters from the hills will be upon us before long. That man Gideon, whom we have heard of lately, may fall upon us all of a sudden and break down our power.” That was the interpretation—the barley biscuit was the ruin of the pavilion.

Now, what we have to learn from it is just this, *God can work by any means*. He can never be short of instruments. For His battles, He can find weapons on the hearth, weapons in the kneading trough, weapons in the poor man’s basket. Omnipotence has servants everywhere! For the defense of His cause, God can enlist all the forces of Nature, all the elements of society, all the powers that be! His kingdom cannot fail, since the Lord can defend it even by the cakes which are baking upon the coals! Gideon, who threshes corn, today, will thresh the Lord’s enemies tomorrow. Preachers of the Word are being trained everywhere!

God can work by the feeblest means. He can use a cake which a child can crumble to smite Midian and subdue its terrible power. Alas, Sirs, we often consider the means to be used and forget to go onward to Him who will use them! We often stop at the means and begin to calculate their natural force and thus we miss our mark. The point is to get *beyond* the instruments to the God who *uses* the instruments! I think I have heard that a tallow candle fired from a rifle will go through a door—the penetrating power is not in the candle, but in the force impelling it. So in this case, it was not the barley biscuit, but the almighty impulse which urged it forward and made it upset the pavilion. We are nothing, but God with us is everything. “He gives power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increases strength.”

By using weak means, our Lord gets to Himself all the Glory and hides pride from men. The Lord had said to Gideon in the early part of this chapter, “The people are yet too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against Me, saying, My own hand has saved me.” Their oppression was a punishment for sin and their deliverance must be an act of mercy! They must be made to see the Lord’s hand and they cannot see it more clearly than by being delivered by feeble means! Out of jealousy for His own Glory, it often pleases God to set aside likely means and use those which we looked not for.

Now I know how it is today—men think that if the world is to be converted it must be done by learned men, men of noble family or at least of eminent talent! But is this the Lord’s usual way? Is there anything in the Acts of the Apostles, or in the life of Christ, that should lead us to look to human wisdom, or talent, or prestige? Does not everything look in the opposite direction? The lake of Galilee was Christ’s Apostolic College. Has not God always acted upon His own declaration that He has hid these things from the wise and prudent—and has revealed them unto babes? Is it not still true that the Lord has chosen the weak things of the world to confuse the things which are mighty? And base things of the world and things which are despised has God chosen, yes, and things which are not, to bring to nothing things that are? Are we not on the wrong track alto-

gether when we look to men and means and measures instead of considering the right hand of the Most High? Brothers and Sisters, let us never forget that out of the mouth of babes and sucklings has the Lord ordained strength because of His enemies, that He might still the enemy and the avenger!

The Lord employs feeble means so that He may have an opening for you and for me! If He used only the great, the wise, the strong, we should have to lie in the corner. Then might the men of one talent be excused for hiding it. But now the least among us may, through God's Grace, aspire to usefulness! Brothers, let not your weakness keep you back from the Lord's work—surely you are at least as strong as barley cakes! I find that the original text suggests a noise, such as might be made by chestnuts or corn when roasting in the fire. The dreamer marked that it was a noisy cake which tumbled into the host of Midian. More noise than force, one would say. It was like a coal which dies out of the fire, makes a little explosion, and is never more heard of. Thus have many of God's most useful servants been spoken of at first. They were nine-day wonders, mere flashes in the pan, much ado about nothing and so forth. And yet the Lord smites His enemies by their feeble means!

My Brother, perhaps you have begun to make a little stir by faithfully preaching the Gospel and this has opened the mouths of the adversaries who are indignant that such a nobody as *you* should be useful. "Why, there is nothing in the fellow! It is sheer impudence for him to suppose that *he* has any right to speak!" Never mind. Go on with your work for the Lord. Cease not because you are of such small account, for by such as you, God is pleased to work! Never are His adversaries so shamefully beaten as when the Lord uses feeble instrumentality. The Lord smote the hosts of Jabin by the hand of a woman and the hosts of Philistia by the hand of Shamgar the plowman! It was to their everlasting reproach that the Lord put His foes to the rout with pitchers and trumpets in the hand of the little band who followed the thresher of Abiezer. The Lord will tread Satan under our feet shortly, even under *our* feet, who are less than the least of all saints!

Note, next, *God uses unexpected means*. If I wanted to upset a tent, I certainly would not try to overturn it by a barley cake! If I had to cannonade an encampment, I should not bombard it with biscuits! Yet how wonderfully God has worked by the very persons whom we should have passed over without a thought. O Paganism, your gigantic force and energy, with Caesar at their head, shall be vanquished by fishermen from the sea of Galilee! God willed it so and so it was done. Papal Rome met as signal a downfall from Reformers rude of speech and poor in estate! Expect the unexpected! Thus the Lord works to call men's attention to what He does. If He does what men commonly reckon upon, they take no notice of His doings, however splendid they may be in themselves. But if He steps aside and does that which none could have looked for, then is their attention arrested and they consider that the hand of the Lord is in it! Then, also, they admire and feel somewhat of awe of Him.

For the tent to fall seems nothing, but for the tent to fall by being smitten with a barley cake is something to be marveled at. For souls to be

saved is, in itself, remarkable, but for them to be saved by some simple child-like Evangelist who can scarcely speak grammatically—this is the talk of the town! For the Lord to call out a thief or a blasphemer and speak by his lips is a thing to make men feel the greatness of God! Then they cry, “How unsearchable are His ways!” For an error to be blasted and dried up, is a blessed thing—and yet it is all the more miraculous when this is done, not by reasoning, nor by eloquent argument, but by the simple declaration of Gospel Truth! O Sirs, we never know what the Lord will do next! He can raise up defenders of the faith from the stones of the river! I despair not for the grand old cause. No, I hope against hope. Driven back as we may be, I see the very dust breeding warriors and the grass of the field hardening into spears. Courage! Courage! Stand still and see the salvation of God!

But the dream has more in it than this—*God uses despised means*. This man, Gideon, is likened to a cake, and then only to a barley cake, but the Lord styles him “a mighty man of valor.” God loves to take men whom others despise and use them for His glorious ends. “He is a fool,” they say, “an uneducated man, one of the very lowest class of minds. He has no taste, no culture, no thought. He is not a person of the advanced school.” My dear Brother, I hope no one among you will be influenced by this kind of silly talk! The “mashers” in our churches talk in this fashion, but who cares for their proud nonsense? It is time that men who despise others should be, themselves, despised, and be made to know that they are so! Those who boast of their intellect are of small account with God. The whole tenor of this Inspired Book is that way—it speaks kindly of things that are despised—but it has no word of reverence for the boastful and pretentious. Therefore, you despised ones, let the proud unbelievers laugh at you and sing concerning you, their song of a barley cake—but you in patience possess your souls and go on in the service of your Lord! They think to render you contemptible, but the scorn shall return upon the scorers! You shall yet, by the Lord’s strength, have such force and vigor put into you that you shall put to flight the armies of the aliens. Say you with Paul, “When I am weak, then am I strong.” “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” “He has put down the mighty from their seats and exalted them of low degree.”

But, then, *God always uses effectual means*. This cake of barley bread came unto a tent and struck it so that it fell and overturned it. The Lord never does His work by halves. Even if He works by barley cakes, He makes a clean overthrow of His enemy. A cannonball could not have done its work better than did this barley cake! Friend, if the Lord uses you for His own purpose, He will do His work by you as effectually and surely as if He had selected the best possible worker! He lifts our weakness out of itself and elevates it to a level of power and efficacy little dreamed of by us. Therefore, be not afraid, you servants of God, but commit yourselves into the hands of Him who, out of weakness, can bring forth strength!

I have done when I have made an application of all this to certain practical purposes. Brothers and Sisters, do you not think that this smiting of the tent of Midian by the barley cake and, afterwards, the actual overthrow of the Midianite hordes by the breaking of the pitchers, the blazing

of the torches and the blowing of the trumpets all tends to comfort us as to those powers of evil which now cover the world? I am appalled, sometimes, as I think of the power of the enemy, both in the matter of impurity and falsehood. At this present moment you seem as if you could do nothing—you cannot get in to strike a blow. Sin and error have so much the upper hand that we know not how to strike them! The two great parties in England, the Puritan and the Cavalier, take turns about and, just now, the Cavalier rules most powerfully!

At one time sound doctrine and holy practice had sway, but in these days loose teaching and loose living are to the fore. But our duty clearly lies in sticking to the Word of the Lord and the Gospel of our fathers. God forbid that we should Glory except in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ! By this sign we shall yet conquer. The impurity of the age will never be cleansed except by the prevalence of the Gospel! The infidelity of the period will never die before any assault but that of the pure Truth of the living Lord! We must tell of pardon bought with blood, of free forgiveness according to the riches of Divine Grace and of eternal power changing fallen human nature and making men new creatures in Christ Jesus! They call this a worn-out doctrine—let us put its power to the test on the largest scale—and we shall see that it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes! As for me, I shall preach the Gospel of the Grace of God and that only, even if I am the only one left!

The hosts of Israel are melting away and they will melt much more. As in Gideon's day, out of the whole host, 22,000 have gone altogether away from true allegiance to the cause and many more have no stomach for the fight. Let them go! The thousands and the hundreds. Let the 30,000 who came at the trumpet call decrease to the 300 men that lap in haste as a dog laps, because they are eager for the fray! When we are thinned out and made to see how few we are, we shall be hurled upon the foe with a power not our own! Our weapon is the torch of the old Gospel, flaming forth through the breaking of our earthen vessels! To this we add the trumpet sound of an earnest voice. Ours is the midnight cry, "Behold He comes!" We cannot get victory by any might or skill of ours and yet, in the end, the foe shall be defeated and the Lord, alone, shall be exalted! Were things worse than they are, we would still cry, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon" and stand, each man, in his place till the Lord appeared in strength.

Another lesson would I draw from the text as to our inward conflicts. Dear Friend, you are feeling in your heart the great power of sin. The Midianites are encamped in your soul. In the little valley of Esdraelon which lies within your bosom, there are countless evils and these, like the locusts, eat up every growing thing and cause comfort, strength and joy to cease from your experience. You sigh because of these invaders. I counsel you to try what faith can do. Your own earnest efforts appear to make you worse—try faith! Neither tears, nor prayers, nor vows, nor self-denials have dislodged the foe—try the barley cake of faith! Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! In Him you are saved! In Him you have power to become a child of God! Believe this and rejoice. Poor sinner, try faith! Poor backslider, try faith! Poor desponding heir of Heaven, try faith! This barley

cake of faith will smite the power of sin, break the dominion of doubt and bring you victory!

Remember that ancient Scripture, “Call upon Me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me”? Make bold to believe! Say at once—

***“I do believe, I will believe,
That Jesus died for me.”***

This seems a very poor means of getting the victory, as poor as the barley cake baked on the coals—but God has chosen it and He will bless it—and it will overthrow the throne of Satan within your heart and work holiness and peace in you.

Once again, still in the same vein, let us, dear Friends, try continually the power of prayer for the success of the Gospel and the winning of men’s souls. Prayer will do anything—will do everything! It fills the valleys and levels the mountains. By its power men are raised from the door of Hell to the gate of Heaven! What is to become of London? What is to become of heathen nations? I listen to a number of schemes, very visionary and very hard to work out. But I put these aside. There remains to Believers but one scheme—our Lord has said, “Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.” This, therefore, we must do and, at the same time, we must cry mightily unto God by prayer that His Holy Spirit may attend the proclamation of the Word.

Let us more and more prove the power of prayer, resting assured that the Lord is able to do exceeding abundantly above what we ask or even think. Let each man stand with the flaming torch of the Truth of God in his hand and the trumpet of the Gospel at his lips—and so let us compass the army of the aliens! This is our war cry—Christ and Him crucified! God forbid that we should know anything else among men, but the death, the blood, the Resurrection, the reign, the coming, the Glory of Christ!

Let us not lose faith in our calling, nor in our God, but rest assured that the Lord reigns and His cause must triumph! Where sin abounded Grace does much more abound! We shall see better and brighter days than these. Grant it, O Lord, for Your Son’s sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—

Judges 6:1-21, 36-40; 7:7-15.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—92 (PART I), 674, 686.

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FAINT—BUT NOT FAINT-HEARTED

NO. 2343

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JANUARY 14, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.
ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 17, 1889.

"Faint, yet pursuing."
Judges 8:4.

THESE three hundred men, though faint, were not faint-hearted. If they had been cowards, they would have left Gideon when he made the proclamation, "Whoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from Mount Gilead." Twenty-two thousand accepted that permission and left their general with ten thousand. Out of that smaller company, which was yet too large, these 300 had been selected as the men that lapped. While others unloosed their helmets and lay prone upon the grass to take a luxurious drink, these men acted like a hasty dog who, running by the side of a stream, laps and runs, and laps and runs—and wastes no time in drinking. They were men who had given themselves wholly up to this holy war and who were determined to smite these foes of God and His people—and yet they were faint. They were not faint because they were dispirited, for they had just won a great victory. They had broken the pitchers, unveiled the lamps, blown the trumpets and had shouted, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon," and they had seen the vast host of Midian melt away before their eyes! They had plunged with fervor into the battle, chasing the flying foe and laying tens of thousands dead at their feet. Every man among them was a hero—and yet they were faint.

When you see men faint, do not blame them. Perhaps, by their faintness, they have proved of what true stuff they are made. They have done as much as flesh and blood can do and, therefore, they are faint. They may not have been defeated—they may have gained a glorious victory—and yet, for the moment, they may be faint. Faintness, by itself, is a poor thing, but if you can truly say, "Faint, yet pursuing," faintness becomes the foil to set off perseverance—and the man is all the nobler because, when faint, he still pursues.

I am going to talk, tonight, to some of God's people who may be in the condition which the text describes—"Faint, yet pursuing." I shall dwell a little, in the first place, upon *the weakness of the flesh*—"Faint." Secondly, I shall ask you to admire *the strength of Divine Grace*—"Faint, yet pursuing." When we have done that, I trust that we shall have a few minutes in which to learn *the lessons of example*, for these men shall be our school-masters.

I. First, let us think about THE WEAKNESS OF THE FLESH. What is man, after all, at his very best? The best of men, at their best, are but

men, and human nature, even at its best, is but a poor thing. And the strongest man may very soon be too weak to do anything and the heroic man, who could stand against the shock of arms, may lie upon the ground, weary, and unable to go a step further. Why were these brave, strong men of Gideon's band faint? I shall mention certain reasons which apply to us as well as to them.

Well, first, they grew faint because *they had lost their rest*. It was at night that they broke the pitchers, at night that they made that surprising attack upon the camp of their enemies and they had, ever since, with hot feet, been pursuing the flying crowd. There had been no time for them to have any sleep, that "tired nature's sweet restorer" which is so necessary to us all. And there are Christian minds that have not rested—they have not had time to rest. And upon some there comes what is called insomnia, the inability to sleep. This, of course, is a physical malady, and overburdened men may be afflicted by it, but Christian men may suffer from *spiritual* insomnia. They may get so exercised about their work, so worried about the Lord's work—they may lay so much to heart the needs and woes of men, they may be so fretted about how little they can do, and how feebly they do it, and how small is the result that follows from all they have done—that they may get into a state of spiritual insomnia and restlessness.

Now, this is always evil. Christ would have Martha care and to serve, but He would not have her cumbered with much serving—He would prefer that she should sit, like Mary, at His feet. We can do much for our Lord—some can do a great deal more than they are now doing—but it is very possible to attempt too much and really to do next to nothing because we have put ourselves into a condition in which we cannot do anything well! You may see a man who is strong and vigorous achieve with one blow what another cannot accomplish with 20 feeble strokes. It is not the doing much that is the important matter—it is the doing what you do with real force and power. You lose the ability to work unless you have necessary rest. Did you never notice how the Master makes rest a privilege of the worker? "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me...and you shall find rest unto your souls." You will never work like Christ unless you can rest like Christ! He had a great capacity for resting as well as great power for working. When He was in that little boat which was tossed in the storm, He was asleep in the back part of the vessel while the storm was at its height! To go to sleep was the best thing that He could do and, at certain times, the best thing that a Christian can do is to "rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him," for in that way he will get back his lost strength and power for service. If he neglects to rest in Christ, he will become faint. But it will be a happy circumstance if, when faint, he is still pursuing!

In addition to losing their rest, *these men had endured a very heavy strain*. There is much work to be done that we might go on doing for a century if we lived so long, yet we should never be worn out by it—the ordinary everyday work does not kill men. But there are superhuman efforts to be made on special occasions and those extraordinary tasks put a tremendous strain upon the soul. It was a superhuman effort when the 300 brave warriors remained with Gideon—over thirty thousand of his first

great army melted away—but the 300 stalwarts stood fast. It may seem to you to be simple enough to stand fast when thirty thousand flee, but you will not find it so if ever you are put to the test! And then to go down, in the dead of night, under Gideon's leadership—against at least a hundred and fifty thousand Midianites—with lamps, pitchers, and trumpets as their only weapons, might seem a small thing to do, but it took courageous men to do such a daring deed as that, and to believe that by such a simple stratagem God would defeat their numerous foes! O Sirs, believe me, faith is not child's play! And though a simple faith, exercised from day to day about ordinary things, is not to be despised, yet there come special moments when you must have the faith of God's elect, and an elect faith, too, and a high degree of it! And if you have that and exert it to the fullest, you will find that it will tell upon your whole frame.

These men had also experienced the strain of great success. Stand still and see that mighty host dividing into parties and beginning to slay one another! Behold the whole power of Midian suddenly broken! Oh, the joy that must have filled the hearts of Gideon's three hundred! Their spirits must have leaped within them with ecstasy and delight—they must have felt that they could hardly contain themselves for very joy while God was working such a glorious deliverance! And if you have ever been indulged by your heavenly Father with some great success in service for the King, you have felt, afterwards, as if your moisture was turned into the drought of summer! It takes the very soul out of a man to see God at work and himself to be the instrument in the Lord's hands, of accomplishing some high and wondrous purpose of judgment or mercy! These three hundred men had endured a great strain upon their faith and they had also had that which is a greater strain, still—the triumph of their faith in God! And so, exhausted and worn out, they were ready to faint.

Beside that, remember, dear Friends, that *these men had put forth great strength*. It was not merely mental wear and tear that they had to endure, but there was much actual conflict with the enemy. At first the Midianites killed one another, but after they took to flight, Gideon's men pursued them up hill and down dale, slaying them wherever they could, for they would not leave one of these enemies of their country who had dared to invade the land of the holy. They resolved to cut them all off. It was a hard day's work and they had done many deeds of daring and now, as they go by Succoth, they are faint though they are still pursuing the flying foe. If you, dear Brothers and Sisters, will give yourselves wholly to God's work, although you will never get tired *of* it, you will often get tired *in* it. If a man has never tired himself with working for God, I should think he never has done any work that was worth doing. If a Sister has never spent herself in trying to win souls, I should suppose that the number of souls which she will win will be very few, indeed. We can never expect God's blessing on our work till every faculty of our being is awakened and the whole of our strength is put forth in the Divine service. Now, if this is the case with us, it is no wonder if sometimes we get weary and feel ready to faint.

Note, also, that *these brave men had endured a long march*. They had first fought the battle in the night and this had been followed by the pursuit of the enemy during the day. They needed to prevent them from

crossing the fords and, all along that forced march there had been fighting—and the fighting after a battle is often the most severe. Many generals have been able to win a battle, but they have not known how to use it after they have won it. The toughest part of the fight full often is after the enemy begins to flee—and these men had endured a long day of this trying work. Now, dear Friends, I believe that it is very often not the pace, but the *time* that makes Christian people tired. When I have thought the matter over, I have many times said that I could die for Christ, by His Grace, if I might lay my head down on a block and have it chopped off at once. I think that I could endure that. But what about being roasted alive by a slow fire? Well, that is a different matter. One might feel, in such a case, that human strength would very soon be dried up. Ah, dear Friends, to stand bravely for Christ for a week or two is a simple matter—but to keep on, month after month, and year after year, is another affair!

It is the length of life that tries the reality of religion. Some are able to stand against the temptations of youth and yet succumb amid the business of middle life. And alas, as many horses fall at the bottom of the hill, so we have known many men who have sinned sadly in old age. In fact, as nearly as I can recollect, all the great falls recorded in Scripture are those of old men, or of persons far beyond the age of youth—as if to teach us that when we think that we have grown wise by experience, we shall be great fools if we trust, even then, to ourselves. But it is that length of endurance, that year after year of trial, that long fight of affliction, or that long-continued temptation that tries the man—and it is of little wonder if, sometimes, the very heroes of the Cross are faint and weary.

And, once more, *these brave men had taken no refreshment*. We read that the people took victuals in their hand when they went down to the fight, but that food was all gone, for soldiers have fine appetites when they have had much to do, and they grow very faint if they cannot get refreshment. Ah, dear children of God, if you live where you do not hear the Gospel faithfully preached, I do not wonder if you faint! Or, if you have given up hearing the Word, and have been busying yourself, always teaching, it may be that you have been giving out too much and taking in too little. I like the plan adopted by many of our dear friends who come here on Sunday mornings—they are always here in the morning, but they are never here on Sabbath evenings. Where are they? They are happily engaged in some good and gracious work! But they will not give up the hearing in the morning, for that, they say, is their week's meal and strengthens them for service during the rest of the day. I think that they do wisely.

Young Christians, especially, cannot do without their food. There are not many of us who would be in vigorous health if we did not have our regular food and I do not think that the majority of Christians can afford to be so busy in the Master's service as not to get opportunities for meditation, contemplation and hearing and studying the Word of God. Perhaps some Brother here may be faint, tonight, for that very reason, and he may receive a hint that it is necessary for him to take refreshment if he is to go on with his work. "Come you, yourselves apart, into a desert place, and rest awhile," said Christ to His disciples and, as to the people who fol-

lowed Him, when He saw them hungry and faint, He multiplied the loaves and fishes and fed them to the fullest, and they were revived.

But, Beloved, what child of God, who engages faithfully in the work and warfare of this life, does not, at times, feel ready to faint? Stand in the position of one who finds himself deserted by those who seemed to be his friends but who prove faithless and, without a protest for the Truth of God, glide away in the general current of error—your heart grows sick as you think of the cowards who ought to have been at your side in the battle for the standard. Your soul is ready to faint as you note the slackness of others whom you do not suspect of going astray, but who, in the day of battle, are like Meroz and come not up to the help of the Lord against the mighty! Battling for Christ in the midst of the crowd where you need hundreds of helpers, but can scarcely find one—trying to carry the Light of God into some of the dark slums of London, thinking that every Christian will sympathize with you, but finding that none do so—these are the trials that make even brave hearts feel faint!

Well, Brothers and Sisters, I think I have said enough, and, perhaps, too much, upon that first point—the weakness of the flesh—so I turn with great pleasure to the next point.

II. In the second place, let us admire THE STRENGTH OF DIVINE GRACE. These 300 men were “faint, yet pursuing.” They could march but slowly, but they did march! They could strike but feebly, but they did strike!

Observe that although they were faint, *they were not faint in heart*. They still believed. They still had a brave stomach for the fight. They had not wavered in their resolution—they meant to still go forward—they intended to conquer the enemies of their country before them, or die in the attempt, and not one of them proposed to turn back! They were “faint, yet pursuing.” Every man of them kept on the track of the Midianites. They were still determined to go forward. They did not demand substitutes, saying, “We have done so much, now let somebody else come in and finish the work.” No, no, they were still pursuing, each man resolved that his own right arm should wield his weapon till the fray was over.

Nor did they rest on their laurels. Some of us, perhaps, would have done so if we had been in their places. We might have said, “We have done bravely, we have already broken the neck of Midian, we are victors—there is no need to do more.” No, but they reckoned that nothing was done while there was anything undone! They were not content while a single enemy lived! They must carry the warfare right through to the bitter end and they meant to do it. Sternly resolved were they that though they were faint, and even if they died, they would die with their faces to the enemy, fighting for the Lord God of Israel! Brothers in Christ, is not that our resolve tonight? My Christian Sisters, do you not feel the same? We have lifted our hands to the Lord and we will never go back—we could not give up His Truth, His love His service! To whom should we go if we left our Lord? If we did not keep on pursuing, what would we do? Lie still we cannot—there is a something in us which will not let us rest while there is work to be done for God—by which Christ can be glorified!

These men were driven forward by hope. Although they were faint, they felt that He who had brought them so far would bring them through to the end. He had done so much for them that they might have said—

***“His love in time past forbids us to think
He’ll leave us, at last, with hunger to sink,”***

and so they kept on, hopeful, still, that they should win a complete victory! They were resolved that if it were not so, yet they would still keep on. So let it be with us. If I am faint, I will still continue fighting against sin. If everybody else forsakes the Cross, yet a genuine Christian cannot. If every flag were taken away and rolled in the mire, our Master should still find us, by His Grace, prepared to bear disgrace and dishonor for His sake, and to still cling to the grand old cause, “faint, yet pursuing.”

Now, Beloved, you who are here, tonight, may belong to various classes and faintness may come upon you in reference to different things. Let me just mention them in the hope that the strength of Grace may come to you even as it did to Gideon’s band.

Are you a student, my dear Brother? Are you studying the Scriptures? Are you endeavoring to learn the deep things of God? Do you know that you have learned very little as yet? Do the great mysteries stagger you? Are you driven to feel what a fool you are? Have you come to those great deeps where such as you can never see the bottom? Ah, well, though you are faint in your study of the Scripture, still pursue it! Get close to the Word of God—search it through and through, study it, meditate on it, give yourself wholly to it, seek to know all that God has revealed—for the things which are revealed, however mysterious they are, belong to you. If you are faint in the pursuit of Divine Truth, yet continue to pursue it!

Perhaps you are fighting against some inbred sin. It may be that I address some who see a swarm of sins within their nature. By God’s Grace you have determined to put every sin to the sword, but you have been baffled by their numbers and their strength. This very morning, when you got up, you thought that you would make this the holiest day you have ever lived, but it has been a very poor day, after all. The other week, when you went to business, you said to yourself, “By God’s help, I will show all I meet today how a Christian can live.” But you tripped and stumbled very sorrowfully. Well now, my dear Brother, you are faint because of these failures. Yet, I pray you, do not give up the struggle, for God will help you! In the power of His Spirit you are able to overcome these sins and you may yet sing, “Thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Up and at them, Brothers! If faint, yet still be pursuing! The Lord help you in this battle!

Possibly, you are a worker for Christ. You have begun well—I am thankful that you have *begun*. After continuing a little time in the Lord’s service, you do not want to give it up, but you do not seem to get on at it, and Satan has been saying to you, “You might as well give it up, for you are doing no good. Do not worry yourself with that work any longer.” There is a friend who is not Satan, but perhaps Satan is using that friend and getting that friend to say to you, “This work will be too much for you. I know it will. You are not adapted for it, why do you not take things more easily?” Ah, but, dear Friend, permit *me* to say to you, “If you are faint, yet still be pursuing. There is a great blessing coming and the devil does not

want you to receive it. Defeat the devil by giving yourself more earnestly than ever to the cause of your Lord, for, depend upon it, there is something going to happen, soon, that will abundantly repay you and the arch-enemy wants to prevent you from getting the blessing.”

Is the conflict concerning prayer? Have you been pleading for a soul and you have not yet won the victory? Is it your husband? Is it your wayward boy? Is it a friend? Have you been at Jabbok, near where Gideon was at this very time? Have you wrestled with the Angel? Have you been expecting to prevail and have you not yet been successful, and has something said to you, “Do not pray about it any more”? Oh, Beloved, if that is the case, I beg you to pluck up courage! Though faint, yet still be pursuing! Continue pleading with God and do not let the Angel go until He blesses you!

Or, once more, have you been bearing witness for the Truth of God and, in bearing witness for it have you met with losses and crosses? Have you been brought under suspicion and misrepresentation? Have you lost some of your dearest friends and have they even become your bitter enemies? Do you get very faint and are you tempted to say, “Why should I protest? Let things go as they will. The age is rotten through and through—what is the use of my standing out?” Oh, say not so! Where would the Reformation have been if it had not been for two or three brave hearts? How will any Truth of God be preserved in the world if men are craven and chicken-hearted? No, my Brother, speak not so, but rather say, tonight, “Though I may appear to achieve nothing by my protest, that is not my affair. My business is to do my duty—*results* must rest with God and, by His Grace, faint as I am, I will still be pursuing.”

III. Now I close by pointing out to you THE LESSONS OF EXAMPLE that we may learn from Gideon’s brave men.

The first lesson is this—*Serve the Lord*. Brothers and Sisters, we are saved by Grace. Some of us were saved years ago. We were washed in the blood of the Lamb and clothed in the righteousness of Christ. We rejoice in a finished work whereby we are saved. Now let us *serve* because we have been saved and let us serve our Lord to the last fragment of strength! I do not think that Christ can be rightly served with half our manhood—it must be with the whole of our powers. All my goods, all my alms, all my talents, all that I can invent, all that I can achieve I must give to Him. Is there any part of us that we dare reserve for self? Shall the broad arrow of the King never be stamped on this or that portion of our being? Ah, then, a curse will come upon us! No, let it not be so, but let us give Him all the strength we have until we become fairly exhausted and are ready to faint—and even then let us be pursuing!

Let us also serve the Lord when every movement is painful, when even to *think* is wearisome. These men were faint. You know what it is for a soldier to be faint—it is no nonsense, no pretence, it is real fainting. To go running on when you are ready to faint—to keep right on when you are ready to drop—this is very trying work, but let us do it, Brothers and Sisters, by God’s Grace! Some people only pray when they feel like praying, but we need most to pray when we feel that we *cannot* pray. If we were only to preach—some of us—when we felt like preaching, we would not of-

ten preach! If some people I know would only give when they felt like giving, they would never give! Perhaps, for that matter, they never do. But you are not to do a thing merely when it is a pleasure to you. Do it when it is a pain to you! When faint, yet be pursuing! When, instead of your legs carrying you, you have to drag your legs along the ground, yet still pursue the enemy! When you feel that, absolutely, you could not go another foot, yet still go many another *yard*, for there is such a thing as doing as much as you can and yet, by Divine Power and Grace, keeping on after that. The work that you felt you could not do will have more acceptance with God than that which you performed in your ordinary strength.

Serve the Lord when every movement is painful and serve Him when difficulties thicken. There were only 300 of Gideon's men and there were fifteen thousand of the enemy—and the people who ought to have been their friends would not even give them a loaf of bread to eat. Then is the time to serve the Lord! There is little in your service when everybody says, "Hurrah"—but there is something in the man who can follow the Lord when they cry, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" To run with the crowd—any fool can do that. But to face that crowd and go the other way. To stand alone, like a bronze pillar that cannot be stirred though the whole earth should push against you—there is something in such action that is worthy of the Grace of God! And it is true Grace, alone, that helps a man to act thus. Brothers and Sisters, do not count the difficulties—count your God as everything and let the rest go which way they will. The more difficulties there are, the better, and the fewer friends, the better—there shall be the more glory to the Grace that helps you in your loneliness to stand firm and to be faithful to your God.

Next, *be stimulated by past success*. Success for God is good. You win a victory over the Midianites and you feel faint. Do not faint. Why? It does not become you to faint after that victory. You who are red to the elbows with the blood of the enemy, are you going to faint? You who just now smote Oreb and Zeeb, are you going to turn cowards? You know what confusion there is in battle when a standard-bearer faints. Look, the standard begins to tremble! It falls almost down. Somebody holds it up, but the standard-bearer faints, and down goes the banner and everybody thinks that the battle is lost! Standard-bearer, standard-bearer, I beseech you, do not faint! Cry to your God, standard-bearer, for so many depend upon you! Teacher of a class, minister of a congregation, leader of a clan—stand in the strength of Jehovah, Himself, and having done all, stand!

Lastly, *be hopeful when you are feeblest*, just as these men were. "Faint, yet pursuing." When there were so very, very, very few of them, and they were faint, *then* they expected victory! And when there are very, very few of us, and we, too, are weary and fainting, then, perhaps, our extremity will be God's opportunity. Watch the hourglass. How fast the sands are falling! The time is almost up—there are only two or three grains, yet, to trickle down. Just so, but when the hour is up, then God's eternity comes in! When our time comes to an end, then God's great leisure shall come to an end, too, and He will pluck His right hand out of His bosom and He will do a work in our day that shall make the ears of them

that hear thereof to tingle! Therefore, beloved Brothers and Sisters, let us give ourselves more to Christ than ever!

As for you who do not belong to Jesus, to whom do you belong? You who are not servants of Christ, whose servants are you? Tremble, I pray you, for your master pays terrible wages—"The wages of sin is death." Remember the rest of the verse, "but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." God grant us that glorious gift, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON:
Judges 7:19-25; Judges 8:1-27.

Judges 7:19-21. *So Gideon, and the hundred men that were with him, came unto the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and broke the pitchers that were in their hands. And the three companies blew the trumpets, and broke the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow with: and they cried, The sword of the LORD and of Gideon! And they stood, every man in his place, round about the camp: and all the host ran, and cried, and fled.* This was in the dead of night, when the hosts of Midian were fast asleep. They were startled from their slumbers by the blast of 300 trumpets, and the flaming of 300 torches. They gathered that these were only the bugles and the lamps at the *head* of vast regiments of the Israelites and they hardly dared to calculate how great the whole host must have been! Filled with fear—astonished at the sound of the trumpets and the shouting of Gideon's band all round their camp, they took to their heels—"all the host ran and cried and fled."

22. *And the three hundred blew the trumpets, and the LORD set every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host.* They were a motley company, every man afraid of his fellow. They had gathered together to share the spoil and now, when fear demoralized them, the hordes of wild warriors began to destroy one another!

22-23. *And the host fled to Beth-Shittim in Zererath, and to the border of Abel-Meholah, unto Tabbath. And the men of Israel gathered themselves together out of Naphtali, and out of Asher, and out of all Manasseh, and pursued after the Midianites.* If some have the courage to strike the enemy, there are others who will come out of their hiding places to hunt the *beaten* foe. When you really need help, often you cannot get it. But when you can afford to do without assistance, you will sometimes be embarrassed by it.

24. *And Gideon sent messengers throughout all Mount Ephraim, saying, Come down against the Midianites, and take them before the waters—* "Secure the fords in the streams which flow into the Jordan from the mountainous region of Ephraim so that the refugees cannot get away."

24-25. *Unto Beth-Barah and Jordan. Then all the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and took the waters unto Beth-Barah and Jordan. And they took two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb; and they slew Oreb upon the rock Oreb, and Zeeb they slew at the winepress of*

Zeeb, and pursued Midian, and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side Jordan. So that, though they had been very backward at the first, yet, when they were once awakened, these men of Ephraim did their part in ridding the land of the common foe and, among the trophies of war, the heads of two of the princes of the Midianites fell into their hands.

Judges 8:1. *And the men of Ephraim said unto him, Why have you served us thus, that you called us not, when you went to fight with the Midianites. And they did chide with him sharply.* We have some friends like these men of Ephraim who do not like being left out of the battle for the Lord. They say, “Why are we not asked for our help? Why are we not allowed to take our share?” These are very good people, but we have known some of them who have made these enquiries rather late in the day! These Ephraimites knew all about the war and they might have volunteered to help Gideon—and we would have been glad of the earlier help of some who tarried till the victory was won!

2. *And he said unto them, What have I done now in comparison of you?* Gideon answered them very kindly and very wisely. He flattered them. He attached great importance to what they had done and took little credit to himself for his valiant service. In this he showed his self-command and his discretion. When persons chide sharply, it is a pity to chide back—the best way of dealing with them is with a soft answer to turn away their wrath.

2-5. *Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abi-Ezer? God has delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb: and what was I able to do in comparison of you? Then their anger was abated toward him, when he had said that. And Gideon came to Jordan, and passed over, he, and the three hundred men that were with him, faint, yet pursuing them. And he said unto the men of Succoth, Give, I pray you, loaves of bread unto the people that follow me; for they are faint, and I am pursuing after Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian.* This was a very natural and a very reasonable request. Gideon did not ask the men of Succoth to come with him, nor even to give a lodging to his soldiers. The fear of Midian was upon Israel and the people were afraid to do anything against their oppressor, but surely they might have relieved the hunger of their fellow countrymen. Instead of doing so, they answered Gideon with arrogant and cruel words.

6. *And the princes of Succoth said, Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in your hands, that we should give bread unto your army?* As much as to say, “What have you done, after all? There are fifteen thousand men with Zebah and Zalmunna, and there are only 300 of you. You have not even captured the leaders yet.” They forgot that Gideon’s band had slain a hundred and twenty thousand already—they underrated and mocked him—and would not give him the help he asked for.

7. *And Gideon said, Therefore when the LORD has delivered Zebah and Zalmunna into my hands, then I will tear your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers.* Some have said that this showed resentment and harshness, but when a man is at war, he is not in the habit of sprinkling his adversaries with rosewater. War is, in itself, so great an evil that

there are many other evils necessarily connected with it. It seems to me that if, when Gideon was trying to deliver his own countrymen, they scoffed at him and refused him bread for his soldiers in the day of their hunger, they deserved to be punished with great severity.

8, 9. *And he went up to Penuel, and spoke unto them, likewise: and the men of Penuel answered him as the men of Succoth had answered him. And he spoke, also, unto the men of Penuel, saying, When I come again in peace, I will break down this tower.* They took liberty to speak rudely because theirs was a fortified city, guarded by a strong tower. And Gideon, not doubting that he would come back that way, God having given him the victory, said, “When I come again in peace, I will break down this tower.”

10, 11. *Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor, and their hosts with them, about fifteen thousand men, all that were left of all the hosts of the children of the East: for there fell an hundred and twenty thousand men that drew sword. And Gideon went up by the way of them that dwelt in tents on the east of Nobah and Joybehah, and smote the host: for the host was secure.* He went by an unusual route and took them at night, again unawares when they felt perfectly safe, and were sound asleep—“for the host was secure.” As I read these words, I think, what a pity it is ever to fancy ourselves secure while we are really in peril! Carnal security is a great danger. To be “safe in the arms of Jesus,” is a most blessed condition, but to be secure in self-confidence is a thing that has a curse upon it.

12. *And when Zebah and Zalmunna fled, he pursued after them, and took the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and discomfited all the host.* That was the end of the tyranny of the Midianites. Gideon slew great numbers of them and drove away such as yet remained alive.

13-17. *And Gideon, the son of Joash, returned from battle before the sun was up, and caught a young man of the men of Succoth, and enquired of him: and he described unto him the princes of Succoth, and the elders thereof even threescore and seventeen men. And he came unto the men of Succoth, and said, Behold Zebah and Zalmunna, with whom you did upbraid me, saying, are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in your hands, that we should give bread unto your men that are weary? And he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briers, and with them he taught the men of Succoth. And he beat down the tower of Penuel, and slew the men of the city.* He probably slew the most public revilers, the leading men of Penuel, even as he had chastised the princes and elders of Succoth with thorns and briers. I have often observed that you and I have been taught a great many things, “with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers.” If we refuse to help God’s weary and tried people, it is highly probable that, one of these days, we may have to learn a great deal from the thorns of the wilderness and from the briers! Do we ever learn much apart from the thorns of the wilderness? Surely, trials and troubles have been our great instructors from the first day even until now.

18, 19. *Then said he unto Zebah and Zalmunna, What manner of men were they whom you slew at Tabor?” And they answered, As you are, so*

were they; each one resembled the children of a king. And he said, They were my brothers, even the sons of my mother. In the East, there is much greater affection between those who are the sons of one mother than between those who are only sons of one father.

19. *As the Lord lives, if you had saved them alive, I would not slay you.* But now it devolved upon him to be an avenger of blood according to Oriental law, and to put to death those who had slain his brothers.

20-22. *And he said unto Jether, his firstborn, Up, and slay them. But the youth drew not his sword: for he feared, because he was yet a youth. Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, Rise you, and fall upon us: for as the man is, so is his strength. And Gideon arose, and slew Zebah and Zalmunna, and took away the ornaments that were on their camels' necks. Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule you over us, both you, and your son, and your son's son also: for you have delivered us from the hand of Midian.* There was always an itching among the Israelites to have a king, an earthly monarch to rule over them, but God did not so design it. It was lack of loyalty and love to God that led them to make this request.

23-27. *And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the LORD shall rule over you. And Gideon said unto them, I would desire a request of you, that you would give me, every man, the earrings of his prey. (For they had golden earrings, because they were Ishmaelites). And they answered, We will willingly give them. And they spread a garment, and did cast therein, every man, the earrings of his prey. And the weight of the golden earrings that he requested was a thousand and seven hundred shekels of gold; beside ornaments, and collars, and purple raiment that was on the kings of Midian, and beside the chains that were about their camels' necks. And Gideon made an ephod thereof, and put it in his city, even in Ophrah: and all Israel went there whoring after it: which thing became a snare unto Gideon, and to his house.* He did not set up an idol, but he made an ephod—an imitation of that wonderful vestment worn by the High Priest. Perhaps he made it of solid gold, not to be worn, but to be looked at, simply to remind the people of the worship of God and not to be, itself, worshipped. But ah, dear Friends, you see here that if we go half an inch beyond what God's Word warrants, we always get into mischief! You hear people say, "We have such and such symbols, not to worship, but to help us in worship." Ah, yes, but the tendency of the *symbol* is to act as a dam to the stream of devotion and to make it end there! God forbid that we should ever violate the rules that Christ has laid down for us! The slightest deviation from the simplicity of the Gospel may lead us away into sheer apostasy! Where have all the errors of Rome come from but from little accretions and alterations? A little ornament here, a little symbol there, and a little variation of the Truth of God yonder and the gigantic system of Romanism has thus been created! Gideon probably meant well and we may do wrong even though we mean well. May the Lord preserve us from the smallest departure from the Way that He has marked out for us in his Holy Word! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—676, 677, 681.

THE FAITHFUL OLIVE TREE

NO. 3208

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 28, 1910.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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“The trees once went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, Reign over us. But the olive tree said to them, Should I cease giving my oil, wherewith by me they honor God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?”
Judges 9:8, 9.

HERE then, in parable, a temptation was set before the olive tree. It was urged to become ambitious and aspire to reign over the rest of the trees. We gather from Jotham’s parable, at the outset, that we, also, are all liable to temptation. Though you may think yourself to be as firmly rooted and as useful as the olive tree, yet may the fascinating whisper be heard by you, “Come and reign over us,” and though you should be as sweet and gentle as the fig tree, yet there may come to you the wily invitation, “Come and reign over us.” And though you should be as fruitful as the vine, yet to you in the Lord’s own vineyard there may come the serpent voice, “Come and reign over us.” We shall never be out of the way of temptation so long as we grow in this earthly garden! Our Lord Himself had a stern conflict with the adversary at the commencement of His ministry, for He came up from the waters of Baptism to be tempted of the devil, and at the close of that ministry, “His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground” in the agony of His spirit when the powers of darkness assailed Him in Gethsemane. We must expect, in our measure, to be conformed to His likeness in this respect. The serpent will bruise our heel as well as our Lord’s. Even into quiet like that of an olive garden, there will come the tempter and the temptation! It is not possible for us to be located anywhere in this world where our surroundings will be clear from danger, for if the serpent comes not into the olive groves, yet the other trees may tempt us. What, therefore, I say unto you, I say unto all, “Watch,” for we are not ignorant of the devices of evil and those devices will surely be exercised upon us. Therefore let us cry unto the Strong for strength and set a double watch against the world, the flesh and the devil—

“Christian! Seek not yet repose.

***Cast your dreams of ease away!
 You are in the midst of foes—
 Watch and pray!
 Principalities and powers
 Mustering their unseen array,
 Wait for your unguarded hours—
 Watch and pray!
 Watch, as if on that alone
 Hung the issue of the day!
 Pray, that help may be sent down—
 Watch and pray!”***

Temptations frequently come in the form of very pleasing baits. Satan gilds the pill that he offers us. He very seldom presents to any of us a bare hook, though that may be done with those who become habituated in sin. It is almost a bare hook when persons continue in drunkenness after they have ruined their health and brought themselves to beggars' rags. Satan hardly has to tempt them at all, for they go willingly after their idols and dote upon them. But with God's own people, Satan generally takes care to bait his hook and cover it so that it is scarcely seen.

In this parable, the temptation to the olive tree is a throne, a crown, a kingdom, a sovereignty over the trees. The trees of the field said unto the olive tree, "Reign over us." Now there is always a sort of glitter about a kingdom. There are few persons who can resist the fascinations of a diadem. To reign over the trees might seem, even to the olive tree, to be a very strong temptation—a brilliant offer indeed! Take heed, dear Friends, lest you be carried away by the deceitfulness of the pleasures, the profits, the honors which Satan puts in your way. When we are likely to be gainers by any proposal, we ought always to look well at it before deciding. When a day is too bright, we fear that it will finish with a thunderstorm—and when a man's prospects in life seem altogether extraordinary and excessive in their brilliance—he ought to pause awhile and see where he is going. We have always been taught that when there is very large interest to be had, there is something rotten about the security and very great risk to those who invest in it! And it is also so in all things. Whenever there comes to you, all of a sudden, some very alluring offer, something very grand and very unusual, like this request, "Reign over us," then doubly be on your guard, for it is after this fashion that Satan baits his hook and catches his fish! It is after this manner that he goes forth to hunt for his prey and many have been entangled in the meshes of a golden net who seemed in other ways to have escaped the corruptions of the world.

Many, to obtain a higher wage, have left holy companionships and sacred opportunities for hearing the Word of God and growing in Grace. They have lost their Sabbaths, left a soul-feeding ministry and fallen among worldlings to their own sorrowful loss. Such persons are as foo-

lish as the poor Indians who gave the Spaniards gold in exchange for paltry beads. Riches procured by impoverishing the soul are always a curse! To increase your business so that you cannot attend week-night services is to become really poorer—to give up heavenly pleasure—and receive earthly cares in exchange, is a sorry sort of barter!

Let me call your attention to something rather singular about this parable. The trees represented in the parable were acting unwisely in desiring a king, for the trees which the Lord has planted need no king and He had not set a king over them. He makes them to be full of sap and waters them out of His treasure houses. And it is for the trees of the forest to sing before the Lord and to clap their hands in His name. Let the trees of the forest rejoice before Him that made them! But, according to this parable or fable, they conspired together to deliver themselves from the Theocracy—the government of God—and to come under the government of one of their own order. The trees desired a king and so fitly pictured that fond desire of the Israelite nation to have a king when God was their King and they had no need of any other king! They were constantly crying, “Make us like the nations that are round about us, and set a king over us.” But this desire for a king was a wrong desire altogether.

Yet notice that when the trees went to choose a king, they did it very wisely—their choice was an admirable one. They did not say to the spreading cedar, “Reign over us,” nor to the pine with its odoriferous shade, “Reign over us.” But they said to the fruitful olive, respectable in character and in every way a right royal tree, “Reign over us.” And when they were disappointed of the first election, they went to another worthy tree, the fig, and said to it, “Come and reign over us.” Then they went to the vine—that fruitful tree—and said to it, “Come and reign over us.” And they only went to the bramble when they were hard pushed and feared that none of the trees would accept the candidature for royalty. They made a good choice at first and I have noticed that even when men are themselves bad and foolish, they generally have sense enough left to pick out somebody better than themselves to be the instrument of their designs. How frequently have I seen an ungodly man act thus when looking for a wife! She must be a Christian—he has sense enough to see her sterling worth, her solid character, her meekness and her gentleness—so he wants her as his wife. Often have I known that a man in business, albeit he despised religion, has wanted to have his confidential servant not simply a professor, but really a *possessor* of the Grace of God!

This is one of the dangers to which Christian people are exposed. It is not because you are a bramble that you will be the first to be tempted to reign over the trees. They will not want the bramble just yet—they will

come to that as the fourth in the list. But if you are the good olive tree, they will want you first. They will want you for a bad purpose because there is something about you that will make their purpose look respectable—and so you will serve their purposes. They will not care for the best part of you, that part for which your Lord cares most. That part they will openly despise and trample on one day, but just now, that is the charm to them and they say to the olive tree, “Come and reign over us.” Be on your guard! Some of our bankrupt companies would not have taken so many people in if they had not the names of certain men of repute as directors. Their power for evil dies there. We must have a king, contrary to God’s will, so we must try to get the olive tree to reign over us if we possibly can so as to make our new kingdom seem respectable. O Believers, be on the watch! Take heed unto yourselves lest you enter into unholy alliances, or put yourselves into positions out of which you may be unable to escape, but may have to mourn to your dying day that you ever entered into that evil confederacy! You must say, “Our Master bids us come out from the world and be separate from sinners. He bids Christians walk with Him and be choice in their company, and not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers, for that would be dishonoring to God and ruinous to their souls!”

You see, therefore, that this parable of Jotham can afford instruction to us and I ask the Lord, while I further open it up, to give me the right words to all to whom it applies.

I. My first head is this—APPARENT PROMOTIONS ARE NOT TO BE SNATCHED AT HURRIEDLY.

“The trees once went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, Reign over us. But”—there is a pause there. It was all very well for them to say to the olive tree, “Reign over us. Come at once. Do not give it a second thought. Come along. You never had such a fine opportunity as this. Here is a brilliant opening for you. Come and reign over us.” “But the olive tree said to them, Should I cease giving my oil, wherewith by me they honor God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?” Notice how the olive tree speaks. It says, “Should I? You say, ‘Come along,’ but I answer, Should I? This is a matter that needs consideration. Ought it to be so? Would it be right? Is it wise? Is it prudent? Is it just? Is it God’s will? *Should I?*”

I speak to younger and old this word of caution. Be not in a hurry to make changes! Hasten not to run into evil thinking it to be good, but always look before you leap. Stop a while and ask, “Should I? Should I do this or that?” I meet constantly with persons who are in terrible trouble and who I know came into that trouble and will probably remain in that trouble for years—perhaps all their lives—because they once, unthinkingly, did an act which they ought not to have done if they had only

paused, then, and asked, as the olive tree did, “Should I? Should I? Should I?” A few minutes spent in serious consideration and especially in prayerful waiting upon God would have kept their pathway smooth and themselves in peace. You have almost done a certain deed, but I beseech you to pull up, now, and stop a minute, and say to yourself, “Should I do it?”

I will throw the emphasis on the letter I. The olive tree said, “Should I? Should I? I am not a bramble. The bramble may be king of the trees if he likes. It may be a question which the fig tree, or the cedar, or the vine, or the oak might entertain, but should I? Should I cease giving my oil and go to be promoted over the trees? Should I do this?” Now, there are a thousand things which may be right in worldlings which are wrong in Christians. There is a very high law for all men and I will not depreciate the true standard of common morality, but set it as high as it can be set! But over and above that there is a law of consecration—there is a rule, not merely of morality, but of something more—of holiness. There is a law of disinterestedness which is binding upon a Christian, which imposes upon him a restraint that causes him often to say, “I might do this if I were other than I am. But, being what I am, I cannot do it.” When Nehemiah was governor of Judah, he had a right to take his daily portion. It was the proper provision for the governor’s support, and all the previous governors had taken it. But Nehemiah said, “So I did not because of the fear of God.” It would have been quite right for Nehemiah to take it, but he would not take it because there was something still better which led him to say, “God will be somewhat compromised if I do this. These people are poor, so I will not impose a tax upon them. I will not take that which is lawfully mine.” “All things,” said Paul, “are lawful to me, but all things are not expedient.” And often, out of that blessed rule of loving expediency for the good of others and the glory of God, we may be made to keep back from things which we would allow in others but cannot allow in ourselves. I invite any dear Christian friend here who may be asked to take an important step—concerning which, if he were to consult a friend, he would certainly say, “Oh yes, that is a fine thing for you! Do it,” to put to himself the question, “Will it be, all round, the best thing that I can do for the glory of God? Should I? Should I do this?”

Sir Edward Cole, Chief Justice of England in the time of James I, was a man of noble spirit and often incurred the displeasure of the king by his patriotism. On one occasion when an unworthy attempt was made to influence his conduct, he replied, “When the case happens, I shall do that which shall be fit for a judge to do.” Oh, that all Christians, in trying moments, would act as shall be fit for followers of Christ to do!

Sometimes the new course of life that may be proposed to us may seem very desirable. It was not a small thing for the olive tree to be asked to be king over the trees, to lord it over all the forests, to have loyal homage from oak, cedar and all the fruitful trees. It did seem an exceedingly desirable thing, yet the olive tree said, "Should I cease giving my oil, and go to be promoted over the trees?" So, dear Friend, be not deceived by the glitter of prosperity, nor moved away from the steadfastness of your faith and your love to Christ by the appearance of something which looks to you exceedingly advantageous! First stop where you are and ask yourself, "Should I?" For there is this fact to be considered. If this olive tree had taken the kingdom, it would have involved many cares and troubles. In the original, the word runs as though it might be translated thus, "Should I leave my oil to go up and down among the trees?" You know that a king, when he takes a kingdom, has much work to do. He has to watch over his subjects and to visit different parts of his dominions. He cannot keep still and be quiet. So this olive tree says, "I have stood here for centuries, and many have enjoyed my oil, but if I become a king, I must go up and down among the trees." So, I ask you, whenever you have an opening in Providence to rise in the world—to consider the duties that will be involved in it rather than the profits that will come of it—because it is selfish to say, "Oh, yes! I would like the emoluments," but it is righteous to ask, "Am I equal to the duties? Can I perform them? Can I expect to be enabled to discharge them as a Christian should do in the sight of God?" For the very best work of every sort ought always to come from us Christians. A Christian servant should be the best of all servants. A Christian artist should try to have the clearest eye and the deftest hand. Whatever is done by those of us who are Christians, we ought to do as unto the Lord and I am sure that we ought not to do anything in a second-rate way "unto the Lord." Up to the utmost of our ability, we should do our very best for Him. Well then, if there is an opening set before you, look not so much at the glitter of it, but, like this olive tree, look at the work of it, look at the duty attached to it and ask, "Can I do it? Am I equal to it?" Do not occupy the position unless you have a reasonable expectation of filling it well and performing its duties acceptably.

Then remember that every time a man moves, he gets fresh cares, fresh temptations, fresh troubles. I somewhat admire the principle of the coachmen I have seen in Switzerland when the flies settle on their horses and suck their blood. I have been very anxious to knock the creatures off, but the men have said to me, "You had better not do so, for if you kill those flies, there will be some fresh ones come that will be greedier and suck more." So, when you have a set of troubles, you had better let them stay, for if you get rid of them, you may get others that will be worse! My

burden that I have to carry, I would be glad to be rid of—yet I should not like to take yours, my Sister, nor yours, my Brother, because I do not know where your load might chafe my shoulders. I know where mine galls me, when it galls at all, and I can carry my own burden better than anybody else's burden. So I am content to keep it and I think you should be content to keep yours. By Divine Grace, you have been excellent as a servant, but how would you be as a mistress? Yes, you have been a very good *employee*—you have done your work very well—but, as a master you might be a complete failure. Look well at the thing, turn it around all ways. Many a man has done exceedingly well in one sphere of life, but has not done so well in another sphere. Solomon truly says, “As a bird that wanders from her nest, so is a man that wanders from his place.” There is a niche in which each statue stands and you see its proportions, for the niche was prepared for the statue, and the statue for the niche. But if you set it up higher, it loses its due proportions. It is seen from another point of view and its beauty is gone. Let us, therefore, whenever there is something new set before us as a great attraction, stop and ask, “Should I take it?”—adding this one to all our other reflections—that wherever we may go, we shall have a change of trouble and care—but we shall still have trouble and care.

The most weighty consideration in connection with the question, “Should I?” is this—“*Can I expect the Divine blessing on what I am about to do?* Dare I venture to lay this case before the Lord in all its details?” I know some of you who are quite willing to bring a case to your minister for his advice. And sometimes he sees, by the very look of your face, that your coming to him is all a sham! You had made up your mind before you came and you only needed him to say, “Yes,” to your, “Yes,” so as to have some kind of sanction in doing something about which your conscience is not quite easy. Has it not been so? And sometimes in your family, when you have needed counsel, have you not stayed away from the one person who would have honestly told you the truth? You have thought like Ahab, “There is one Prophet of the Lord in Israel, but he always speaks evil and not good of me. Let all the prophets speak except Micah—I do not want to hear him. He does not ever seem to soften his message, but he lets out the plain blunt truth, so I won't go to him.” It is not wise, dear Christian Friends, if you talk as that wicked king did! If you are about to change your state of life, or your position in anyway whatever, let the change be such that you can look at it yourself from top to bottom, and can invite Christian friends to look at it most carefully and yet say of it, “It is good.” Let it be such that you can look at it on a dying bed, in the light of eternity, and say, “In this thing I really sought to glorify God.” If not—it will be better by far to say, with the olive tree,

“Should I? Should I?” and to come to the olive’s decision, “I will do nothing of the kind. Any tree that likes may have the crown—it is not for me.”

II. Now, secondly, ACTUAL ADVANTAGES ARE NOT TO BE TRIFLED WITH, for the olive says, “Should I cease giving my oil and go to be promoted over the trees?”

The greatest advantage in life is to be useful to God and man. The olive says, “Should I cease giving my oil, wherewith by me they honor God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?” It was the olive’s glory that it yielded oil which was used in various offerings to the *honor of God* and which was also used for the honor of men in the most sacred ceremonies at the anointing of kings and priests. And the highest glory of any man’s life is that he is honorable to God and useful to men. The first considerations of a saved soul should be, “How can I best magnify Him who has saved me? How can I be most useful to my fellow men in promoting the cause of the Lord Jesus Christ?” Anything, then, which robs us of that desire—the power to honor God and to do good to men—anything which takes away in even the smallest degree our power to do this, is a dead loss! If the olive tree shall be made king over the trees, but lose its oil whereby it honors God and man, the olive tree is a loser. So if, by changing from a cottage to a palace, yes, and from a prison to a throne, the believer in Christ would lose any atom of his power to serve God and bless the sons of men, he would be a loser thereby! We must always hold this before us as a test when an offer comes to us—will it really be for the glory of God and the good of men?

Sometime I think, beloved Brothers and Sisters, it is *our sense of having that oil of Divine Grace*—by which we honor God and help men—which *makes temptation powerless*, for in the Hebrew, the text runs thus, “Have I then lost my oil that I should go to be promoted over the trees?” So may you say to yourself, “Have I then lost my joy in Christ, or lost my peace of mind, or lost the blessed privilege of glorifying God that I should go and look after this world’s gain or this world’s honors? If I had not Christ as my Savior—if I had not love to Him in my heart—if I had not the love of God shed abroad in my soul, this or that might, indeed, be a temptation to me. But as I have not lost those great blessings, you tempt me with a bait that has no fascination for me, for I have something better—

**“Go, you that boast of all your stores
And tell how bright they shine!
Your heaps of glittering dust are yours,
But my Redeemer’s mine”—**

“and while He is mine, I cannot leave Him—not even to be promoted over my fellow men, nor to roll in wealth, for He is infinitely superior to any bait or bribe which you can present to me!”—

“Begone, unworthy of my cares,

***You specious baits of sense!
Inestimable worth appears,
The pearl of price immense!"***

Let the joy of the Lord, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, be your protection against temptation. I feel persuaded that when you have full assurance of faith and your heart is filled with joy in Christ, you are able to repel the fiery darts of the enemy, for if he comes and offers you gold, you can say to him, "I have diamonds and pearls that are worth far more than all your gold." "I offer you honor," he says, but you reply, "I have the love of Christ, which is my greatest honor. Is it not written, 'Unto you who believe He is an honor'? That honor which I derive from Him is greater than any honor which you can give me." Thus you checkmate your great adversary! You can prove to him that in Christ you possess far more than he can possibly offer to you—

***"Jesus, to multitudes unknown,
Oh name Divinely sweet!
Jesus in You, in You alone,
Health, honor, pleasure, meet!
Should both the Indies at my call,
Their boasted stores resign,
With joy I would renounce them all,
For leave to call You mine.
Should earth's vain treasures all depart,
Of this dear gift possessed,
I'd clasp it to my joyful heart,
And be forever blessed!"***

Oh, that our hearts may be kept in this blessed condition! So shall temptation be powerless to overcome us.

To help you in this matter, let me remind you of two or three things on which you may reflect with profit.

First, Beloved, suppose it should be your prospect in life that from this day forward you should not be as useful as you now are but that you should be much better off? Suppose it were proposed to you that you should not glorify God as you have done in the past, but that you should be much more respectable? Suppose it were laid upon you as an obligation that from this time forward you should not do half the good you have done in the past, but that you should receive a title of nobility and move in a higher circle of society than you have ever done? *Would not these proposals startle you?* If you are a true Christian, I know they would! You would say, with the olive tree, "Shall I cease giving my oil, wherewith by me they honor God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?" You would instantly recoil from such a prospect when it was set before you and you would say, "No, let me be as a servant of Christ wherever I can serve my Master best. And let me be kept where I can bring most glory to His holy name."

If this prospect startles you, let me invite you to consider *what the retrospect would be*. Suppose that lying on a dying bed, you, as a child of God, should have to say, “I was very happy and very useful during the first part of my life, but I took a step which apparently promised me comfort—and ever afterwards there was a blight upon my whole life. God never again favored me by making me useful in His service. I did little or nothing for Him and now I have come to the end of my life like a withered fruitless vine-branch.” Do you not think that even with a faint hope of Heaven to sustain you, your dying pillow would be stuffed with thorns? I am sure it would be a far more joyous experience to lie there waiting to be translated and feeling, with Paul, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.” Do not, therefore, O olive tree or Christian, be tempted to turn aside to gain a fading crown, but stay where you are and enjoy the joy which Divine Grace gives you, whereby you shall honor God and be a blessing to men!

I will also venture to say that, if a Christian were to leave the enjoyment of communion with Christ and usefulness among his fellows even for a day, to be through that day made into a king, it would be a day that he would ever afterwards wish to have crossed out of his diary. A day without Christ, who is my life? Without His love for a day? Without His smile for a day? Let the day perish wherein such a calamity could happen! What if the thrones of all the Caesars could be occupied for that one day by a chaste heart that loves Jesus? It would be a wretched heart and it would say, “I had better be in a prison and find my Lord there and live in His love, rather than be exalted here to sit upon a throne without Him.” Now if it would be so sad *for a single day*, what would it be if you could make such a choice as that for the whole of your life?

Ah, Beloved, and let me add that when any do choose worldly gain and worldly honor and let their usefulness suffer in consequence, *it is almost certain to end in disappointment*. Not if they are hypocrites, for they will probably get what they seek after. They mostly prosper in this world and increase in riches when they give up their profession for it, but if you are a child of God and you get out of God’s way, the hand of the Lord will be lifted up against you. As surely as you are God’s children, you will be driven back to Him—He will fetch you home with a rod behind you. You shall not prosper if you err from His ways. Look at Lot. He pitches his tent toward Sodom because he sees that the well-watered plain of Jordan is just the place for his flocks and herds. Then he lives in Sodom because it is so comfortable to live in a town and give up living in tents and wandering about as Abraham does. But did he make a good thing of it in the long run? Ah, let the flames that devoured his house and the brine that turned his wife into a pillar of salt, and the horrible sin that depraved

both him and his daughters tell that it is an awful thing for a child of God to get away from God! But if he walks with God, it shall be well with him. The Philistines could not hurt Abraham, neither could famine come near his tents—but every evil thing came to Lot when he gave up the separated life and began to live like the rest of the world! Then, dear Christian Friends, when the greatest honor or gain is offered to you, say with the faithful olive tree, “Should I cease giving my oil, wherewith by me they honor God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?”—

***“I would not change my blest estate
For all that earth calls good or great!
And while my faith can keep her hold,
I envy not the sinner’s gold.”***

Do not forget that *it was only the bramble that accepted that proffered crown*. He had nothing to lose, so he was glad to take it. Now, if anybody goes to the races, frequents the theater and enjoys all the gaieties and frivolities of this world, I do not find fault with him—why should I do so? Whenever I see hogs greedily devouring their slop, I say, Let them enjoy it—it suits them, it is their sort of food.” But if I saw a child of God doing what the ungodly do, I should feel just as if I saw one of you going to the swine trough and kneeling down there to find your food! Of course it was a fine thing for the bramble to be made into a king over the trees. He had always been hidden away, despised and hated, but now that he was made king, he could lord it over the rest of the trees. He could pierce them with his thorns and the flames could burn up his foes. But the bramble’s position would not suit the olive tree, or the vine, or the fir tree! And, dear Christian Friend, can you be content with that which satisfies the very meanest of men—those who are dead in trespasses and sins? I trust you cannot. Rather aspire to follow in the footsteps of the saints who flung away this world that they might gain the next! Think of the martyrs who counted not their lives dear to them, that they might win Christ and be found in Him. Their persecutors offered them wealth. They offered them position and power! They offered them what was still dearer—that they should live in peace and enjoy the love of wife and children—and as the alternative, they must stand at the stake and be burnt to death! They did not hesitate to choose the dread alternative, for they could die for Christ, but they could not deny Him! They could be burnt to death, but they could not violate their conscience! They could not leave their oil, wherewith they honored God and blessed man, for anything that their persecutors could offer them.

Remember, also, how your Master and Lord acted. All the kingdoms of this world lie at His feet and the arch-fiend says to Him, “All these things will I give You if you will fall down and worship me.” And His reply is, “Get you hence, Satan.” He may have life, liberty, power and an earthly

kingdom if He will but speak before Pilate, or will but command the eager crowds to make Him king, but He remains silent and He dies. He saved others, Himself He will not save because His heart is set *upon our salvation*. So, Beloved, often deny yourselves what you might have—what might lawfully be yours. Put away every alluring bait if in any wise you would injure your usefulness or mar your character by taking it. The Lord help you to do this by His good Spirit!

III. My time has almost gone, so I can only give you the third division in outline. It is this—**TEMPTATION SHOULD BE TURNED TO ACCOUNT.**

First, *let us take deeper root*. The mere proposal to leave our oil should make us hold the faster to it.

Next, *let us be on the watch that we lose not our joy*, which is our oil. If we would not leave it, neither can we bear that it should leave us.

Then *let us yield more oil and bear more fruit*. He who gains largely is all the further removed from loss. The more we increase in Divine Grace, the less we are likely to leave it.

Lastly, let us feel the more content and speak the more lovingly of our gracious state, that none may dare to entice us. When Satan sees us happily established, he will have the less hope of overthrowing us.

I have been preaching some practical Truths of God which may not be quite as sweet to you as if I were preaching the precious Doctrines of the Gospel, but these Truths are needed for the strengthening of the soul in times of trial. I pray the Lord to help you to be strong in Him and to stand fast in the faith. Do not go away from the Truths of God that make you spiritually fat and flourishing. Do not turn aside from the Christ who makes you strong. Do not depart from the fellowship with Him that makes you holy and useful. Abound in prayer, abide in communion with Christ and let not the prospect of the most glittering life tempt you to turn away even an inch from your Lord and Master, but may His Divine Spirit keep you true to Him throughout the whole of your life—and to Him shall be the praise and glory forever and ever! Amen.

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***“I have given my word to the Lord, and I cannot go back.”
Judges 11:35.***

IN Jephtha case there were good reasons for going back. He had made a rash vow and such things are much better broken than kept. If a man makes a vow to commit a crime, his vow to do so is, in itself, a sin. The carrying out of his vow will be doubly sinful. If a man's vowing to do a thing made it necessary and right for him to do it, then the whole moral law might be suspended by the mere act of vowing, for a man might vow to steal, to commit adultery, or to murder—and then say—“I was right in all those acts because I *vowed* to do them.” This is self-evidently absurd and to admit such a principle would be to destroy all morality!

You have, first of all, no right to promise to do what is wrong. And then, secondly, your promise, which is, in itself, wrong, cannot make a criminal act to be right. If you have come under a rash vow, you must not dare to keep it! You ought to go before God and repent that you have made a vow which involves sin—and as to *keeping* the sinful vow, that were to add sin to sin! “But,” says one, “would it not be sin to break my vow?” I reply, there was great sin in *making* it and there will probably be some measure of sin connected with your breaking it, for few human actions are perfect. But to keep your evil vow would certainly be sin and you must not commit the greater sin to avoid the lesser which, perhaps, may be involved in the breach of your foolish promise.

I think it would have been well if Jephtha, though he had opened his mouth before God, had gone back when it involved, as I think it did, so dreadful a necessity as that of sacrificing his own innocent, only child! His having *sworn* to do it did not make it right—it was just as wrong. If he really did slay her, it was a horrible action, dramatize or disguise it as you may! He had no right to make the dangerous promise. He had still less right to carry it out after he had made it, if it led to such terrible consequences.

But now I am going to speak about other openings of the mouth to God in which there is no ill—openings of the mouth which need never be regretted, which certainly never can be recalled—and of which we may rightly say, before the living God, in the strength which He gives us, “I have given my word to the Lord, and I cannot go back.” My sermon will not have much to do with some of you. You have not given your word to God, or made any sort of promise. No, you remain as you were, far off from Him and negligent of His claims. I do not envy you. Your being under no obligation from any resolution of your own does not prevent your being under as much natural obligation to God on account of your being His creatures and, therefore, subjects under His Law.

I sometimes hear of people who say, "You know I do not profess anything," and after that assertion they appear to feel at liberty to say and do whatever they like. Now, if we heard of certain persons entrusted with our business that they had not acted honestly, what would we think of it if one man among them should rise up and say, "Don't blame me. You know I never professed to be honest"? What would that mean? It would mean that he is a confessed and acknowledged thief! Suppose a man were to say, "Well, I never profess to be truthful." What is he? He is an acknowledged liar! And he who says, "Ah, I never made any vows or promises, neither do I pretend to serve the Lord," acknowledges himself to be a godless man. He is living in the daily robbery of God, defrauding Him of His rights! He is living in direct and avowed rebellion against the King of kings! He is living without a hope for the hereafter—without Grace in his soul for the present—and without glory in prospect for the future!

Ah, Friend, although the things I may have to say at this time may not directly bear upon you, yet the very fact that they do not bear upon you should make you think, and weigh, and consider, and ponder your ways as to the place which you now occupy! You are, by your non-profession and non-avowal of Christ, making a confession of being on the opposite side, for he that is not with Him is against Him, and he that gathers not with Him scatters abroad.

But now I speak to my own Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus. Dear Friends, there are three things which I would bring to your practical remembrance. First, what we have done—we have opened our mouth unto the Lord. Secondly, what we cannot do—"I cannot go back." And, thirdly, what we *must* do—there are some things that we must seek after if we are to be able to hold on and to act faithfully to our profession.

I. First, then, WHAT WE HAVE DONE. "I have given my word to the Lord." We have opened our mouths before the Lord, first, by confessing our faith in Jesus Christ. I have said, and most of you upon whom I am looking have, also, solemnly said, before others, "I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with all my heart. Let others believe what they will and trust in what they please—

***'My hope is fixed on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness.'***

We are troubled by no question of our Lord's power to save, or of our interest in His salvation, but we have testified outright, as a matter-of-fact which we feel in our own souls, that we believe that Jesus died for us and that He is all our salvation and all our desire. We have opened our mouth to that in the most decided manner and we are continually doing so in various ways.

We have, also, avowed and declared before the living God that we are Christ's disciples and followers. If anyone should ask us, "Are you one of them? Do you consort with Jesus of Nazareth?" We would gladly answer, "Yes." However short we come of perfect obedience to His commands, yet His will is our rule. We call Him, "Master," and, "Lord," and when we read about the disciples of Christ we think of ourselves as belonging to them. Blessed Master, how glad we are to acknowledge that we are, indeed, Your

disciples! We are not ashamed to acknowledge that we have opened our mouth unto You, to believe all Your teachings and to obey all Your commands!

We have opened our month to the Lord, next, because as we believe in Jesus Christ and take Him to be our Master. we have admitted the Redeemer's claims to our persons and services and have resolved to live for Him only all our days. We have made a dedication of ourselves to His service, declaring that we are not our own, but bought with a price. Some of us did this years ago and—

***“High Heaven that heard the solemn vow,
That vow, renewed, has often heard,”***

and shall hear it again! We profess that nothing that we have is ours, but our goods, our time, our talents and ourselves are all marked with the broad arrow of the King! We are the perpetual heritage of the Lord, to be His forever, and never to serve self again, or the world, or the flesh, or any except Jesus.

We have, also, cast in our lot with His people. We belong to their fraternity, heart and soul. We are not ashamed of them, either. It is some years ago with some of us since we came forward and asked to have our names enrolled with the despised people of God. We opened our mouth to the Lord that we would take part and lot with His people—that if they were abused we would take a share of the abuse—that if they had sorrows we would help to bear their burdens and if they had joys we only hoped that we might be worthy to enjoy the crumbs of their table! We craved to be numbered with the citizens of that noble city, the New Jerusalem, and we requested to share the portion of Zion's blessed but tried inhabitants, whether they held a fast or a festival, suffered siege or enjoyed triumph.

We asked to have it said of us that we were born there and when we were asked if we would forego the world and all its allurements to become heirs of the better country, we stood up before the Lord and declared that it was even so. In all these things we have, as Christian people, opened our mouths unto the Lord, have we not? Now, if you ask me when you did so, I shall have to mention several occasions. Some of us opened our mouths in this respect to the Lord in a very solemn way in *private*. We made our dedication to God a solemn deed performed in a distinct and formal manner. We took time about it, thought it over, and then did it deliberately and definitely.

Some have even written out an act of solemn dedication and signed it. Others, perhaps, more wisely, have refrained from writing it, lest it should become a bondage to their spirits, but they have, nevertheless, made a formal act of transfer of themselves and all that they had, to the Lord. At any rate, whether we did it formally or not, we can say—

***“Tis done! The great transaction's done,
I am my Lord's, and He is mine!”***

There was a time when once and for all we gave up the keys of the city of Mansoul and surrendered to the Lord, that He might be ours and that we might be His forever and ever.

Then absolutely many of you, beloved Friends, gave your word to the Lord in Baptism. Searching His Word, you saw there, clearly, that as

many as believed were baptized. You read of the eunuch to whom the question was put, “Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? For if you believe with all your heart you may”—and then on confession of his faith he was baptized! I have given my word to the Lord in that manner. I remember the solemn occasion when I went into the river! There were multitudes of people as witnesses on either bank to mark my burial with the Lord in the water! And, though I have not the remotest confidence in outward form or ceremony, yet often has my soul recalled that day when I did, before men and angels and *devils*, declare myself to be the servant of the living God! And I was, therefore, buried in water in token of my death to all the world—and then raised from it as the emblem of my newness of life!

Oh, to be always faithful to what we did, when, coming forward of our own accord, we declared that we were dead with Christ that we might, also, live with Him! We have opened our mouth unto the Lord since then, full often when we have come to the Communion Table. The solemn sitting down at the Table of Communion, when others have to go away, or can only look on—the separation which is made in that act—is a declaration on your part, Beloved, that you belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, that He is your meat and your drink, that you feed at His table and are His servants! There is something very solemn about the communion service—it ought never to be lightly entered upon—and when you have been attending to that ordinance in remembrance of Him, you should feel, “I have given my word to the Lord in a very special manner by sitting at the table with His people.”

Besides that, how often have we given our word to God in hymn-singing? I am afraid that we do not always think enough about what we say when we sing. But what solemn things you have sung. Did you not sing the other day—

***“And if I might make some reserve,
And duty did not call,
I love my God with zeal so great
That I would give Him all”?***

And did you not sing—

***“Had I ten thousand hearts, dear Lord,
I’d give them all to Thee!
Had I ten thousand tongues, they all
Should join the harmony”?***

Ah, you have given your word very widely unto the Lord in song. And so, too, in prayer—both in the closet and in public. We say great things to God in supplication—do we always make good on what we say? Are we always of the mind of Jephtha, who said, “I have given my word to the Lord, and I cannot go back”? Do we remember those vows which our soul, in anguish, made when we drew near to God in the bitterness of our spirit and poured out our troubles before Him?

But ah, Beloved, very specially I may speak of some here present who are my partners in the work and ministry of the Church for her Lord. We who bear public testimony, “we have given our word to the Lord, and cannot go back.” You who teach classes in the school. You who try to tell the Gospel to other men in the workshop. You who talk of Jesus Christ even

to your children—remember that you have committed yourselves! While you are trying to speak to others you make promises for yourselves which bind you to present the Truth of God and future fidelity. As for me, where could I flee from my Master's Presence? Where could I go from His service?

Should I desert His ministry, unto what part of the earth could I go to hide myself? Somebody would remember this face which has been seen by so many thousands—the very tones of my voice would betray me—and men would point me out as an apostate from my Lord! Jonah might flee to Tarshish, but if I went to Tarshish someone or other would know me and pronounce my name as soon as I set foot upon the soil! I must fight this battle to the finish, now—retreat is out of the question! “I have given my word to the Lord” so often and before so many, that I am bound by a myriad ties! Nor would I wish to be bound with one less—but daily with more and more!

But, Beloved Friends, remember that in proportion as your religion gains publicity and in proportion as, by teaching others, you tacitly or avowedly declare your faith in the Gospel, in *that* proportion you have given your word to the Lord—and it is not possible that you should go back without deep disgrace and dire destruction! Now, it is worth our remembering after what fashion we have done this. I have shown you that we have given our word to the Lord and I have shown you the occasions when we have done so. But in the very manner of the deed there has been practical force. We have done this *voluntarily*. We have given our word to the Lord without any compulsion!

The little child, you know, who, according to the Prayer Book [Church of England] is made a member of Christ and a child of God and so on, has nothing to do with the business—and is in no way responsible for what others choose to promise without its leave. But you and I did *willingly* what *we* did. We came forward and said, “Let me be baptized, for I am a Believer in Jesus. Let me be united with the Church, for I am one of the Lord's redeemed.” We said to the Lord Jesus Christ, “I am cheerfully and willingly Your servant.” We took upon ourselves the bonds of a Christian profession because we desired to do so! Well, then, if we have done this voluntarily, *that* is the strongest reason why we should not go back from our own chosen position as the Lord's own disciples.

And we did this very solemnly. Oh, to some of you, it was, indeed, a devout action when you avowed yourselves on the Lord's side. Many were the prayers and praises which preceded and followed it. Shall such solemnity be made into a falsehood? Shall the weeping and the supplication be proven to have been base hypocrisy? I hope, also, that we did it very deliberately, counting the cost, looking round about and seeing what it meant—and understanding what we were doing. We did not reckon upon a smooth path. We did not consider that we should gain crowns without crosses, or win victories without fights—and we have found it much as we expected.

We passed through the wicket gate and entered on the road to the Celestial City knowing that there were dragons to encounter, giants to fight,

hills to climb, rivers to swim and swamps to ford. We set out with considerable knowledge of what we were doing and what it involved—and we were not, thereby, prevented from decidedly and deliberately declaring ourselves to be on the Lord's side. Are we now going to confess ourselves to have been fools and dupes? Will we now tell our Lord that His service is hard and worthless?

Most of us made our profession publicly. We had many onlookers. We cannot forget that when we began the race, a cloud of witnesses surrounded us and have ever since kept us in full survey. If there is a little speck in our character, they are sure to point it out! Never a cat watched a mouse as the lynx-eyed world watches the Christian! How it magnifies and multiplies the faults of Believers and cries, "Aha! Aha! We figured they were hypocrites," the moment it finds the slightest trip or mistake. Well, we have given our word to the Lord before multitudes and shall we recant and deny the faith?

Men and angels and devils know that we belong to the Lord Jesus Christ! We have declared it before all with whom we have come into contact—not always in so many words, but I hope in our *actions*—by the decided stand that we have taken up for God, for Christ, for Truth, for holiness and for the fear of God in the land. But the weight of it all lies in this—"We have given our word to the *Lord*." It is not what we promised the *Church*, though in becoming members of it we have promised to fulfill the mutual duties of Christians. It was not what we promised to the *minister*, though, in the very fact of becoming members of a Church of which he is the pastor, we have a Christian duty towards him.

It was not what we promised one another, though we all owe something to each other. But we have given our word to the Lord! If a man must trifle, let him trifle with men, but not with God! If promises to men may be lightly broken—and they should *not* be—yet let us not trifle with promises made to God! And if solemn declarations can ever be forgotten—which they should not be—yet not solemn declarations made to God. Beware, oh, beware of anything like frivolity in entering into covenant with the Most High! If a man should measure his footsteps and weigh his words when he appears before an earthly monarch, how much more when he stands before the King of kings, who is, also, Judge of the quick and the dead?

There let your words be few and guarded, but when you have once spoken them, and lifted your hand to Heaven, let your promise stand and keep it faithfully, saying, "I have given my word to the Lord, and I cannot go back."

II. But enough upon what we have done, for we need our full strength of thought to dwell upon WHAT WE CANNOT DO. "I have given my word to the Lord, and I cannot go back." That is to say, having once become Christians, we cannot apostatize from the faith. We feel that we cannot and God's servants in all ages have proven that they cannot. Men have threatened them, "You shall go to prison if you do not go back," but they have said, "We cannot." And they have gone to prison and they have said,

like John Bunyan, "I will lie here till the moss grows on my eyelids, but I cannot—cannot do other than God bids me."

The enemy has said, "If you do not leave Christ you shall be stretched on the rack," and that means the pulling of every bone from its socket—but in defiance of torture they have replied, "We cannot go back—we would rather bear the rack." Poor women, like Anne Askew, have been racked most cruelly, but they could not go back. Then the enemies of the Lord have sworn, "We will burn you to the death." The saints have accepted that challenge, also, and they have burned and triumphed in the burning, clapping their blazing hands—for they could not go back. The young people in the old city of London, over the water there, went down to Smithfield in the early morning to see their pastor burned. And when they came home and their mother said, "Why did you go?" the boys replied, "We went to learn the way."

They needed to know how to burn when their turn should come! Brave sons of brave sires! God's servants always have known how to burn, but they have not known how to turn! They have lifted their hands to the Lord and if it involved losses, crosses, torture, torment and death, they could not go back! No, Sir, if you can go back, you never knew Christ! If you can go back, He never marked the cross mark on your heart, He never baptized you into His death for, if He had done so, a sacred impulse would be upon you and you would go forward! As though you were a thunderbolt launched from the Omnipotent hand of God, you must go on and burst through every opposition till you reach the end towards which God's eternal might is speeding you! You cannot go back.

Moreover, if we are right at heart we feel that we have lifted our hand to the Lord and we cannot go back, even by temporary turning aside. I do not mean that we *do not do so*, sadly, too often—the Lord have mercy upon us for it. But it ought to be our solemn declaration that we cannot go back. Somebody says to you when you enter the workshop, "Ah, you are one of those Christians fools." The devil tempts you to say that you are not, or, at any rate, to be very quiet about it. Do not fall into cowardly silence, but say at once, "I have given my word to the Lord, and I cannot go back. I am in forever. Whatever it costs, I am enlisted and will never desert."

Sometimes the temptation is, "Come with me, young man, come with me, young woman"—to such-and-such a questionable place of amusement. "Shall I go? Perhaps I shall not get much hurt." Stand still and say, "No, I have given my word to the Lord and I cannot go back, even if I have the desire to do so. I have committed myself to the pursuit of holiness and I cannot go back to the foolish pleasures of sin." I like you young people to make a very straightforward profession of your faith because it may be the means of keeping you in the hour of temptation. You will say to yourself, "The vows of the Lord are upon me. How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"

I heard one say once, "I could not join the Church because I should feel it such a tie." "Yes, but," I replied, "Brother, it is the sort of tie you need to feel." A profession of our faith in Jesus ought to be a very strong cord of

love to hold us to that which is good. We ought to feel that the sacrifice is bound to the horns of the altar, but this bondage is true liberty to us and pleasant to us—and it should be our desire to be bound tighter and tighter as long as we live. “I cannot go back” is an inability of the most desirable kind!

The enemies of your soul will attempt to persuade you to forsake the Lord. They will try ridicule and threats and bribes, but be as a deaf man and hear them not! If you have really given your word to God with all your heart, you cannot go back—the Divine life within you will laugh to scorn all efforts of the foe. Baffled and discouraged, they will soon give up their wicked endeavors! They will see that it is of no use to tempt such an one as you are—your steadfastness and patient endurance will drive them from the field. But there are some of you that make a profession who attempt compromises and go a little way with the world. If you go a furlong with the world you will soon go a mile! I will give you a sentence to remember—“That man who is only half Christ’s is altogether the devil’s.”

Remember that! He who is only half a Christian is altogether an unbeliever! As half clean is unclean, so half converted is unconverted and half a saint is wholly a sinner! You cannot say to the world, “Up to here you shall go, but no further.” It is greedy and seeks to win the whole man. To its imperious demands give a stern denial, saying, “I have given my word to the Lord, and I cannot go back.” Now, what are our reasons why we cannot go back? The first reason is that if we *did* go back we should show that we have been altogether false. You profess to be believers in Jesus Christ. You say that you have been born again, that you have received that inward principle which lives and abides forever! If you go back to the world and to sin, you say to all mankind, “I made a hypocritical profession. I was a mere formalist. The root of the matter was not in me.”

You cannot say that, for you know you love the Lord. Even when you are in a doubting mood, you know you love Jesus! Though you question yourselves over and over again, you know that you love your Master. If you hear anybody finding fault with Him, are you not sorely grieved? Oh, yes, it brings the blood into your cheeks and you say, “I cannot bear to hear Him spoken against.” You thought that you did not love Him, but the enemy provokes you to feel that you *do* love Him. You do love Him! You cannot say that you do not! Can you? And yet if you went back it would be tantamount to a declaration that all your former life had been a lie!

You cannot go back, dear Friend, because that were to act most basely. Have you been bought with the precious blood of Christ and will you leave Him? Did He die upon the Cross for you and will a little buffeting cause you to desert Him? What? Did He fetch you up out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay by His own death and will you forsake Him and choose sinful ease and the praises of a wicked world? Oh, it were baseness, abominable baseness, for a soul who once has tasted of His wondrous love and seen Him in His Glory and death throes to desert Christ! No, no, NO! We cannot be so base as this, God helping us!

To go back from that for which we have given our word to the Lord were to incur frightful penalties, for there is no judgment so great as that which

is pronounced upon the apostate. If they have tasted of the heavenly gift and the powers of the world to come—"if these shall fall away, it is impossible to renew them, again, unto repentance." "Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its savor where shall it be seasoned? It is from now on good for nothing but to be trod under foot of men," You know how many passages there are in which it is positively asserted that if a child of God did deliberately and totally apostatize, his restoration would be utterly impossible—not difficult—impossible! This is one of the greatest proofs of the doctrine of the Final Perseverance of the Saints, since there is no man in a condition in which it is impossible to save him and yet any man would be in such a state if he apostatized!

Therefore true Believers shall not apostatize, but shall stand fast and shall be kept even to the end. Yet, could they totally apostatize, they could never be restored again! The greatest remedy having already failed, there would remain no other. On the supposition that the power of the Holy Spirit and the cleansing influence of the blood of Jesus could not preserve the man from falling back into his unregenerate state, what else could be done for such an one? If regeneration fails—what then? If the incorruptible Seed which lives and abides forever can die—what then? Oh, we cannot go back! To go back is death, shame, eternal ruin!

And to go back would be so unreasonable. Why should I leave my Lord? Why should I let my Savior go? In my heart of hearts I cannot think of a reason why I should forsake my Master. Do I seek pleasure? What pleasure is equal to that which He can give me? Do I seek gain? What gain could there be if I lost Him? Do I seek ease? Ah, to leave Him were to forfeit eternal rest! To whom should we go? That was a forcible question of the disciples when the Master enquired, "Will you, also, go away?" They replied, "To whom can we go?" Ah, to whom can we go? If you give up the religion of Jesus Christ, what other religion would you have? If you were to give up the pleasures of godliness, what other pleasures would you have?

"Oh," says one, "we could go into the world." Could you? Could you? If you are a child of God you are spoiled for the world. Before you became a Christian you could have done very well in the world, but now you know too much to be happy there. While the sow is a sow, the mud is good enough for her. Turn that sow into an angel—and if the angel has no place in Heaven—where shall it go? It cannot go back to the sty! What could it do there? The wash of the trough was good enough for the sow, but the angel has eaten heavenly food. It cannot roll in the mire, nor consort with swine—it must have Heaven or nothing! If you can go back to the world you *will* go back to the world—but if you are a child of God you *cannot* go back because Grace has so changed your nature that you would not be in an element in which you could exist!

There is no reason for apostasy—all the reasons lie the other way. "I have given my word to the Lord, and I cannot go back" for this reason—I have no inclination that way. Brothers and Sisters, some of us have been Christians these 25 years and we are glad of it. You know that in the army they have short-time soldiers and long-time soldiers. When I enlisted in

Christ's army, I did not go in to enlist for a quarter of a year and then have a new ticket. I enlisted for life! But suppose my Master were to say to me, "Now, you have had some 25 years of it—you may now go home and cease from being one of My soldiers." "Ah, my Master, where should I go? Do not discharge me!"

If He were still to say, "You are out of your time and may go home," I would tell Him that I would not leave Him in life or death. If I were put out at the front door I would come in at the back. Ah, my Lord, what anguish has that question stirred, whether I would, also, go as others have done. Go? You have fastened me to Your Cross and driven in the nails! I cannot go. Go? I am dead and buried with You! Your rich Grace has made me part and parcel of Yourself by indissoluble union! "Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" No, if I were discharged today, I would enlist again today!

The man who is married to a good wife thinks to himself, "If I had to marry, again, tomorrow morning, she would be the bride and happy would we be." And so, if we had our choice to make again, we would choose our dear Lord over again, only with much more eagerness and earnestness than we did at first! Dear Friends, we have given our word to the Lord, and we cannot go back because we are so happy as we now are! A man does not turn his back upon that which has become his life and his joy! He is bound to it by the bliss which he derives from it. Can the Swiss forget his country when he listens to the home music which he heard as a child amidst his native hills? Does not the home-sickness come over him so that he longs to be among the Alps, again?

Does not the Englishman, wherever he wanders, whether by land or sea, feel his heart instinctively turn to the white cliffs of Albion? And does he not say that, with all her faults, he still loves his country? Who would cease to be that which he loves to be? And so our joy in Christ is great and we cannot wish to be divided from Him. Why should we? Shall the star desert the sphere in which it shines, or the fish the sea in which it lives? Shall the eagle abhor the craggy rock on which he builds his nest, or the angel shun the Heaven in which he dwells? No, Beloved, we cannot go back! Our joy holds us fast to our Lord.

And then, besides that, we cannot go back from what we have said, for Divine Grace impels us onward. There is a secret power more mighty than all other forces called the force of Irresistible Grace and this has captured us. When the temptation comes to go back to Egypt and we remember the garlic—that strong-smelling garlic and the cucumbers—those spongy, watery cucumbers! And when we remember the onions—those pungent onions—the thought of going back to the fleshpots comes upon us like a man of war! But mighty Grace soon puts it down—it drowns the desire in tears of repentance and makes us loathe ourselves to think that we should be such fools as to think more of fleshpots than of manna, and more of cucumbers than of Canaan!

Again, we resolutely press forward towards Canaan, blushing to think that we should have, in heart, turned back into Egypt. Grace will not let us return to our old bondage! And there is Another that holds us. It is He

with the hands nailed to the tree! Whenever He is revealed in us we feel that we cannot go back. A sight of Him with His face to the world's opposition, His face to the devil, His face to death, His face to Hell, His face towards the wrath of God—and going through it all with boundless courage—makes us feel that we must go forward, too, even till we enter into His rest!

Brothers and Sisters, we are moved to testify all these arguments, each one for himself, "I have given my word to the Lord, and I cannot go back."

III. Now, the last thing of all is that if this is the case, there is something WHICH WE MUST DO. What we must do is this—if there is a present sacrifice demanded of us, we must make it directly, "I have given my word to the Lord, I cannot go back." Now, if there is anything in your business which you cannot do and be a Christian, renounce it at once and forever! Do not think about it and do not ask a friend what you should do, but follow your conscience. If you know the thing is right, do it. Do not ask your mother, or brother, or the wisest man that ever lived—consult not with flesh and blood—but follow Jesus at all costs. Do not take time for second thoughts, but do it, and have done with it.

Oh, I have known Christians falter as to what they ought to do—their duty has been plain enough, but they have not liked it—and so they have wished for somebody to tell them that they might be Christians and yet do wrong! They need to get some sort of excuse from the judgment of others. They have gone fishing about to this and that minister, misrepresenting the circumstances to some extent, to gain the judgment they desired—till at last they have forged a sort of dispensation for sin from some good man's opinion—and then they have cheated their conscience by saying, "I feel much relieved. I can do it, now, for I have consulted a gracious man and he thinks I may."

No consultation can be required where duty is plain. "Oh, Sir, but the sacrifice is great." If it were a thousand times greater, that does not enter into the question! Duty is imperative, so let it be done. If your doing right will make yourself and your children poor, so must it be. It were better that you were poor and yet maintained your integrity and continued in the service of God than that you should roll in riches by violating your conscience! Say, "I cannot go back." Make the sacrifice and go on. If you are to do this, however, you must ask for more Grace and, dear Brothers and Sisters, wherever there is an ugly piece in the road, since you cannot go back, all you have to do is to ask the Lord to assist you over it—for you must go through it and this can only be done in *His strength*.

Remember that your abiding faithful to the end does not depend upon *yourself*. You have to do it, but the Holy Spirit is to find you strength to do it. The American slave said, "Massa, if the Lord say to me, 'Jump through the brick wall,' I will jump. It is the Lord that will make me go through—but I must jump." So it is with persevering in the face of difficulty and trouble. If you are bid to a hard duty and it involves sacrifice and hardship, do not hesitate, but advance unflinchingly! It is the Lord who bids you do it and if the Lord bids you go through the brick wall, He will make a hole in it for you, or make it soft for you, or in some way or other make

you equal to the occasion! Yours it is to go through—do not stand back because of your own weakness, but let faith lay hold on the Divine strength.

One other admonition to Christian people is this—burn the boats behind you. When the Roman commander meant victory he landed his troops on the coast where he knew there were thousands of enemies troops and he burned his boats, so as to cut off all chance of retreat. “But how are we to get away if we are beaten?” “That is just it,” he said, “we will not be beaten! We will not *dream* of such a thing.” “Burn the boats”—that is what you Christian people must do! “Make no provision for the flesh.” Let the separation between you and the world be final and irreversible. Say, “Here I go for Christ and His Cross, for the truth of the Bible, for the Laws of God, for holiness, for trust in Jesus! And by the Grace of God I will never go back, come what may.”

This is the right spirit. The Lord send it among us more and more! It is the spirit of martyrs. You need it, you converted working men—you need the spirit of martyrs. I know how your workmates jest and jeer, and torment you. Well, do not think yourself harshly treated, but play the man and bear it all and say to yourself, “I did not quite reckon on this, but it does not matter. I have given my word to the Lord, and I cannot go back if it costs me everything.” I will not talk to you longer, for what, after all, Brothers and Sisters, can religion cost us compared with what our salvation cost our Lord?

What is it to go forward if we compare it with the Glory that is beyond? A pin’s prick, that is all—and then you will be in Heaven! Oh, to stand among the glorified!—to hear the Master say, “Well done!” One might die a thousand deaths to get those two syllables, if there were nothing else—“Well done!” To enjoy His smile, to share His crown, to stand among His palm-bearing hosts and participate in His Glory—this is worth all the difficulty and sacrifice involved in going forward—and ten thousand times more!

Therefore accept this closing word. Forward, my Brothers and Sisters—forward! Whatever lies before you—the Red Sea or the rage of earth and Hell combined—if God calls you, forward! He will bear you through to the glorious end. The Lord be with you, for Christ’s sake! Amen!

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

MANOAH'S WIFE AND HER EXCELLENT ARGUMENT NO. 1340

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

***“And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God. But his wife said unto him, If the Lord were pleased to kill us, He would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands, neither would He have showed us all these things, nor would He at this time have told us such things as these.”
Judges 13:22, 23.***

The first remark arising out of the story of Manoah and his wife is this—that oftentimes we pray for blessings which will make us tremble when we receive them. Manoah had asked that he might see the Angel and he saw Him—in answer to His request the Wonderful One condescended to reveal Himself a second time, but the consequence was that the good man was filled with astonishment and dismay. And turning to His wife, he exclaimed, “We shall surely die, because we have seen *God*.”

Brothers and Sisters, do we always know what we are asking for when we pray? We are imploring an undoubted blessing and yet if we knew the way in which such blessing must necessarily come, we would, perhaps, hesitate before we pressed our case. You have been entreating very much for growth in holiness. Do you know, Brother, that in almost every case, that means increased *affliction*? We do not make much progress in the Divine life except when the Lord is pleased to try us in the furnace and purge us with many fires. Do you desire the mercy on that condition? Are you willing to take it as God pleases to send it, and to say, “Lord, if spiritual growth implies trial. If it signifies a long sickness of body. If it means deep depression of soul. If it entails the loss of property. If it involves the taking away of my dearest friends, yet I make no reserve, but include in the prayer all that is necessary to the good end. When I say, sanctify me wholly, spirit, soul and body, I leave the process to Your discretion.”

Suppose you really knew all that it would bring upon you, would you not pray, at any rate, with more solemn tones? I hope you would not hesitate, but, counting all the cost, would still desire to be delivered from sin. But, at any rate, you would put up your petition with deliberation, weighing every syllable, and then, when the answer came, you would not be so astonished at its peculiar form. Often and often the blessing which we so

eagerly implored is the occasion of the suffering which we deplore. We do not know God's methods. This is the Lord's way of answering prayer for faith and Grace. He comes with rods of chastisement and makes us smart for our follies, for thus, alone, can He deliver our childish spirits from us.

He comes with sharp plowshares and tears up the soil, for thus, only, can we be made to yield Him a harvest. He comes with hot irons and burns us to the heart. And when we inquire, "Why all this?" the answer comes to us, "This is what you asked for. This is the way in which the Lord answers your requests." Perhaps, at this moment, the fainting feeling that some of you are now experiencing, which makes you fear that you will surely die, may be accounted for by your own prayers! I should like you to look at your present sorrows in that light, and say, "After all, I can see that now my God has given me exactly what I sought at His hands. I asked to see the Angel and I have seen Him, and now it is that my spirit is cast down within me."

A second remark is this—Very frequently deep prostration of spirit is the forerunner of some remarkable blessing. It was to Manoah and to his wife the highest conceivable joy of life, the climax of their ambition, that they should be the parents of a son by whom the Lord should begin to deliver Israel. Joy filled them—inexpressible joy—at the thought of it! But, at the time when the good news was first communicated, Manoah, at least, was made so heavy in spirit that he said, "We shall surely die, for we have seen God." Take it as a general rule that dull skies foretell a shower of mercy. Expect sweet favor when you experience sharp affliction.

Do you not remember, concerning the Apostles, that they feared as they entered into the cloud on Mount Tabor? And yet it was in that cloud that they saw their Master transfigured! And you and I have had many a fear about the cloud we were entering, although there we were to see more of Christ and His Glory than we had ever beheld before. The cloud which you fear makes the external wall of that secret chamber where the Lord reveals Himself! Before you can carry Samson in your arms, Manoah, you must be made to say, "We shall surely die." Before the minister shall preach the Word of God to thousands, he must be emptied and made to tremble under a sense of inability.

Before the Sunday school teacher shall bring her girls to Christ, she shall be led to see how weak and insufficient she is. I believe that whenever the Lord is about to use us in His household, He takes us like a dish and wipes us right out and sets us on the shelf—and then afterwards He takes us down and puts thereon His own heavenly meat, with which to fill the souls of others. There must, as a rule, be an emptying, a turning upside down and a putting on one side before the very greatest blessing comes. Manoah felt that he must die and yet he could not die, for he was

to be the father of Samson, the deliverer of Israel and the terror of Philistia!

Let me offer a third remark, which is this—great faith is, in many instances, subject to fits. What great faith Manoah had! His wife was barren, yet when she was told by the Angel that she should bear a child, he believed it, although no heavenly messenger had come to *him* personally! He so believed it that he did not want to see the Man of God a second time to be told that it would be so, but only to be informed how to bring up the child! That was all. “Well might he be the father of strong Samson, that had such a strong faith,” says old Bishop Hall. He had a strong faith, indeed, and yet here he is saying in alarm, “We shall surely die, because we have seen God.”

Do not judge a man by any solitary word or act, for if you do, you will surely mistake him. Cowards are occasionally brave, and the bravest men are sometimes cowards. And there are men who would be worse cowards, practically, if they were a little less cowardly than they are. A man may be too much a coward to confess that he is timid. Trembling Manoah was so outspoken, honest and sincere that he expressed his feelings which a more political person might have concealed. Though fully believing what had been spoken from God, yet, at the same time, this doubt was on him as the result of his belief in *tradition*—“We shall surely die, because we have seen God.”

Once again, another remark is that it is a great mercy to have a Christian companion to go to for counsel and comfort whenever your soul is depressed. Manoah had married a wonderful wife. She was the better one of the two in sound judgment. She was the weaker vessel by nature, but she was the stronger Believer and probably that was why the Angel was sent to her, for angels are best pleased to speak with those who have faith—and if they have the pick of their company—and the wife has more faith than the husband, they will visit the wife sooner than her spouse, for they love to take God's messages to those who will receive them with confidence. She was evidently full of faith and so, when her husband tremblingly said, “We shall surely die,” she did not believe in such a mistrustful inference.

Moreover, though they say that women cannot reason, yet here was a woman whose arguments were logical and overwhelming! Certain it is that women's perceptions are generally far clearer than men's reasonings. They look, at once, into a Truth of God while we are hunting for our glasses! Their instincts are generally as safe as our reasonings and, therefore, when they have, in addition, a clear logical mind, they make the wisest of counselors. Well, Manoah's wife not only had clear perceptions, but she had first-rate reasoning faculties. She argued, according to the language

of the text, that it was not *possible* that God should kill them after what they had seen and heard!

Oh that every man had such a prudent, gracious wife as Manoah had! Oh that whenever a man is cast down, a Christian Brother or Sister stands ready to cheer him with some reminder of the Lord's past goodness, or with some gracious promise from the Divine Word! It may happen to be the husband who cheers the wife and in such a case it is equally beautiful. We have known a Christian Sister to be very nervous and very often depressed and troubled—what a mercy to her to have a Christian husband whose strength of faith can encourage her to smile away her griefs by resting in the everlasting faithfulness and goodness of the Lord!

If God the Holy Spirit shall help us, we will take up the argument of Manoah's wife and see whether it will, also, comfort *our* hearts. She had three strings to her bow, good woman. One was—The Lord does not mean to kill us, because He has accepted our sacrifices. The second and third were—He does not mean to kill us, or else He would not, as at this time, have told us such gracious things as these. So the three strings to her bow were *accepted sacrifices, gracious revelations, and precious promises*. Let us dwell upon each of them. And, first, accepted sacrifices. I will suppose that I am addressing a Brother who is sadly tried, terribly cast down and, who, therefore, has begun to lament—

***“The Lord has quite forsaken me.
My God will be gracious no more.”***

Brother, is that *possible*? Has not God of old accepted, on your behalf, the offering of His Son, Jesus Christ? You have believed in Jesus, dear Friend. You do not believe in Him now? Lay your hand on your heart and put the question solemnly to yourself, “Do you believe on the Son of God?” You are able to say, “Yes, Lord, notwithstanding all my unhappiness, I do believe in You and rest the stress and weight of my soul's interests on Your power to save.” Well, then, you have God's own Word, recorded in His own infallible Bible, assuring you that Jesus Christ was accepted of God on your behalf, for He laid down His life for as many as believe in Him, that they might never perish!

He stood as their Surety and suffered as their Substitute! Is it possible that this should be a lie and that, after all, they may be cast away? The argument of Manoah's wife was just this—“Did we not put the slain goat on the rock and as we put it there was it not consumed? It was consumed instead of us! We shall not die, for the victim has been consumed! The fire will not burn *us*—it has spent itself upon the *sacrifice*! Did you not see it go up in smoke and see the Angel ascend with it? The fire is gone—it cannot fall on us to destroy us.” This being interpreted into the Gospel is just

this—Have we not seen the Lord Jesus Christ fastened to the Cross? Have we not beheld Him in extreme agonies?

Has not the fire of God consumed Him? Have we not seen Him rising, as it were, from that sacred fire in the Resurrection and the Ascension to go into Glory? Because the fire of Jehovah's wrath had spent itself on Him, we shall not die. He has died instead of us! It cannot be that the Lord has made Him suffer, the Just for the unjust, and now will make the Believer suffer, too! It cannot be that Christ loved His Church and gave Himself for it and that, now, the Church must perish, also! It cannot be that the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all and now will lay our iniquity on us, too! It were not consistent with justice! It would make the vicarious sacrifice of Christ to be nullified, a superfluity of cruelty which achieved nothing!

The Atonement cannot be made of no effect—the very supposition would be blasphemy! O, look, my Soul! Look to the redeemer's Cross and as you see how God accepts Christ, be filled with content! Hear how the, "It is finished!" of Jesus on earth is echoed from the Throne of God, Himself, as He raises up His Son from the dead and bestows glory upon Him! Hear this, I say, and as you hear, attend to the power of this argument—If the Lord had been pleased to kill us, He would not have accepted His Son for us! If He meant us to die, would He have put Him to death, too? How can it be? The sacrifice of Jesus must effectually prevent the destruction of those for whom He offered up Himself as a Sacrifice!

Jesus, dying for sinners, and yet the sinners denied mercy?! Inconceivable and impossible! My Soul, whatever your inward feelings and the tumult of your thoughts, the accepted Sacrifice shows that God is not pleased to kill you! But, if you notice, in the case of Manoah, they had offered a burnt sacrifice and a meat offering, too. Well, now, in addition to the great, grand sacrifice of Christ, which is our trust, we, dear Brothers and Sisters, have offered other sacrifices to God. And in consequence of His acceptance of such sacrifice we cannot imagine that He intends to destroy us. First, let me conduct your thoughts back to the offering of prayer which you have presented. I will speak for myself.

I recall now, running over my diary mentally, full many an instance in which I have sought the Lord in prayer and He has most graciously heard me. I am as sure that my requests have been heard as ever Manoah could have been sure that his sacrifice was consumed upon the rock! May I not infer from this that the Lord does not mean to destroy me? You know that it had been so with you, dear Brother. You are down in the dumps, today. You are beginning to raise many questions about Divine love. But there have been times—you know there have—when you have sought the Lord and He has heard you.

You can say, "This poor man cried and the Lord heard him and delivered him from all his fears." Perhaps you have not jotted down the fact in a book, but your memory holds the indelible record. Your soul has made her personal boast in the Lord concerning His fidelity to His promise in helping His people in the hour of need—for you have happily proved it in your own case. Now, Brother, if the Lord had been pleased to *kill* you, would He have heard your prayers? If He had meant to cast you out, after all, would He have heard you so many times? If He had sought a quarrel against you He might have had cause for that quarrel many years ago and have said to you, "When you make many prayers I will not hear." But since He *has* listened to your cries and tears—and many a time answered your petitions—He cannot intend to kill you.

Again, you brought to Him, years ago, not only your prayers but yourself. You gave yourself over to Christ—body, soul, spirit, all your goods, all your hours, all your talents, every faculty, and every possible acquirement—and you said, "Lord, I am not my own, but I am bought with a price." Now, at that time did not the Lord accept you? You have at this very moment a lively recollection of the sweet sense of acceptance you had at that time. Though you are at this time sorely troubled, yet you would not wish to withdraw from the consecration which you then made, but on the contrary you declare—

***"High Heaven, that heard the solemn vow,
That vow renewed shall daily hear,
Till, in life's latest hour, I bow,
And bless in death a bond so dear."***

Now, would the Lord have accepted the offering of yourself to Him if He meant to destroy you? Would He have let you say, "I am Your servant and the son of Your handmaid: You have loosed my bond?" Would He have permitted you to declare, as you can boldly assert tonight, "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus," delighting to remember the time of your Baptism into Him, whereby your body washed with His pure body, was declared to be the Lord's forever—would He enable you to feel a joy in the very mark of your consecration, as well as in the consecration itself—if He meant to slay you? Oh, surely not! He does not let a man give himself up to Him and then cast him away! That cannot be!

Some of us, dear Friends, can remember how, growing out of this last sacrifice, there have been others. The Lord has accepted our offerings at other times, too, for our works, faith and labors of love have been acknowledged by His Spirit. There are some of you, I am pleased to remember, whom God has blessed to the conversion of little children whom you brought to the Savior. And there are others on earth whom you can look upon with great joy because God was pleased to make you the instrument

of their conviction and their conversion. Some of you, I perceive, are ministers of the Gospel. Others of you preach on the corners of the streets and there have been times in your lives—I am sure that you wish they were 10 times as many—in which God has been pleased to succeed your efforts so that hearts have yielded to the sway of Jesus.

Now, you do not put any trust in those things, nor do you claim any merit for having served your Master, but still, I think they may be thrown in as a matter of consolation and you may ask, “If the Lord had meant to destroy me, would He have enabled me to preach His Gospel? Would He have helped me to weep over men’s souls? Would He have enabled me to gather those dear children like lambs to His bosom? Would He have granted me my longing desire to bear fruit in His vineyard if He did not mean to bless me?”

Now, the second argument was that they had received gracious revelations. “If the Lord were pleased to kill us, He would not have showed us all these things.” Now, what has the Lord shown you, my dear Brothers and Sisters? I will mention one or two things. First, the Lord has shown you, perhaps, years ago, or possibly at this moment He is showing you for the first time—your sin. What a sight that was when we first had it! Some of you never saw your sins, but your sins are there all the same. In an old house, perhaps, there is a cellar into which nobody goes and no light ever comes in. You live in the house comfortably enough, not knowing what is there. But one day you take a candle and go down the steps. You open that moldy door and when it is opened, dear Me!

What a damp, pestilential smell! How foul the floor is! All sorts of living creatures hop away from under your feet! There are growths on the very walls—a heap of roots in the corner, sending out those long yellow growths which look like the fingers of death. And there is a spider—and there are a hundred more—of such a size as cannot be grown except in such horrible places! You get out as quickly as ever you can! You do not like the looks of it. Now, the *candle* did not make that cellar bad—the candle did not make it filthy! No, the candle only showed what there was. And then you get the carpenter to take down that shutter which you could not open anyway, for it had not been opened for years.

And when the daylight comes in, it seems more horrible than it did by candlelight! And you wonder, indeed, however you did go across it with all those dreadful things all around you and you cannot be satisfied to live upstairs now till that cellar downstairs has been perfectly cleansed! That is just like our heart—it is full of sin—but we do not know it. It is a den of unclean birds, a menagerie of everything that is fearful, fierce and furious—a little Hell stocked with devils! Such is our nature. Such is our heart.

Now, the Lord showed me mine years ago, as He did some of you, and the result of the sight of one's heart is horrible. Well does Dr. Young say, "God spares all eyes but His own, that fearful sight, a naked human heart." Nobody ever did see all his heart as it really is. You have only seen a part, but when seen, it is so horrible that it is enough to drive a man out of his senses to see the evil of his nature! Now, let us gather some honey out of this dead lion. Brothers and Sisters, if the Lord had meant to destroy us, He would not have shown us our sin because we were happy enough, previously, were we not? In our own poor way we were content and if He did not mean to pardon us, it was not like the Lord to show us our sin and to torment us before our time, unless He meant to take it away!

We were swine, but we were satisfied enough with the husks we ate—so why not let us remain swine? What was the good of letting us see our filthiness if He did not intend to take it away? It never can be possible that God sets Himself studiously to torture the human mind by making it conscious of its evil, if He never intends to supply a remedy. Oh no! A deep sense of sin will not *save* you, but it is a pledge that there is something begun in your soul which may lead to salvation! That deep sense of sin does as good as say, "The Lord is laying bare the disease that He may cure it. He is letting you see the foulness of that underground cellar of your corruption because He means to cleanse it for you."

But He has shown us more than this, for He has made us see the hollowness and emptiness of the world. There are some here present, who, at one time, were very gratified with the pleasures and amusements of the world. The theater was a great delight to them. The ballroom afforded them supreme satisfaction. To be able to dress just after their own fancy and to spend money on their own whims were the very acme of delight! But there came a time when across all these the soul perceived a mysterious handwriting which, being interpreted, ran thus—"Vanity of vanities; all is vanity."

These very people went to the same amusements, but they seemed so dull and stupid that they came away saying, "We do not care a bit for them. The joys are all gone. What seemed gold turns out to be gilt. And what we thought marble was only white paint. The varnish is cracked, the tinsel is faded, the coloring has vanished. Mirth laughs like an idiot and pleasure grins like madness." We have heard the words, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity," sounding in our hearts, and now do you think that if the Lord had meant to *kill* us, He would have taught us this? Why, no! He would have said, "Leave them alone, they are given unto idols. They are only going to have one world in which they can rejoice—let them enjoy it."

He would have let the swine go on with their husks if He had not meant to turn them into His children and bring them to His bosom. But He has taught us something better than this—namely, the preciousness of Christ! Unless we are awfully deceived—*self*-deceived, I mean—we have known what it is to lose the burden of our sin at the foot of the Cross. We have known what it is to see the suitability and all-sufficiency of the merit of our dear Redeemer and we have rejoiced in Him with unspeakable joy full of glory! If He had meant to destroy us, He would not have shown us Christ!

Sometimes, also, we have strong desires after God! What pining after communion with Him have we felt! What longings to be delivered from sin! What yearnings to be perfect! What aspirations to be with Him in Heaven and what desires to be like He while we are here! Now these longings, cravings, desires, yearnings—do you think the Lord would have put them into our hearts if He had meant to destroy us? What would be the good of it? Would it not be tormenting us as Tantalus was tormented? Would it not, indeed, be a superfluity of cruelty to make us wish for what we could never have and pine after what we should never gain? O Beloved, let us be comforted about these things! If He had meant to kill us, He would not have shown us such things as these!

I shall have no time to dwell upon the last source of comfort, which is what the Lord has spoken to us—many precious promises. “Nor would He have told us such things as these.” At almost anytime when a child of God is depressed, if he goes to the Word of God and to prayer, and looks up, he will generally get hold of some promise or other. I know I generally do. I could not tell you, dear Brothers and Sisters, tonight, what promise would suit your case, but the Lord always knows how to apply the right Word at the right time. And when a promise is applied with great power to the soul and you are enabled to plead it at the Mercy Seat, you may say, “If the Lord had meant to kill us, He would not have made us such a promise as this.”

I have a promise that hangs up before my eyes whenever I wake every morning and it has continued in its place for years. It is a stay to my soul. It is this—“I will not fail you nor forsake you.” Difficulties arise, funds run short, sickness comes—but somehow or other my text always seems to flow like a fountain—“I will not fail you nor forsake you.” If the Lord had meant to kill us, He would not have said that to us. What is your promise, Brothers and Sisters? What have you got a hold of? If you have not laid hold of any and feel as if none belonged to you, yet there are such words as these, “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,” and you are one!

Ah, if He had meant to destroy you, He would not have spoken a text of such a wide character on purpose to include your case! A thousand promises go down to the lowest deep into which a heart can ever descend. And if the Lord had meant to destroy a soul in the deeps, He would not have sent a Gospel promise down even to that extreme. I should like to say these two or three words to you who are unconverted, but who are troubled in your souls. You think that God means to destroy you. Now, dear Friend, I take it that if the Lord had meant to kill you, He would not have sent the Gospel to you. If there had been a purpose and a decree to destroy you, He would not have brought you here!

Now you are sitting to hear that Jesus has died to save such as you are! You are sitting where you are, earnestly bid to trust Him and be saved! If the Lord had meant to slay you, I do not think He would have sent me on such a fruitless errand as to tell you of a Christ who could not save you! Some of you have had your lives spared very remarkably. You have been in accidents on land or on sea—perhaps in battle and shipwreck. You have been raised from a sickbed. If the Lord had meant to destroy you, surely He would have let you die—but He has spared you, and you are getting on in years—surely it is time that you yielded to His mercy and gave yourself up into the hands of Grace. If the Lord had meant to destroy you, surely He would not have brought you here, for, possibly, I am addressing one who has come here, wondering why.

All the time that he has been sitting here, he has been saying to himself, “I do not know how I got into this place, but here I am.” God means to bless you, tonight, I trust, and He will, if you breathe this prayer to Heaven, “Father, forgive me! I have sinned against Heaven and before you, but for Christ’s sake, forgive Me! I put my trust in Your Son.” You shall find eternal life, rejoicing in the sacrifice which God has accepted! You shall, one of these days, rejoice in the revelations of His love and in the promises which He gives you, and say, as we say tonight, “If the Lord were pleased to kill us He would not have showed us all these things!”

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CHEER FOR THE FAINT-HEARTED

NO. 440

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, JANUARY 26 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“But his wife said unto him, If the Lord were pleased to kill us, He would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands, neither would He have showed us all these things, nor would as at this time have told us such things as these.”

Judges 13:23.

FAITH is not only the door by which we enter into the way of salvation, as it is written, “He has opened the door of faith unto the gentiles,” but it likewise describes the entire path of Christian pilgrimage, “that we also walk in the steps of that faith.” We are not only quickened by faith at the outset of our spiritual career, but we are supported and sustained thereby in all our subsequent experience—“the just shall *live* by faith.” As it is by faith that we come out from the world and begin to tread the heavenly road, so it must be by faith that we walk all the journey through.

Till we lay down this veil of flesh, till the angel of death shall rend the curtain and we shall see him face to face, let us not hope to walk by sight or sense but only by faith in the living God. A life of faith is always very singular—often it seems very foolish to the carnal man. The man who acts by faith often acts imprudently in the eyes of the world. He appears un-business-like, because he observes not the maxims of his times, but holds fast by those statutes which God has given us for all time.

Faith and patience often encourage a man to go the very way that caution and prudence would tell him *not* to go. And not infrequently, those who are weak in the faith will hold up their hands with astonishment, even if they do not speak with some degree of indignation, at the daring way in which the man strong in faith challenges the promises of God and acts as if he believed them to be quite as true as though they were already fulfilled. You know little, my Brothers and Sisters, of what it is to walk by faith, if you do not find it to be a way that you know not and a path which you have not seen.

We saw the last step not until we had taken it, but the foundation on which faith is to put its foot for the next we cannot see. We do, as it were, tread on clouds and find them firm. We put our feet on mists and find them adamant beneath our feet. Happy is that man who, steadfast, upright, cheerful, goes from strength to strength, believing his God! Trusting

in his God, he knows no care! Resting in his God he knows no impossibility!

But, it seems, from our text, that we have one or two lessons to learn. And the first is, that the strongest faith has its seasons of wavering. Even Abraham, “the father of the faithful,” had his seasons of distrust, when expediency rather than integrity prompted him. Most of those eminent saints who are mentioned in Scripture as exhibiting faith in its greatness, appear to have sometimes showed the white flag of unbelief. There may have lived—I will not dare to say to the contrary—there may have lived some man who did never once doubt his God.

But I think I have never had the privilege of putting my eyes upon him. There may be, and I hope there are, some Christians who through their whole career never doubted their interest in Christ and who never had to say—

***“It is a point I long to know,
Often it causes anxious thought,
Do I love the Lord or no,
Am I His, or am I not?”***

But, I must say, I think such Brethren are few. I think you might travel far before you should meet with any. God forbid I should speak lightly of unbelief! It is the most damnable of sins. God forbid I should say a word in its favor, or encourage its propagation. There cannot be a greater villainy out of Hell than doubting the promises of God.

There cannot be a greater act of treason than to mistrust the love, the faith, the tenderness, the Truth of the God who has helped us up to now. But still the confession must be made, humiliating though it is—we do know that even those Believers whose hearts are true and whose souls are clad in the panoply of Heaven, do sometimes find their loins loose and their strength fail them. Mr. Pilgrim thought Mr. Great-Heart never had a doubt. And so is it with some of our hearers. They fancy that their pastors certainly never have any trials as to their union with Christ. They can always read their titles clear.

Ah, Beloved but if you should ask those men, they might say with Elijah, “I am not better than my fathers.” There are times when the high-soaring eagle droops to the earth, and when he who could scale the stars has to lay flat upon his face in dust and ashes, crying, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” These reflections are illustrated by the narrative of our text. Manoah certainly was strong in faith. He did not even see the angel but he believed— “Blessed is he that has not seen and yet has believed”—and when he entreated that he might see the angel, there seemed to be more curiosity than wavering in his faith.

He believed God, and no doubt, settled in his own mind that he would be obedient to the heavenly vision. Yet even he begins to entertain misgivings when he says, "We shall surely die, for we have seen an angel of the Lord." Good Lord! Of what small account are the best of men apart from You! How high they go when You lift them up! How low they fall if You withdraw Your hand! It is our joy amidst distress when You enables us to say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." But if You take away Your Spirit, we cannot even trust You in the brightest day. When storms gather around us, we can laugh at them if You are with us. But in the fairest morn that ever glowed on human heart, we doubt, and we miscarry if You are not with us still, to preserve and strengthen the faith which You have Yourself bestowed.

Dwelling no longer, however, upon that very humiliating truth, we come to make a second observation. We have observed that some of these greatest liberations of faith have occurred just after the brightest seasons of enjoyment. Some of us have learned to be afraid of joy. Sadness is often the herald of satisfaction. But bliss is oftentimes the harbinger of pain. Whether it is that God provides for our struggle by giving us an extraordinary banquet before a season of long fasting, so that like Elijah, we may go forty days in the strength of this marvelous meat. Or whether it is that He cures us of the dangers of surfeit by sending us on long journeys after we have had high feastings, I cannot say, but so it is.

How strangely is it related of our Lord! He went into the Jordan of His Baptism. The Spirit descended upon Him like a dove. The Father's voice saluted Him, "You are My Beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased." What next? "And immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness: and He was there in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan and was with the wild beasts."

John Bunyan, with great wisdom, puts the Palace Beautiful first, and then no sooner does Christian get out of the Palace gates, than he begins to descend into the Valley of Humiliation. They had given him a sword and a shield and a helmet. He had never had those before. Now that he had his sword, he found that he had to use it against Apollyon. Now that he had his shield, he had to hold it up to catch the fiery dart. Now that he had received the weapon of "all prayer," he found that he had need of it as he walked through that desperate place, the Valley of the Shadow of Death.

God does not give His people weapons to *play* with. He does not give them strength to spend on their lusts. Lord, if You have given me these goodly weapons, it is sure I shall need them in hard fighting. If I have had a feast at Your table, I will remember that it is but a short walk from the upper chamber to the garden of Gethsemane. Daniel, the man greatly be-

loved, was reduced very low. "All his comeliness was turned into corruption and he retained no strength," when God showed him "the great vision."

Thus, too, with favored John, he must be banished to Patmos. In the deep solitude of that Aegean sea-girt island he must receive "the Revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto him." I have noticed, in the ordinary scenes of Christian experience, that our greatest joys come just after some of our sorest trials. When the howling tempest has played out its strength, it soothes itself to sleep. Then comes a season of calm and quiet, so profound in its stillness, that only the monstrous tempest could have been the mother of so mighty a calm. So it seems with us.

Deep waves of trial, high mountains of joy. But the reverse is almost as often true—from Pisgah's top we go to our graves. From the top of Carmel we have to go down to the dens of lions and fight with the leopards. Let us be on our watchtower, lest like Manoah, having seen the Angel of God, the next thing should be that we say we shall surely die, for we have seen the Lord.

It seems very plain from our text that it is a very happy thing if, when one Believer's down, there is another near to lift him up. In this case Manoah found in his wife a helpmeet. It is said by old Master Henry Smith that there is many a man who has had his head broken with his own rib. But there is many a man who has had his heart cured in the same way. So, in this case, if wife and husband had both been down at one time, they might have been long in getting up. But seeing that when *he* fell *she* was there, strong in faith, to give him a helping hand, it was but a slight fall and they went on their way rejoicing.

If one shall fall, then his Brother shall help him up. What is the lesson here? Why, perhaps some of you have got such strong faith tonight that you hardly know what to do with it. What should you do? If there was some person fainting in the seat behind you and you had some strong smelling salts, you would pass them over. Now sometimes our faith is intended to be as a bottle to be put to the nostril of other fainting souls. If you are strong, help your weak Brother. If you see any bowed down, take them on your shoulders, help to carry them. Does not your Master carry the lambs in His bosom? Imitate Him and sometimes carry a lamb in your bosom, too.

It is a Divine thing to wipe tears from all eyes—perhaps your faith is meant to be a handkerchief with which you may wipe away the tears of your Brother. But you say, "Where are the ones low in faith just now?" Wife, perhaps it is your husband! Husband, perhaps it is your wife! It may be, daughter, your aged mother. Brother, may be it is your brother? Perhaps the very person who sits next to you in the pew, who may be at this

time saying, "I walk in darkness and I see no light." Speak, speak wisely, fervently, affectionately, out of the fullness of your soul, and who can tell?

He who said twice, "Comfort you, comfort you, My people; speak you comfortably unto Jerusalem," may make you to be a Barnabas, a son of Consolation to those who are weary and ready to die. Is it not the duty of Christians to strengthen the weak hands and to confirm the feeble knees? Do not follow the way of the world. It is always, if a man is going down, "Down with him. The moment he begins to reel, give him a push. Send him over at once." And it is so with some coarse-minded professors. If they see a Brother a little faint, they tell him something frightful—something about the dragons and the lions, or the giants that are in the road.

Instead of that, my Brother, help to prop up your reeling friend for a little season and it may be that in some brighter day with him, when *your* dark hour shall come, he will repay with a mighty interest the little cheer which you give him today. It is a good thing, however, to temper kindness with wisdom. You know Manoah's wife did not say, when she found that she knew more than her husband did, "Why how silly you must be! What a stupid man to be frightened like this!" She did not begin, as I know some Christians would do who are stronger in faith than the weak ones, by scolding about the matter—but no, she used soft liniment for smarting wounds.

She knew that it does not do to put stinging nettles to a cut, and therefore she put soft salve where there had been a very deep wound. Let us do the same. It is time to talk of duty to a Brother when you get him out of the ditch. But when you see a man down, I would hardly talk to him about the sin of tumbling in, but pull him out first and brush him clean. Then afterwards tell him to take heed that he fall not there again. I have sometimes had lessons given me about unbelief, when they were not, I think, very profitable. There should be a timeliness about our advice, and if we see a man in Manoah's plight, afraid of dying, we should use the discretion of Manoah's wife and encourage and cheer his heart.

The text seems to me to suggest certain consolations which ought to be laid hold of by Believers in Christ in their time of sore trouble. Let me speak to any Christian present tonight who has a trouble—we will suppose it temporal trouble.

"These are hard times!" Times have always been hard ever since I remember them, and I suppose they ever will be, for they used to be hard in our grandfathers' days and there seems to be no likelihood but what they will continue to be so. Yet we always talk of "the good old times," and when our children succeed us, they will speak about our times as being "the good old times," too. The fact is, the present time is the best time that

ever was, and “now” is the only time that belongs to us, for the past is gone and the future is not come. The present is what we have got in hand. Let us make the right use of it.

But you have had losses and crosses and disappointments. You are chastened every morning and you are troubled all day long. Satan whispered to you last Saturday night, when you were putting up the shutters and as tired as you could be, “It is no use going to the House of God tomorrow. There is nothing there for you. God has been troubling you all week. He means to destroy you. He is going to give you up—you may do what you will but the current is too strong. You may tug and pull, but you will starve, for all that. God has forsaken you, and your enemies are persecuting you on every side.”

Well, now, it would be a very curious thing if it were true. But it is not true, for the reasons which Manoah’s wife gave. Remember, first, the Lord has in your case accepted a burnt offering and a meat offering at your hand. You know that when your faith laid hold of Christ, God did not spurn the sacrifice you brought. When you said, for the first time in your life—

**“My faith does lay her hand
On that dear head of Yours,
While like a penitent I stand,
And here confess my sin,”**

He did not reject the offering which you then presented to Him, but He spoke with a loving voice and said, “Go and sin no more. Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you.”

Since that time you have brought the meat offering of your prayers and they have been heard—you have had answers of peace. In looking back upon the past, you can remember many times and seasons when God has especially answered you as though He would rend the heavens and put out His right hand full of the mercies which you needed. Now, would the Lord have heard you? Above all, would He have accepted Christ for you? Would He have accepted your faith and saved you in Christ, if He had meant to destroy you?

What? Can you trust Him with your soul and not trust Him with your shop? Can you leave *eternity* with Him and not *time*? What? Trust the immortal Spirit and not this poor decaying, moldering, flesh and blood? Man! Shame on you! If the Lord had meant you to die, He would not have accepted the offering at your hand. But, you say, He will forsake you in this trouble. Remember what things He has shown to you. See how Manoah’s wife said, “Would He have shown us such things as these?” Why, what has your past life been? Has not it been a wonder?

You have been in as bad a plight as you are in tonight scores of times—and you have got out of it. “There is a big wave coming over my head.” Yes, but there have been fifty waves as big as that which have passed over your head without drowning you, and this will not, either. “It is a deep river I have to ford.” Ah, but you have waded through as deep streams as that and you have not been drowned. Besides, remember how He showed you His love in a strange city and His faithfulness, perhaps, in a far-off land.

When there was none to comfort you and none to help you, His own right hand defended you and His right hand brought salvation to you. I can say joyfully and cheerfully—

***“When trouble like a gloomy cloud,
Has gathered thick and thundered loud,
He, near my side, has always stood,
His loving kindness, O how good!”***

And I often think myself the biggest fool in the world for ever daring to doubt my God again after such singular interpositions both of Providence and Divine Grace as you and I have seen in this Church and in the midst of this congregation. If He had meant to destroy us, would He have shown us such things as we have seen? After such kindness in the past, will He let us sink at last? God forbid!

Besides this, Manah's wife gave a third reason, “Nor would He at this time have told us such things as these.” She meant that He would not have given them such prophecies of the future as He had done, if He meant to kill them. It stood to reason, she seemed to say, “If I am to bear a son, we are not going to die.”

And so, remember, God has made one or two promises which are true and if they are true, it stands to reason He won't leave you. Let us have one of them. “No good thing will I withhold from them that walk uprightly.” Then, as you are to have every good thing, you must have it. It is absolutely certain that God is not going to leave you without good things now.

Or take another, “When you go through the rivers I will be with you and through the floods, they shall not overflow you.” Mark that! It is certain that God will not permit the floods to overflow you. Then it stands to reason that you cannot be drowned. It is a good thing for a Christian who is much tried in business to carry his check book in his pocket but mark what kind of check book I mean. Get a copy of “Clarke's Precious Promises.” They are the promises collated from Scripture put under the different heads.

I generally have kept a copy in my pocket, so that when I have had a trouble of a particular sort, I could turn to the head under which my

trouble would come. And I never turned there without finding a promise to meet it. Or whenever your trial comes, go home to your Bible, open it, ask the Lord to direct you, and with a little search I think you will soon find a promise that was made on purpose for you. It may have suited twenty cases before, but you can only say if an angel had come down from Heaven to bring a message precisely adapted to your peculiar trial, it could not have been better worded! The arrow could not have hit the center of the mark more surely than it has.

Well, then, if the Lord had meant to destroy you, would He have given you that promise? Would He thus have deluded you? Oh, this is far from Him! Let the fact that He has accepted Christ for you, that He has already shown you so much favor, and that He has given you such precious promises, let these, I say, lead you to think that He will not destroy you, He will not leave you.

But we will suppose for a moment, in the next place, that you are in some *spiritual* trouble. "Oh," you say, "this is worse than temporal trial," and indeed, it is. Touch a man in his house and he can bear it. Touch him in his children and he may bear that. But touch him in his bone and in his flesh, no, go farther, touch him in his *soul* and in his *faith*—and then it is hard to lay hold on God and trust Him still. The enemy had thrust sore at Manoah to vex him and make him fret.

There may be some here whose spiritual enemy has set upon them dreadfully of late and he has been howling in your ears, "It's all over with you! You are cast off, God has rejected you! You are twice dead, plucked up by the roots—you are wandering stars, you are clouds without rain, you are one of those that knew the way of righteousness but have turned away from it—you have gone back to your old sin. God has cursed you! Like Esau, He has rejected you. You have sold your portion for a mess of pottage and you are cast out forever."

No, Soul—thus says the Lord to you—"Was there not a time when Christ was precious to you?" O back-slider, was there not a season when you could put your finger into the prints of the nails and your hand into His side? Poor fallen soul, was there not a period when that precious hymn of Toplady's was sweet to your ears?—

***"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to Your Cross I cling.
Naked, look to You for dress,
Helpless, come to You for Grace.
Black I to the fountain fly,
Wash me, Savior, or I die."***

Then I tell you, Soul, if the Lord had ever meant to destroy you, He would never have permitted you to know a precious Christ, or to put your trust in Him. Besides, fallen though you now are, through sore travail, yet

was there not a time when you saw the beauty of God in His temple? I went to the House of God with the company that kept holy day. His name to me was as ointment poured forth. My soul delighted herself in her God and my spirit made her boast in her King. O Jesus, once You were very sweet to me. I knew the plague of my own heart even then, but I knew Your power to save, I knew the fellowship of the Father and of His Son Jesus Christ—

***“What peaceful hours I then enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void,
The world can never fill.”***

Our Soul! What a mercy it is that the world cannot fill it, and what a greater mercy still, that God *will* fill it, for He never emptied a soul He did not mean to fill. He never stripped a man He did not mean to clothe. He never made one a spiritual beggar without intending to make Him spiritually rich. And if you, tonight, are brought to the first stage of desperation, you are brought to the first stage of hope. Now that man comes to his wit's end, God shall begin to magnify His mercy and His Truth.

To conclude the argument of Manaoh's wife, what promises God has made even to you! What has He said of His people? “I will surely bring them in.” “I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand.” And what does Christ say again?—“Father, I will that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am.” But turn to that Book for yourself. See the promises made to the soul that ever did believe in Christ, and you may say, once and for all, “If He had meant to destroy me, He would not have made such promises as these. If He meant to desert me in spiritual trouble He would never have brought me this far.”

To the Christian who is near his death, I commend this text. To the gray-headed tottering saint. To the consumptive girl, whose cheeks betray the worm within. To you who are going down the steep decline and whose feet begin to chill with the waters of the black river. He has accepted Christ at your hands, be not afraid to die. He has showed you the riches of His faithfulness up to now—trust Him for the rest. He is engaged by Covenant, yes, by the blood of the Everlasting Covenant, to bring you to Heaven. Do not doubt, but boldly ford the stream, for in its deepest parts you shall feel the bottom. Thus boldly live and boldly dare to die, for when you go through the valley of the shadow of death, He will be with you, His rod and His staff shall comfort you.

Now it may happen tonight that I have some *young* Christians here, who have only during the last week or two been converted to God, and they have been falling during the last two or three days into the Slough of

Despond. I hope this sermon may help them out, for of you is it true that if you have laid hold of Christ, He would not have enabled you to do that, if He meant to leave you. If you have been shown the evil of your own heart, He would not have shown you that if He meant to destroy you. And if He has caused you to lean upon any promise, depend upon it He will give you that promise and fulfill it in your experience. He will save you.

I think about five days after I first found Christ, when my joy had been such that I could have danced for very mirth at the thought that Christ was mine, on a sudden I fell into a sad fit of despondency. I will tell you why. When I first believed in Christ, I am not sure that I thought the devil was dead but certainly I had a kind of notion that he was so mortally wounded he could not disturb me. And then I certainly fancied that the corruption of my nature had received its death blow. I read what Cowper said—

***“Since the dear hour that brought me to Your foot,
And cut up all my follies by the root.”***

And I really thought that Cowper knew what he was saying—but never did any poet blunder so terribly as Cowper did when he said that, for no man, I think, has got his follies cut up by the roots yet. However, I fondly dreamed mine were. I felt persuaded that they would never sprout again. I was going to be perfect—I fully calculated upon it—and lo, I found an intruder I had not reckoned upon—an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.

So I went to that same Primitive Methodist Chapel where I first received peace with God, through the simple preaching of the Word. The text happened to be, “Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” “There,” I thought “that’s a text for me.” I had got as far as that—in the middle of that very sentiment—when the minister began by saying, “Paul was not a Believer when he said this.”

Well now, I knew I was a Believer, and it seemed to me from the context that Paul must have been a Believer, too. Now I am sure he was. The man went on to say that no child of God ever did feel any conflict within. So I took up my hat and left the place and I do not think I have frequented such places since. They are very good for people who are unconverted to go to, but of very little use for children of God. That is my notion of Methodism. It is a noble thing to bring in strangers. But a terrible thing for those that are brought in to sit and feed there.

It is like the parish pound, it is a good thing to put sheep in when they are strayed but there is no food inside. They had better be let out as soon as possible to find real food for the soul. I knew that that man understood nothing of experimental divinity, or of practical heart theology, or else he

would not have talked so. A good man he was, I do not doubt, but utterly incompetent to the task of dealing with a case like that.

Then we say to you tonight, who are in such a case, we are not at all surprised. This is just where God's people generally come soon after conversion. If they get over that Slough of Despond, they may go on merrily for a long way—years, perhaps—certainly for whole miles. As Mr. Bunyan says that, when Christian got out of that Slough, he went for a long distance along a high road within walls—called the Walls of Salvation—and so it is. Once get over that, that first season of spiritual depression, which is partly caused by the excessive exhilaration of our mental frame after conversion, and we shall go on readily enough, rejoicing in God.

Be not troubled, young Christian, about this matter. Go *you* again to Christ—put your trust in Him anew. Go once more as a poor lost sinner and take Jesus to be your All in All. Cast yourself flat on your face again before His Cross. Go and wash anew in the fountain filled with His blood. Let your Betrothed come over again, and then the joy of your salvation shall come again. And so, God keep you and God bless you, that the Evil One touch you not.

“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He that believes not shall he damned.” Believe, then, on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved and your house. May God give His blessing for the Savior's sake! Amen.

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HANDS FULL OF HONEY

NO. 1703

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 28, 1883,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And Samson turned aside to see the carcass of the lion: and, behold, there was a swarm of bees and honey in the carcass of the lion. And he took some in his hands, and went on eating, and came to his father and mother, and he gave some to them, and they did eat: but he did not tell them that he had taken the honey out of the carcass of the Lion.”
Judges 14:8, 9.

IT was a singular circumstance that a man unarmed should have slain a lion in the prime of its vigor and yet, more strange that a swarm of bees should have taken possession of the dried carcass and have filled it with their honey. In that country, what with beasts, birds, insects and the dry heat, a dead body is soon cleansed from all corruption and the bones are clean and white. Still, the killing of the lion and the finding of the honey make up a remarkable story. These singular circumstances became, afterwards, the subject of a riddle—but with that riddle we have no concern at this time. Samson, himself, is a riddle! He was not only a riddle-maker, but he was, himself, an enigma very difficult to explain.

With his personal character I have, at this time, little or nothing to do. We are not, today, resting at the house of “Gains, my host,” where the pilgrims amused themselves with a dish of nuts after dinner, but we are on the march and must attend to the more important matter of refreshing and inspiriting those who are in our company. Neither are we going to discuss difficulties, but as Samson took the honey without being stung, so would we gain instruction without debate.

We have, in these days, so much to do that we must make practical use of every incident that comes before us in the Word of God. My one design is to cheer the desponding and stir up all God's people to greater diligence in His service. I conceive that the text may legitimately be employed for this purpose. By the help of the Divine Spirit, even after this lapse of time, we may find honey in the lion! The particular part of the incident which is recorded in these two verses appears to have been passed over by those who have written upon Samson's life—I suppose it appeared to be too inconceivable. They are taken up with his restive riddle, but they omit the far more natural and commendable fact of his bringing forth the honey in his hands and presenting it to his father and mother.

This is the little scene to which I direct your glances. It seems to me that the Israelite hero, with a slain lion in the background, standing out in the open road with his hands laden with masses of honeycomb and dripping with honey, which he holds out to his parents, makes a fine picture, worthy of the greatest artist. And what a type we have here of our Divine Lord and Master, Jesus, the conqueror of death and Hell! He has

destroyed the lion that roared upon us and upon Him. He has shouted victory “over all our foes.” “It is finished” was His note of triumph and now He stands in the midst of His Church with His hands full of sweetness and consolation, presenting them to those of whom He says, “these are My brother and sister and mother.”

To each one of us who believe in Him, He gives the luscious food which He has prepared for us by the overthrow of our foes. He bids us come and eat that we may have our lives sweetened and our hearts filled with joy. To me, the comparison seems wonderfully apt and suggestive! I see our triumphant Lord laden with sweetness, holding it forth to all His Brothers and Sisters, and inviting them to share in His joy. But, Beloved, it is written, “As He is, so are we, also, in this world.” All that are true Christians are, in a measure, like the Christ whose name they bear—and it is to His image that we are finally to be conformed. When He shall appear, we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is. And, meanwhile, in proportion as we see Him, now, “we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

The Samson type may well serve as the symbol of every Christian in the world. The Believer has been helped by Divine Grace in his spiritual conflicts and he has known “the victory which overcomes the world, even our faith.” He has thus been made more than a conqueror through Him that loved us and now he stands in the midst of his fellow men inviting them to Jesus. With the honey in his hands, which he continues to feast upon, he displays the heavenly sweetness to all that are round about him, saying, “O taste and see that the Lord is good! blessed is the man that trusts in Him.” I have before now met with that popular artist, Gustave Dore, [1832-1883] and suggested subjects to him. Had he survived among us, and had another opportunity occurred, I would have pressed him to execute a statue of Samson handing out the honey—strength distributing sweetness!

And it might have served as a perpetual reminder of what a Christian should be—a Conqueror and a Comforter, slaying lions and distributing honey! The faithful servant of God wrestles with the powers of evil, but with far greater delight he speaks to his friends and companions, saying, “Eat that which is good and let your souls delight themselves in sweetness.” Set the statue before your mind’s eye and now let me speak about it. Three touches may suffice. First, the Believer’s life has its conflicts. Secondly, the Believer’s life has its sweets. And, thirdly, the Believer’s life leads him to communicate of those sweets to others. Here is room for profitable meditation!

I. First, then, THE BELIEVER’S LIFE HAS ITS CONFLICTS. To become a Christian is to enlist as a soldier. To become a Believer is to enter upon a pilgrimage and the road is often rough—the hills are steep, the valleys are dark, giants block the way and robbers lurk in corners! The man who reckons that he can glide into Heaven without a struggle has made a great mistake. No cross, no crown—no sweat, no sweet—no conflict, no conquest. These conflicts, if we take the case of Samson as our symbol, begin early in the life of the Believer. While Samson was a child, the Spirit of the

Lord moved him in the camps of Dan—see the last verse of the 13th chapter.

And as soon as he was on the verge of manhood, he must match himself with a lion! God, who intended that His servant should smite the Philistines and should check their proud oppression of His people, Israel, began early to train the hero for his life's conflict. So, when Samson was going to seek a wife, he turned aside into the vineyards of Timnath and a lion roared upon him. Yes, and the young Believer, who as yet has not wrestled with the Powers of Darkness, will not be long before he hears the roar of the lion and finds himself in the presence of the great Adversary. Very soon we learn the value of the prayer, "Deliver us from the Evil One!"

Most of the Lord's servants have been men of war from their youth up. This early combat with the savage beast was intended by God to let Samson know his strength, when under the influence of the Spirit, and to train him for his future combats with Israel's enemies. He that is to smite the Philistines hip and thigh with a great slaughter, until he has laid them heaps on heaps by his single prowess, must begin by tearing a lion apart with his naked hands! He was to learn war in the same school as another and a greater hero, who afterwards said, "Your servant slew both the lion and the beast, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them."

Soldiers are made by war. You cannot train veterans or create victors except by battles. As in the wars of armies, so is it in spiritual contests—men must be *trained* for victory over evil by combat with it. Therefore, "it is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth," for it will not gall his shoulders in later years. It is assuredly a dangerous thing to be altogether free from trouble—in silken ease the soldier loses his prowess. Look at Solomon, one of the greatest and wisest, and yet, I might say, one of the least and most foolish of men. It was his fatal privilege to sit upon a throne of gold and sun himself in the brilliance of unclouded prosperity. And, therefore, his heart soon went astray and he fell from his high places.

Solomon, in his early days, had no trouble, for no war was raging, then, and no enemy worth notice was then living. His life ran smoothly and he was lulled into a dreamy sleep, the sleep of the voluptuous. He had been happier far had he been like his father, called, from his earliest days, to trial and conflict, for this might have taught him to stand fast upon the pinnacle of glory whereon the Providence of God had placed him. Learn, then, O young Brother, that, if, like Samson, you are to be a hero for Israel, you must early be subjected to suffering and daring, in some form or other! When you step aside and seek for meditation in the quiet of the vineyard, a young lion may roar upon you even as in the earliest days of your Lord and Master's public service He was led into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

These conflicts, dear Friends, may often be very terrible. By a young lion is not meant a whelp, but a lion in the fatness of its early strength and not yet slackened in its pace, or curbed in its fury by growing years. Fresh and furious, a young lion is the worst kind of beast that a man can meet with! Let us expect, as followers of Christ, to meet with strong temptations, fierce persecutions and severe trials which will lead to stern con-

flicts. Do not reckon, you that are yet putting on the harness, that you shall soon put it off, or that when you take it off, it will be quite as bright as it is today! It will be dimmed with blood and dust—and battered by many a blow. Perhaps your foe may find a way to pierce it, or at least to wound you between its joints. I would have every man begin to be a soldier of the Cross, but I would, at the same time, have him count the cost for it is no child's play! And if he thinks it will be such, he will be grievously disappointed.

A young Believer will, all of a sudden, have a doubt suggested to him of which he never heard before—and it will roar upon him like a young lion. Neither will he see, all at once, how to dispose of it. Or he may be placed in singular circumstances where his duty seems to run counter to the most tender instincts of his nature. Here, too, the young lion will roar upon him. Or, one for whom he has an intense respect may treat him badly because he is a follower of Christ—and the affection and respect which he feels for this person may make his opposition the more grievous. In this, also, it is with him as when a lion roars. Or he may suffer a painful bereavement, or sustain a severe loss. Or he may have a disease upon him with consequent pains and depressions—all of these may cast the shadow of death upon his spirit, so that, again, a young lion roars upon him.

Brother, Sister, let us reckon upon this and not be dismayed by it, since in all this is the life of our spirit. By such lessons as these we are taught to do service for God, to sympathize with our fellow Christians and to value the help of our gracious Savior. By all these we are weaned from earth and made to hunger for that eternal Glory which is yet to be revealed, of which we may truly say, "No lion shall be there, neither shall any ravenous beast go up there." These present evils are for our future good—their terror is for our teaching! Trials are sent us for much the same reason that the Canaanites were permitted to live in the Holy Land, that Israel might learn war and be equipped for battles against foreign foes!

These conflicts come early and they are very terrible and, moreover, they happen to us when we are least prepared for them. Samson was not hunting for wild beasts. He was engaged on a much more tender business. He was walking in the vineyards of Timnath, thinking of anything but lions, "and behold," says the Scripture, "a young lion roared against him." It was a remarkable and startling occurrence! He had left his father and mother and was quite alone. No one was within call to aid him in meeting his furious assailant. Human sympathy is exceedingly precious, but there are points in our spiritual conflict in which we cannot expect to receive it. To each man there are passages in life too narrow for walking two abreast. Upon certain crags we must stand alone. As our constitutions differ, so our trials, which are suited to our constitutions, must also differ.

Each individual has a secret with which no friend can interfere, for every life has its mystery and its hidden treasure. Do not be ashamed, young Christian, if you meet with temptations which appear to you to be quite singular—we have, each one, thought the same of our trials. You

imagine that no one suffers as you do, whereas no temptation has happened unto you but such as is common to man—and God will, with the temptation, make a way of escape that you may be able to bear it. Yet, for the time being, you may have to enter into fellowship with your Lord when He trod the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with Him. Is not this for your good? Is not this the way to strength?

What kind of piety is that which is dependent upon the friendship of *man*? What sort of religion is that which cannot stand alone? Beloved, you will have to *die* alone and you need, therefore, Divine Grace to cheer you in solitude. The dear wife can attend you, weeping, to the river's brink, but into the chill stream she cannot go with you—and if you have not a religion which will sustain you in the solitudes of life—of what use will it be to you in the grim lonesomeness of death? Thus I reckon it to be a happy circumstance that you are called to solitary conflict so that you may test your faith and see of what stuff your hope is made!

The contest was all the worse for Samson, that in addition to being quite alone, “there was nothing in his hands.” This is the most remarkable point in the narrative. He had no sword or hunter's spear with which to wound the lordly savage—he had not, even, a stout staff with which to ward off his attack. Samson stood all unarmed, an unarmored man in the presence of a raging beast! So we, in our early temptations, are apt to think that we have no weapon for the war and we not know what to do. We are made to cry out, “I am unprepared! How can I meet this trial? I cannot grasp the enemy to wrestle with him. What am I to do?” Herein will the splendor of faith and Glory of God be made manifest, when you shall slay the lion, and yet it shall be said of you, “he had nothing in his hands”—nothing but that which the world sees not and values not!

Now, go one step further, for time forbids our lingering here. I invite you to remember that it was by the Spirit of God that the victory was won. We read, “And the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him and he tore him as he would have torn a kid.” Let the Holy Spirit help us in our trouble and we need neither company nor weapon! But without Him what can we do? Good Bishop Hall says, “If that roaring lion that goes about continually seeking whom he may devour, finds us alone among the vineyards of the Philistines, where is our hope? Not in our heels—he is swifter than we! Not in our weapons—we are naturally unarmed! Not in our hands which are weak and languishing—but in the Spirit of God, by whom we can do all things! If God fights in us, who can resist us? There is a stronger lion in us than that against us,” There is only one necessity—to be endowed with power from on high—the power of the Holy Spirit!

Helped by the Spirit of God, the Believer's victory will be complete! The lion shall not be driven away, but torn in pieces. Girt with the Spirit's power, our victory shall be as easy as it will be perfect—Samson tore the lion as though it were a little lamb, or a kid of the goats. Well said Paul, “I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me.” Sin is soon overcome, temptations are readily refused, affliction is joyfully borne, persecution is gladly endured when the Spirit of Glory and of Peace rests upon us! With God all things are possible and as the Believer is with God, it comes to pass that all things are possible to him that believes!

If we were surrounded by all the devils in Hell, we need not fear them for an instant if the Lord is on our side. We are mightier than all Hell's legions when the Spirit is mightily upon us! If we were to be beaten down by Satan until he had set his foot upon our chest to press the very life out of us, yet if the Spirit of God helped us, we would reach out our hand and grasp the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, and we would repeat the feat of Christian, against Apollyon, when he gave the fiend such grievous wounds that he spread his dragon wings and flew away! Therefore fear not, you tried ones, but trust in the Spirit of God and your conflict shall speedily end in victory!

Sometimes our conflict is with *past* sin. We doubtfully enquire, "How can it be forgiven?" The temptation vanishes before the sight of the dying Redeemer! Then inbred lusts roar against us and we overcome it through the blood of the Lamb, for "the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin." Sometimes a raging corruption, or a strong habit wars upon us—and then we conquer by the might of the sanctifying Spirit of God who is with us and shall be in us forever! Or else it is the *world* which tempts and our feet have almost gone—but we overcome the world through the victory of faith!

And if Satan raises pride of life against us—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the life all at once—we are still delivered, for the Lord is a wall of fire round about us! The inward fire bravely resists all sin and God's help is given to Believers to preserve them from all evil in the moment of urgent need, even as He helped His martyrs and confessors to speak the right words when called, unprepared, to confront their adversaries! Care not, therefore, oh you truster in the Lord Jesus, how fierce your enemy may be this day! As young David slew the lion and the bear and slew the Philistine, too, even so shall you go from victory to victory! "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all." Therefore, with a lion-like spirit, meet lions which seek to devour you!

II. Now, then, we, come to our second head, which is—THE BELIEVER'S LIFE HAS ITS SWEETS. We are not always killing lions—we are sometimes eating honey! Certain of us do both at a time—we kill lions and yet cease not to eat honey—and truly it has become so sweet a thing to enter into conflict for Christ's sake, that it is a *joy* to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. The same Lord who has bid us, "quit yourselves like men; be strong," has also said, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again, I say, rejoice."

The Believer's life has its sweets and these are of the choicest—for what is sweeter than honey? What is more joyful than the joy of a saint? What is more happy than the happiness of a Believer? I will not condescend to make a comparison between our joy and the mirth of fools—I will go no further than a contrast. Their mirth is as the crackling of thorns under a pot, which spit fire and make a noise and a flash—but there is no heat and they are soon gone out—nothing comes of it, the pot is long in boiling.

But the Christian's delight is like a steady coal fire. You have seen the grate full of coals, all burning red and the whole mass of coal has seemed to be one great glowing ruby! And everybody who has come into the room,

out of the cold, has delighted to warm his hands, for it gives out a steady heat and warms the body even to its marrow. Such are our joys! I would sooner possess the joy of Christ five minutes than I would revel in the mirth of fools for half a century! There is more bliss in the tear of repentance than in the laughter of gaiety—our holy sorrows are sweeter than the worldlings' joys. But, oh, when our joys grow full, *Divinely* full, then they are unspeakably like those above—and Heaven begins below!

Did you never cry for joy? You say, perhaps, "Not since I was a child." Nor have I, but I have always remained a child as far as *Divine* joy is concerned. I could often cry for joy when I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him! Ours is a joy which will bear thinking over. You can dare to pry into the bottom of it and test its foundation! It is a joy which does not grow stale. You may keep it in your mouth by the years together, and yet it never sours. You may return to it again and again, and again, and find it still as fresh as ever. And the best of it is there is no repentance after it. You are never sorry that you were so glad!

The world's gay folk are soon sick of their drink, but we are only sorry that we were not gladder, still, for our gladness sanctifies! We are not denied any degree of joy to which we can possibly attain, for ours is a healthy, health-giving delight! Christ is the fullness of joy to His people and we are bid to enjoy Him to the fullest! Christians have their sweets and those are, as honey and the honeycomb, the best of the best! Of these joys there is plenty, for Samson found, as it were, a living spring of honey, since he discovered a swarm of bees. So abundant was the honey that he could take huge masses of the comb and carry it in his hands and go away with it, bearing it to others. In the love of Christ; in pardoned sin; in acceptance in the Beloved; in resting in God; in perfectly acquiescing in His will; in the hope of Heaven there is such joy that none can measure it. We have such a living swarm of bees to make honey for us in the precious promises of God, that there is more delight in store than any of us can possibly realize!

There is infinitely more of Christ beyond our comprehension than we have as yet been able to comprehend. How blessed to receive of His fullness, to be sweetened with His sweetness and yet to know that infinite goodness still remains! Perhaps some of you have enjoyed so much of Christ that you could hardly bear any more—but your largest enjoyments are only as tiny shells filled by a single wave of the sea—while all the boundless ocean rolls far beyond your perception! We have exceedingly great joy, yes, joy to spare! Our Master's wedding feast is not so scantily furnished that we have to bring in another seat for an extra guest, or murmur to ourselves that we had better not invite at random lest we should be swarmed by too great a crowd.

No, rather the pillared halls of mercy in which the King makes His feast are so vast that it will be our life-long business to furnish them with guests, compelling more and more to come in, that His house may be filled and that His royal festival may make glad ten thousand times ten thousand hearts! Dear Friends, if you want to know what are the elements of our joy, I have already hinted at them, but I will, for a moment, enlarge

them. Our joys are often found in the former places of our conflicts. We gather our honey out of the lions which have been slain for us or by us. There is, first, our sin. A horrible lion that! But it is a *dead* lion, for Grace has much more abounded over abounding sin. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, I have never heard of any dainty in all the catalog of human joys that could match a sense of pardoned sin! Full forgiveness! Free forgiveness! Eternal forgiveness! See, it sparkles like dew of Heaven!

To know that God has blotted out my sin is knowledge rich with unutterable bliss! My soul has begun to hear the songs of seraphim when it has heard that note, "I have blotted out your sins like a cloud, and as thick cloud your iniquities." Here is choice honey for you! The next dead lion is conquered *desire*. When a wish has arisen in the heart contrary to the mind of God and you have said—"Down with you! I will pray you down. You used to master me—I fell into a habit and I was soon overcome by you—but I will not, again, yield to you. By God's Grace I will conquer you." I say, when at last you have obtained the victory, such a sweet contentment perfumes your heart that you are filled with unspeakable joy and you are devoutly grateful to have been helped by the Spirit of God to master your own spirit. Thus you have again eaten spiritual honey!

When you are able to feel in your own soul that you have overcome a strong temptation, the fiercer it was and the more terrible it was, the louder has been your song and the more joyful your thanksgiving! To go back to Mr. Bunyan, again, when Christian had passed through the Valley of the Shadow of Death during the night, and when he had come entirely out of it and the sun rose, you remember he looked back. (A pause). He was long in taking that look, I guarantee you! What thoughts he had while looking back! He could just discern that narrow track with the quagmire on one side and the deep ditch on the other—and he could see the shades out of which the hobgoblins hooted and the fiery eyes glanced forth! He looked back by sunlight and thought within himself, "Ah me! What goodness has been with me! I have gone through all that and yet I am unharmed!"

What a happy survey it was to him! Ah, the joy of having passed through temptation without having defiled one's garments! How must Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego have felt when they stepped out of the fiery furnace and were not even singed, neither had the smell of fire passed upon them! Happy men were they to have lived in the center of the seven-times-heated furnace where everything else was consumed! Here, again, is "a piece of the honeycomb." We find honey, again, from another slain lion—namely, our troubles after we have been enabled to endure them. This is the metal of which our joy-bells are cast! Out of the brass of our trials, we make the trumpets of our triumph! He is not the happy man who has seen no trouble, but, "blessed is he that endures temptation, for when he is tried, he shall receive a crown of life that fades not away."

Death, too. Oh, the honey that is found in dead death! Death is, indeed, dead! We triumph over him and are no more afraid of him than little children are of a dead lion! We pluck him by the beard, and say to him, "O Death, where is your sting? O Grave, where is your victory?" We even look forward to the time of our departure with delight, when we shall leave this

heavy clay and on spirit wings ascend unto our Father and our God! You see, there is a rich store of honey for God's people and we do not hesitate to eat it! Let others say what they will, we are a happy people, happy in Christ, happy in the Holy Spirit, happy in God our Father! So that Believers have their sweets.

III. But the third is the point I want to dwell upon—THE BELIEVER'S LIFE LEADS HIM TO COMMUNICATE OF THESE SWEETS. As soon as we have tasted the honey of forgiven sin and perceived the bliss that God has laid up for His people in Christ Jesus, we feel it to be both our *duty* and our *privilege* to communicate the good news to others. Here let my ideal statue stand in our midst—the strong man, conqueror of the lion—holding forth his hands full of honey to his parents. We are to be modeled according to this fashion.

And, first, we do this immediately. The moment a man is converted, if he would let himself alone, his instincts would lead him to tell his fellows. I know that the moment I came out of that little chapel in which I found the Savior, I needed to pour out my tale of joy! I could have cried with Cennick—

***“Now will I tell to sinners round,
What a dear Savior I have found!
I'll point to Your redeeming blood,
And say, ‘Behold the way to God!’”***

I longed to tell how happy my soul was and what a deliverance I had obtained from the crushing burden of sin! I longed to see all others come and trust my Lord and live! I did not preach a sermon, but I think I could have told out all the Gospel in that first hour!

Did not you, my Friend, feel much the same? Did not your tongue long to be telling of what the Lord had done for you? Perhaps you are one of those proper and retiring people who are greatly gifted at holding their tongues and, therefore, you left the feet of Jesus in silence—silence which angels wondered at! Is that why you have held your tongue ever since? Perhaps if you had begun to speak, then, you would have continued your testimony to this day! I repeat my assertion that it is the instinct of every new-born soul to communicate the glad tidings which Grace has proclaimed in his heart. Just as Samson had no sooner tasted of the honey than he carried a portion of it to his father and mother, so do we hasten to invite our neighbors to Christ!

My dear young Friend, as soon as ever you know the joy of the Lord, open your mouth in a quiet, humble way and never allow yourself to be numbered with the deaf and dumb! Let no one stop you from unburdening your heart! Do not follow the bad example of those who have become dumb dogs because of their cowardice at the beginning. The Believer will do this, first, to those who are nearest to him. Samson took the honey to his father and mother who were not far away. With each of us, the most natural action would be to tell a brother or a sister or a fellow workman, or a bosom friend. It will be a great joy to see them eating the honey which is so pleasant to our own palate!

It is most natural in a parent, at once, to wish to tell his children of Divine Love—have you all done so? You pray for your children, but many of

you would be the means of answering your own prayers if you would talk with them, one by one! This may appear difficult, but once commenced, it will soon grow easy—and, indeed, if it is difficult, we should aspire to do it for that very reason! Should we not do many a difficult thing for Him who overcame all difficulties for us? At the least, do not deny to your own children the personal testimony of their father or their mother to the surpassing power of Grace and the unutterable sweetness of Divine Love. Tell it to those who are nearest to you. The Believer will do this as best he can.

Samson, you see, brought the honey to his father and mother in a rough and ready style going on eating it as he brought it. If I wished to give honey to my father and mother, I should do it up rather daintily—I would at least put it in as respectable a dish as our kitchen could afford—but there were no plates and dishes out there in that Timnath vineyard and so his own hands were the only platters upon which Samson could present the delicacy! “He took some in his hands, and came to his father and mother, and he gave them, and they did eat.” Perhaps you think, “If I am to speak to any person upon true religion, I should like to do it in poetry.” Better do it in prose, for perhaps they will take more notice of your verse than of your subject. Give them the honey in your hands and if there is no dish, they cannot take notice of the dish.

“Yes, but, I should like to do it very properly,” says one. “It is a very important matter. I should like to speak most correctly.” But my judgment is, that as you will not be likely to attain correct speech all in a hurry and your friends may die while you are learning your grammar and your rhetoric, you had better tell them of Jesus according to your present ability! Tell them there is life in a look at Jesus! Tell them the story, simply, as one child talks to another. Carry the honey in your hands, though it drips all round—no hurt will come of the spilling—there are always little ones waiting for such drops. If you were to make the Gospel drip about everywhere and sweeten all things, it would be no waste, but a blessed gain to all around! Therefore, I say to you, tell of Jesus Christ as best you can and never cease to do so while life lasts.

But then Samson did another thing and every true Believer should do it, too—he did not merely tell his parents about the honey, but he took them some of it. I do not read, “And he told his father and mother of the honey,” but I read, “and he took some in his hands.” Nothing is so powerful as an exhibition of Grace, itself, to others. Do not talk about it, but carry it in your hands! “I cannot do that,” says one. Yes, you can, by your life, your temper, your spirit, your whole being! If your hands serve God, if your heart serves God, if your face beams with joy in the service of God, you will carry Grace wherever you go and those who see you will perceive it! You will hardly have need to say, “Come and partake of Grace,” for the Grace of God in you will be its own invitation and attraction! Let our lives be full of Christ and we shall preach Christ! A holy life is the best of sermons! Soul-winning is worked by a winning life more surely than by winning words.

Take note, also, that Samson did this with great modesty. We have plenty of people about, nowadays, who could not kill a mouse without

publishing it in the Gospel Gazette! But Samson killed a lion and said nothing about it. He holds the honey in his hands for his father and mother—he shows them *that*—but we are specifically informed that he told not his father or his mother that he had taken it out of the carcass of the lion. The Holy Spirit finds modesty so rare that He takes care to record it! In telling your own experience, be wisely cautious. Say much of what the Lord has done for you, but say little of what you have done for the Lord! You need not make much effort to be brief on that point, for I am afraid that there is not much of it, if all were told! Do not utter a self-glorifying sentence! Let us put Christ to the front—and the joy and blessedness that comes of faith in Him—but as for ourselves, we need not speak a word except to lament our sins and shortcomings.

The sum of what I have to say is this—if we have tasted any joy in Christ; if we have known any consolation of the Spirit; if faith has been to us a real power and if it has worked in us peace and rest, let us communicate this blessed discovery to others. If you do not do so, mark you, you will have missed the very objective for which God has blessed you! I heard the other day of a Sunday school address in America which pleased me much. The teacher, speaking to the boys, said, “Boys, here’s a watch, what is it for?” The children answered, “To tell the time.” “Well,” he said, “suppose my watch does not tell the time, what is it good for?” “Good-for-nothing, Sir.” Then he took out a pencil. “What is this pencil for?” “It is to write with, Sir.” “Suppose this pencil won’t make a mark, what is it good for?” “Good-for-nothing, Sir.”

Then he took out his pocket knife. “Boys, what is this for?” They were American boys and so they shouted—“to whittle with”—that is to experiment on any substance that came in their way by cutting a notch in it. “But,” he said, “suppose it will not cut, what is the knife good for?” “Good-for-nothing, Sir.” Then the teacher asked, “What is the chief end of man?” And they replied, “To glorify God.” “But suppose a man does not glorify God, what is he good for?” “Good-for-nothing, Sir.” That brings out my point most clearly—there are many professors of whom I will not say that they are good-for-nothing, but I think if they do not soon stir themselves up to glorify God by proclaiming the sweetness of God’s love, it will go hard with them! Remember how Jesus said of the savorless salt, “Henceforth it is good for nothing”?

What were you converted for? What were you forgiven for? What were you renewed for? What have you been preserved on earth for but to tell others the glad tidings of salvation and so to glorify God? Then go out with your hands full of the honey of Divine Love and hold it out to others! You must assuredly do good by this—you cannot possibly do harm. Samson did not invite his father and mother to see the lion when he was alive and roaring—he might have done some hurt in that case, by frightening them, or exposing them to injury. But he settled the lion business, himself, and when it came to honey, he knew that even his mother could not be troubled about that! Therefore he invited them both to share his gains. When you get into a soul-conflict, do not publish your distress to all your friends, but fight manfully in God’s name—and when you possess the joy

of Christ and the love of the Spirit and Grace is abundant in your soul—*then* tell the news to all around!

You cannot do any hurt by such a proceeding! Grace does good and no harm, all its days. Even if you blunder over it, you will do no mischief. The Gospel spilled on the ground is not lost! Good, and only good must come of making known salvation by Jesus Christ! It will be much better for you to tell of the sweets of godliness than it will be to make riddles about the doctrine of it. Samson, afterwards, made a riddle about his lion and the honey—and that riddle ended in fighting and bloodshed. We have known certain Christians spend their lives in making riddles about the honey and the lion, by asking tough doctrinal questions which even angels cannot answer. “Riddle me this,” they say, and then it has ended in a fight and brotherly love has been murdered in the fray.

It is much better to bring your hands full of honey to those who are needy and present it to them that they may eat of it, than it is to cavil and discuss. No hurt can come of telling what the Lord has done for your soul and it will keep you out of mischief. Therefore, I would stir up all Christian people to continue, from day to day, exhibiting to needy sinners the blessedness of Christ, that unbelievers may come and eat thereof. By doing this you will be blessing men far more than Samson could bless his parents, for our honey is honey unto eternity, our sweets are sweets that last to Heaven and are best enjoyed there! Call upon others to taste and see that the Lord is good and you shall have, therein, much joy! You shall increase your own pleasure by seeing the pleasure of the Lord prospering in your hands.

What bliss awaits useful Christians when they enter into Heaven, for they shall be met there by many who have gone before them whom they were the means of turning to Christ! I often inwardly sing when I perceive that I can scarcely go into any town or village but what somebody hunts me up to say to me, “Under God I owe my salvation to your sermons or to your books.” What will be the joys of Heaven when we shall meet those who were turned to righteousness by our holding forth the Word of Life! Our Heaven will be seven heavens as we see them there! If you have done nothing but exhibit in your lives the precious results of Grace, you will have done well. If you have presented to your companions Truths of God that were sweetness, itself, to you, and tried to say in broken accents, “Oh that you knew this peace!” it shall give you unspeakable joy to meet those in Glory who were attracted to Christ by such a simple means!

God make you all to be His witnesses in all the circles in which you move. Amen.

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

“He was very thirsty, and called on the LORD, and said, You have given this great deliverance into the hand of Your servant: and now shall I die of thirst, and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?”
Judges 15:18.

YOU will remember the occasion on which these words were spoken. Samson had been brought down from the top of the rock Etam, bound with cords by his own brothers, and given up as a captive into the hands of the Philistines. But no sooner did he reach the Philistines than the supernatural force of God's Spirit came upon him and he snapped the cords as though they had been but hemp and, seeing the jawbone of a newly-slaughtered donkey lying near at hand, he grasped that strange weapon and fell with all his might upon the hosts of the Philistines! And though, no doubt, they took to speedy flight, yet the one man, smiting them hip and thigh, left no less than a thousand persons dead upon the ground! And as he piled up the heaps of the slain, he looked with grim satisfaction upon the slaughter which he had worked, crying, “With the jawbone of a donkey, heaps upon heaps, with the jaw of a donkey have I slain a thousand men.” There was, perhaps, a little of vaunting and vain-glorying in his conduct, but in a moment, a sudden faintness came over him. He had been exerting himself most marvelously, straining every nerve and muscle, and now, being very thirsty, he looked round him for a stream of water, but there was none—and he felt as if, for lack of water, he would die and then the Philistines would rejoice over him! With that simple-minded faith which was so characteristic of Samson, who was nothing but a big child, he turned his eyes to his heavenly Father, and cried, “O Jehovah, You have given me this great deliverance, and now shall I die of thirst? After all that You have done for me, shall the uncircumcised rejoice over me because I die for lack of a drink of water?” Such confidence had he that God would interpose on his behalf.

Now, my drift is the comforting of God's saints, especially in coming to the Table of their Lord. I have thought there may be many of you who are feeling in an unhappy and a distressed frame of mind and that by referring you to what God has already done for you, I might lead you to see a lighter estimate upon your present trouble and enable you to argue that He who has worked great deliverances for you in the past will not allow you to lack in the future!

I. YOU HAVE ALREADY, MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS, EXPERIENCED GREAT DELIVERANCES.

Happy is it for you that you have not had the grim task of slaying a thousand men, but there are “heaps upon heaps” of another sort upon which you may look with quite as much satisfaction as Samson and, perhaps, with less mingled emotions than his when he gazed on the slaughtered Philistines.

See there, Beloved, the great heaps of *your sins*—all of them giants—and any one of them sufficient to drag you down to the lowest Hell! But they are all slain! There is not a single sin that speaks a word against you. “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” Another arm than yours has done it, but the victory is quite complete. Christ has returned with dyed garments from Bozrah. He has trodden the winepress of God’s wrath and I may almost say that the blood which stains His apparel is the blood of your sins which He has utterly destroyed forever. Look at their number. Take all the years of your life and make each year a heap. Divide them, if you will, into groups and classes—put them under the heads of the Ten Commandments and there they lie, in ten great heaps, but every one of them destroyed!

Think, too, of the heaps of your *doubts and fears*. Do you not remember when you thought God would never have mercy upon you? Let me remind you of the deep dungeon where there was no water when the iron entered into your soul. Some of us can never forget the time when we were under conviction of sin. Moses tied us up to the Halberts and took the ten-thronged whip of the Law of God and laid it upon our backs most terribly—and then seemed to wash us with brine as conscience reminded us of all the aggravations which had attended our sins! But though we feared we should have been in Hell. Though we thought that surely the pit would shut its mouth upon us, yet here we are living to praise God, as we do this day, and all our fears are gone! We rejoice in Christ Jesus. God “has not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.” “Heaps upon heaps” of fears have we had—bigger heaps than our sins—but there they lie, troops of doubters. There are their bones and their skulls, as Bunyan pictured them outside the town of Mansoul, but they are all dead, God having worked for us deliverance from them!

Another set of foes that God has slain includes *our temptations*. Some of us have been tempted from every quarter of the world, from every point of the compass. Sometimes it has been pride. At another time, despair. Sometimes it has been too much of the world and at other times it has been too little. Sometimes we have been too strong and puffed up. At other times we have been too weak and cast down. There has sometimes been a lack of faith and at other times our fervency may have been inflamed by the flesh. The best of men are shot at with the devil’s worst darts. You have been tempted by Satan. You have been tempted by the world. Your nearest and dearest friends have, perhaps, been your worst tempters, for “a man’s foes shall be they of his own household.” There has not been a bush behind which an enemy has not lurked. There has been no inch of the road to Canaan which has not been overgrown with thorns!

Now look back upon your temptations and where are they? Your soul has escaped like a bird out of the snare of the fowler and this night you can say, "They compassed me about like bees. Yes, like bees they compassed me about, but in the name of God have I destroyed them! I have passed safely where others have been ruined. I have walked along the walls of salvation when others have been lying at the foot, dashed in pieces by their presumption and their self-confidence—'heaps upon heaps' of my temptations have been slain and You, O God, have worked for me a great deliverance!"

So let me say, in the next place, has it been with *most of your sorrows*. You sons and daughters of tribulation have sometimes sat down and said, "All these things are against us." You have lost children, friends have died, business has departed, wealth has melted—almost every comfort has had a blight upon it. Like Job's messengers, evil tidings have followed one another and you have been brought very low. But, Beloved in Christ Jesus, you have been delivered! "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all." It has been so in your case. Whatever form the affliction has taken, Mercy has taken a suitable form to meet it. When the arrow flew, God was your Shield. When the darkness gathered, He was your Sun. When you had to fight, He was your Sword. When you needed to be supported, He was your Rod and your Staff—

***"Thus far we've proved that promise good
Which Jesus ratified with blood.
Still is He gracious, wise, and just
And still in Him let Israel trust."***

I will let no man or woman in this congregation take a place before me in obligation to the Most High! Brothers and Sisters, we are all debtors, but I count myself most of all a debtor! I boast that I have nothing to boast of! I would desire to lie the lowest and to take the meanest place, for I owe most of all to the Grace of God! When I look back to my parentage, when I see from where the Lord has brought me and what He has done for me and by me, I can only say, "You have given to Your servant this great deliverance." And I suppose if all the people of God could meet here, one by one, they would each claim that there is something peculiar in their every case. Each one would say, "There is something in the deliverance God has worked for me that demands of me a special song"—therefore let the whole of us together, who have known and "tasted that the Lord is gracious," look back upon the past with thankfulness and praise to the Lord!

II. YET FRESH TROUBLES WILL ATTACK YOU AND EXCITE YOUR ALARM.

Thus, after his fight with the Philistines, Samson was thirsty. This was a new kind of trouble to him—he was so thirsty that he was afraid that he would die! The difficulty was totally different from any that Samson had met before. Shake those Samsonian locks in which your strength lies, but they cannot distil a single drop of dew to moisten your mouth! The strongest man is as much amenable to thirst as the weakest—and

that arm which could slay a thousand Philistines, cannot open a fountain in the earth, or draw down a shower from the skies, or yield to thirst a single draught of water! He is in a new plight. Of course it seems to you to be a far simpler trial than he had known before, and so it was. Merely to get thirst relieved is not anything like so great a thing as to be delivered from a thousand Philistines! But I daresay, when the thirst was upon him and oppressed him, Samson felt that little present difficulty more weighty and severe than the great past difficulty out of which he had so recently been delivered!

Now I think, Beloved, there may be some of you who have been forgiven, saved, delivered and yet you do not feel happy tonight. "God has done great things for you, whereof you are glad," yet you cannot rejoice. The song of your thanksgiving is hushed. A little inconvenience in getting into your pews, a hasty word spoken by somebody outside the gate, the thought of a child at home—something which is very little and insignificant compared with all that God has worked for you will sometimes take away the present joy and comfort of the great—the unspeakably great gifts which you have received! You may be sure of your standing in Christ and yet some little trouble keeps buzzing about your ears and may be distracting you even now. Let me say two or three words to you.

It is very usual for God's people, when they have had some great deliverance, to have some little trouble that is too much for them. Samson slays a thousand Philistines and piles them up in heaps—and then he must die for need of a little water! Look at Jacob—he wrestles with God at Peniel and overcomes Omnipotence itself—and yet he goes limping on his thigh! Strange, is it not, that there must be a touching of the sinew whenever you and I win the day? It seems as if God must teach us our littleness, our *nothingness*, in order to keep us within bounds! Samson seems to have crowed right lustily when he said, "With the jaw of a donkey have I slain a thousand men." Ah, Samson, it is time your throat became hoarse when you can boast so loudly! The mighty man has to go down on his knees and cry, "O God, this thirst will overcome Your hero! Send me, I pray You, a draught of water." God has ways of touching His people so that their energy soon vanishes. "In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved...You did hide Your face and I was troubled." Now, dear child of God, if this is your case, I say it is not an unusual one. There is a reaction which generally follows any strong excitement. No doubt the excitement of having slain the Philistines would naturally be followed by depression of spirits in Samson. When David had mounted the throne of Judah, there came a reaction and he said, "I am this day weak, though anointed king." You must expect to feel weakest just when you are enjoying your greatest triumph!

I have already said that *the use of all this is to make a man feel his weakness.* I hope it makes you feel yours. What fools we are, Brothers and Sisters and yet, if someone else were to call us fools, we would not like it—though I do not doubt but that we are very well named, whoever may give us the title—for the whole of Heaven cannot make us rejoice if we have a pain in our head and all the harps of angels and our know-

ledge of our interest in “the Glory that shall be revealed,” cannot make us happy if some little thing happens to go contrary to our minds! Somebody trod on the corns of your pride as you were coming in here—and if an angel had preached to you, you would not have enjoyed it because of your mind being discomposed. Oh, simpletons that we are! The table is daintily spread and the manna of Heaven lies close to our hands, but because there is a little tear in the garment, or a small thorn in the finger, we sit down and cry as though the worst of ills had happened to us! Heaven is your own and yet you cry because your little room is scantily furnished! God is your Father and Christ your Brother—and yet you weep because a baby has been taken from you to the skies! Your sins all forgiven and yet you mourn because your clothes are poor! You are a child of God, an heir of Heaven—and yet you sorrow as though you would break your heart because a fool has called you ill names! Strange is it and foolish—but such is man—strangely foolish and only wise as God shall make him so!

III. If, my Brothers and Sisters, you are now feeling any present trouble pressing so sorely that it takes away from you all power to rejoice in your deliverance, I want you to remember that you ARE STILL SECURE! God will as certainly bring you out of this present little trouble as He has brought you out of all the great troubles in the past.

He will do this for two reasons, both of which are found in the text. The first is because *if He does not deliver you, your enemy will rejoice over you*. “What?” said Samson, “Shall I die of thirst, and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised? Faint, weary, thirsty, shall I become their victim?—I who was once their terror and made the damsels of Gath and of Askelon to weep instead of to dance? Shall I be slain?” And what do you say? But hush your gloomy forebodings! If you perish, the honor of Christ will be tarnished and the laughter of Hell will be excited. Bought with Jesus’ blood and yet in Hell—what merriment there would be in the Pit! Justified by the righteousness of Christ and yet lost—what a theme of scorn for fiends! Sanctified by the Spirit of God and yet damned—oh what yells of triumph would go up from the abode of Apollyon and his angels! What? A child of God forsaken of his Father? A jewel plucked from Jesus’ crown? A member rent from Jesus’ body? Never, never, never! God will never permit the power of darkness to triumph over the power of light. His great name He always has in respect and the ruin of the meanest Believer would be the cause of dishonor and disrespect to God—therefore you are safe! Oh it is such a blessed thing when you can run behind your God for shelter! Some youngster out in the street has been offending his fellow and is likely to receive a blow—but here comes his father—and he runs behind him and feels that there is no fear for him now! So let us shelter ourselves behind our God. Better than bronze walls, or castles, or high towers shall Jehovah be to us! And we may then look at all our enemies and say, as the Lord did to Sennacherib, “The virgin, the daughter of Zion, has despised you and laughed you to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem has shaken her head at you.” The uncircum-

cised shall not rejoice! The daughters of Philistia shall not triumph! We are our God's and He will keep His own until the day when He shall display them as His jewels.

That is one reason for confidence, but another reason is to be found in the fact that *God has already delivered you*. I asked you just now to walk over the battlefield of your life and observe the heaps of slaughtered sins, fears, cares, temptations and troubles. Do you think He would have done all that He has done for you if He had intended to leave you? The God who has so graciously delivered you up to now has not changed! He is still the same as He ever was. I have no doubt about the sun rising tomorrow morning—he always has done so since I have been able to see him. Why should I doubt my God, for He is more certain than the sun? The Nile ceases not to make Egypt laugh with plenty—men trust it. And why should not I trust my God who is a river full of water overflowing with loving kindness? If we never doubt God till we have cause to do so, distrust will be banished from our hearts forever! Of men, we speak as we find them—let us do the same with God. Was He ever a wilderness to you? When did He forsake you? When did your cries to Him return without an answer? Has He ever said, “I have blotted you out of My Book and I will remember you no more?” You have doubted Him wickedly and wantonly, but never have you had any cause for suspicion or mistrust! Now, since He is “the same yesterday, and today, and forever,” the God who delivered you out of the jaws of the lion and out of the paws of the bear will yet deliver you out of your present difficulty!

Do you think, dear Friend, *if He does not do so, He will lose all that He has done for you!* When I see a potter making a vessel, if he is using some delicate clay upon which he has spent much preliminary labor to bring it to its proper fineness—if I see him again, and again, and again molding the vessel—if I see, moreover, that the pattern is coming out—if I know that he has put it in the oven and that the colors are beginning to display themselves—I think were it common everyday ware I could understand his breaking up what he had done, because it would be but worth little. But since it is a piece of rich and rare porcelain upon which months of labor have been spent, I could not understand his saying, “I will not go on with it,” because he would lose so much that he had already spent! Look at some of those rich vessels by Bernard de Palissy which are worth their weight in gold, and you can hardly imagine Bernard stopping when he had almost finished and saying, “I have been six months on this, but I shall never take the pains to complete it.”

Now God has spent the blood of His own dear Son to save you! He has spent the power of the Holy Spirit to make you what He would have you be and He will never stay His mighty hand till His work is done! Has He said and shall He not do it? Has He begun and shall He not complete it? God will have no unfinished works! When Jehovah's banner is furled and His sword is sheathed, then shall He cry—

***“Tis done,
For the kingdoms of this world
Are the kingdoms of My Son.”***

In that day, every vessel that He prepared for Glory shall be in Glory, having been made perfectly meet for it. Do not, then, despair because of your present trouble!

Doubtless some of you who are saying that I am speaking as one who does not know the occasion or the bitterness of your peculiar distress. My dear Friends, I do not care to know it. It is enough for me to know that if God has worked for His servants so great a deliverance as He has done, the present difficulty is only like Samson's thirst and I am sure He will not let you die of faintness, nor suffer the daughter of the uncircumcised to triumph over you. "Ah," says one, "it is all very well talking, but mine is a very, very, very peculiar case!" Well, then, dear Brother, there is a special reason why God should deliver you because if Satan could overcome you in that peculiar case, he would then say that he could have overcome all the saints if he could have got them into the same corner! And he would loudly boast just as though the whole had perished! But I do not think that your case is so very peculiar—it is only the way in which *you* look at it. The road to sorrow has been well trodden—it is the regular sheep path to Heaven—and all the flock of God have had to pass along it. So I pray you, cheer up your heart with Samson's words and rest assured that God will deliver you soon!

And now, while I have been talking thus, the thought has again occurred to me that many people listen to me who are not Christians. My Friends, my great wonder is what some of you do without God! I can hardly understand how the rich man can have any comfort without God, for he must suffer from bereavement and bodily pain as well as the poor. Those silly butterflies of fashion who spend all their time in flitting about from flower to flower are so heartless and thoughtless that I can, to some extent, comprehend how they can do without God. With empty heads and silly hearts, men and women can make gods of anything! Their own pretty persons can be quite a sufficient object for their idiotic worship. But a man who stands right straight up, a sensible thinking man—a working-man, if you will—I do not mind whether he works with the dry heat of his brain or with the damp sweat of his face—I cannot understand how a man like this, with organs of thought and a reasoning soul, can go on without God! There must be pinches with some of you when you need a God. I would have been in a madhouse a dozen times if it had not been for my God. My feet would have altogether gone into the chambers of despair and I would have ended this life if it had not been for the faithful promises of the God who keeps and preserves His people! My life has not been a miserable, but a happy one! And yet I tell you that there have been innumerable times in it when I could not have done without my God. I do not understand what some of you who are always so pinched, do without God. There are many such here. You are poor. You are not often without sickness. You were born inheritors of maladies that make your life wretched. Your children are sickly about you. It is as much as you can do by Saturday night to make ends meet—you are frequently in debt—you are constantly in trouble. Oh, I cannot tell what you

do without God! Why, you have nothing here, and no hope of anything hereafter! Poor Souls, I could weep for you to think that you are without God!

And you will have to die soon. When the death-thirst is in your throat, what do you think you will do without God? To die in God's Presence is simply to let life blossom into something better than life—but to die without God must be horrible! You will not want your companions then! Strong drink will not pacify you then! Music will have no charms for you then! The love of a tender and gentle wife can yield you but sorry comfort then! You may lay your moneybags at your side, but they will not calm your palpitating heart then! You will hear the booming of the waves of the great sea of eternity! You will feel your feet slipping into the dreadful quicksand! You will clutch about you for help, but there will be none! Instead, invisible hands shall begin to pull you down and down through the dark sea! And you will descend to those darker depths where dread despair will be your everlasting heritage!

But there is hope yet! Whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved! Turn your eyes to Christ, poor Sinner, as He hangs there suffering in man's place, taking human guilt on Himself and being punished for it as though it were His own! Trust Him, Sinner—and resting in Jesus you shall be saved!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 37.

Verse 1. *Fret not yourself because of evildoers, neither be you envious against the workers of iniquity.* They often seem to have the best of it in this life, but if it really is so, we must never forget that there is another life after this in which there will be no reason for the righteous to be envious of evildoers and workers of iniquity!

2. *For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.* It is very easy to cut down the grass with a sharp scythe. And when Death takes down his scythe and cuts down men as the mower cuts down the grass of the field, they fall, rank upon rank, to “wither as the green herb.”

3. *Trust in the LORD, and do good.* These are two good things to go together—faith and good works! “Trust in the Lord, and do good.”

3. *So shall you dwell in the land.* Not merely on earth, but in the land of promise, the land which God has promised to His people. We dwell there by faith even now. Everywhere we find our God and wherever we find Him, it is Emmanuel's land to us.

3. *So and verily you shall be fed.* “Verily, verily,” is Christ's most solemn affirmation. [See Sermon #3053, Volume 53—JESUS CHRIST'S IDIOM—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] David here says, “verily,” because the statement he makes is absolutely true—“Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed.”

4. *Delight yourself also in the LORD; and He shall give you the desires of your heart.* [See Sermon #454, Volume 8—SUNSHINE IN THE HEART—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] When all your heart's desires are fixed upon Him because He is your heart's delight, then you may give a loose rein to those desires without any fear that they will run away! When your heart's desires are of this sort, you shall have them, be they what they may! It is not every man who shall have the desires of his heart given to him, but only that man whose heart's delight is in his God. There is much in connection with the person praying which will help to decide whether he shall or shall not have his desires granted. What is the condition of the heart out of which the desires come? When the heart is full of delight in the Lord, its desires shall be pleasing in His sight and shall be granted.

5. *Commit your way unto the LORD.* You who are just now in trouble. You who are walking in a rough way, commit that trouble and that way to the Lord! You who are in difficulty as to what is your right way, commit that difficulty to the Lord! Then, of course, you will not need to keep it yourself, nor to trouble your head about it. It does not need two to "care" when God is one of the two, so cast all your care upon Him, for He cares for you! His Grace is amply sufficient for every emergency that can possibly arise, so "commit your way unto the Lord." You have committed your soul to Him—then you can surely commit your business to Him, for that is a far inferior thing to your immortal soul!

5. *Trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass.* Your desire shall be brought to pass. Your safety shall be brought to pass. Your everlasting advantage shall be brought to pass. Your way shall be made passable to you—you shall find your way to Heaven.

6. *And He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noonday.* Are you misunderstood, misrepresented, slandered, laughed at? Leave it all with your God! Are you now walking in darkness? Trust in Him and He will bring you out into the Light of God in due time. We do not have morning light in the evening—morning light comes when the morning comes—and your deliverance shall come when it is the right time for you to have it.

7. *Rest in the LORD.* That is a blessed state to reach. Notice the various stages that the Psalmist has mentioned. There was first, "Trust and do." Then there was, "Delight and have." Then there was, "Commit, and have it brought to pass." And now there is, "Rest in the Lord."

7, 8. *And wait patiently for Him: fret not yourself because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger.* That comes of fretting and of being in a hurry—and not resting and being patient—for when the mind is restful, we can bear injuries. "Cease from anger."

8. *And forsake wrath: fret not yourself in any wise to do evil.* Very often our proverb is true, "The more haste, the less speed." And he who is in a hurry often does evil under the notion that it is the shortest way to get good—which it never is, for evil brings forth evil—and that perpetually.

9, 10. *For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yes, you shall diligently consider his place, and it shall not be.* The very place wherein he stood so high has utterly perished. How many instances there have been of men who have taken great pains to perpetuate their own names, yet their names are forgotten in the very place where they dwelt! God has a way of stamping out evil and putting an end to it—and when there has been great wickedness in the land, He knows how to make the very name of the wicked to rot.

11-13. *But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. The wicked plots against the just, and gnashes upon him with his teeth. The Lord shall laugh at him: for He sees that his day is coming.* “His day is coming,” and what a day it will be! When the day of the wicked shall come—the day of God’s righteous vengeance—woe unto him; woe unto him!

14-16. *The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as are of upright conversation. Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken. A little that a righteous man has is better than the riches of many wicked.* Not of one wicked man, only, but of “many wicked.” Fortunes heaped upon fortunes as the result of evil-doing cannot equal the portion of the poorest of God’s saints! A little with a blessing resting upon it is vastly better than much accompanied by a curse.

17. *For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the LORD upholds the righteous.* They would soon fall if they were not upheld—but they shall not fall, for God will make them to stand!

18. *The LORD knows the days of the upright.* He knows our dark days and our bright days—and all our days that are yet to be as well as all our days that have been! The Lord knows all about all our days.

18. *And their inheritance shall be forever.* What they have, if it is really worth having, they shall keep forever. What God has given them in Christ, because they are His children, shall never be taken away from them, nor shall they be taken away from it—“their inheritance shall be forever.” Men try to pass on their estates, but it is often an unsatisfactory system. Our estates are owned by God—upon the inheritance of every one of His people there is an inalienable ownership.

19. *They shall not be ashamed in the evil time.* If any shall say to them, “How is it that you are a child of God and yet you live in such an evil time?” they shall not be ashamed, but they will have an answer ready for them. They will tell them that many righteous men have lived in evil times, but they, themselves, have not been evil because of that. Where should bright lights be but in a dark place? Where should the salt be but where everything is going to corruption? “They shall not be ashamed in the evil time,” for their God will still be their God and though everyone else may fail them, their God will not fail them.

19-23. *And in the days of famine they shall be satisfied. But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall be consumed; into smoke shall they be consumed. The*

wicked borrows, and pays not again: but the righteous shows mercy, and gives. For such as are blessed of Him shall inherit the earth; and they that are cursed of Him shall be cut off. The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD. Oh, what comfort there is in this blessed assurance! Sometimes we know not which way to move, but we need not lack Divine guidance, for there is a special Providence which watches over every step of a gracious man. When we are right with God, everything is right with us. If our heart's desire is that we may walk in God's way, then God will take care that the way of His Providence shall be made plain to us and shall be full of love to us.

23. *And He delights in his way.* God delights to watch the way that His children walk, even though their steps may falter and totter, for they are often like little children learning to walk and usually they are very weak and feeble. Yet, if it is a good man who is walking as he should walk, God "delights in his way."

24. *Though he falls, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholds him with His hand.* He is like a little child who does not yet know how to stand alone, so his mother or nurse holds him up, or picks him up if he falls. God's arms are under His children's arms as He says by the mouth of the Prophet Hosea, "I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms." This is how He also teaches us to go—in wondrous condescension taking us by our arms!

25. *I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.* I have been young and though I am not yet old, I can truly say that I have never seen the righteous forsaken. I have, however, seen the seed of the righteous begging bread. David never saw that sad sight, but then he was a king, so he was not likely to see as many beggars as some of us do. Yet, still as a general rule it remains true that the God of the fathers does provide for their children. Of course, if the seed of the righteous become vicious and profligate, as they sometimes do, drunkenness will clothe them with rags and set them among the beggars of the street just as it would if they were the children of ungodly parents! And it may be mercy on the part of God that it should be so, as it was in the case of the prodigal, who never came to himself until he was in need—and his begging of bread was a blessing to him—for it brought him, at last, to beg to be received again into his father's household!

26-27. *He is always merciful, and lends; and his seed is blessed. Depart from evil.* Do not remain near it, do not even look at it, do not parley with it—run away from it! "Depart from evil."

27. *And do good.* For you must do something, either good or evil. If you became an idler, even though you had departed from evil, you would not have become what God would have you to be. Negatives must be backed up with positives! "Depart from evil, and do good."

27, 28. *And dwell forevermore. For the LORD loves judgment, and forsakes not His saints; they are preserved forever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.* Not, of course, if they themselves become right-

teous, for then they come under the Covenant of Grace and shall never be cut off.

29-37. *The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein forever. The mouth of the righteous speaks wisdom, and his tongue talks of judgment. The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide. The wicked watches the righteous, and seeks to slay him. The LORD will not leave him in his hands, nor condemn him when he is judged. Wait on the LORD, keep His way, and He shall exalt you to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, you shall see it. I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yes, I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace. He does not wither and vanish like a gourd of the night. He passes not away like that phantom bay tree which seemed so substantial, but really was not. His end is peace and “all is well that ends well,” so all is well with him—and blessed is that man’s life which came to such a blessed conclusion as this—“the end of that man is peace.”*

38, 39. *But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off. But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD. That is why they are not cut off like the wicked, because God’s salvation is in them. They would pass away, they would be but the mere dream and phantom that the prosperous wicked ones are, but God Himself is in them and, therefore, are they solid and substantial and their salvation is an everlasting salvation!*

39, 40 *He is their strength in the time of trouble. And the LORD shall help them and deliver them: He shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in Him. That is the main point—“they trust in Him.” One of the descriptions of Abraham is this, “Abraham believed God,” and therefore he had God for his shield and his exceeding great reward. Are you trusting in God, dear Friends? Are you living a life of faith? Then the walk of faith will be followed, in due time, by the triumph of faith! Blessed are all they that put their trust in the Lord, and blessed forever shall they be.*

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

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SAMSON CONQUERED

NO. 224

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, NOVEMBER 21, 1858,
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AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“And she said, the Philistines are upon you, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep and said, I will go out as at other times before and shake myself. And he knew not that the Lord was departed from him. But the Philistines took him and put out his eyes and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass. And he did grind in the prison house.”
Judges 16:20, 21.***

SAMSON is, in many respects, one of the most remarkable men whose history is recorded in the pages of inspiration. He enjoyed a singular privilege only accorded to one other person in the Old Testament. His birth was foretold to his parents by an angel. Isaac was promised to Abraham and Sarah by angels whom they entertained unaware. But save Isaac, Samson was the only one whose birth was foretold by an angelic messenger before the opening of the Gospel dispensation. Before his birth he was dedicated to God and set apart as a Nazarite. Now, a Nazarite was a person who was entirely consecrated to God and in token of his consecration he drank no wine—and allowed his hair to grow untouched by the razor.

Samson, you may therefore understand, was entirely consecrated to God and when any saw him, they would say, “That man is God’s man, a Nazarite, set apart.” God endowed Samson with supernatural strength, a strength which never could have been the result of mere bones and sinews. It was not the fashioning of Samson’s body that made him strong. It was not his arm, or his fist with which he smote the Philistines—it was a miracle that dwelt within him. It was a continued going forth of the omnipotence of God which made him mightier than thousands of his enemies. Samson appears very early to have discovered in himself this great strength, for “the Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times in the camp of Dan.” He judged Israel for thirty years and gloriously did he deliver them. What a noble being he must have been! Look at him, when he steps into the vineyard, for a moment. A lion that has been crouching there springs upon him, but he meets him unarmed, receives him upon his brawny arms and rends him like a kid.

Look at him afterwards, when his countrymen have bound him and taken him down from the top of the rock and delivered him up to the thousands of the Philistines. He has scarcely come near them, when, without a weapon, with his own foot, he begins to spurn them. And seeing there the jawbone of an ass, he takes that ignoble weapon and sweeps away the men that had helmets about their heads and were girded with

armor of brass. Nor did his vigor fail him in his later life, for he died in the very prime of his days. One of his greatest exploits was performed at this very season. He is entrapped in the city of Gaza. He remains there till midnight—so confident is he in his strength that he is in no hurry to depart and instead of assailing the guard and making them draw the bolts, he wrenches up the two posts and takes away the gate, bar and all and carries his mighty burden for miles to the top of a hill that is before Hebron.

Every way it must have been a great thing to see this man, especially if one had him for a friend. Had one been his enemy, the more distant the sight the better, for none could escape from him but those who fled. But to have him for a friend and to stand with him in the day of battle was to feel that you had an army in a single man and had in one frame that which would strike thousands with terror. Samson, however, though he had great physical strength, had but little mental force and even less spiritual power. His whole life is a scene of miracles and follies. He had but little grace and was easily overcome by temptation. He is enticed and led astray. He is often corrected—still he sins again.

At last he falls into the hands of Delilah. She is bribed with an enormous sum and she endeavors to get from him the secret of his strength. He foolishly toys with the danger and plays with his own destruction. At last goaded by her importunity, he lets out the secret which he had never confided to anyone. The secret of his strength lay in his locks. Not that his hair made him strong, but that his hair was the *symbol* of his consecration and was the pledge of God's favor to him. While his hair was untouched he was a consecrated man. As soon as that was cut away, he was no longer perfectly consecrated and then his strength departed from him. His hair is cut away. The locks that covered him once are taken from him and there he stands shaking, weak as other men.

Now the Philistines begin to oppress him and his eyes are burned out with a hot iron. How are the mighty fallen! How are the great ones taken in the net! Samson, the great hero of Israel, is seen with a shuffling gait walking towards Gaza. A shaming gait, I said, because he had just received blindness which was a new thing to him. He had not as yet learned to walk as well as those who, having been blind for years, at last learn to set their feet firmly upon the earth. With his feet bound together with brazen fetters—an unusual mode of binding a prisoner, but adopted in this case because Samson was supposed to be still so strong that any other kind of fetter would have been insufficient—you see him walking along in the midst of a small escort towards Gaza. And now he comes to the very city out of which he had walked in all his pride with the gates and bolts upon his shoulders. And the little children come out, the lower order of the people come round about him and point at him—"Samson, the great hero, has fallen! Let us make sport of him!"

What a spectacle! The hot sun is beating upon his bare head, which had once been protected by those luxuriant locks. Look at the escort who guard him, a mere handful of men, how they would have fled before him in his brighter days! But now a child might overcome him. They take him to a place where an ass is grinding at the mill and Samson must do the same ignoble work. Why, he must be the sport and jest of every passerby and of every fool who shall step in to see this great wonder—the destroyer of the Philistines made to toil at the mill! Weep over poor blind Samson. That he should have lost his eyes was terrible. That he should have lost his strength was worse. But that he should have lost the favor of God for awhile—that he should become the sport of God’s enemies—was the worst of all. Over this indeed we might weep.

Now, why have I narrated this story? Why should I direct your attention to Samson? For this reason. *Every child of God is a consecrated man.* His consecration is not typified by any outward symbol. We are not commanded to let our hair grow forever, nor to abstain from meats or drinks. The Christian is a consecrated man but his consecration is unseen by his fellows, except in the outward deeds which are the result thereof.

And now I want to speak to *you*, my dear Friends, as consecrated men—as Nazarites—and I think I shall find a lesson for you in the history of Samson. My first point shall be *the strength of the consecrated*, for they are strong men. Secondly, *the secret of their strength*. Thirdly, *the danger to which they are exposed*. And fourthly, *the disgrace which will come upon them if they fall into this danger*.

I. First, THE STRENGTH OF THE CONSECRATED MAN. Do you know that the strongest man in all the world is a consecrated man? Even though he may consecrate himself to a wrong object, yet if it is a thorough consecration, he will have strength—strength for evil, it may be, but still strength. In the old Roman wars with Pyrrhus you remember an ancient story of self-devotion. There was an oracle which said that victory would attend that army whose leader should give himself up to death. Decius, the Roman Consul, knowing this, rushed into the thickest of the battle, that his army might overcome by his dying. The prodigies of valor which he performed are proofs of the power of consecration. The Romans at that time seemed to be every man a hero, because every man was a consecrated man. They went to battle with this thought—“I will conquer or die. The name of Rome is written on my heart. For my country I am prepared to live, or to shed my blood.”

And no enemies could stand against them. If a Roman fell there were no wounds in his back, but all in his breast. His face even in cold death was like the face of a lion and when looked upon it was of terrible aspect. They were men consecrated to their country. They were ambitious to make the name of Rome the noblest word in human language. And consequently the Roman became a giant. And to this day let a man get a purpose within him—I care not what his purpose is but let his whole soul be

absorbed by it—and what will he not do? You that are “everything by turns and nothing long,” that have nothing to live for, soulless carcasses that walk this earth and waste its air, what can *you* do? Why nothing. But the man who knows what he is and has his mark, speeds to it “Like an arrow from a bow shot by a strong archer.”

Nothing can turn him aside from his design. How much more is this true if I limit the description to that which is peculiar to the Christian—consecration to *God!* Oh, what strength that man has who is dedicated to God! Is there such an one here? I know there is. I know that there are many who have consecrated themselves to the Lord God of Israel in the secret of their chamber—who can say in their hearts—

***“Tis done. The great transaction’s done.
I am my Lord’s and He is mine.
He drew me and I followed on,
Glad to obey the voice Divine.”***

Now the man that can say that and is thoroughly consecrated to God—be he who he may, or what he may—he is a strong man and will work marvels.

Need I tell you of the wonders that have been done by consecrated men? You have read the stories of olden times, when our religion was hunted like a partridge on the mountains. Did you ever hear how consecrated men and women endured unheard of pain and agonies? Have you not read how they were cast to the lions, how they were sawn in sunder, how they languished in prisons, or met with the swifter death of the sword? Have you not heard how they wandered about in sheep’s skins and goats’ skins, destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom the world was not worthy? Have you not heard how they defied tyrants to their face, how when they were threatened they dared most boldly to laugh at all the threats of the foe—how at the stake they clapped their hands in the fire and sang Psalms of triumph when men, worse than fiends, were jeering at their miseries?

How was this? What made women stronger than men and men stronger than angels? Why this—they were consecrated to God! They felt that every pain which rent their heart was giving glory to God, that all the pains they endured in their bodies were but the marks of the Lord Jesus, whereby they were proven to be wholly dedicated unto Him. Nor in this alone has the power of the consecrated ones been proven. Have you ever heard how the sanctified ones have done wonders? Read the stories of those who counted not their lives dear unto them, that they might honor their Lord and Master by preaching His Word, by proclaiming the Gospel in foreign lands. Have you not heard how men have left their kindred and their friends and all that life held dear—have crossed the stormy sea and have gone into the lands of the heathen, where men were devouring one another?

Have you not known how they have put their foot upon that country and have seen the ship that conveyed them there fading away in the dis-

tance and yet without a fear have dwelt among the wild savages of the woods, have walked into the midst of them and told them the simple story of the God that loved and died for man? You must know how those men have conquered, how those who seemed to be fiercer than lions have crouched before them, have listened to their words and have been converted by the majesty of the Gospel which they preached. What made these men heroes? What enabled them to rend themselves away from all their relatives and banish themselves into the land of the stranger? It was because they were consecrated, thoroughly consecrated to the Lord Jesus Christ. What is there in the world which the consecrated man cannot do? Tempt him—offer him gold and silver—carry him to the mountain top and show him all the kingdoms of the world and tell him he shall have all these if he will bow down and worship the god of this world. What says the consecrated man? “Get you behind me, Satan. I have more than all this which you do offer me, this world is mine and worlds to come. I despise the temptation. I will not bow before you.”

Let men threaten a consecrated man, what does he say? “I fear God and, therefore, I cannot fear you. If it is right in your sight to obey man rather than God, judge you. But, as for me, I will serve none but God.” You may, perhaps, have seen in your life a consecrated man. Is he a public character? What cannot he do? He preaches the Gospel and at once a thousand enemies assail him. They attack him on every side—some for this thing and some for that—his very virtues are distorted into vices and his slightest faults are magnified into the greatest crimes. He has scarcely a friend. The very ministers of the Gospel shun him. He is reckoned to be so strange that everyone must avoid him. What does he do? Within the chamber of his own heart he holds conference with his God and asks himself this question—am I right? Conscience gives the verdict—yes—and the Spirit bears witness with his spirit that conscience is impartial. “Then,” says he, “come fair, come foul, if I am right—neither to the right hand nor to the left will I turn.” Perhaps he feels in secret what he will not express in public. He feels the pang of desertion, obloquy and rebuke. He cries—

***“If on my face, for Your dear name,
Shame and reproach shall be,
I’ll hail reproach and welcome shame,
If You’ll remember me.”***

As for himself in public, none can tell that he cares for any of these things. He can say with Paul—“None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto me that I may win Christ and finish my course with joy.” What cannot a consecrated man do? I do believe if he had the whole world against him he would prove more than a match for them all. He would say—“Heaps upon heaps, with the jaw-bone of an ass, have I slain my thousand men.” I care not how violent may his foe be—nor how great may be the advantage which that foe may get on him—though the lion may have crouched for the spring and may be leaping upon him, yet

will he rend him as a kid, for he is more than a conqueror through Him that loved him. He is alone such, who is wholly consecrated unto the Lord Jesus Christ.

“But,” says someone, “can we be consecrated to Christ? I thought that was for ministers only.” Oh, no, my Brethren! All God’s children must be consecrated men. What are you? Are you engaged in business? If you are what you profess to be, your business must be consecrated to God. Perhaps you have no family whatever and you are engaged in trade and are saving some considerable sum a year. Let me tell you the example of a man thoroughly consecrated to God. There lives in Bristol, (name unknown), a man whose income is large. And what does he do with it? He labors in business continually that this income may come to him, but of it, every farthing every year is expended in the Lord’s cause except that which he requires for the necessities of life. He makes his necessities as few as possible, that he may have the more to give away.

He is God’s man in his business. I do not exhort you to do the same. You may be in a different position, but a man who has a family and is in business should be able to say—“Now, I make so much from my business. My family must be provided for—but I seek not to amass riches. I will make money for God and I will spend it in His cause. Did I not say, when I joined the Church—

**“All that I am and all I have,
Shall be forever yours.
Whatever my duty bids me give,
My cheerful hands resign”?**

And if I said it, I meant it. I do not understand some Christian people who sing that hymn and then pinch, screw and nip anything when it comes to God’s cause. If I sing that I mean it. I would not sing it unless I did. If I join the Church, I understand that I give myself and all that I have to that Church. I would not make a lying profession. I would not make an avowal of a consecration which I did not mean. If I have said, “I am Christ’s,” by His grace I will be Christ’s. Brethren, you in business may be as much consecrated to Christ as the minister in his pulpit. You may make your ordinary transactions in life a solemn service of God. Many a man has disgraced a cassock and many another has consecrated a smock frock. Many a man has defiled his pulpit cushions and many another has made a cobbler’s lap stone holiness unto the Lord. Happy the man who is consecrated unto the Lord. Wherever he is, he is a consecrated man and he shall do wonders.

It has often been remarked that in this age we are all little men. A hundred years ago, or more, if we had gone through the Churches, we might have readily found a number of ministers of great note. But now we are all little men, the driveling sons of nobodies—our names shall never be remembered, for we do nothing to deserve it. There is scarce a *man* alive now upon this earth. There are plenty to be found who *call* themselves men—but they are the husks of men, the life has gone from them—the

precious kernel seems to have departed. The littleness of Christians of this age results from the littleness of their consecration to Christ. The age of John Owen was the day of great preachers. But let me tell you that that was the age of great consecration. Those great preachers whose names we remember were men who counted nothing their own—they were driven out from their benefices because they could not conform to the Established Church and they gave up all they had willingly to the Lord.

They were hunted from place to place. The disgraceful five-mile act would not permit them to come within five miles of any market town. They wandered here and there to preach the Gospel to a few poor sheep, being fully given up to their Lord. Those were foul times. But they promised they would walk the road fair or foul and they did walk it knee deep in mud. And they would have walked it if it had been knee deep in blood, too. They became great men and if we were, as they were, wholly given up to God—if we could say of ourselves, “From the crown of my head to the sole of my foot, there is not a drop of blood that is not wholly God’s—all my time, all my talents, everything I have is God’s”—if we could say *that*, we should be strong like Samson, for the *consecrated must be strong*.

II. Now, in the second place, THE SECRET OF THEIR STRENGTH. What makes the consecrated man strong? Ah, Beloved, there is no strength in man of himself. Samson without his God was but a poor fool, indeed. The secret of Samson’s strength was this—as long as he was consecrated he should be strong. So long as he was thoroughly devoted to his God and had no object but to serve God, (and that was to be indicated by the growing of his hair), so long and no longer would God be with him to help him. And now you see, dear Friends, that if you have any strength to serve God, the secret of your strength lies in the same place. What strength have you but in God? Ah, I have heard some men talk as if the strength of free will, of human nature was sufficient to carry men to Heaven. Free will has carried many souls to Hell, but never a soul to Heaven yet. No strength of nature can suffice to serve the Lord aright. No man can say that Jesus is the Christ but by the Holy Spirit. No man can come to Christ except the Father that has sent Christ does draw him. If, then, the first act of Christian life is beyond all human strength, how much more are those higher steps far beyond any of us?

Do we not utter a certain truth when we say in the words of Scripture, “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves. But our sufficiency is of God”? I think everyone who has a really quickened soul will sooner or later be made to feel this. Yes, I question whether a man can be converted a day without finding out his own weakness. It is but a little space before the child finds that he can stand alone so long as God his Father takes him by the arms and teaches him to go, but that if his Father’s hand is taken away he has no power to stand, and down he falls at once. See Samson without his God—going out against a thousand men. Would they not laugh at him? And with scarcely time to express his

terror, he would flee, or be rent in pieces. Imagine him without his God, locked up in Gaza, the gates fast closed. He goes out into the streets to escape, but how can he clear a passage? He is caught like a wild bull in a net, He may go round and round the walls, but where shall be his deliverance? Without his God he is but as other men. The secret of his strength lies in his consecration and in the strength which is its result. Remember, then, the secret of your strength. Never think that you have any power of your own—rely wholly upon the God of Israel. And remember that the channel through which that strength must come to you must be your *entire consecration to God*.

III. In the third place, What is THE PECULIAR DANGER OF A CONSECRATED MAN? His danger is that his locks may be shorn, that is to say, that his consecration may be broken. As long as he is consecrated he is strong—break that—he is weak as water. Now there are a thousand razors with which the devil can shave off the locks of a consecrated man without his knowing it. Samson is sound asleep—so clever is the barber that he even lulls him to sleep as his fingers move across the scalp, the fool’s scalp, which he is making bare. The devil is more clever than even the skillful barber. He can cut the Believer’s locks while he scarcely knows it. Shall I tell you with what razors he can accomplish this work? Sometimes he takes the sharp razor of *pride* and when the Christian falls asleep and is not vigilant, he comes with it and begins to run his fingers upon the Christian’s locks and says, “What a fine fellow you are! What wonders you have done! Didn’t you rend that lion finely? Wasn’t it a great feat to smite those Philistines hip and thigh? Ah, you will be talked of as long as time endures for carrying those gates of Gaze away! You need not be afraid of anybody.”

And so on goes the razor, lock after lock falling off and Samson knows it not. He is just thinking within himself, “How brave I am! How great I am!” Thus works the razor of pride—cut, cut, cut away—and he wakes up to find himself bald and all his strength gone. Have you ever had that razor upon your head? I confess I have on mine. Have you ever, after you have been able to endure afflictions, heard a voice saying to you, “How patient you were!” After you have cast aside some temptation and have been able to keep to the unswerving course of integrity, has not Satan said to you, “that is a fine thing you have done. That was bravely done.” And all the while you little knew that it was the cunning hand of the Evil One taking away your locks with the sharp razor of pride. For mark, pride is a breach of our consecration. As soon as I begin to get proud of what I do, or what I am, what am I proud of?

Why, there is in that pride the act of taking away from God His glory. For I promised that God should have all the glory and is not that part of my consecration? And I am taking it to myself—I have broken my consecration—my locks are gone and I become weak. Mark this, Christian—God will never give you strength to glorify yourself. God will give you a crown,

but not to put on your own head. As sure as ever a Christian begins to write his feats and his triumphs upon his own escutcheon and take to himself the glory, God will lay him level with the dust.

Another razor He also uses is *self-sufficiency*. “Ah,” says the devil as he is shaving away your locks, “You have done a very great deal. You see they bound you with green straw and you snapped them in sunder, they merely smelt the fire and they burst. Then they took new ropes to bind you—ah, you overcame even them—for you snapped the ropes in sunder as if they had been a thread. Then they weaved the seven locks of your head, but you walked away with loom and web, too, beam and all. You can do anything, don’t be afraid. You have strength enough to do anything. You can accomplish any feat you set your will upon.” How softly the devil will say all that—how will he be rubbing the poll while the razor is moving softly along and the locks are dropping off and he is treading them in the dust. “You have done all this and you can do anything else.”

Every drop of grace distils from Heaven—O my Brethren—what have we that we have not received? Let us not imagine that we can create might wherewith to gird ourselves. “All my springs are in You.” The moment we begin to think that it is our own arm that has gotten us the victory, it will be all over with us—our locks of strength shall be taken away and the glory shall depart from us. So, you see, self-sufficiency, as well as pride may be the razor with which the enemy may shave away our strength.

There is yet another and a more palpable danger still. When a consecrated man begins to *change his purpose in life and live for himself*—that razor shaves clean, indeed. There is a minister. When he first began his ministry he could say, “God is my witness I have but one object—that I may free my garments from the blood of all of my hearers—that I may preach the Gospel faithfully and honor my Master.” In a little time, tempted by Satan, he changes his tone and talks like this, “I must keep my congregation up. If I preach hard doctrine, they won’t come. Did not one of the newspapers criticize me and did not some of my people go away from me because of it? I must mind what I say. I must keep this thing going. I must look out a little sharper and prune my speech down. I must adopt a little gentler style, or preach a new-fashioned doctrine. I must keep my popularity up. What is to become of me if I go down? People will say, ‘Up like a rocket, down like the stick’ and then shall all my enemies laugh.”

Ah, when once a man begins to care so much as a snap of the finger about the world, it is all over with him. If he can go to his pulpit and say, “I have got a message to deliver and whether they will hear or whether they will not hear, I will deliver it as God puts it into my mouth. I will not change the dot of an “i” or the cross of a “t” for the biggest man that lives, or to bring in the mightiest congregation that ever sat at a minister’s feet”—that man is mighty, by God’s grace. He does not let human judgments move him and he will move the world. But let him turn aside and

think about his congregation and how that shall be kept up—ah, Samson—how are your locks shorn? What can you do now? That false Delilah has destroyed you—your eyes are put out, your comfort is taken away and your future ministry shall be like the grinding of an ass around the continually revolving mill. You shall have no rest or peace ever afterwards.

Or let him turn aside another way. Suppose he should say, “I must get preferment, or wealth. I must look well to myself, must see my nest feathered—that must be the object of my life.” I am not now speaking of the ministry merely, but of all the consecrated. And as sure as ever we begin to make *self* the primary object of our existence our locks are shorn. “Now,” says the Lord, “I gave that man strength, but not to use it for himself. I put him into a high position, but not that he might clothe himself about with glory. I put him there that he might look to *My* cause, to *My* interests. And if he does not do that first, down he shall go.”

You remember Queen Esther—she is exalted from being a simple humble maiden, to become the wife of the great monarch—Ahasuerus. Well, Haman gets a decree against her nation, that it shall be destroyed. Poor Mordecai comes to Esther and says, “You must go in to the king and speak to him.” “Well,” says she, “But if I do I shall die.” “Ah,” says he, “If you altogether hold your peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place. But you and your father’s house shall be destroyed—and who knows whether you are come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” Esther was not made Queen Esther that she might make herself glorious, but that she might be in a position to save the Jews. And now if she prefers herself before her country then it is all over with her—Vashti’s fate shall be as nothing compared with her destruction.

And so, if you live in this world and God prospers you—perhaps you get into some position and you say, “Here I am. I will look out for myself. I have been serving the Church before, but now I will look to myself a little.” “Come, come,” says human nature, “you must look after your family,” (which means, you must look after yourself). Very well, do it Sir, as your main object and you are a ruined man. “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these shall be added to you.” If you keep your eye single, your whole body shall be full of light. Though you seemed as if you had shut out half the light by having that single eye, yet your body shall be full of light. But begin to have two masters and two objects to serve and you shall serve neither. You shall neither prosper for this world nor for that which is to come. Oh, Christian, above all things take care of your consecration. Ever feel that you are wholly given up to God and to God alone.

IV. And now, lastly, there is THE CHRISTIAN’S DISGRACE. His locks are cut off. I have seen him, young as I am. You with gray hairs upon your brows have seen him more often than I. I have seen him in the ministry. He spoke like an angel of God—many there were that regarded him and

did hang upon his lips. He seemed to be sound in doctrine and earnest in manner. I have seen him turn aside. It was but a little thing—some slight deviation from the ancient orthodoxy of his fathers, some slight violation of the Law of his Church. I have seen him, till he has given up doctrine after doctrine, until, at last, the very place wherein he preached has become a byword and a proverb. And the man is pointed out by the gray-headed sire to his child as a man who is to be looked upon with suspicion. Who, if he lectures, is to be heard with caution. And if he *preaches* is not to be listened to at all. Have you not seen him? What disgrace was there! What a fall! The man who came out in the camps of Dan and seemed to be moved by the Spirit of the Lord has become the slave of error. He has gone into the very camps of the enemy and there he is now, grinding in the mill for the Philistine, whom he ought to have been striking with his arm!

Now there are two ways of accounting for this. Such a man is either a thorough hypocrite or a fallen Believer. Sometimes people say of persons who turn aside to sin, “There now—look, there is a Christian fallen—a child of God fallen.” It is something like the vulgar, when at night they see a bright light in the sky and say, “Ah, there is a star fallen.” It was not a star. The stars are all right. Take a telescope. They are everyone there. The Great Bear has not lost a star out of its tail. And if you look, there is the belt of Orion all safe and the dagger has not lopped out of it. What is it, then? We do not know exactly what it is. Perhaps it may be a few gases up there for a little while that have burst and that is all. Or some wandering substance cast down—and quite time that it should be. But the stars are all right.

So, depend upon it, the children of God are always safe. Now these men who have turned aside and broken their consecration vow are pointed at as a disgrace to themselves and dishonor to the Church. And you who are members of Christ’s Church, you have seen men who stood in your ranks as firm soldiers of the Cross and you have noticed them go out from us, “because they were not of us.” Or like poor Samson, you have seen them go to their graves with the eyes of their comfort put out, with the feet of their usefulness bound with brazen fetters and with the strength of their arms entirely departed from them. Now, do any of you wish to be backsliders? Do you wish to betray the holy profession of your religion? My Brethren, is there one among you who this day makes a profession of love to Christ, who desires to be an apostate? Is there one of you who desires like Samson to have his eyes put out and to be made to grind in the mill?

Would you, like David, commit a great sin and go with broken bones to the grave? We say, “Lord, let my path be like the eagle’s flight. Let me fly upwards to the sun and never stop or never turn aside. Oh, give me grace that I may serve You, like Caleb, with a perfect heart and that from the beginning even to the end of my days my course may be as the shining light, which shines more and more unto the perfect day.” Yes, I know what is your desire. How, then, shall it be accomplished? Look well to

your consecration—see that it is sincere—see that you mean it and then look up to the Holy Spirit, after you have looked to your consecration and beg of Him to give you daily grace. For as day by day the manna fell, so must you receive *daily* food from on high.

And, remember, it is not by any grace you have in *you*, but by the grace that is in *Christ* and that must be given to you hour by hour, that you are to stand and having done all, to be crowned at last as a faithful one who has endured unto the end. I ask your prayers that I may be kept faithful to my Lord. And on the other hand I will offer *my* earnest prayers that *you* may serve Him while He lends you breath. So that when your voice is lost in death, you may throughout a never-ending immortality praise Him in louder and sweeter strains.

And as for you that have not given yourselves to God and are not consecrated to Him, I can only speak to you as to Philistines and warn you that the day shall come when Israel shall be avenged upon the Philistines. You may be one day assembled upon the roof of your pleasures, enjoying yourselves in health and strength. But there is a Samson—called Death—who shall pull down the pillars of your tabernacle and you must fall and be destroyed—and great shall be the ruin. May God give you grace that you may be consecrated to Christ—so that living or dying, you may rejoice in Him and may share with Him the glory of His Father.

END OF VOLUME 4

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SHAVED AND SHORN, BUT NOT BEYOND HOPE NO. 1939

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 9, 1887.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 26, 1886.**

*“However, the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaved.”
Judges 16:22.*

LET me introduce the text to you. Samson was set apart from his birth to be the champion of Israel—to break the power of the Philistines who lorded over God's people. Everything in his bringing up had reference to his peculiar calling as the hero of Israel, the hammer of Philistia. He was to be a Nazarite from his birth. Among other things which concerned the Nazarite, he never touched wine. No, nor grapes, nor husks of grapes, nor anything that came of the vine—which goes to show that the greatest physical strength is attainable without the use of wine or strong drink. Whatever else overcame Samson, he was never overcome with drunkenness, and yet he greatly sinned, which goes to show that total abstinence is not, of itself, enough to form a character. A Nazarite, in addition to abstinence from wine, also abstained from wearing the common appearance of men. He was not to have his hair at any time shaved or cut away—so that when Samson was grown up to manhood, he was covered with a shaggy mass of hair. He must have looked like the lion that he was. Those locks of his were the token of his consecration to God, the outward marks of his being set apart to be the servant of the God of Israel. Can you not see him with the terrible glory of his hair upon him?

Poor Samson was as weak morally as he was strong physically and he fell a prey, first to one evil woman and then to another. Perhaps the extraordinary strength of his physical frame placed him under stronger temptation than is common to man—at any rate, he was peculiarly constituted and seemed more like a wanton boy than a judge in Israel. Through this peculiar sin of his, the Philistines found opportunity to assail him. They tempted Delilah, whom he loved, to extract from him the secret of his great strength. He was so strong that he tore a lion as though it had been a kid. He was so strong that he carried away the gates of the city in which they had shut him up! He was so strong that he smote an army of Philistines, “hip and thigh, with a great slaughter.” The mercenary woman, upon whom he foolishly doted, extracted from him, by degrees, the secret of his strength. And while he lay asleep upon her lap, the Philistine lords caused a barber to cut away the locks of his head. He awoke

from his sleep shaved. Then he went out and thought to fight the Philistines as before—but to his surprise he found that his strength was gone. The locks of his dedication had been shorn—he was no longer the acknowledged servant of the Lord—and he was weak as other men. Then the Philistine lords took him captive, bored out his eyes—for such is the expression in the margin of our old Bibles—gouged out his eyes, bound him to the mill and made him work like a slave or an ass. In that pitiable plight our text finds him—but it comes with a key of deliverance to set free the captive!

My text runs thus—it is in the 22nd verse of the 16th Chapter of Judges—“*However, the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaved.*”

Poor Samson! I roughly sketched his story as with a crayon just now. I cannot stay to attempt a more accurate portrait. Poor Samson, the champion of Israel, now the scoff of his enemies! Poor Samson, the hero of so many fights, now at last conquered by his own foolishness! They have taken him; they have bound him; they have gouged out his eyes and there he stands—sightless—in the midst of his adversaries, who bind him to the mill and lash him as he grinds for them. To humiliate him, they put him to woman’s work, made hard so as to be the work of beasts. See what sin will do! See how the man who had fought God’s battles suffers great loss, great pain, great disfigurement, great dishonor and comes into a cruel and abhorred bondage through his sin! That shaved man made a slave is the picture of very many who once were the avowed servants of God and were valiant for the Truth of God. They have given up their secret, they have told the world that which none should know but themselves. They have lost the locks of their dedication and they are led captive by the devil at his will. They cannot see as they used to see. Darkness shuts out all joy. They do not work for God as they used to work, for they are slaving for *men*, for poor, passing, earthborn objects! They have come into an awful bondage and they have, at the same time, brought great dishonor and weakness upon the Church to which they belong. How the mighty are fallen!

Children of God, whatever God may do for you, take heed that you always remember that you can never gain anything by sin! It is loss, utter loss in every sense, to yield ourselves servants to sin! Again I cry, How the mighty are fallen! How has the champion become a slave at the mill! In the midst of our Churches how often are those who were excellent and useful brought to nothing and made to be a derision! How often do our boldest warriors bring the Cross of Christ into contempt by their sin! The Lord keep us from thus falling! May we rather die than dishonor our Lord!

I begin thus upon the mournful key because I want to speak of God’s great goodness to backsliders—and of how He restores them. But I want to warn them, at the very outset, that sin does not pay—that whatever may come of it through God’s mercy, yet it is an evil and a bitter thing to wander from the Lord! Though Samson’s hair grew again and his strength came back—and he died gloriously fighting against the Philistines—yet he never recovered his eyes, or his liberty, or his living power in Israel! Short and effective was his last stroke against the adversary, but it cost him his

life. He could not again rise to be the man he had been before. And though God did give him a great victory over the Philistine people, yet it was but as the flicker of an expiring candle—he was never again a lamp of hope to Israel. His usefulness was abated and even brought to an end through his folly. Whatever the Grace of God may do for us, it cannot make sin a right thing, or a safe thing, or a permissible thing! It is evil, only evil, and that continually. O children of God, be not enslaved by fleshly lusts! O Nazarites unto God, guard your locks lest they be cut away by sin while you are sleeping in the lap of pleasure! O servants of Jehovah, serve the Lord with heart and soul, by His Grace, even to the end—and keep yourselves unshorn by the world!

With that as a preface we come again to the text—“However, the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaved.”

First, let us see *what this growing of the hair pictures*; secondly, *what it specifically symbolizes* and thirdly, *what it prophesies*.

I. First, WHAT THIS GROWING OF THE HAIR PICTURES. I think that this pictures the gradual restoration of certain among us who have back-slidden from God. The hair was there upon Samson’s head, though it had been cut short. Though the hair was shaved off, yet the adversary could not take the *roots* away. It was a living thing and it would grow again. So is it with those who are the people of God. The devil can shave them very closely and clip off their beauty, their strength and their consecration—but a living *something* is still there that will grow again! If there has been a *real* regenerating work of God—the Holy Spirit upon their hearts—it will show itself again. Though the fruit and holy outcome of this living principle may, for a while, be removed—sadly removed to their bitter loss and damage—yet I say the living roots of Divine Grace are still in the soul and, before long, we shall have to say, “However, the hair of his head began to grow again.” Wells may, for a while, be stopped, but the living water will break out and come to the surface again. The tree may lose every leaf which once adorned it, but its substance is in it—and when the spring smiles again, it will, once more, begin to bud. Eternal life may sleep, may faint—but it cannot utterly die—otherwise, how were it *eternal* life? The hair, though closely shaved, will grow again.

I will show you this hair in the process of growing. A man was once a member of a Christian Church, godly and gracious. Satan has shaved him of all that was distinctive and religious. He has gone into the world; he has been put away by his brethren. His conduct was too inconsistent to allow of a continuance of his profession. But there had really been a change of heart—there had been a radical work of Grace in his soul and, therefore, after a while, he begins to be very miserable and uneasy. It is impossible for him to be happy among the Philistines who have captured him. His comrades, who flattered themselves that they had really got him, this time, cannot make him out. He has fits of melancholy. Occasionally he falls into a deep despondency and he utters strange words which they do not like to hear, partly denunciations of himself—and partly prophecies of evil to those around him. He is evidently terribly uneasy in the ways of sin. Now he gets alone and sighs—

“Where is the blessedness I knew

When first I saw the Lord?

There is a something in his heart which troubles him both night and day. His soul is saying, "I will go and return to my first husband, for then was it better with me than now." However, his hair begins to grow again. It has been shaved very cleverly, but the roots have not been extracted and you can see that he will soon be a hairy man again. He cannot rest in his sin—no true-born child of God ever can. Giant Slay-Good may pick up a pilgrim on the road when he is faint and weary, but he can never pick the bones of a true Believer! He will come out of the den of the giant somehow or other. What a pity that he should ever go into it!

Well, now notice that the man begins to drop in to hear a sermon. It is a long time since he was familiar with the house of prayer, but he finds himself here, tonight, after a long absence! He remembers when he used to be always here—and he almost waters the door with his tears as he thinks of the happy days which he used to enjoy in the midst of God's people—when he welcomed the light of the Sabbath morning and the way was never too long for him to come up to the place of his love! In those days the Word of the Lord was sweet to him. He has not been for some time, but somehow he felt, today, that he must come again. How welcome he is! How glad I am to see him, though he looks so rough and grisly, and half-shaved!

I have heard—I am not sure of it, but I think that it is very likely—that he has been reading his Bible again. That poor Book had been left to be covered with dust, but he has taken it down and he has looked at a Psalm that once used to charm his heart. And he has wept over the passage which once revealed Christ to him. He even groaned to think that he should have forgotten the voice of the Living God which used to speak to him through that holy Book. He read a sermon today, too. He has not often done *that*. He took a tract from someone in the street and he looked at it with eagerness! This, also, was a hopeful sign.

A little while ago, when he first forsook his Lord, he could blaspheme—he could say hard things against Christ and His Word—but he does not do so now. It would be impossible for him, now, to ridicule religion! He is too tender for that. He has a strong desire to hear, again, the message of Free Grace and dying love. He longs to listen once more to the ringing of those silver bells that once were music to his ears! I think it must be true that the Lord is bringing him back. Surely my test is being fulfilled—"However, the hair of his head began to grow again." The devil could shave away those flowing locks which once adorned him, but he could not cut out the roots which are deeper than he can reach. Do you not think that our shorn Samson may yet be himself again? Surely his hair has begun to grow anew and tonight I trust that it will grow very quickly while he is in this house of prayer hearing the glad tidings of free forgiveness!

I am most of all encouraged with the fact that he begins to feel in his soul an anguish and a bitterness—and an aching and a craving and a longing! I have great hopes of him, now that his old feelings are returning. I think I hear him say, "I cannot live like this." He sighs, "I have tried the way of transgressors and it is hard. I have tested the life of sinful pleasure and there is nothing in it. The cups of the world are all froth! The devil's

bread is all bran. It chokes me. It poisons me. I cannot endure it any longer. Oh, that I could get back to God! Oh, that I could be truly converted, if I never was converted! If I am, indeed, a child of God, oh, that He would once more manifest His pardoning love to me and show me my sins are forgiven, for I cannot rest as I am!" O my dear Brother, I was so sorry when you went astray—your backsliding has caused me many a pang of heart—but I begin to rejoice now as I hear you talk in that way, for I think that the text is coming true—"However, the hair of his head began to grow again"!

And now, stop till our uneasy friend gets home tonight. No, perhaps it will come to pass before he quits this assembly. He begins to pray, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" He does not say that aloud, for he would be afraid that somebody would hear him. He is almost amazed that he is not put out of the place of worship, considering what kind of sinner he has been. He has sneaked in tonight, but he *is* in and he trembles to find it is so—he scarcely dares to lift his eye upward. He hardly dares to hope! His desire is to get back to God and to be forgiven—and so, with trembling hope and quivering fear, he has begun to pray. You notice that Samson began to pray when his hair began to grow. And when they took him into that temple where they wanted him to make sport for them, he breathed an earnest prayer to God that he might be strengthened but that once to do service to his people and his God. How earnestly do I invite you that have gone away from God and His ways to pray tonight that the Lord will return to you in mercy, fill you to the full once more with His Holy Spirit and make the bones which he has broken rejoice! If you begin to pray, I shall begin to praise! When you plead with tears, I shall begin to bless the Lord with exultation! For you it is coming true—"However, the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaved."

And if that prayer should go still farther and you should say, "I will break off every connection that holds me to the paths of sin," this would be better, still! If you were to cry, "I know what drew me aside. I will have no more to do with the evil which destroyed me," it would be a hopeful sign, indeed! Oh, if tonight there shall be a severance of yourself from the swine and from all the husks that they eat because you are determined to go to your Father, it shall be well with you! From our Church fellowship we sometimes find one drawn aside by one motive and another by another—alas, the ways downward are as plenteous as the gates of death! How many are tempted with unholy loves! How many are seduced by the fatal cup! Ah, how many go aside through false doctrine, heresy and the delusions of the day! How many are foolishly tempted by their own prosperity! They grow rich and cannot afford to worship where they once did!

On the other hand, how many are led aside by their poverty! They do not think that their clothes are good enough to come in—a piece of pride from which I pray that we may be delivered! Or, because they have come down in the world and cannot spend as once they did, they forsake their Brothers and Sisters—and their Lord. For different reasons men go aside from the Truth of God and holiness. But it is a happy circumstance when they cry, "If I have been led away from Christ by anything sinful, I will give it up. I will part with my eye, or my arm, or my foot so that I may enter

into the Kingdom of God, for it were better for me to enter into life blind, or crippled, or maimed, than that keeping these dear things I should be cast into Hell fire." When the Lord of Grace leads men to this resolve, we see the text fulfilled again—"However, the hair of his head began to grow again."

When the backslider comes to that pass, you will soon see other signs. The man who went so far astray now seeks the Lord afresh and begins again to run in His ways. When a Nazarite lost his consecration, all the years of his consecration before did not count—he had to begin again. So some of you must begin again. Beginning again is sweet! Beginning again is safe! Even though I trust that I have not wandered from God, either in act or in heart, yet I *often* begin again. I delight to renew the love of my espousals and rehearse the vows of my youth before the Lord my God! If the devil says to me, "Your religion is a pretence; your experience is a mistake," I do not attempt to argue with him upon those lines, but I reply, "I will not cavil about the past, but I will begin again!" I am a sinner. I know that and the devil himself has not the impudence to tell me that I am not! Then, Jesus Christ died for sinners and, therefore, I return to the sinners' Savior and trust Him even as if I had never trusted Him before! This I find to be the direct road to peace. To breathe again one's native air is a prescription most helpful to those who would regain their health and strength! Can you not return again to the starting point, you that have wandered? If so, we shall all thank God for you and look upon you as a Samson whose hair begins to grow again after he has been shaved.

If the matter goes on rightly, I know what will happen—the forlorn backslider will begin to entertain a feeble hope. "Oh," he says, "I trust that I may be restored! I shall be a miracle of Divine Grace if I am—and I think that I shall be." Further on he even cries, "I hope that I am restored and once more put among the children." He gets a bit of bread from the children's table and though he feels that he is not much better than a dog, yet he makes bold to enjoy it. "The dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table"—and this poor man is aware of that gracious fact and dares to take full advantage of it! Sometimes, while he is eating a crumb of promise, it tastes so sweet that he whispers to himself, "I do not think that I am a dog, after all. I think that I must be a *child*, for I have the taste that a child has. This is children's meat and I do so enjoy it that, perhaps, I am, after all, a child of God!"

Ah, and let me tell you that sometimes, when it is sunshiny weather, this poor seeker feels greatly encouraged and cheered! Though he will go limping to Heaven by reason of his past sin, yet, on bright days, he half forgets his lameness! He has played the prodigal and almost doubted his sonship, but with his face towards the Father's house, he now cries, "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon me, that I should be called a child of God!" In his happiest times he feeds ready to burst out with rapture because he enjoys a sense of Divine Love. He even makes bold to declare—"Yes, I am forgiven! Jesus smiles and still loves me!" When he is quite alone and nobody can hear it, he even ventures to speak of himself as, after all, one of those that the Father has loved with an everlasting love; that Christ has redeemed with precious blood; that the Spirit

has renewed and that the Lord will never cast away. What a pleasure to see his faith thus coming back to him! “However, the hair of his head began to grow again.”

We shall have him back, again, and we shall see him and know him, again, to be the same Samson that once we knew in his first days—before he had played the fool and brought himself into bondage! Soon we shall say, “Come in, and welcome, dear Brother; for the Lord has recovered you from the disfigurement which your sin brought upon you! You are again a Nazarite and your head and beard are covered with the tokens of your dedication. Come and take your place among those who are consecrated to the Lord.” How much I desire that it may be so with all who formerly turned away from the right path, but are now casting a longing glance towards it!

I think that is the picture which our text paints for us.

II. Now I am going to turn a little way round, still keeping the shorn champion well before us. In the second place, we have to see in our text **WHAT IT SPECIFICALLY SYMBOLIZES**, that is to say, this text is a distinct type of some one thing. You see that Samson’s strength lay in his consecration. His hair was the token of his dedication to God. When he lost his locks, he did, as it were, lose his consecration—and when he lost his consecration, he lost his strength. On the other hand, the only way by which he could *regain* his strength was to reestablish his consecration—and of this the growing, again, of his hair was the type and token.

Well, now, I know some *Churches* which performed a great work a 100 years ago, or 50 years ago, or less. Their former days were heroic. Their palmy times were beautified with great prosperity. These Churches knew how to suffer and to serve; they were faithful to the Truth of God and earnest in holy labor—and the Lord made them to be exceedingly useful. But now they have grown respectable and useless. They do nothing outrageous now—the question is—Are they doing *anything*? Their minister is an extremely learned man and as polished as a looking-glass. Of course he never addresses himself to the vulgar, neither does he oppose the views of his cultured hearers. The church, itself, is highly respectable—no one ever questions its high respectability, or speaks of it without due deference to its prominent position. Yet it has ceased to be a power for good. It has no influence over the mass of sinners around it.

Of course its usefulness is a secondary consideration, for it must not be forgotten that it has a superior ministry and a superior reputation! Its deacons are superior and so are most of the members! Besides, they have a celebrated choir and a most delightful organ! A great deal of money has been spent for that organ—and if that will not save souls and glorify God, what will? What are we to do with our respectability if we do not proclaim it by buying the most expensive organ in the market? But do not forget the choir. I think they wear surplices, but whether they do or not, the singing is fine, the building is of superior architecture, the pulpit is unique and the whole thing is done in a model manner! It is true that nobody is saved. There are no additions to the church—they have not used the baptistery for a long time—but they are wonderfully respectable! What more would you have?

In the opinion of some persons, Samson looked much improved when his matted hair was gone. He was more presentable; more fit for good society. And so in the case of churches, the notion is that they are all the better for getting rid of their peculiarities. You who are in the secret know better and you will follow me while I sorrowfully seek a remedy for the unhappy weakness which has fallen upon many communities which once were strong in the Lord. How is this church, all shaved and shorn, this poor, enslaved and miserable concern, to be brought back to its old state? How is this Samson, that once was strong, to get its strength back? Why, only by letting its hair grow again! It must be consecrated to God again! This church must go back to the old Gospel—it must say once more, “God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” It must again become desirous for the conversion of men. Prayer must again become the delight of the whole church and its trust must be in the Spirit of the Lord! The Glory of God must take possession of the church instead of its desire to be fashionable and respectable—and when its locks grow again, its strength will come back. When it is consecrated to God, it will resume its former force, bear its testimony as in better days and once again shake the world with its power!

Now the same truth applies to every *preacher*. There are some preachers who are splendid men and yet they are practical failures. You see in them wide knowledge, eloquent language and yet nothing. They can speak so properly that a senate might sit with admiration at their feet—but when they have done, nobody is pricked in the heart, nobody is convinced of sin—nobody is led to behold the beauties of Christ. Yet in their youth these men were soul-winners and were looked upon as champions for Christ! O Samson, how are we to make you strong again? That preacher must begin again to serve God with all his heart! He must give up the idea of being a great man, or a learned man, or an eloquent man. He must give up the idea of charming the *elite* and bringing together the fashionable—he must give himself up to glorify God by the winning of souls!

When his hair grows again in that respect, we shall see what Samson can do. He will yet lay hold on the pillars of the Philistine temple and bring them down about the heads of the lords. Give me a man perfectly consecrated and I do not care much what he is. He may be rough, unpolished and even illiterate—but if he is *consecrated*, the people will feel his power! He may be educated so that he may understand all knowledge and he may speak as eloquently as Cicero—but if he is a consecrated man, his power will be none the less, but perhaps all the greater, because of his education. But this one thing is essential—there *must* be consecration to God and downright earnestness in consequence, or else he will be a shaved Samson. May God give full consecration to each one of us who stand before the people to speak in His name, for in that consecration lies the power of the Holy Spirit to bless us! He cannot and will not bless unconsecrated men! If we do not live to God’s Glory, God will not use us.

The same is true of every Christian *worker*. I have seen this demonstrated over and over again in daily life. I have seen a Christian woman most useful in a class, bringing to the Savior many of the girls whom she has taught, but all of a sudden a change has come—there have been no

conversions and for years the class has dwindled away and nothing has come of it. If enquiry were to be made, it would be found that the consecration of the teacher had declined. She no longer spoke with tearful eyes and earnest heart, seeking to *love* those girls to Christ. And because her consecration was gone, her strength was gone. It is just the same whether you preach in the street, or distribute tracts, or whatever you do—if you are wholly consecrated to God—you will be strong. I do not say that you will, by sincere devotion, alone, gain all the talents and all the mental forces you might desire, but, believe me, force does not lie in these—these are like sword and spear, but the strength with which they are to be wielded lies elsewhere. You do not absolutely require great abilities, but you must have perfect consecration. Be thankful if you have javelin and shield, but go on without them if you have not been armed with them, for, to a devoted man even a castaway bone will be sufficient weapon! Samson did not wait till he found a weapon worthy of his heroic hands—he used such instruments as he found on the spot. It is in *consecration* that your *strength* will lie. Let but the arrow be winged by a mighty pull of the bow and it will go straight forward in proportion to the force that has impelled it. Let but *God* fit you to *His* bow—and send you forward with Divine energy— what more do you need? The impulse that comes from on high is your strength—and that impulse is found in your consecration to your Lord!

Perhaps I am addressing some Christian person who is not altogether a worker, but partly *a sufferer*. He is only a private Christian, bearing up as he may under the trials of life. You have grown rather dull of late, dear Friend. You do not enjoy things as you once did. You have not the vivacity and the enjoyment which you once had in the things of God. See to it— has there not been a razor at work upon you somewhere? Oh, yes, I knew a Brother who, when he had a little money, rejoiced to have it because he gave abundantly to the cause of God! I believe that he is worth a hundred times as much as he was, then, and he gives a *hundredth* part of what he used to do when he was poorer! In proportion as his pocket has grown golden, his heart has grown bronzy. He has gone down in himself in proportion as he has gone up in his property—and now he does not enjoy things as he used to. He is a poor creature to what he once was! Even in his own esteem he is not the happy man he once was! How much I wish that this good man's hair would grow so that he would again be living for his Lord, whom I trust he still loves!

I know Christian people who used to spend an hour a day in prayer. The hour has dwindled into five minutes. They used to be constant at week-night services. They very seldom gladden us with their presence, now, and they are not as happy as they once were. I can read this riddle. If a man were to reduce his meals to eating once a week, we could not guarantee his health. I would not guarantee that if a man never ate except on Sundays, he would grow strong. So I do not think that people who neglect the means of Grace and give up their consecration can expect to be lively, happy, or vigorous. When the razor gets to work and the hair of conscious and resolute devotion to God begins to fall on the floor, lock after lock, the strength is departing—and only as that hair begins to grow,

again, and spiritual consecration returns, can these people expect to be useful, influential and strong in the Lord!

I must say no more on this point, but it is most important, and I pray the Holy Spirit will stir up your pure minds concerning it.

III. I will close with this further consideration. We are now to remember WHAT IT PROPHESED when Samson's hair began to grow again. I wonder why these Philistines did not take care to keep his hair from growing to any length? If cutting his hair once had proved so effective, I wonder why they did not send in the barber every morning to make sure that not a hair grew upon his scalp or chin? But *wicked* men are not in all matters *wise* men. Indeed, they so conspicuously fail in one point or another that Scripture calls them fools! The devil himself is a fool after all. He thinks that he is wonderfully cunning, but there is always a place where he breaks down. These servants of Satan, these boastful Philistines said confidently, "We have done for him now, once and for all. We have put out his eyes and what can a blind man do?" They do not go on cutting off his hair because they fancy that, once lost, the good man's strength is lost forever. Perhaps they said, "Now we have lashed him to the mill—the stronger he gets, the more he can grind—therefore let his hair grow and so he will be the more useful to us."

Great was the foolishness of their wisdom! They were fostering their own destruction. Satan, also, is very cunning in getting hold of backsliders, but he generally manages to let them slip by his over-confidence in their willfulness. Many a man have I seen come back to the dear Savior on account of the oppression which he has endured from his old master, the Prince of Darkness! If he had been treated well, he might never have returned to Christ—but it is not possible for the citizens of the far country to treat prodigals well—sooner or later they starve them and oppress them so that they run back home.

When Samson's hair began to grow, what did it prophesy? Well, first, it prophesied *hope for Samson*. I will be bound to say that he put his hands to his head and felt that it was getting bristly. And then he put his hands to his beard and found it rough. Yes, yes, yes, it was coming and he thought within himself, "It will be all right soon. I shall not get my eyes back. *They* will not grow again. I am an awful loser by my sin, but I shall get my strength back again, for my hair is growing. I shall yet be able to strike a blow for my people and for my God." So round the mill he went, grinding away, grinding away, but every now and then putting his hands to his head and thinking, "My hair is growing! Oh, it is growing again! My strength is returning to me." The mill went round merrily to the tune of hope, for he felt that he would get his old strength back. When they loaded it and tightened it to make the work heavier, yet his hair was growing and so he found the burden lighter than it had been before—and his heart began to dance within him in prospect of being his former self again!

Now, if any of you have signs of God's restoring Grace in your hearts and you are coming back to your God and Savior, be glad, be thankful! Do not hesitate to let your renewed devotion to God be seen by those around you. Come along, Brother, come along—your Brethren wait to receive you! Come along, my wandering Sister, come along—all the people of God will

welcome you! If the Grace of God is moving you at all, be hopeful and quicken your steps and come to Jesus! Come to Him just now even as you came at first. Yes, and if you never did come before, come now and throw yourselves at the foot of the Cross and look up to those five precious wounds! Look and live for there is life in a *look* at the Crucified One! There is life at this moment even for the chief of sinners!

What did this prophesy? Joy for Samson, but, also, *hope for Israel*. Oh, if any of the Israelites did get in to see him in prison, how they must have been cheered by the sight of his returning hair! Some ancient Israelite would say to his brother, "I have been to see poor Samson. You remember him. We had to put him out of the Church, you know. Sad case. I have been to see him." "How did he look?" "Well," he would say, "there was much to grieve me, but somewhat, also, to comfort me. He does not look as he did on the day when the Philistines shaved him. He looks quite hairy again." "Oh!" the other would say, "then he will get strong again—and when he is strong, he will use his mighty arms against the oppressors of his people. I know he will fight for his country again. When he gets strong again, he will lift that brawny arm of his that smote the Philistines and he will let them know that he is yet an Israelite. I know he will, for his heart will return to the love of God and His chosen. Philistia shall not always triumph over us. There is hope for us."

So, my dear Brothers and Sisters, when we see in you some little signs of Grace and you are coming back, you do not know how cheerily we talk to one another! Why, at the Elders' Meeting, one of them said, "Our poor brother Jones was at the Tabernacle the other night. You remember him." "Yes, we do remember him, indeed." "Well he was listening to our pastor; I was so pleased to see him." Another Brother also said, "I am glad to tell you that Mrs. So-and-So, the sister that went so sadly astray, was outside the chapel—and when I pressed her to come in, she wept and said she wished she had never gone away. There is a good work going on there." We rejoice together and we say, "Thank God, they are coming back!" Oh, you do not know the joy that you backsliders will give to the hearts of God's people if you do but return! There is joy not only with the Great Shepherd, but with His friends and His neighbors when the lost sheep is restored to the fold. Do you not know that the Chief Shepherd calls His Brethren together and says, "Rejoice with Me, for I have found My sheep which was lost"?

Lastly, what did it prophesy? Well, it prophesied *mischief for the Philistines*. They did not know it, but if they could have read the writing in Samson's heart, they would have understood that he meant to shave their nation quite as closely as they had shaved him! There was a storm brewing for Philistia. He that tore the lion as though it had been a kid was getting back his strength! He that seized the jawbone of an ass and said, "Heaps upon heaps, with the jawbone of an ass have I slain a thousand men," will soon be scattering death among the oppressors of his people! Woe to you, lords of Philistia! Woe to you, princes of Gaza!

When a sinner who has gone astray is restored again, it means mischief to the kingdom of Satan. Oh, how he will serve his God! How he will try to bring back his fellow sinners! Having had much forgiven, this man will

love much and will serve Jesus much! He will be one of your earnest Christian men, depend upon it! He will be much in prayer! He will be careful in his walk! He will be holy in his speech! He will contend earnestly for the Doctrines of Grace! He will be a leader among the host of God, even as he had been a ringleader in sin! He will invade the dark places and lead the chief of sinners captive to the Cross! Woe to you, Philistia, when Samson's hair grows again! Woe to the hosts of evil when the backslider is restored!

There, I have put it all before you. I have tried to put the matter interestingly, but all the while my heart has been yearning over you that have gone aside. I am pining for the restoration of those who have turned like the dog to his vomit and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. I long for your restoration, or your true conversion. I want to see a different nature in you, that you may neither be dogs nor swine, but may become the real children of our God and Father! And then you will not return to your former ways. If you have defiled yourselves, may you at once be washed! If you have wandered, may you at once be restored to Jesus and His Church, to the praise and the glory of His Divine Grace wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved! Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Hosea 11 and 14.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—605, 620, 607.**

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON.

BELOVED FRIENDS—*A Happy New Year to you all*, in the best possible sense. In answer to many prayers I am raised up and I am looking forward hopefully to a happy return to my pulpit. True, I am not strong, and may never be long free from my infirmity, but yet I hope to do good service and, at least, to “hold the fort.” For this I again beg the prayers of many friends—and once more I would say—if these sermons are of any service to you, please spread them by introducing them to fresh friends. Pardon me for repeating this, for I am anxious that I may do all the good I can while I am spared to publish these discourses. To my affectionate and sympathetic congregation I desire my hearty love in Christ Jesus. I hope to see them all on Sunday, January 23rd.

Yours to serve, for Christ's sake,
Mentone, New Year's Day, 1887.

C. H. SPURGEON

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OUR CHAMPION NO. 3009

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 11, 1906.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
IN THE YEAR 1861.**

***“And Samson lay till midnight, and arose at midnight, and took the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts, and went away with them, bar and all, and put them upon his shoulders, and carried them up to the top of the hill that faces Hebron.”
Judges 16:3.***

POOR Samson! We cannot say much about him as an example to Believers. We must hold him up in two lights—as a beacon and as a prodigy. He is a beacon to us all, for he shows us that no strength of body can suffice to deliver from weakness of mind. Here was a man whom no fellow man could overcome, but he lost his eyes through a woman—a man mighty enough to tear a lion like a kid, yet, in due time, though himself stronger than a lion, he was bound with fetters of brass. When I think of the infatuation of which Samson was the subject and remember that we are men of like passions with him, I can only, for myself, put up the prayer, “Lord, hold You me up, and I shall be safe,” and urge you to do likewise.

And Samson is also a prodigy. He is more a wonder as a Believer than he is even as a man. It is marvelous that a man could smite thousands of Philistines with no better weapon than the jawbone of a newly-killed ass, but it is still more marvelous that Samson should be a saint, ranked among those illustrious ones saved by faith, though such a sinner! The Apostle Paul has put him among the worthies in the 11th Chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews and Paul wrote by Inspiration—therefore there can be no mistake about the fact that Samson was saved. Indeed, when I see his childlike faith, and note the way in which he dashed against the Philistines and smote them, hip and thigh, with a great slaughter—the way in which he cast aside all reckonings and probabilities and, in simple confidence in his God achieved the most tremendous feats of valor—when I see this, I cannot but wonder and admire!

The Old Testament biographies were never written for our imitation, but they were written for our instruction. Upon this one matter, what a volume of force there is in such lessons! “See,” says God, “what faith can do? Here is a man, full of infirmities, a sorry fool, yet, through his childlike faith, he lives. ‘The just shall live by faith.’ He has many sad

flaws and failings, but his heart is right towards his God. He does trust in the Lord and he does give himself up as a man consecrated to his Lord's service and, therefore, he is saved." I look upon Samson's case as a great wonder, put in Scripture for the encouragement of great sinners. If such a man as Samson, nevertheless, prevails by faith to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, so shall you and I! Though our characters may have been disfigured by many vices and we may have committed a multitude of sins, if we can but trust Christ to save us, He will purge us with hyssop and we shall be clean! He will wash us and we shall be whiter than snow—and in our death we shall fall asleep in the arms of Sovereign Mercy to wake up in the likeness of Christ!

But now I am going to leave Samson alone, except as he may furnish us with a picture of our Lord Jesus Christ. Samson, like many other Old Testament heroes, was a type of our Lord. He is especially so in this case and I shall invite you to look at Christ rather than at Samson. First, *come and behold our Champion at His work*. Then, *let us go and survey the work when He has accomplished it*. And thirdly, *let us enquire what use we can make of the work which He has performed*.

I. Come with me, then, Brothers and Sisters, and LOOK AT OUR MIGHTY CHAMPION AT HIS WORK.

You remember when our Samson, our Lord Jesus, came down to the Gaza of this world, 'twas love that brought Him. Love to a most unworthy object, for He loved the sinful church which had gone astray from Him many and many a time. Yet He came from Heaven and left the ease and delights of His Father's palace to put Himself among the Philistines, the sons of sin and Satan here below!

It was rumored among men that the Lord of Glory was in the world and straightway they took counsel together how they should slay Him. Herod makes a clean sweep of all the children of two years old and under, that he may be sure to slay the newborn Prince. Afterwards, scribes and priests and lawyers hunt and hound Him. Satan tempts Him in the wilderness and provokes Him when in public. Death also pursues Him, for he has marked Him as his prey. At last, the time comes when the triple host of the Savior's foes has fairly surrounded Him, and shut Him in. They have dragged Him before Pilate. They have scourged Him on the pavement. They drag Him to the place called Calvary, while His blood drips upon the stones of Jerusalem's streets. They pierce His hands and His feet. They lift Him up, a spectacle of scorn and suffering and now, while dying in extreme pangs, and especially when He closes His eyes and cries out, "It is finished," sin, Satan and death all feel that they have the Champion safe! There He lies silently in the tomb. He who is to bruise the old serpent's head, is, Himself, bruised! O you who are the world's great Deliverer—there You lie as dead as any stone! Surely Your foes have led You captive, O You mighty Samson!

He sleeps. But think not that He is unconscious of what is going on. He knows everything. He sleeps till the proper moment comes and then our Samson awakes—and what happens now? He is in the tomb and His foes have set a guard and a seal that they may keep Him there. Will any now help Him to escape out of their charge? Is there any man who will aid Him? No, there is none! If the Champion escapes, it must be by His own singlehanded valor! Will He make a clear way for Himself and come up from the midst of His foes? You know He will, my Brothers and Sisters, for the moment the third day comes, He touches the stone and it is rolled away! He has defeated death! He has pulled up the posts of the grave and taken away its gates and bars! As for sin, He treads that beneath His feet—He has utterly overthrown it! And Satan, too, lies broken beneath the heel that once was bruised! He has broken the old dragon's head and cut His power in pieces forever! Solitary and alone, His own arm brings salvation unto Him and His righteousness sustains Him. I think I see Him now as He goes up that hill which is before Hebron—the hill of God. He bears upon His shoulders the uplifted gates of the grave—the tokens of His victory over death and Hell! Doors and posts and bar and all, He bears them up to Heaven. In sacred triumph He drags His enemies behind Him. Sing to Him! Angels, praise Him in your hymns! Exalt Him, cherubim and seraphim! Our mightier Samson has gotten to Himself the victory and cleared the road to Heaven and eternal life for all His people!

You know the story. I have told it poorly, but it is the most magnificent of all stories that ever were told! “Arms, and the man, I sing,” said one of the great classic poets of old, but I can say, “The Cross and the Christ, I sing.” ‘Tis my delight to tell of Him who espoused the cause of His people and, though for a while a captive, broke the green straps and fetters of brass and, having gained the victory for Himself, also liberated others, then goes, at the head of His emancipated people, along the way which He has opened—the new way which He leads to the right hand of God!

II. Let us go now, dear Brothers and Sisters, and calmly SURVEY THE WORK WHICH CHRIST HAS ACCOMPLISHED.

We will stand at the gates of old Gaza and see what the Champion has done. Those are ponderous hinges, and they must have held up huge doors. We will look at these doors, posts and this bar. Why, it is a mass of iron that ten men could hardly lift—and it might take 50 more to carry those huge doors! They were scarcely moved, even on their hinges, without the efforts of a dozen men—and yet this one man carried them all and I read not that his shoulders were bent, or that he grew weary. Seven miles, at least, Samson carried that tremendous load, uphill all the way, too! Still he bore it all without staggering, nor do I find that he was faint as he was aforetime at Ramath-Lehi.

I will not linger upon Samson's exploits, rather would I lift up your thoughts to the great Captain of our salvation! See what Christ has carried away. I said that He had three enemies. The three beset Him and He has achieved a threefold victory over them!

There was *death*. My dear Friends, Christ, in being first overcome by death, made himself Conqueror over death and He has also given us the victory, for, concerning death, we may truly say that Christ has not only opened the gates, but He has taken them away—and not the gates only, but the very posts, and the bar and all! Christ “has abolished death and has brought life and immortality to light.”

He has abolished it in this sense—in the first place, the curse of death is gone. Believers die, but they do not die for their sins. “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.” We die, but it is not any longer as a punishment. It is the fruit of sin, but it is not the *curse* of sin that makes the Believer die. To other men, death is a curse—to the Believer, I may almost put it among his Covenant blessings, for to sleep in Jesus Christ is one of the greatest mercies that the Lord can give to His believing people! The curse of death, then, being taken away, we may say that the posts are pulled up.

Christ has also taken away the after results of death, the soul's exposure to the Second Death. Unless Christ had redeemed us, death, indeed, would have been terrible, for it would have been the shore of the great Lake of Fire. When the wicked die, their punishment begins at once—and when they rise again, at the general resurrection, it is but to receive in their *bodies* and in their souls the due reward of their sins! The sting of death is the Second Death—that which is to come afterwards—

“To die—to sleep—

To sleep! Perhaps to dream. Yes, there's the rub,

For in that sleep of death what dreams may come!”

said the world's poet—no, not what “dreams” may come, but what *substantial pains*, what *dread miseries*, what *everlasting sorrows* will come! These are not for Christians. There is no Hell for you, Believer! Christ has taken away posts, and bar and all. Death is not to you any longer the gate of torment, but the gate of Paradise!

Moreover, Christ has not only taken away the curse and the after results of death, but from many of us He has taken away even the fear of death! He came on purpose to “deliver them, who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” There are not a few here who could conscientiously say that they do not dread death—no, but rather look forward to it with joyful expectation! We have become so accustomed to think of our last hours that we die daily—and when the last hour shall arrive, we shall only say, “Our marriage day has come.”—

“Welcome, sweet hour of full discharge!

That sets my longing soul at large.”

We shall joyfully hail the summons to mount beyond this land of woes, sighs and tears to be present with our God! The fear of death having been taken away, we may truly say that Christ has taken away posts, bar and all.

Besides, Beloved, there is a sense in which it may be said that Christians never die at all. Jesus said to Martha, “He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.” Believers do not die, they do but—

“Sleep in Jesus and are blessed.”

But the main sense in which Christ has pulled up the posts of the gates of death is that He has brought in a glorious Resurrection. O Grave, you cannot hold your prisoners, for they must rise! O Death, your troops of worms may seem to devastate that fair land of human flesh and blood, but that body shall rise again blooming with more beauty than that with which it fell asleep! It shall rise from its bed of dust and silent clay to dwell in realms of everlasting day! Conceive the picture if you can! If you have imagination, let the scene now present itself before your eyes. Christ, the greater Samson, sleeping in the dominions of Death—death boasting and glorifying itself that now it has conquered the Prince of Life! Christ waking, striding to that gate, dashing it aside—taking it upon His shoulders, carrying it away and saying as He mounts to Heaven, “O Death, where is your sting? O Grave, where is your victory?”

Another host which Christ had to defeat was the army of sin. Christ had come among sinners and sins beset Him round. Your sins and my sins beleaguered the Savior till He became their captive. “In Him was no sin” yet sins “compassed Him about like bees.” Sin was imputed to Him—the sins of all His people stood in His way to keep Him, as well as them, out of Heaven. When Christ was on the Cross, my Brothers and Sisters, he was looked upon by God as a sinner, though He never had been a sinner. And when in the grave, He could not rise until He was justified. Christ must be justified as well as His people. He was justified not as we are, but by His own act. We are not justified by acts of our own as He was. All the sin of the elect was laid upon Christ—He suffered its full penalty and so was justified. The token of His Justification lay in His Resurrection. Christ was justified by rising from the dead and in Him all His people were justified too. I may say, therefore, that all our sins stood in the way of Christ’s Resurrection—they were the great iron gate and they were the bar of brass that shut him out from Heaven. Doubtless, we might have thought that Christ would be a prisoner forever under the troops of sin, but oh, see Him, my Brothers and Sisters! See how the mighty Conqueror, as He bears our sins “in His own body on the tree,” stands with unbroken bones beneath the enormous load, bearing—

***“All that Incarnate God could bear,
With strength enough, but none to spare.”***

See how He takes those sins of ours upon His shoulders and carries them right up from His tomb and hurls them away into the deep abyss of forgetfulness, where, if they are sought, they shall not be found any more forever! As for the sins of all God's people, they are not partly taken away—they are as clean removed as ever the gates of Gaza were—posts, gates, bar and all! That is to say, every sin of God's people is forgiven—

***“There's pardon for transgressions past,
It matters not how black their cast!
And, oh, my Soul, with wonder view,
For sins to come there's pardon too!”***

Every sin that all the elect ever did commit, are now committing, or ever shall commit was taken away by Christ—taken upon His shoulders in His great atoning Sacrifice and carried away! There is no sin in God's book against any of His people! He sees no sin in Jacob, neither iniquity in Israel—they are justified in Christ forever.

Moreover, as the guilt of sin was taken away, the punishment of sin was consequently taken away, too. For the Christian there is no stroke from God's angry hand. No, not so much as a single frown of punitive justice! The Believer may be *chastised* by a Father's hand, but God, the Judge of all, has nothing to say to the Christian, except, “I have absolved you: you are acquitted.” For the Christian, there is no Hell, no penal death, much less any second death. He is completely freed from all the punishment as well as the guilt of sin—and the power of sin is removed too. It may stand in our way to keep us in perpetual warfare, but, oh, my Brethren, sin is to us a conquered foe! There is no sin which a Christian cannot overcome if he will only rely upon his God to enable him to do so. They who wear their white robes in Heaven overcame through the blood of the Lamb—and you and I may do the same. There is no lust too mighty, no besetting sin too strongly entrenched—we can drive these Canaanites out though they have cities walled unto Heaven—we can pull their cities down and overcome them through the power of Christ! Believe, Christian, that your sin is virtually a dead thing. It may kick and struggle—there is force enough in it for that, but it is a dead thing! God has written condemnation across its brow. Christ has crucified it, “nailing it to His Cross.” Go now and bury it forever, and the Lord help you to live to His praise! Oh, blessed be His name! Sin, with the guilt, the power, the shame, the fear, the terror of it, is gone! Christ has taken posts, and bar and all up to the top of the hill!

Then there was a third enemy and he, also, has been destroyed—that was *Satan*. Our Savior's sufferings were not only an Atonement for sin, but they were a conflict with Satan and a conquest over him. Satan is a defeated foe. The gates of Hell cannot prevail against the Church of Christ, but Christ has prevailed against the gates of Hell! As for Satan, the posts and bar and all have been plucked up from his citadel in this sense—that Satan has now no reigning power over Believers. He may

bark at us like a dog and he may go about like a roaring lion, but to rend and to devour us are not in his power. There is a chain about the devil's neck and he can only go as far as God likes, but no further. He could not tempt Job without first asking God's permission and he cannot tempt you without first getting God's permission. There is a permit needed before the devil dares so much as look on a Believer! And so, being under Divine permission, he will not be allowed to tempt us above what we are able to bear.

Moreover, the exceeding terror of Satan is also taken away. A Man has met Apollyon foot to foot and overcome him. That Man in death triumphed over Satan—so may you and I. The prestige of the old enemy is gone. The dragon's head has been broken and you and I need not fear to fight with a broken-headed adversary! When I read John Bunyan's description of Christian's fight with Apollyon, I am struck with the beauty and truth of the description, but I cannot help thinking, "If Christian had but known how thoroughly Apollyon had been thrashed in days gone by, by his Master, he would have thrown that in his face and made short work of him." Never encounter Satan without recollecting that great victory that Christ achieved on the tree! Do not be afraid, Christian, of Satan's devices or threats. Be on your watch-tower against him. Strive against him, but fear him not. Resist him, being bold in the faith, for it is not in his power to keep the feeblest saint out of Heaven, for all the gates which he has put up to impede our march have been taken away, posts, bar and all—and our God, the Lord, has gotten to Himself the victory over all the hosts of Hell!

III. We will now see HOW WE CAN USE THIS VICTORY.

Surely there is some comfort here—*comfort for you, dear Friend, over yonder*. You have a desire to be saved. God has impressed you with a deep sense of sin. The very strongest wish of your soul is that you might have peace with God. But you think there are so many difficulties in the way—Satan, your sins, and I know not what. Beloved, let me tell you, in God's name, there is no difficulty whatever in the way except in your own heart, for Christ has taken away the gates of Gaza—posts, bar and all! Mary Magdalene said to the other Mary, or the women said to one another, when they went to the sepulcher, "Who shall roll away the stone for us?" That is what you are saying. And when they came to the place, the stone was rolled away! That is your case, too, poor troubled conscience—the stone is rolled away! What? You cannot believe it? Here is God's testimony for it—"Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." You need an atonement for your sins, do you? "It is finished." You need someone to speak for you. "He is able to save unto the uttermost, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for us." Can you believe in the mercy of God in Christ and rest your poor guilty soul upon the merit of

His doing and the virtue of His dying? If you can, God is reconciled to you! There may have been great mountains between you and God, but they are all gone. There may have been the Red Sea of your sins rolling between you and your Father. That Red Sea is dried up. I tell you, Soul, if you believes in Christ Jesus, not only is there a way of access between your soul and God, but there is a clear way! You remember, when Christ died, the veil of the Temple was torn in two. There was not a little slit for sinners to creep through, but it was ripped in two from the top to the bottom, so that big sinners might come in the same way as when Samson pulled up gates, posts, bar and all! There was a clear way out into the country for all who were locked up in the town. Prisoner, the prison doors are open! Captive, loose the bonds on your neck—be free! I sound the trumpet of jubilee! Bond-slaves, Christ has redeemed you! You who have sold—

***“Your heritage for nought,
Shall have it back unbought,
The gift of Jesus’ love!”***

The Lord has anointed His Son Jesus “to preach deliverance to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.” Trust Him! May His mercy lead you to trust Him now, for there is really nothing to prevent your salvation if you rest in Him. Between your soul and God, I tell you, there is no dividing wall. “He is our peace, who has made both one...and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were near.” May these precious words be treasured up by such as need them! Some of you need them. May the Spirit of God put them into your hearts and lay them up there, that you may find comfort in Christ!

But is there not something more here? Is there not here *a ground of exhortation to Christians?* Brothers and Sisters, have not some of you been tolerating some sin—some besetting sin which you think you cannot overcome? You would be more holy, but the thought that you are not able to overcome it makes your arm helpless against your own sin. So you think that Christ has left the posts, do you? I tell you, no! “Whoever is born of God does not commit sin.” He that is born of God sins not with allowance. He sins not with constancy and it is in his power, with the Holy Spirit’s aid, to overcome his sin! And it is his duty, as well as his privilege, to go to war against the stoutest of his corruptions till he shall tread them under foot. Now, will you believe, Brothers and Sisters, that in the blood of Christ and in the water that flowed with it from His side, there is a Sovereign virtue to kill your sins? There is nothing standing between you and the pardon of your sins but your unbelief—and if you will but shake that off, you shall march triumphantly through the gate of Glory!

Once more and I am through. Is not this *an incentive for us, who profess to be servants of Christ, to go out and fight with the world and*

overcome it for Christ? Brothers and Sisters, where Jesus leads us, it needs not much courage for us to follow. “The earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof.” Let us go and take it for Him! Nations that sit in darkness shall see a great light. Satan may have locked up the world with bigotry, with idolatry and with superstition, as with posts and bars, but the Kingdom is the Lord’s! And if we will but awaken ourselves to preach the Word, we shall find that the Breaker has gone up before us and broken and torn away the gates, posts, and bar and all—and we have nothing to do but to enjoy an early victory. God help us to do so!

And now, as we come to the Lord’s Table, let us have before us this vision of our glorious Samson achieving His mighty victory! And while we weep for sin, let us praise His superlative power and love that have worked such marvels for us. The Lord give us to enjoy His Presence at His table, and He shall have the praise! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 51.**

A Psalm of David, when Nathan the Prophet came to him and rebuked him, in the name of God, for his great sin with Bathsheba.

Verse 1. *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving kindness: according unto the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions.* This is not a Psalm to be sung to the joyous music of the harp and the viol, but rather to the minor music of sighs, groans and tears. You must have the picture of weeping David before your mind’s eye if you would really get to the heart and soul of his language here. There is only one thing on the Psalmist’s heart, and that is the consciousness of his great sin which seemed to swallow up everything else. He feels that he must have that sin forgiven—he cannot rest until he knows that it is pardoned.

Note how he makes his appeal to the loving kindness and tender mercies of God. A sinner under a sense of sin has a keen eye for the mercy of God, for he knows that there is his only hope and, therefore, he looks for it as a mariner at sea looks for a star! He will not allow even one to escape his observation if there is but one visible between the rifts of the clouds. David urges the most powerful plea with God—“According to Your loving kindness; according unto the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions.”

2. *Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.* For he loathes it. It is abominable in his sight. His whole spirit seems sickened at the very recollection of it. He not merely prays, “Wash me,” but, “Wash me thoroughly.” Wash me *thoroughly*, not only from sin, but from the iniquity of it, the wrongdoing of it, that wherein it was essentially sin and when You have washed me, cleanse me, for, perhaps,

washing will not be enough—there may need a cleansing by fire. Lord cleanse me anyway, only cleanse me from my sin.”

3. *For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is always before me.* He had tried to forget it, but he could not, for it haunted him wherever he went. He had put it behind his back, but now it had gotten in front of his eyes. It seemed as if it were painted on his eyeballs and he could not see without seeing through his sin. This is how God makes men repent—how He makes sin to be like gall and wormwood to them.

4. *Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight that You might be justified when You speak, and be clear when You judge.* David had sinned against a great many others beside God, but the virus, the very poison of the sin, seemed to him to lie in this—that he had sinned against his God. The unregenerate usually take no account of that, they care nothing about sinning against God. Offending men, doing some injury to their fellow creatures, may cause them trouble, but as for offending God they snap their fingers at that and count it to be something not worth even thinking of! But when a man is really awakened by Divine Grace, he sees that sin is an attack upon God, an offense against God’s very Nature and this becomes the heaviest burden to him. Do you know what this experience means, dear Friends?

5. *Behold, I was shaped in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.* David has got further than seeing sin upon him—he sees that he is, himself, sinful—that his nature, his very being, is steeped and dyed in sin! The evil is not merely that you have sinned, but that you are a *sinner*. Sin would never come out of you if it were not in you. And, oh, what a mine of sin, what a bottomless deep of sin there is in human nature! No wonder that it bursts forth as it does. As the volcano is but the index of a mighty seething ocean of devouring flame within the heart of the earth, so any one sin is only a token of far greater sinfulness that seethes and boils within the cauldron of our nature! “Behold, I was shaped in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.”

6. *Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts.* “Alas, O Lord, it is not there! I have looked there, but have seen only sin. It is not truth, but the reverse of truth that I find in my inward parts! Lord, You will never have what You desire to see in me unless You put Your hand to the work.”

6. *And in the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom.* Yes, God can teach us. Even those hidden parts which no human teaching can reach, God can touch and there He can make us to know wisdom.

7. *Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean.* “Sprinkle the blood of Atonement upon me, give me a sacrificial cleansing, and then I shall be clean.”

7. *Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.* To my mind, this is a wonderful expression of faith. I do not know of any Scripture that seems more full of holy confidence than this is. David had such a deep sense of

his sinfulness that it was a wonderful thing that he should have, side by side with it, such a perfect confidence in the power of God to cleanse him! It is easy enough to say, "I shall be whiter than snow," when we do not realize what scarlet sinners we are, but when the crimson is before us and we are startled by it, it requires a real and living faith to be able to say to God, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

8. *Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which You have broken may rejoice.* God has a way of making our sins come home to us like the blows of great bone-breaking hammers. I suppose that no pain can be much worse than that of a broken bone, but God can make the pain of sin in the conscience to be as continuous and as intense as that of broken bones and then, blessed be His name, He knows how to heal the bones which He has broken and to make each broken bone to sing and rejoice. Whereas it groaned before, he can give it a new power and make that very bone to be a mouth out of which shall come praise to God!

9. *Hide Your face from my sins.* "Lord, look no more at them. Do not hide Your face from *me*, but hide it from my sins!"—

***"O You that hears when sinners cry,
Though all my crimes before You lie,
Behold them not with angry look,
But blot their memory from Your book!"***

9. *And blot out all my iniquities.* "Do not let them be recorded any longer, O Lord! Run Your pen through them! Let them not stand against me in Your books of remembrance!"

10. *Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.* Here the truly quickened man speaks. It is not salvation from punishment he asks for, but salvation from the power of sin. He wants a new heart. He wants to have removed from him the defiling power of sin over his affections. "Create in me a clean heart, O God." It will need the Creator to do it. Only the God who made the world can make me what I ought to be. Great Creator, put Your hand to this work—"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."

11. *Cast me not away from Your Presence; and take not Your Holy Spirit from me.* "O Lord, do not thrust me into a dungeon and say, 'You shall never be a favored child of Mine again.' 'Take not Your Holy Spirit from me. *That* I should dread beyond everything else!"

12. *Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation; and uphold me with Your free Spirit.* "Lord, I shall slip again unless You hold me up, and, since You cannot trust Your little child by himself, come and teach me how to walk."

13. *Then will I teach transgressors Your ways; and sinners shall be converted unto You.* "If You will but teach me, and save me, and cleanse

me, then I will tell to others what great things You have done for me. I will tell out the story of Your love that others, also, may prove its power.”

14. *Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, You God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.* This was a wonderful prayer, but it was not wonderful that David should get relief when he called his sin by its right name. Another man, in his place, might have said, “I did not kill Uriah. It is true that I had him put where he was likely to be slain, but then the sword devours one as well as another.” That was the way that David did hypocritically talk at first—but now that his conscience has been awakened, he confesses that he is a murderer—“Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God.”

15, 16. *O Lord open You my lips: and my mouth shall show forth Your praise. For You desire not sacrifice; else would I give it: You delight not in burnt offering.* How wonderfully a true sense of sin puts a man on the track of Evangelical doctrine! David could see that sin was too grievous a thing for the blood of sheep and bulls to wash it away, and though he did not despise the ritual which God had ordained, he looked beyond it to something greater and better of which it was but a type.

17, 18. *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. Do good in Your good pleasure unto Zion: build You the walls of Jerusalem.* This is a blessed end to David’s mournful Psalm. He felt that his sin had a tendency to do injury to the Church of God—that he had, in fact, pulled down the towers of Zion by his iniquity, so he prays “Build You the walls of Jerusalem.”

19. *Then shall You be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon Your altar.*

—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 DANGER OF CARNAL SECURITY NO. 2490

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
NOVEMBER 8, 1896.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
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“Then the five men departed, and came to Laish, and saw the people that were there, how they dwelt carelessly, after the manner of the Sidonians, quiet and secure; and there was no magistrate in the land, that might put them to shame in anything; and they were far from the Sidonians, and had no business with any man... And they took the things which Micah had made, and the price at which he had, and came to Laish, to a people that were quiet and secure: and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and burned the city with fire. And there was no deliverer, because it was far from Sidon, and they had no business with any man.”
Judges 18:7, 27, 28.

I HAVE for this evening's discourse what some of you may consider to be rather an amazing text. Let me, therefore, begin by briefly stating the circumstances surrounding it.

The tribe of Dan found its portion to be rather too small, so the people held a council to decide what was to be done. They resolved to send a small body of men to spy out the land—these spies came, in due time, to a place called Laish, which they found to be inhabited by certain people who dwelt there carelessly, in supposed security, “after the manner of the Sidonians.” They were attacked without any notice and the tribe of Dan took their territory and added it to their own. I do not, in the least degree, commend the action of these people. What I have to do with the narrative is to use it for the purpose of drawing from it lessons suited to the present time.

I suppose that these people, who were living at Laish, were originally a colony of Sidonians, and they had settled in a very fat, fertile valley—according to the tenth verse, a place where there was no lack of anything. They did not care to trade with others, they were not at all an enterprising or busy people. Finding every luxury growing out of their own soil, they had no care to do business with any other men whatever. They kept no guard or watch, for, although they knew that, in common with all the other inhabitants of the land of Canaan, they had been doomed to fall by the sword of Israel, yet the Israelites had been very slow in conquering the country. Many years had passed since Joshua had died. Many judges had come and gone and they had never been troubled.

Therefore they rested in perfect ease, neither drilling themselves, nor exercising any warlike arts, but feeling altogether secure, living luxuriously in a fools' paradise. It was so, for, all of a sudden, these Danites, giving them no notice whatever, fell upon them, cut them up, root and branch, burned their city and took the land for themselves.

I am not going into the moral of this business—how far Dan is to be blamed. I am simply going to use this incident as the picture of a very common condition which is to be found among the sons of men—which condition is a very dangerous and false one, and will end, unless the Grace of God prevents it, in the destruction of those who are thus carnally secure.

I. First, let us notice THE CONDITION OF CARNAL SECURITY INTO WHICH CHRISTIANS SOMETIMES FALL.

If they fall into such a condition as that, they may rest assured that it is one of great danger. Let me describe it to you. Here is a man who is a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. In times long gone by he struggled hard to get his feet upon the Rock of Ages and, at last, he obtained a firm footing and there he stood in blessed security. For some time, perhaps even for *years*, he has been free from all doubts and fears—and also *free from all internal struggles and conflicts*. He almost thinks that the devil is dead, or, if not, that the devil in *him* is dead, that sin has become so broken and bruised in *his* nature that it will never rise again, or cause him trouble! He rejoices and continues to rejoice, but it may be that in the course of time the dry rot of self-satisfaction will begin to show itself. The man would not say, with the Pharisee, that he thanks God he is not as other men, but there is something of that sort of feeling within his heart. He entered into full assurance of faith at the first, but that full assurance has begun to rust into *confidence in self*. And now, no longer emptied from vessel to vessel, his sin remains in him. No longer tossed upon the waves, he makes little or no progress towards the heavenly haven—his ship's keel upon the ocean is still amidst a calm, but the fear is that the calm will grow into stagnation—and the stagnation into corruption. God save the man to whom a calm, itself, becomes more dangerous than a tempest! I think you must know some people of that kind. Perhaps if some of you look in the mirror, you may see at least one person of that sort! The Sidonians mentioned in our text had no dread of warfare, or the sound of the trumpet, or the crash of arms—and self-confident professors are in much the same condition.

You noticed, also, about these Sidonians that they had “no magistrate in the land.” I think I have known some persons who may have possessed a conscience, but if so, it had gone to sleep. I have great fear for *religious men with sleepy consciences* and it is really amazing what mischief may be done by men who seem to be heartily religious, yet whose consciences have gone soundly asleep. There are some ungodly men who would tremble to do what some professing Christians do without any qualms of conscience! God save you, dear Friends, from such a state of heart as that! We ought to long for a holy sensitiveness of conscience. We

should wish to have it tender as the apple of the eye, so that the very least touch of sin should startle and amaze us! We are all too apt to grow a skin over our conscience and, after a time, it gets to be callous and we need to have it wounded and kept open like a fresh raw wound, so that the least speck of sin may cause it intense anguish! We are never what we ought to be except we are in that condition! Yet I have known some professors who have been so long at ease in Zion that the moss has grown over their conscience and you can scarcely get at it so as to awaken it to a sense of sin!

These Sidonians, next, had *no care at all about other people*. We are told *twice* that they “had no business with any man.” Are there any people who are called Christians who are of that sort, and have no concern, or very little concern, about the souls of others? They say that they care about the heathen, for they have subscribed five shillings towards sending a missionary to lay down his life on a foreign shore! They care about the people who are dying at home, for they spoke to someone about the Sunday school a little while ago, and they said a kind word for the City Mission! They have never done anything by way of *teaching* children, or *visiting* the poor and needy—you could not expect it of them, of course. They are such men of business—they have so many matters to attend to that you could put into a small thimble anything they do for the cause of God. They take little or nothing for the Lord out of the full river of their life’s force, so far as the good of their fellows is concerned. They have “no business with any man.”

Years ago they were very active workers—at least, they tell us so. In some dim remote past, almost forgotten, they did try to take up Christ’s Cross and to bear His yoke, but now they are gentlemen at large, supernumeraries, who have entered upon a period of dignified rest—Sidonians, having no business with any man! Some of these people never join a church, for they do not care about its responsibilities. They are going to Heaven, so they say, yet they are trying to get there without walking in the King’s Highway, but sneaking behind the hedges and taking rest whenever they can. They will not enter the Palace Beautiful, nor join the caravans of pilgrims that march together, with their Great-Hearts leading them and fighting giants on the road. We still have this sort of Christians about. I call them Christians, but God alone knows whether they are His or not.

These people also live, like the Sidonians did, *without any fear of invasion*. It is not at all likely that they will ever fall into gross sin, at least so they say. Young people, of course, have strong passions and *they* may fall into sin, but these old, experienced people are not likely to be carried away by temptation. Some people are very foolish and they may be caught by the subtlety of the old serpent, but these good old professors are wonderfully wise. Indeed, it is quite a wonder that one small head can carry all they know! They are so deeply experienced that if they were to die, half the experience in the church would die out with them! So excellent are they that, with regard to their yielding to temptation and fal-

ling into sin, it is quite impossible! Of course, the young folk had better pledge themselves to total abstinence because drink would be a temptation to *them*, but these good people can drink just a sufficient quantity and no more, they have such control of themselves! Of course, young men and women had better keep away from doubtful places of amusement, but these old people are so supremely good that if they were living in the devil's camp, their hearts would still be in Heaven! They can be trusted anywhere!

Perhaps you enquire, "Does anybody seriously believe this what you have been saying?" Anybody seriously believe it? Why, yes, some of you do, only you do not put it into words and if I were to point you out and say that you believed it, you would flatly contradict me. But you do, all the same. There are many professing Christians who live as if they were beyond gun-shot of the enemy and were quite safe and secure. They say, spiritually, "Soul, take your ease, you have much goods laid up for many years—eat, drink and be merry." And all the while they are in imminent danger of falling into the very worst forms of sin, proving apostates, after all, showing the rottenness of their profession, letting all see that their religion is nothing better than a painted disguise to go to Hell in—but not a work of God in the soul by which that soul is really and truly saved. A friend told me that the other night, as she sat in this Tabernacle, there spoke with her a person who is a regular frequenter of this House of Prayer and who said that she was without sin, that she did not know that anything preached here at all suited her—and that she believed I was well aware that she did not require any admonitions or exhortations.

She was glad to hear me earnest about sinners, but *she* was not a sinner—she had not been a sinner for a long time and any exhortations that were directed to sleepy saints, she felt were very proper, but they did not belong to her. In fact, she only came because it was a proper thing to come, but she did not expect to get anything for herself out of the services—she had advanced far beyond that point. Well, I do not know where you are, my good Sister, but you are the very person to whom I am now speaking! You superlatively good people who think you do not need any warning are the exact persons I am most anxious to warn. Remember Cowper's lines—

***"He has no hope who never felt a fear.
And he that never doubted of his state,
He may, perhaps—perhaps he may—too late."***

He that is, as men say, so "cock sure," may find himself lost after all. He may be but a dotard and a dreamer, notwithstanding all his confidence. I would rather go to Heaven doubting all the way than be lost through self-confidence. I would rather cry out in the bitterness of my spirit, "Am I sincere or not?" and cry it out every day, than write myself down among the blessed and, at last, wake up and find myself in Hell!

There is a holy fear which must not be banished from the Church of God. There is a sacred anxiety which puts us to the question and examines us whether we are in the faith—and it is not to be laughed at as

some would do. It is all very fine to say, “Believe that you are right, and you are right,” but if you believe that you are right and you are, all the while, *wrong*, you put yourself beyond the probability of ever getting right! He who believes himself to be saved when he is not is likely to shut the door of salvation in his own face and to perish self-excluded. God save us from that fatal folly! I would blow the trumpet of warning even in Zion! I would sound an alarm in God’s holy mountain! May you and I never get beyond spiritual conflicts, beyond striving against our corruptions, beyond hating the garment spotted by the flesh! May we never get beyond a holy filial fear and a grave anxiety that in all that we do we may be pleasing and acceptable in the sight of God! If not, we may get to be like these Sidonians dwelling carelessly in their city of Laish—and one of these days destruction may enter our gates when we little expect it.

II. Now I change the theme to speak of THIS CONDITION OF CARNAL SECURITY IN THE UNSAVED and to address those who know that they are *not converted*, and who make no profession of religion whatever. There are some of these who live very carelessly and who are very difficult to awaken to a true sense of their peril.

Let me describe this condition as it is found among many unsaved persons. Our text tells us that when the spies came to Laish, they “saw the people that were therein, how *they dwelt carelessly*.” That is the way with the carnally secure—they are careless. As long as they can enjoy the present, they are quite indifferent to all thoughts of the future. Many of you see no further than your hand can reach. Multitudes of men restrict their vision to that which might be seen by an ox or a sheep. If there is enough grass in the pasture, the ox is satisfied. Indeed, he does not look over the whole pasture, for if there is but grass near his nose, it is enough for him. And, oh, the multitudes of London, and of England, and in the world at large, whose only questions are, “What shall we eat? What shall we drink? With what shall we be clothed?” They live as if they would never die, or as if, when they died, they would die like dogs and that would be the end of them. This spirit breeds carelessness about their lives, about their thoughts, about prayer, about all holy things. They ask, “What is all that to us? It may do very well for some people to be religious, but we have to work hard from morning to night and we cannot think about these things at all.” They would reduce themselves, if they could, to the level of swine! They are as careless as the beasts that perish. Perhaps, my dear Hearer, that word, “careless,” describes you.

And, connected with this carelessness, there is, next, *a great quietness from all trial*. It is not so with many of you, for you are sorely vexed with troubles, sickness, poverty, or bereavement. You seem to be *always* afflicted and you may always thank God if you are! It is evident that He has not given you up and left you to sleep yourselves to destruction. But there are certain persons who appear to have no troubles. Their path is wonderfully smooth, they have all that heart can wish, they touch nothing without prospering. They are contented and well they may be, for it seems as if Providence had determined to make them rich! And yet what

do I see before me? A bull locked in the stall! Would I rejoice to be that bull? No, for I know why it is thus fed—it is fattened for the *slaughter* and already I see the pole-axe lifted in the air and about to descend upon the poor beast! And many a man who is indulged with everything that he can desire is nothing better than a fattened bull doomed to die! Yet many care not about that—they are quite satisfied if they can enjoy themselves today—as for tomorrow, it must take thought for the things of itself.

Meanwhile, these same people are *quite secure as to the future*. A funeral perhaps startles them for a moment. The passing bell has a strange tone to their ears, but, for the most part, they put away all thoughts of death. They are young, or they are robust—they will not soon die and, therefore, should they even think of it? And, as for that Great White Throne, and the Judgment Seat, and the assembled worlds, and the rocking earth, and the blazing Heaven—well, it is only *preachers* who talk about those things! They put their fingers in their ears and will not listen to our warnings—and go their way to their farms and to their merchandise—and let the future take care of itself. This is the horrible condition of multitudes of mankind that, with the best possible reasons for being concerned about the future, they resolve that they will not wake up to it, but that, like these men of Laish, they will dwell “quiet and secure.”

The trumpet is sounding, the adversaries are marching from Dan, they have already encamped on the way! Men of Laish, why do you gird yourselves for the dance and for the feast—the sword of the enemy will soon be at your throats? And, O you men of London, you men of this world, how can you make mirth and sport while the day of your doom hastens on and Death, on the pale horse, rides so fast towards you and judgment follows at his heels? Yet I may say what I will, but, with the most of men, I shall but waste my breath, for they dwell so carelessly, and wrap themselves up in their ease!

These people of Laish, it seems, were also *free from all restraint*. “There was no magistrate in the land.” It is a perilous thing for any of us to know no restraint—especially for that young man who, in a few days, is coming into possession of a large fortune and will then have his full swing. Oh, if I could get hold of his hand, I would wet it with my tears while I urged him not to court ruin with his fingers jeweled with the mercies of God! To turn the blessings of Providence into stones to throw at Him who gave them to us is base ingratitude, indeed! I pray that the young man, instead of acting so, may begin a new and better life and so use his substance for the Glory of God. We are all impatient of control, but nothing can be worse for some men than to have no voice to check, no language to upbraid, no tender wife or gentle friend who will administer a kind rebuke. But there *are* such, and there may be such *here* who are all the more confident and stolid because there is no conscience yet awake within them—and nobody to serve as a conscience for them. “There was no magistrate in the land.”

And, once more, these people at Laish were *self-contained*. “They had no business with any man.” There are some persons who are all the more

hard to get at because they do not want to be interfered with. If anybody were to speak to such a man about his soul, tonight, he would say, "Don't you bother about me! Leave me alone, I can take care of myself." But he who takes care of himself generally has a fool for a keeper! All of us need some help from others and those of us who receive most help thank God for all that we get.

Yet once more, according to verse 10, these people at Laish had "*no need of anything*." They had all that heart could wish. I daresay that while I have been describing them, some of you have half envied them. Of course you do if you are of the same nature as they were! But the day shall come when some of us will bless God for poverty and for sickness because we shall get to Heaven by such help—while others will have to curse themselves because they turned their health, their vigor and their wealth into occasions and opportunities for sin! If we could, we would escape all trial, but we would be very unwise to do so. If, by falling down upon my knees, now, I could prevail with God so that there should be no poverty to the drunk, I dare not pray the prayer! Or that there should be no disease to the unclean man, I dare not pray the prayer! Or that there should be no punishment to the thief, I dare not pray it! It is, after all, best for society that sin should be followed by chastisement, and it is best for us all that we should be drawn to God, or *driven* to Him, by the troubles and trials of this mortal life, rather than that we should now be set in the slippery places of ease and, by-and-by, be cast down to destruction! Oh, that I could say a word that would make you easy-going men, who have all you can desire, begin to tremble amidst your plenty—lest eternal ruin should follow the greatness of God's bounty!

III. So now, thirdly, I want to speak briefly upon THE EVILS OF THIS CONDITION OF CARNAL CONFIDENCE in which an ungodly man is perfectly at his ease in a dying world.

The first result of it is that *warnings are unheeded*. Preach, Mr. Preacher, and preach your very heart out, but this man does not care a bit about it all, for he is perfectly at ease and happy—nothing ever stings him into anxiety! He never wakes at night to cry to God for mercy. He never dreams of judgment, not he! His companions sing that "he's a jolly good fellow" and he thoroughly enjoys himself. Just so. Yet he has no God, no Christ, no hope! He trifles with eternal things and makes this world his all. Alas, all our most solemn warnings are lost upon him!

What is worse, *all the mercies of God are lost on him*. What is the use of bidding him wash in the Fountain opened for sin and uncleanness? He does not feel that he is foul. Why present him with garments of righteousness? He does not know anything about his iniquity. Why talk to him of a Physician? He feels no sickness. Why point him to a Savior? He does not believe that he is lost! Oh, how I wish that the pangs of contrition would strike through ungodly men and women in this house! Dear Master, fit Your sharp arrows to Your bow and wound them now! Fill this house with stricken souls that will cry mightily for You! Then shall they

have You! Then shall they rejoice in You! But men miss these choice mercies of God because they are self-contented and carnally at ease.

The further result is that, as year follows after year, *the heart grows still harder*. In the young man there once was a little feeling, but now in the gray head there is none. You might have impressed him when he was a boy at his mother's knee, but you cannot influence him now. He does not believe anything you say, for he is case-hardened—the devil has fitted on him a coat of mail which seems to even turn the edge of the Sword of the Spirit. Ah, miserable man!

And in this man, worse still, *great sin is being prepared*. He may not yet have sinned grossly against the laws of his country or of society, but where there is such fuel as this hard heart and stolid will, the devil will not be slow to bring the flame! I look on some self-confident men and read their terrible future in their present assurance. And I would say to each one, as to another Hazael, "I know what you will do. You have been moral and excellent, but the day will come when, having cast off all fear of God, you will do what it would horrify you to hear of now." The man asks, "Is your servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" No, you are not a dog, but if you were, it would be better for you than to be what you are! No man knows how much of devil there is asleep in him—and no man may dream that he is secure from the worst of evils unless he comes to Jesus, gets a new heart and puts himself into the keeping of the One who is better and stronger than himself. Then he will be safe, but short of that all his fancied security is ruinous to the last degree!

I do not know all to whom I am speaking, but I am convinced that I am preaching directly to some of you. Whether you are in the top gallery, or downstairs, or close around the platform, I do not know, but the Lord, the Searcher of all hearts, knows for whom this message is intended. Let us, each one, take it so far as it bears upon our case. Wake, you sleepers, wake! Why sleep? Sin besets you all around. If you have not fled to Christ for salvation. If you have not received a new heart and a right spirit, give no sleep to your eyes nor slumber to your eyelids till these things are set right by the power of the Holy Spirit—and you are saved from the wrath to come!

IV. Now, finally, I have to notice THE GREAT DANGER OF THOSE WHO ARE CARNALLY SECURE.

Notice the horror of their doom. These poor careless Sidonians, enjoying themselves, setting no watch, bearing no shield, wielding no sword, rested in fancied security, till, all of a sudden, the swords of their adversaries cut them in pieces and they were destroyed! What I dread most about some men is *the change which will come upon them from their present state of ease*. "Oh, it is all right, Sir!" says one. "It is all right. I feel perfectly happy." An unsaved man may be in the very article of death and yet be quite at ease because his conscience has been so heavily drugged that it does not awake even in his death moments. But it will awake, it will awake! There is no opium that can send your conscience into an eternal slumber, else you might venture to die with your sins un-

cleansed. But it will awake, and oh, the awful change from the fools' paradise to the fools' perdition, from playing with trifles to find that there are no trifles, but that everything is real, earnest, serious in that dread world into which your soul will plunge when God says to you, "Return," and your spirit shall return to God who gave it! I dread the change for you who are now carnally at ease.

And, further, when I think of the doom which will ultimately come upon careless souls, I dread *that sense of self-deceiving which comes upon men*. If they went to Hell merely by virtue of a Divine decree, it would not be such a Hell to them. But to go there by their own folly—this is a fire that can never be quenched! This is a worm that never dies! Such a man will have to say, "I brought myself here. I was warned. That preacher in the Tabernacle spoke to me on that October night as best he could—in rough words, but real earnest—and he bade me awake and escape from the wrath to come, but I said, 'Leave me alone!' Like the sluggard, I turned over to the other side and said, 'A little more sleep, a little more folding of the hands,' and now I am in Hell! I shut myself in here! Those iron bolts I fastened by my own folly! These fires I kindled and the terrible truth burns in my conscience that I, myself, supplied the fuel for this flame." O Sirs, I do pray you, commit not everlasting suicide by resting at ease and peace when there is no rest and no peace, for, "there is no peace, says the Lord, to the wicked."

There is a short, sad sentence in the 28th verse—"There was no deliverer." When the Danites were at the gates of Laish, "there was no deliverer." Thank God there is a Deliverer, now! There is a Savior for sinners! Come, guilty souls, and trust yourselves with Jesus! Free, full and immediate pardon is proclaimed to all who trust Him. Submit to His dear will. Look to His blessed wounds and live! But if your ears refuse the language of His Grace. If you despise the invitations of His mercy, there will come a time when there shall be no deliverer, *no deliverer*, NO DELIVERER in Heaven, or earth or Hell—no deliverer—nothing but the sword and the fire, the just and righteous wrath of God which you have, yourselves, obstinately incurred.

Then there came back upon these people of Laish, in their death agony, the fact that they had no business with any man and, therefore, *nobody pitied them*. Nobody came to their rescue! They had no business with any, so none had any business with them—and they died, "unwept, unhonored, and unsung"—only remembered by preachers who, like myself, try to turn their doom into a warning and a lesson for others! You self-contained people who have no business with anybody and do not want anybody to interfere with you. You who do not wish to be warned and would resent anyone's touching you on the shoulder and asking you if you are saved—thus shall it be with you in the evil day—no man shall have any business with you! Shame and everlasting contempt will be the portion of that man who boasted that he could take care of himself, but who found, at last, that he had no deliverer and no man to care for his soul! My dear Hearers, may God save you, every one of you! Could I look

you in the face and wish anything else for any one of you but that you might find eternal salvation in Jesus Christ? No, I could not have any other desire than that! Do you not also wish it for yourselves? Now, a wish is half a prayer—make it a whole one! Breathe this brief prayer to God—“Lord, save me.”

Then listen to this Word of Grace which has the message of salvation in it—“Look and live.” Jesus died upon the Cross that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but should have everlasting life. He is lifted up before you, now, that you who have been bitten by the fiery serpent of sin may look to Him, as Israel in the wilderness looked to the brazen serpent—and in that looking, you may be healed. As I shall meet you in that Day of Days for which all other days were made. As I shall make one of the vast throng that will be gathered before the Judgment Seat of Christ, I pray you, bear witness to me, in that day, that I have spoken honestly and faithfully and fearlessly—certainly in no smooth and flattering terms—to every one of you! And if you perish I shall be clear of your blood in that great day. If you will not have Christ and will be damned, you must. But it shall not be without my crying to you, “Turn you, turn you, for why will you die?” “Turn you, turn you,” says the Lord God, Himself! Turn them, O Lord, by Your Grace, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-18; 5.

1 Thessalonians 4:13. *But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that you sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.* You cannot help sorrowing, for you miss your dear ones so much. But you do not sorrow like the heathen who believe their departed friends to be extinct and annihilated. You have a glorious hope concerning those who have fallen asleep in Christ—you believe that they still live and that, by-and-by, their bodies will rise again!

14. *For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, they, also, which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.* There is such a union between Christ and His people that they never can be divided from Him. In life they live in Him, in death they sleep in Him. And when He comes again, He will bring them with Him. Christ cannot be without His people. A head without a body would be a ghastly thing—and Christ without His people would be incomplete and imperfect.

15. *For this we say to you by the Word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain to the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.* We shall have no preference over the saints who are sleeping in Jesus. We shall not go before them, we shall be on a blessed equality with them.

16, 17. *For the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we always be with the Lord.* Whatever ideas we have concerning the

details of Christ's coming, this summing up of the whole matter is unutterably precious to us—"so shall we always be with the Lord." There is no separating Christ and His people! If you are one with Him, He will not be in Heaven and leave you behind. Nor will He be glorified in the Presence of His Father without making you to be partakers of the Glory. What joy there is for us in this blessed Truth of God!

18. *Therefore comfort one another with these words.*

1 Thessalonians 5:1, 2. *But of the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I write to you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.* That is, most unexpectedly to an ungodly world. Even they who are watching for Christ's coming may be, to some extent, surprised at His appearing, as the most watchful person may be when the thief, at last, comes. But we shall not be taken altogether unawares. We shall be, at least in a measure, prepared for the coming of the Lord. But as for the world at large, it will be an awful and surprising visitation—

3. *For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction comes upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.* Let no ungodly man dream that he will escape! Apart from vital union to Christ, there will be no escaping for any of us in that tremendous day of the Lord.

4. *But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.* You who truly know the Lord. You who are saved through His First Coming and are expecting His Second Coming—

5, 6. *You are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others.*—Night is the time for sleep and we sleep best in the darkness, but if we have come into the daylight, if the Sun of Righteousness has risen upon us, let us be wakeful, let us be watchful. When the sun is shining, it is not right that men should sleep. "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others."—

6, 7. *But let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that are drunk are drunk in the night.* Even in Paul's day, drunkenness was a thing that seemed more at home in darkness than in the light. As for us, Brothers and Sisters, let us never be carried away by excess—either drunkenness of body or inebriation of mind—for there is a drunkenness which abjures the cup and yet is as gross an intoxication as the other is. We may be drunk with pride, or drunk with ambition, or drunk with wrath, or drunk with worldliness, but we are to avoid all these evils because we are not, now, in the night, when these drunken fits might be in some sort of harmony with the surrounding darkness.

8-10. *But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breast-plate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.* This seems to be a theme which the Apostle constantly brings up, as though he could not help it—that we are to live together

with Christ. There lies your safety, Brothers and Sisters—“together with Him.” If you could get away from Him, you would go down to destruction! But “together with Him” is the path of life, safety and perfection.

11-13. *Therefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also you do. And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.* So that these Apostolic Churches had a ministry set over them in the Lord and they were commanded to know these laborers for the Master, to recognize them as appointed by God to their ministerial position, “and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake.”

14-26. *Now, we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. See that none render evil for evil to any man, but always follow that which is good, both among yourselves and to all men. Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesying. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil. And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He that calls you, who also will do it. Brethren, pray for us. Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss. That was the Oriental manner of greeting and it means to us, “Greet all the brethren with a hearty shake of the hand.” Such tokens of fellowship ought never to be forgotten among the followers of Christ.*

27, 28. *I charge you by the Lord that this Epistle be read to all the holy brethren. The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.*

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