

THREEFOLD SANCTIFICATION

NO. 434

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 9, 1862,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Sanctified by God the Father.”
Jude 1:1.

“Sanctified in Christ Jesus.”
1 Corinthians 1:2.

“Through sanctification of the Spirit.”
1 Peter 1:2.

MARK, Beloved, the union of the Three Divine Persons in all their gracious acts. We believe that there is one God, and although we rejoice to recognize the Trinity, yet it is ever most distinctly a Trinity *in Unity*. Our watch-word still is—“Hear O Israel, the LORD our God is one LORD.” How unwisely do those young Believers talk, who make preferences in the Persons of the Trinity—who think of Christ as if He were the embodiment of everything that is lovely and gracious, while the Father they regard as severely just but destitute of kindness.

And how foolish are those who magnify the decree of the Father, or the atonement of the Son, so as to depreciate the work of the Spirit. In deeds of Divine Grace none of the Persons of the Trinity act apart from the rest. They are as united in their deeds as in their essence. In their love towards the chosen they are One, and in the actions which flow from that great central source they are still undivided.

Especially I would have you notice this in the case of sanctification. While we may, without the slightest mistake, speak of sanctification as the work of the Spirit, yet we must take heed that we do not view it as if the Father and the Son had no part in it. It is correct to speak of sanctification as the work of the Father, of the Spirit, and of the Son. Still does Jehovah say, “Let *Us* make man in our Own image after Our likeness,” and thus we are “*His* workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.”

My Brethren, I beg you to notice and carefully consider the value which God sets upon real holiness, since the Three Persons are represented as co-working to produce a Church without “spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.” Those men who despise holiness of heart are in direct conflict with God. Holiness is the architectural plan upon which God builds up His living temple. We read in Scripture of the “beauties of holiness.” Nothing is beautiful before God but that which is holy. All the glory of Lucifer, that son of the morning, could not screen him from Divine abhorrence when he had defiled himself by sin.

“Holy, Holy, Holy”—the continual cry of cherubim—is the loftiest song that a creature can offer, and the noblest that the Divine Being can accept. See then, He counts holiness to be His choice treasure. It is as the seal upon His heart and as the signet upon His right hand. He could as soon cease to be, as cease to be holy, and sooner renounce the sovereignty of the world than tolerate anything in His presence contrary to purity, righteousness and holiness. I pray you, you who profess to be followers

of Christ, set a high value upon purity of life and godliness of conversation.

Value the blood of Christ as the foundation of your hope, but never speak disparagingly of the work of the Spirit which is your meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. Yes, rather, prize it—prize it so heartily that you dread the very appearance of evil. Prize it so that in your most ordinary actions you may be, “a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, showing forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”

My design was to have entered at large upon the doctrine of sanctification this morning. I intended to use the word “sanctification” in the mode in which it is understood among theologians. For you must know that the term “sanctification” has a far narrower meaning in bodies of divinity than it has in Scripture. But in studying the subject I found myself lost in its ever-widening extent, so that I concluded to attempt less in the hope of efficiently doing more.

On some future occasion we will enter at length into the Spirit’s work, but now I only call attention to the fact that sanctification is treated in Scripture in various ways. I think we may do some service in illuminating the understanding of Believers, if we shall this morning draw their attention not to the theological but to the Scriptural uses of the term “sanctification,” and show that, in God’s Holy Word, it has a much wider meaning than is accorded to it by systematic divines.

It has been well said that the Book of God, like the works of God, is not systematically arranged. How different is the freedom of nature from the orderly precision of the scientific museum! If you visit the British Museum you see all the animals there placed in cases according to their respective orders. You go into God’s world and find dog and sheep, horse and cow, lion and vulture, elephant and ostrich roaming abroad as if no zoologist had ever ventured to arrange them in classes. The various rocks are not laid in order as the geologist draws them in his books, nor are the stars marked off according to their magnitudes.

The order of Nature is variety. Science does but arrange and classify, so as to assist the memory. So systematic divines, when they come to deal with God’s Word, find Scriptural truths put, not in order for the classroom, but for common life. The systematic divine is as useful as the analytical chemist, or the anatomist, but still the Bible is not arranged as a body of divinity. It is a handbook to Heaven. It is a guide to eternity, meant for the man at the plow, as much as for the scholar at his table. It is a primer for babes, as well as a classic for sages.

It is the humble, ignorant man’s book, and though there are depths in it in which the elephant may swim, yet there are shallows where the lamb may wade. We bless God that He has not given us a body of divinity in which we might lose ourselves, but that He has given us His own Word, put into the very best practical form for our daily use and edification.

It is a recognized truth among us, that the Old Testament very often helps us to understand the New, while the New also expounds the Old. With God’s Word, self-interpretation is the best. “Diamond cut diamond” is a rule with a goldsmith—so must it be with a Scriptural student. They who would know best, God’s Word, must study it in its own light.

I. Now, in the Old Testament we find the word “sanctify” very frequently, indeed, and it is used there in three senses. Let me call your attention to the *first* one. The word “sanctify” in the Old Testament frequently has the meaning of *setting apart*. It means the taking of something which was common before, which might legitimately have been put to ordinary uses, and setting it apart for God’s service, alone. It was then called sanctified or holy. Take, for instance, the passage in the 13th chapter of Exodus at the 2nd verse. “Sanctify unto me all the first-born.”

On account of the destruction of the first-born of Egypt, God claimed the first-born of men and the first-born of cattle to be His. The tribe of Levi was set apart to be the representatives of the first-born, to stand before the Lord to minister day and night in His tabernacle and in His temple. Those who were thus set apart to be priests and Levites were said to be *sanctified*. There is an earlier use of the term in the 2nd chapter of Genesis, at the 3rd verse. It is said, “And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made.”

It had been an ordinary portion of time before, but He set it apart for His own service, that on the seventh day man should do no work for himself, but rest and serve his Maker. So in Leviticus 27:14, you read, “And when a man shall sanctify his house to be holy unto the Lord,” etc., which was meant as a direction to devout Jews who set apart a house or field to be God’s. Intending that either the produce of the field or the occupation of the house should be wholly given either to God’s priests or Levites, or in some other way set apart to holy uses.

Now, nothing was done to the house. There were no ceremonies. We do not read that it was cleansed or washed or sprinkled with blood. But the mere fact that it was set apart for God was considered to be a sanctification. So in the most notable of instances in the Book of Exodus 29:44, we read that God said, “I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar,” by which plainly enough was meant that He would set it apart to be His house, the special place of His abode, where between the wings of the cherubim the bright light of the Shekinah might shine forth, the glorious evidence that the Lord God dwelt in the midst of His people.

To the same effect are such as the following: The sanctification of the altar, instruments and vessels, in Numbers 7:1, the setting apart of Eleazer the son of Abinadab, to keep the ark of the Lord while it was at Kirjathjearim, 1 Samuel 7:1, and the establishment of cities of refuge in Joshua 20:7, where in the original we find that the word rendered “appointed” is the same which elsewhere is translated “sanctified.” It plainly appears from the Old Testament that the word “sanctify” sometimes has the meaning simply, and only, of setting apart for holy uses.

This explains a text in John 10:36, “Say you of Him whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world, ‘you blaspheme,’ because I said I am the Son of God?” Jesus Christ there speaks of Himself as “sanctified” by His Father. Now He was not purged from sin, for He had none. Immaculately conceived, gloriously preserved from all touch or stain of evil, He needed no sanctifying work of the Spirit within Him to purge Him from dross or corruption. All that is here intended is that He was *set apart*. So in that notable and well known passage in John 17:19, “And for their

sakes I sanctify Myself that they also might be sanctified through the truth," by which, again, He meant only that He gave Himself up especially to God's service—to be occupied only with His Father's business.

He could say, "It is My meat and My drink to do the will of Him that sent Me and to finish His work." Brethren, you understand, now, the text in Jude, "Sanctified by God the Father." Surely it means that God the Father has especially set apart His people or *sanctified* them. Not that God the Father works operatively in the Believer's heart, although Paul tells us it is God that works in us to will and to do—that belongs immediately and effectively to the Holy Spirit—but He in the decree of election separated unto Himself a people who were to be sanctified to Himself forever and ever.

He, by the gift of His Son, redeemed for them, them from among men that they might be holy. And He by continually sending forth the Spirit fulfils His Divine purpose that they should be a separate people sanctified from all the rest of mankind. In this sense every Christian is perfectly sanctified already. We may speak of Believers as those who are sanctified by God the Father, that is to say, they are *set apart*. They were set apart before they were created, they were legally set apart by the purchase of Christ, they are manifestly and visibly set apart by the effectual calling of the Spirit of Divine Grace. They are, I say, in this sense, at all periods sanctified. And speaking of the work as it concerns God the Father, they are completely sanctified unto the Lord forever.

Is not this doctrine clear enough to you all? Leave the doctrine a moment, and let us look at it practically. Brothers and Sisters, have we ever realized this Truth of God as we ought to do? When a vessel, cup, altar, or instrument was set apart for Divine worship, it was never used for common purposes again. No man but the priest might drink out of the golden cup. The altar might not be trifled with. God's brazen laver was not for ordinary washing. Even the tongs upon the altar and the snuffers for the lamps were never to be profaned for any common purpose whatever.

What a suggestive and solemn fact is this! If you and I are sanctified by God the Father, we ought never to be used for any purpose but for God. "What," you say, "not for ourselves?" My Brethren, not for ourselves. You are not your own. You are bought with a price. "But must we not work and earn our own bread?" Verily, you must, but still not with that as your object. You must still be "diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." Remember, if you are servants, you are to serve not with eye service as men-pleasers but serving the Lord. If any man shall say "I have an occupation in which I cannot serve the Lord," leave it, you have no right in it.

But I think there is no calling in which man can be found, certainly no lawful calling, in which he may not be able to say, "Whether I eat or drink, or whatever I do, I do all to the glory of God." The Christian is no more a common man than was the altar a common place. It is as great a sacrilege for the Believer to live unto himself, or to live unto the world, as you and I could have profaned the most holy place, used the holy fire for our own kitchen, or the censer for common perfume, or the candlestick for our own chamber.

These things were God's—none might venture to appropriate them—and we are God's—and must be used only for Him. Oh, Christians, would that you could know this! You are Christ's men, God's men—servants of God through Jesus Christ. You are not to do your own works. You are not to live for your own objects. You are to say at all times, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus." You are practically to take this for your motto, "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain." I fear nine out of ten professing Christians have never recognized this fact. They think if they were to devote a *part* of their substance that would do, or a *part* of their time will suffice.

Oh, Christ did not buy a *part* of you—Brothers and Sisters—Jesus Christ did not purchase a part of you! He bought *all* of you—body, soul and spirit—and He must have you, the whole man. Oh, if you are to be partly saved by Him and partly by yourselves, then live to yourselves. But if God has wholly set you apart to be vessels of mercy fitted for His use, do not rob the Lord! Treat not as common cups those things which are as the bowls of the altar.

There is another practical thought here. It was a crime which brought destruction upon Babylon when Belshazzar in his drunken frolic cried, "Bring forth the cups of the Lord, the goodly spoil of the temple at Jerusalem." They brought the golden candlestick and there it stood flaming high in the midst of the marble hall. The despot, surrounded by his wives and his concubines, filled high the bowl with the foaming draught, and bidding them pass round the cups of Jehovah, the heathen, the worshippers of idols, drank confusion to the God of Heaven and earth.

In that moment, just as the sacred vessel touched the sacrilegious lips, a hand was seen mysteriously writing out his doom—"You are weighed in the balances and found wanting." This was the crime which filled up the ephah of his sin. Now was the measure of his iniquity fully accomplished. He had used for lascivious and drunken purposes, vessels which belonged to Jehovah, the God of the whole earth. Oh, take heed, take heed, you that profess to be sanctified by the blood of the Covenant, that you reckon it not to be an unholy thing! See to it that you make not your bodies which you profess to be set apart to God's service, slaves of sin, or your members servants of iniquity unto iniquity. Lest, O Professors, you should hear in that hour the voice of the recording angel as he cries, "You are weighed in the balances and found wanting."

Be you clean, you that bear the vessels of the Lord. And you Beloved who hope that you are Christ's. and have a humble faith in Him this morning, see that you walk circumspectly, that by no means you prostitute to the service of sin that which was set apart in the eternal Covenant of Grace to be God's. alone. If you and I are tempted to sin, we must reply, No! Let another man do that, but I cannot. I am God's man. I am set apart for Him—how shall I do this great wickedness and sin against God? Let dedication enforce sanctification. Think of the dignity to which God has called you—Jehovah's vessels, set apart for the Master's use.

Far from you, far from you be everything which would make you impure. When Antiochus Epiphanes offered a sow on the altar of the Lord in the temple at Jerusalem, his awful death might have been easily foretold. Oh, how many there are who make a high profession who have offered unclean flesh upon the altars of God! So many have made religion a

stalking-horse to their own emolument, and espoused the faith to gain esteem and applause among men! What says the Lord concerning such? “Vengeance belongs unto Me, I will recompense says the Lord” (Heb. 10:30).

Their god was their belly. They gloried in their shame. They minded earthly things—and they die justly accursed. Spots are they in your solemn feasts—wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. But, you Beloved, be not carried away with the error of the wicked—keep yourselves unspotted from the world.

II. Secondly, in the Old Testament, the word “sanctify” is now and then used in another sense, one which I do not perceive to be hinted at in our Biblical Encyclopedias, but which is needed to make the subject complete. The word “sanctify” is used, not only to signify that the thing is set apart for holy uses but *that it is to be regarded, treated, and declared as a holy thing*. To give you an instance. There is a passage in Isaiah 8:13, which is to the point, when it is said—“Sanctify the Lord of Hosts, Himself.”

You clearly perceive that the Lord does not need to be set apart for holy uses. And the Lord of Hosts needs not to be purified, for He is Holiness itself. It means *adore* and *reverence* the Lord—with fear and trembling approach His throne—regard Him as the Holy One of Israel. But let me give you other instances. When Nadab and Abihu, as recorded in the tenth of Leviticus, offered sacrifice to God, and put strange fire on the altar, the fire of the Lord went forth and consumed them. And this was the reason given—“I will be sanctified in them that come near Me.”

The Lord did not mean that He would be set apart, nor that He would be made holy by purification, but that He would be treated and regarded as a most Holy Being with whom such liberties were not to be taken. And again in Numbers 20:12, on that unfortunate occasion when Moses lost his temper and smote the rock twice, saying, “Hear now, you rebels, must we fetch you water out of this rock?” The Lord said that he should see the promised land but should *never* enter it, the reason being—“Because you believed Me not, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel.”

By which He meant that Moses had not acted as to honor God’s name among the people. A yet more familiar instance occurs in what is commonly called “The Lord’s Prayer.” “Our Father which are in Heaven, sanctified be Your name.” The word “hallowed” is simply an English variation, the Greek is “*sanctified* be Your name.” Now we know that God’s name does not need purifying, or setting apart—so that the sense here can only be, “Let Your name be revered and adored throughout the whole earth and let men regard it as being a sacred and holy thing.”

My beloved Brethren, have we not some light here concerning our second text—“Sanctified in Christ Jesus.” If the word “sanctified” may mean “regarded as holy and treated as such,” can you not see how in Christ Jesus the saints are regarded by God as being holy and treated as such? Mark, we do not lay that down as being the *only* meaning of the text, for we shall have to show that another sense may be attached to it.

There are Brethren who have enlarged upon our being sanctified in Christ and have almost forgotten the work of the Spirit. Now, if they only speak of our being sanctified in Christ, in the sense of being treated as

holy, in fact as being justified, we have no quarrel with them. But if they deny the work of the Spirit, they are guilty of deadly error. I have sometimes heard the term used, “imputed sanctification,” which is sheer absurdity. You cannot even use the term, “imputed justification.” “Imputed righteousness” is correct enough and implies a glorious doctrine.

But *justification* is not imputed, it is actually conferred. We are justified through the imputed righteousness of Christ, but as to being imputedly sanctified, no one who understands the use of language can so speak. The term is inaccurate and unscriptural. I know it is said that the Lord Jesus is made of God unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. But this sanctification is not by *imputation*, nor does the text say so. Why, you might as readily prove imputed *wisdom*, or imputed *redemption* by this text, as force it to teach imputed sanctification!

It is a fact that for the sake of what Jesus Christ did, God’s people, though in themselves *partially* sanctified and being yet subject to sin, are for Christ’s sake treated and regarded as if they were perfectly holy. But this, according to theological definitions, is rather justification than sanctification. It must, however, be admitted that the Scripture sometimes uses the word “sanctification” in such a manner as to make it tantamount to justification. This, however, we can clearly see, that God’s people have access with boldness to the Lord, because they are regarded through Christ as though they were perfectly holy.

Oh, Brethren, think of this for a moment. A holy God cannot have dealings with unholy men. A holy God—and is not Christ Jesus God?—cannot have communion with unholiness, and yet you and I are unholy. How, then, does Christ receive us to His bosom? How does His Father walk with us and find Himself agreed? Because He views us, not in ourselves, but in our great federal Head, the Second Adam. He looks at us—

**“Not as we were in Adam’s fall,
When sin and ruin covered all;
But as we’ll stand another day,
Fairer than sun’s meridian ray.”**

He looks on the deeds of Christ as ours—on His perfect obedience and sinless life as ours, and thus we may sing in the language of Hart—

**“With your spotless garments on,
Holy as the Holy One.”**

We may boldly enter into that which is within the veil, where no unholy thing may come, yet where we may venture because God views us as holy in Christ Jesus. This is a great and precious doctrine. But still, since the use of the term “sanctification” in any other sense than that in which it is commonly employed as meaning the work of the Spirit, tends to foster confused notions and really does, I fear, lead some to despise the work of the Spirit of God, I think it is better in ordinary conversation between Christians to speak of sanctification without confounding it with what is quite a distinct act, namely, justification through the imputed righteousness of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Yet, if we hear a Brother so talk, we must not be too severe upon him, as though he assuredly erred from the faith, for in Scripture, the terms “sanctification” and “justification” are frequently used interchangeably and Christ’s righteousness made the subject matter of both works of Divine Grace.

III. We now come to the usual sense in which the word “sanctification” is employed. It means *actually to purify or make holy*. Not merely to set apart nor to account holy, but to make *really* and *actually* so in nature. You have the word in this sense in many places in the Old Testament. You will find it in Exodus 19:10, 11, 12. On the third day God was about to proclaim on the top of Sinai His Holy Law and the mandate went forth, “Sanctify the people today and tomorrow,” which sanctification consisted in certain outward deeds by which their bodies and clothes were put into a clean state and their souls were brought into a reverential state of awe.

In the third of Joshua you find when the children of Israel were about to pass the Jordan, it was said, “Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you.” They were to prepare themselves to be beholders of a scene so august—when Jordan was driven back and the river was utterly dried up before the feet of the priests of God. There was in this case an actual purification. Men in the old times were sprinkled with blood and thus sanctified from defilement and considered to be pure in the sight of God.

Now this is the sense in which we view our third text, “Sanctification through the Spirit,” and this, I repeat, is the general sense in which we understand it in common conversation among Christian men.

Sanctification *begins* in regeneration. The Spirit of God infuses into man the new principle called the spirit, which is a third and higher nature, so that the believing man becomes body, soul and *spirit*. And in this he is distinct and distinguished from all other men of the race of Adam. This work, which begins in regeneration, is carried on in two ways—by vivification and by mortification. That is, by *giving life* to that which is good, and by *sending death* to that which is evil in the man. Mortification, whereby the lusts of the flesh are subdued and kept under. And vivification, by which the life which God has put within us is made to be a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.

This is carried on every day in what we call *perseverance*, by which the Christian is preserved and continued in a gracious state, and is made to abound in good works unto the praise and glory of God. And it culminates, or comes to perfection, in “Glory,” when the soul, being thoroughly purged, is caught up to dwell with holy beings at the right hand of the Majesty on High. Now, this work, though we commonly speak of it as being the work of the Spirit, is quite as much the work of the Lord Jesus Christ as of the Spirit.

In looking for texts on the subject, I have been struck with the fact that where I found one verse speaking of it as the Spirit’s work, I found another in which it was treated as the work of Jesus Christ. I can well understand that my second text, “Sanctified in Christ Jesus,” has as great a fullness of meaning as the third, “Sanctification through the Spirit.” Lend me your attention. I fear that not many of you will be interested, except those of you who have a share in this precious work. Others may think the subject too dry for them. Oh that they may yet know how precious to Believers is the purifying work of sanctification!

Sanctification is a work *in* us, not a work *for* us. It is a work in us and there are two agents—one is the Worker who works this sanctification effectually—that is the Spirit. And the other, the Agent, the efficacious means by which the Spirit works this sanctification—Jesus Christ and

His most precious blood. Suppose, to put it as plainly as we can, there is a garment which needs to be washed. Here is a person to wash it, and there is a bath in which it is to be washed. The Person is the Holy Spirit but the bath is the precious blood of Christ. It is strictly correct to speak of the Person cleansing, as being the *Sanctifier*—it is quite as accurate to speak of that which is in the bath and which makes it clean as being the Sanctifier, too.

Now, the Spirit of God sanctifies us. He works it effectively. But He sanctifies us through the blood of Christ, through the water which flowed with the blood from Christ's side. To repeat my illustration—here is a garment which is black. A fuller, in order to make it white, uses niter and soap, both the fuller and the soap are cleansers. So both the Holy Spirit and the atonement of Christ are Sanctifiers. I think that will be plain enough.

Let us enlarge upon the doctrine. The Spirit of God is the great Worker by whom we are cleansed. I shall not, this morning, quote the texts. Most of you have the "Baptist Confession of Faith," published by Passmore and Alabaster. And the "Catechism," which are generally distributed among the families of the Church. They will furnish you with abundance of texts on that subject, for this is a doctrine which is generally received among us—that it is the Spirit of God who creates in us a new heart and a right spirit, according to the tenor of the Covenant—"A new heart will I give them and a right spirit will I put within them." "I will put My Spirit within them, and they shall walk in My ways."

He renews and changes the nature—turns the bias of the will—makes us seek after that which is good and right, so that every good thing in us may be described as "the fruit of the Spirit." And all our virtues and all our Graces are efficiently worked in us by the Spirit of the living God. Never, I pray you, Brethren, never, never forget this! Oh, it will be an ill day for any Church when the members begin to think lightly of the work of the Holy Spirit within us! We delight to magnify the work of Christ *for* us, but we must not depreciate the work of the blessed Spirit *in* us.

In the days of my venerable predecessor, Dr. Gill, who was in the opinion, even of ultra-Calvinists, sound to the core, this pernicious evil broke out in our Church. There were some who believed in what was, "Imputed Sanctification," and denied the work of the blessed Spirit. I was reading last night in our old Church Book, a note written there in the doctor's own handwriting, as the deliberate opinion of this Church—

"Agreed—That to deny the internal sanctification of the Spirit, as a principle of Divine Grace and holiness worked in the heart, or as consisting of Divine Grace communicated to and implanted in the soul, which, though but a begun work and as yet incomplete, is an abiding work of Grace and will abide, notwithstanding all corruptions, temptations and snares, and be performed by the Author of it until the day of Christ, when it will be the saints' meetness for eternal glory—is a grievous error, which highly reflects dishonor on the blessed Spirit and His operations of Grace on the heart, is subversive of true religion and powerful godliness and renders persons unfit for Church communion.

"Why, it is further agreed, that such persons who appear to have embraced this error be not admitted to the communion of this Church. And should any such who are members of it appear to have received it and

continued in it, that they be forthwith excluded from it.” Two members then present declaring themselves to be of the opinion condemned in the above resolution and also a third person who was absent but who was well known to have been under this awful delusion, were consequently excluded that evening.

No, more, a person of another Church who held the opinion thus condemned, was forbidden to commune at the Table, and his pastor at Kettering was written to upon the subject, warning him not to allow so great an errorist to remain in fellowship. The doctor thought the error to be so deadly that he used the pruning knife at once. He did not stop till it spread, but he cut off the very twigs. And this is one of the benefits of Church discipline when we are enabled to carry it out under God—that it does nip error in the very bud—and thus those who as yet are not infected are kept from it by the blessed Providence of God through the instrumentality of the Church.

We have always held, and still hold and teach that the work of the Spirit in us, whereby we are conformed unto Christ’s image, is as absolutely necessary for our salvation, as is the work of Jesus Christ, by which He cleanses us from our sins.

Pause here one moment and let me not distract your minds while I say that while the Spirit of God is said in Scripture to be the Author of sanctification, yet there is a visible agent which must not be forgotten. “Sanctify them,” said Christ, through Your *truth*. Your Word is truth.” Young men of the Bible Class, look up the passages of Scripture which prove that the instrument of our sanctification is the Word of God. You will find that there are very many. It is the Word of God which sanctifies the soul. The Spirit of God brings to our minds the commands and precepts and doctrines of the Truths of God and applies them with power.

These are heard in the ear, and being received in the heart, they work in us to will and to do of God’s good pleasure. How important, then, that the Truths of God should be preached. How necessary that you never tolerate a ministry which leaves out the great doctrines or the great precepts of the Gospel. The Truth of God is the Sanctifier and if we do not hear the Truth, depend upon it, we shall not grow in sanctification. We only progress in sound living as we progress in sound understanding. “Your word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my paths.”

Do not say of such-and-such an error, “Oh, it is a mere matter of opinion.” If it is a mere matter of opinion today, it will be a matter of *practice* tomorrow. No man has an error of *judgment*, without sooner or later having an error in *practice*. As every grain of Truth is a grain of diamond dust, prize it all. Hold fast the Truths of God which you have received and which you have been taught. “Hold fast the form of sound words.” And in this day when articles are ridiculed, when creeds are despised—hold fast to that which you have received that you may be found faithful among the faithless. For by so holding the Truth of God shall you be sanctified by the Spirit of God. The Agent, then, is the Spirit of God working through the Truth.

But now let me bring you back to my old figure. In another sense we are sanctified through Christ Jesus, because it is His blood and the water which flowed from His side in which the Spirit washes our heart from

the defilement and propensity of sin. It is said of our Lord—“Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it. That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle or any such thing.”

Remember again, “Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate.” “He that sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them Brethren.” I say again, there are hundreds of texts of this kind. “You shall call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.” “God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world.”

In that memorable passage where Paul, struggling with corruption, exclaims, “Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”—the answer is not concerning the Holy Spirit. But he says, “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Space forbids the multiplication of texts. But there are many passages to the effect that our sanctification is the work of Jesus Christ. He is our Sanctifier, for He filled the sacred laver of regeneration in which we are washed, filled it with His blood and with the water which flowed from His side—and in this, by the Holy Spirit, we are washed.

There is no being sanctified by the Law. The Spirit does not use legal precepts to sanctify us—there is no purification by mere dictates of morality—the Spirit of God does not use them. No, just as when Marah’s waters were bitter, Moses, to make them sweet, commanded them to take a tree and cast it into the waters, and they were sweet, so the Spirit of God, finding our natures bitter, takes the tree of Calvary, casts it into the stream, and everything is made pure. He finds us lepers, and to make us clean He dips the hyssop of faith in the precious blood and sprinkles it upon us and we are clean.

There is a mysterious efficacy in the blood of Christ not merely to make satisfaction for sin but to work the death of sin. The blood appears before God and He is well-pleased. It falls on us—lusts wither and old corruptions feel the death stroke. Dagon falls before the ark and although the stump is left and corruptions still remain, yet Christ shall put an end to all our inbred sins and through Him we shall mount to Heaven perfect, even as our Father, which is in Heaven, is perfect.

Just as the Spirit only works through the Truth, so the blood of Christ only works through *faith*. Young men of the Catechumen and Bible Classes, again I say, turn to your Bibles at your leisure and look up the many passages which speak of faith as sanctifying the soul and purifying the mind. Our faith lays hold on the precious atonement of Christ. It sees Jesus suffering on the tree and it says—“I vow revenge against the sins which nailed Him there.” And thus His precious blood works in us a detestation of all sin and the Spirit, through the Truth of God, working by faith, applies the precious blood of sprinkling—and we are made clean and are accepted in the Beloved.

I am afraid that I have confused and darkened counsel with words. But, I think I may have suggested some trains of thought which will lead you to see that Holy Scripture teaches us a sanctification, not narrow and concise, so as to be written down with a short definition as in our

creed books—but wide, large and expansive. A work in which we are sanctified *by* God the Father, sanctified *in* Christ, and yet have our sanctification *through* the Spirit of God.

Oh, my dear Hearers, strive after practical holiness. You that love Christ, do not let any say of you—“There is a Christian, but he is worse than other men.” It is not our eloquence, our learning, our fame, or our wealth, that can ever commend Christ to the world—it is the holy living of Christians. I was speaking, the other day, to a Brother minister about this Bi-centenary movement, which I fear will be an immense injury to Christ’s Church. I feared, lest it should be made an opportunity for strife among Brethren. Error must be corrected but love must not be wounded.

He remarked, and I thought it was so truthful, that the only way by which Dissent flourished of old was by the then superior holiness of its ministers, so that while the Church clergyman was hunting, the Dissenting minister was visiting the sick. And said he, “This is the way in which we shall lose power, if our ministers become political and worldly, it will be all over with us.” I have never shunned to rebuke, when I thought it necessary, but I hate contention. The only allowable strife is to labor who can be the most holy, the most earnest, the most zealous—who can do the most for the poor and the ignorant—and who can lift Christ’s Cross the highest.

That is the way to lift up the members of any one particular denomination—by the members of that body being more devout, more sanctified, more spiritual-minded than others. All mere party fights will only create strife, animosities, and bickering—and are not of the Spirit of God. But to live unto God and to be devoted to Him—this is the strength of the Church. This will give us the victory, God helping us—and unto His name shall be all the praise.

As for persons here who are not converted and are unregenerate, I cannot address you about sanctification. I have opened a door this morning, but you cannot enter. Only remember, that if you cannot enter into this, you cannot enter into Heaven, for—

***“Those holy gates forever bar
Pollution, sin and shame.
None shall obtain admission there,
But followers of the Lamb.”***

May it be yours, by God’s Grace, to come humbly and confess your sins and ask and find forgiveness. And then, but not till then, there is hope that you may be sanctified in the Spirit of your mind. The Lord bless you for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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

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

A STRING OF PEARLS

NO. 948

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 28, 1870,
BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in Heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”
1 Peter 1:3-5.

THE persons whom Peter addressed were in great need of comfort. They were strangers, strangers scattered far from home. They had in consequence to suffer manifold trials and therefore needed plenteous consolations. Such is our position in a spiritual sense. We, too, are strangers and foreigners. We are pilgrims and sojourners below, and our citizenship is in Heaven. We also require the Word of comfort, for while our banishment lasts, we look for tribulations. The persons whom Peter addressed were God's chosen, “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father,” and one sure result of Divine election is the world's enmity. “If you were of the world, the world would love his own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”

So you too, my Brethren, chosen out from among men, to be the peculiar people of God, must expect to be partakers of the Cross—for the servant is not greater than his Lord. Since they persecuted Him they will also persecute you. Therefore to you, as to those of old by Peter, the Word of consolation is sent this day. The Apostle also addressed the sanctified. Through the Holy Spirit they had been sanctified and set apart. To the “obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus” they had been brought. They were a people who had “purified their souls in obeying the Truth of God through the Spirit.”

And rest assured no man can do this without encountering fiery trials. He who swims with the stream shall find all things go easily with him until he reaches the waterfall of destruction. But he who stems the torrent must expect to breast many a raging billow. And therefore to such the strong consolations of the Gospel are necessary. Speak we then this morning to the same characters as those addressed by Peter, even to you who “are not of the world,” but “strangers.” To you who are “chosen of God,” and therefore the object of the enmity of man. To you who maintain the separated life of true holiness, and are therefore opposed by the profane.

You have need of comfort, and in the Word, and by the Holy Spirit, your need is more than met. Our Apostle cheers these troubled hearts by exciting them to a song of praise. I might almost entitle these three verses a New Testament Psalm. They are stanzas of a majestic song. You have here

a delightful hymn. It scarcely needs to be turned into verse—it is in itself essential poetry.

Now, my Brethren, to lead the mind to praise God is one of the surest ways of uplifting it from depression. The wild beasts of anxiety and discontent which surround our bivouac in the wilderness will be driven away by the fire of our gratitude and the song of our praise. When the Psalm recounts with joyous gratitude the mercies which God has given us, it supplants distress by thankfulness, even as the fir tree and the myrtle take the place of the thorn and the brier where the Gospel works its wonders.

In these three verses we have a string of pearls, a necklace of diamonds, a cabinet of jewels—no, the comparisons are poor—we have something far better than all the riches of the earth can ever typify. You have here the heritage of the chosen of God. Your *heritage*, Beloved, your own peculiar portion if you belong to Christ this day.

We shall conduct you through this mine of treasure, and ask you to dwell upon each blessing, that your souls may be comforted, and that you, lifting up your hearts in blessing, and praising the God of all Grace, may forget your cares and sorrows, and find a young Heaven begun below—a Paradise blooming amid the desert. There are seven choice things in the text, a perfect number of perfect things. One might see more than seven, but these will exhaust all our time. Therefore we shall speak briefly upon each one.

First, I see in the text as the source of all the rest, ABUNDANT MERCY. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a lively hope.” No other attribute could have helped us had Mercy refused. As we are by nature, Justice condemns us, Holiness frowns upon us, Power crushes us, Truth confirms the threat of the Law and Wrath fulfils it. It is from the mercy of our God that all our hopes begin.

Mercy is needed for the miserable, and yet more for the sinful. Misery and sin are fully united in the human race, and Mercy, here, performs her noble deeds. My Brethren, God has vouchsafed His mercy to us, and we must thankfully acknowledge that in our case His mercy has been abundant mercy.

We were defiled with abundant sin, and only the multitude of His loving kindnesses could have put those sins away. We were infected with an abundance of evil, and only overflowing mercy can ever cure us of all our natural disease, and make us meet for Heaven. We have received abundant Grace up till now. We have made great drafts upon the Exchequer of God, and of His fullness have all we received Grace for Grace. Where sin has abounded, Grace has much more abounded. Will you, my fellow Debtor, stand still awhile and contemplate the abundant mercy of our blessed God?

A river deep and broad is before you. Track it to its fountain head—see it welling up in the Covenant of Grace—in the eternal purposes of Infinite Wisdom. The secret source is no small spring, no mere bubbling fountain, it is a very geyser, leaping aloft in fullness of power. The springs of the sea are not comparable with it. Not even an angel could fathom the springs of eternal love or measure the depths of Infinite Grace.

Follow now the stream—mark it in all its course. See how it widens and deepens, how at the foot of the Cross it expands into a measureless river!

Mark how the filthy come and wash. See how each polluted one comes up milk-white from the washing! Note how the dead are brought to be bathed in this sacred stream, and mark how they live the moment that they touch its wave. Mark how the sick are laid upon the bank, and if but the spray of the river falls upon them they are made whole!

See how on either bank rich verdure clothes the land! Wherever this stream comes, all is life and happiness. Observe along the margin the many trees whose leaves never wither, and whose fruits in season are always brought to maturity. These all draw their life from this flood, and drink from this river of God, which is full of water. Fail not with gladsome eye to note the thousand boats of fairest sail which scud along the mighty river with colors flying, each vessel laden with joy. Behold how happily they are borne along by the current of mercy to the ocean of infinite felicity!

Now we reach the mighty main of mercy, dare you attempt with wings of faith to fly over that glassy sea? No shore gives boundary to that great deep, no voice proclaims its length and breadth. But from its lowest deeps and all along its unruffled bosom I hear a voice which says, "Here is Love." "Touching the Almighty, we cannot find Him out," but this we know, that His love towards His elect surpasses all conception, even—

***"Imagination's utmost stretch
In wonder dies away."***

Turn to the words of the text a moment, for there is great suggestiveness in them. It is God's great mercy that is spoken of here. "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy." Everything in God is on a grand scale. Great power—He shakes the world. Great wisdom—He balances the clouds. His mercy is commensurate with His other attributes, it is Godlike mercy! Infinite mercy! You must measure His Godhead before you shall compute His mercy. My Soul, think for awhile—you have drank out of this exceeding great and wide sea, and it is all yours to drink from forever!

Well may it be called "abundant," if it is infinite. It will always be abundant, for all that can be drawn from it will be but as the drop of a bucket to the sea itself. The mercy which deals with us is not man's mercy, but God's mercy, and therefore boundless mercy. But note again, it is the mercy of the "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is the mercy of God *in* Christ. God's mercy is always special, but His mercy in Christ is especially special.

I know not how else to describe it. His mercy in Nature is bright. His mercy in Providence is conspicuous. But His mercy in His dear Son, His mercy in the Incarnate God—His mercy through the perfect Sacrifice—this is mercy's best wine kept to the last. This is mercy's "fat things full of marrow." When I see Jesus descending from Heaven to earth, Jesus bleeding, Jesus paying all the debts of His people, I can well understand that the mercy of God in Christ must be abundant mercy.

Note carefully another word, it is the mercy of "the Father." You have read this last week, I dare say, and felt sickened as you read, the fearful stories of the wounded and their sufferings on the battlefield. You have read also descriptions of how the wounded, when they are brought into the many German towns are met by their compatriots, who rejoice in their victories, but at the same time lament for the valiant men who are

maimed for life. You stand on the platform of the railway station, a stranger, and you see a fine young man with an arm shot away, looking sickly and pale from pain and hardships, and you pity him.

I know you pity him from your heart, but an elderly man rushes before you, it is his father. And as *he* looks upon his son, whom he sent to the war so manly, so strong, so full of health and vigor—now reduced to the mere ghost of what he was—he pities as a stranger cannot. His inmost heart is moved with compassion for his son. The mercy of the Lord to us is not the mercy of a stranger to a stranger, but the mercy of a Father towards his own dear children. Such mercy has the Lord had on me, and I weep for joy as I tell of it.

“Like as a father pities his children,” so has He pitied me. I know if He had not loved me He could not have treated me so tenderly. Such pity, such mercy has He had on you. And He is still the same. Do you not rejoice to think that you participate in abundant mercy, Divine mercy, the mercy of God in Jesus Christ, a Father’s mercy, the mercy of our God and Father? O reach to the height of the text—one more step will do it.

The Father who is thus tender to us, is also the “Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” And therefore such a Father as can be found nowhere else. The Father of Him who is the Perfect and the Ever-Blessed, is also your Father. And all His mercy belongs to you. Let us congratulate each other, my Brothers and Sisters in the faith. Let us shake off all thoughts of our poverty and all trembling because of our trials. We are rich and abound, for Heaven’s “abundant mercy” belongs to us. “Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name.”

II. The next great blessing in the text is that OF INCORRUPTIBLE LIFE. Mark that, O Believer. “The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to His abundant mercy, has begotten us again unto a lively hope.” One of the first displays of Divine mercy which we experience is being begotten again. Our first birth gave us the image of the first Adam—“earthly.” Our second birth, and that alone, gives us the image of the second Adam, which is “heavenly.”

To be begotten once may be a curse—to be begotten again is everlastingly and assuredly a blessing. To be born once may be a subject for eternal bewailing—to be born a second time will be the theme of a joyful and unending song. My Brethren, saints are “begotten again unto a lively hope” in the hour of their regeneration, when they are “born again from above.”

Have we been so born? If we have, we enjoy a blessing far exceeding anything which the natural man can dream of. The Holy Spirit comes upon the chosen in the hour appointed and creates in them a new heart and a right spirit. In a supernatural manner a new principle is implanted, a new life is created within the soul. Just as assuredly as our first birth gives us being from our former nothingness, our new life brings us from utter death into the world of spirit, and into newness of life. We are new born by the “incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever.” Ours is not the fancied regeneration of those who impute to a mere ceremony, invented by men, a change which is altogether of God’s own working. It is not an imaginary charm worked by incantations and sprinkling over an unconscious baby. It is a real creation, a true life—not fictitious—but ac-

tual and operative, and one which is found to reveal itself in righteousness and true holiness.

You shall know this new life by the faith and the repentance which always come with it wherever God Himself is pleased to work it. The new life of a Christian is Divine in its origin—God has begotten us. The new life comes not from man—it is worked by the operation of the Holy Spirit. As certainly as God spoke, and it was done, in the creation of the world, so He speaks in the heart of man, and it is done—and the new creature is born. The new life in us, as it has a Divine origin, has also a Divine Nature. You are made partakers of the Divine Nature.

The life of a Christian is the life of God—God dwells in him. The Holy Spirit Himself enters the Believer and abides in him, and makes him a living man. Therefore, from its Divine Nature, the inner life of the Believer can by no possibility ever be destroyed. You must first destroy the Godhead before you can quench the spark of the eternal flame that burns within the Believer's bosom. Has not the Apostle told us it is a "living and incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever"?

What a great mystery is this, but at the same time what a blessing! To be born again, to be born from above, to be born by the power of God into a discernment of spiritual truths. To hear spiritual voices, to see spiritual sights, and to be worshippers in spirit and in truth of God, who is a Spirit. God grant that if we have never known this we yet may be created anew in Christ Jesus.

Observe, dear Brethren, to be begotten again is a very marvelous thing. Suppose a man is born into this world, as is too frequently the case, with a predisposition to some sad hereditary disease. There he is, filled with disease, and medicine cannot eject the unwelcome tenant from his body. Suppose that man's body could be altogether new born, and he could receive a new body pure from all sickness—it would be a great mercy. But, O my Brothers and Sisters, it does not approach to regeneration!

Because our supposition only deals with the *body*, while the new birth renews the *soul*, and even implants a higher nature. Regeneration overcomes not a mere material disease, not an infliction in the flesh, but the natural depravity of the *heart*—the deadly disorder of the soul. We are born again, and by that means we are delivered from the power of corruption. The new nature having no depravity in it, nor tendency to sin, "it cannot sin because it is born of God."

The moment the heavenly life is implanted it begins to war with the old nature, and continues to struggle violently with it—there is a deadly enmity between the two. The new nature will never be reconciled to the old, or the old one to the new, but the new will conquer and overcome the evil. You have smiled at the pleasant fiction of old men being ground young again in a mill—but that marvel would be nothing compared with this—the old man made young would still be the same man. And placed in the same circumstances, he would develop into the same character.

But here is the old man crucified and a new man created in the Divine image! Who can estimate the privilege of receiving a Heaven-born Nature, which, however weak and feeble it may be at the first, is ever-living, and by the power of God will gain the ultimate victory? Let us then rejoice and be glad! We may be very poor today, but we are born from above. We may be much afflicted, but what of that if we are the twice-born sons of Hea-

ven? We may be despised and rejected, but the heavenly light has shone upon our eyes. We have been regenerated, we have “passed from death unto life.” Here is ceaseless cause for gratitude and joy, and if we rightly consider it, we may forget our griefs.

III. A third blessing strictly connected with this new life, is A LIVELY HOPE. “He has begotten us again unto a lively hope.” Could a man live without hope? Men manage to survive the worst condition of distress when they are encouraged by a hope. But is not suicide the natural result of the *death* of hope? Yes, we must have a hope, and the Christian is not left without one. He has “a lively hope,” that is to say, first, he has a hope within him, real, true, and operative.

Some men’s hopes of Heaven are not living hopes, for they never stir them to action. They live as if they were going to Hell, and yet they coolly talk about hoping that all will be well with them at last! A Christian’s hope purifies him, excites him to diligence, makes him seek after that which he expects to obtain. A student at the University hoping to gain a prize uses his best endeavors, burns the midnight oil, strains all his faculties that he may reach the mark which will ensure his passing the exams.

Even thus the Christian with a lively hope devotes himself to obtaining the blessings which God has promised in His Word. The Lord has begotten us to a “lively hope,” that is to say, to a vigorous, active, operating hope. It is a “lively hope” in another sense, namely, that it cheers and enlivens. The swimmer who is ready to sink, if he sees a boat nearing him, plucks up courage and swims with all his strength because now he expects that his swimming will be of effectual service to him. The Christian amid the waves and billows of adversity retains his hope, a glorious hope of future bliss, and therefore he strikes out like a man towards the heavenly shore. Our hope buoys up the soul, keeps the head above water, inspires confidence and sustains courage!

It is also called a “living hope,” because it is imperishable. Other hopes fade like withering flowers. The hopes of the rich, the boasts of the proud—all these will die out as a candle when it flickers in the socket. The hope of the greatest monarch has been crushed before our eyes. He set up the standard of victory too soon, and has seen it trailed in the mire. There is no unwaning hope beneath the changeful moon—the only imperishable hope is that which climbs above the stars, and fixes itself upon the Throne of God and the Person of Jesus Christ.

The hope which God has given to His truly quickened people is a lively hope, however, because it deals with life. Brethren, it may be Christ will come while yet we live, and then we shall not die but shall be fitted for Heaven by a change. However, it is probable that we may have to depart out of this world unto the Father by the usual course of nature. And in expecting to do so let us not look at death as a gloomy matter, as though it could at all jeopardize our welfare or ultimately injure us.

No, my Brethren, we have a living hope, a lively hope. Charles Borromeo, the famous bishop of Milan, ordered a painter who was about to draw a skeleton with a scythe over a sepulcher, to substitute for it the golden key of Paradise. Truly this is a most fitting emblem for a Believer’s tomb—for what is death but the key of Heaven to the Christian? We notice frequently over cemetery gates, as an emblematic device, a torch turned

over ready to be quenched. Ah, my Brethren, it is not so, the torch of our life burns the better, and blazes the brighter for the change of death.

The breaking of the pitcher which now surrounds the lamp and conceals the glory, will permit our inner life to reveal its lofty nature, and before long even the pitcher shall be so remodeled as to become an aid to that light! Its present breaking is but preparatory to its future refashioning. It is a blessed thought that the part of us which must most sadly feel the mortal stroke is secured beyond all fear from permanent destruction. We know that this very body, though it molders into dust, shall live again!

These weeping eyes shall have all tears wiped from them. These hands which grasp today the sword of a conflict shall wave the palm branch of triumph. My Brethren, it were not just that one body should fight and another body should be crowned—that one body should labor and another body have the reward. The same identical body shall rise from the dead at the Lord's coming, marvelously changed, strangely developed as the seed develops into the full-blown flower—but still the same—in very deed the same!

This very body shall be resplendent with glory, even the same which now bears sickness and pain. This is our lively hope—that death has no dominion over any part of our manhood. There is for awhile a separation between the soul and the body—it is but for awhile. There is for the flesh a temporary slumbering in the tomb, it is but a slumber, and the waking shall be in the likeness of Christ. As for the soul, it shall be forever with the Lord, waiting for the latter day and the coming of Christ, when the body itself shall be raised from corruption into the likeness of the Glory of Him who is the first begotten from the dead. Thus, I have brought you up from the abundant mercy to the new life, and onward, to the lively hope.

IV. We cannot tarry, but must notice, in the fourth place, another delightful possession which ought effectually to chase away from all of us the glooms of this life, and that is A RISEN SAVIOR. "He has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Our best Friend is not dead! Our great Patron and Helper, our Omnipotent Savior, is not lying in the tomb today. He lives, He ever lives! No sound of greater gladness can be heard in the Christian Church than this—"The Lord is risen, the Lord is risen indeed!"

Now, Brethren, observe the connection between a risen Savior and our living hope. Jesus Christ died, not in appearance, but in reality. In proof whereof, His heart was pierced by the soldier's spear. He was laid in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, truly a corpse. Not a spark of life remained. The only difference between His dead body and the dead body of any other was that still the preserving power hovered over Him, and as His body had been defiled by no sin, so His flesh could not see corruption as it would have done had it been the body of a sinful man.

Then, at the end of the appointed time, the same Savior who was laid in the tomb rose from the dead—not in secrecy—but before the Roman guards who watched the sepulcher. They fled in terror. He met His disciples sometimes one by one, sometimes two at a time. On other occasions, four hundred at once saw Him—credible witnesses—persons who had no reason for forging a falsehood. Persons who so believed that they saw Him that many of them died, for their belief, the most painful deaths.

He rose, not in fantasy and figure, but in reality. One of the witnesses put his finger into the print of the nails, and thrust his hand into His side. And in the presence of His assembled disciples, the Risen One ate a piece of a broiled fish and of a honeycomb. He really and literally rose from the dead—the selfsame Christ who was born of the Virgin Mary, who suffered under Pontius Pilate—and afterwards ascended into Heaven. That fact is as well proved as any fact in human history. There never, perhaps, was any incident of human history more fully verified than the rising of Jesus of Nazareth from the tomb.

Now, note you well the comfort which arises out of this fact, since it proves that we possess a living Advocate, Mediator and High Priest who has passed into the heavens. Moreover, since all Believers, being partakers of the incorruptible life of God are one with Jesus Christ, that which happens to Him virtually happens to them. They died in His death, they live in His life, they reign in His Glory. As in Adam all die who were in Adam, so in Christ shall all be made alive who are in Christ—the two Adams head up their dispensations—whatever happens to either of the Adams, happens to those represented by him.

So, then, the resurrection of Jesus is virtually *my* resurrection. Were He dead still, then might I fear, no, I would know, that I, dying, should die. But He, having died, arose again in due season and lives! Therefore I, dying, shall also rise and live, for as Jesus is, so must I be. If I have within me the new life, I have the same life in me that is in Christ, and the same thing happens to me as happens to Christ. If His life dies, mine, being the same, dies also. But, as He has said, “Because I live, you shall live also,” my life is secure.

Here, then, is the top and bottom of the Christian’s hope—“We are begotten again into a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” As we see Him alive, we rejoice that He lives, because He lives for us, and we live in Him.

Let me give you an illustration. When Joseph was in Egypt, he was highly exalted and placed upon the throne. Now, while his brothers did not know him they were grievously afraid to go down into Egypt—they thought him to be an Egyptian, a haughty ruler of the land—and that he treated them roughly. But when once they and their father were persuaded that Joseph, their brother, was alive and on the throne, then they cheerfully joined with the old man when he said, “Joseph my son is yet alive. I will go and see him before I die.”

Now, into the unknown land our Elder Brother has gone—where is He and what? Why, He is King of the country. He sits on a Throne. O Brethren, with what comfort do we now go down into that Egypt! With what consolation will we enter the unknown country, which some think to be shrouded in darkness, but which, now that Jesus reigns on its Throne, is full of light to us!

Or take another image. When the children of Israel went through the Jordan, they were told that the Jordan would divide before them, but they were still more fully assured when the priests went forward with the ark. For as soon as the feet of the priests touched the edge of the river, the waters began to divide. As they saw their priests march through the bed of the stream, and come up on the other side, all doubts about the security of the passage must have vanished at once! The priests were the repre-

sentatives of the people before God, and where they passed safely all Israel might go.

See you, then, my Brethren, the “Great High Priest of our profession” has led the van. The ark of the Eternal Covenant has gone before, death is dried up, so that we can say, “O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?” And you and I may, with perfect confidence, full of a lively hope, march onwards into the Glory land, for Jesus Christ has safely passed the flood, and even so shall we. Here, then, is reason for joy. We will not fear the present, we will not dread the future. For Christ is risen, indeed, and our lively hope is fixed on Him. Thus we have set before you four out of the seven precious things.

V. The fifth is exceedingly rich, but we can only give a word where many sermons would not exhaust—AN INCORRUPTIBLE INHERITANCE—“an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away.” God has been pleased in His abundant mercy to prepare for His people an inheritance. He has made them sons, and if children, then heirs. He has given them a new life, and if a new life, then there must be possessions and a place suitable for that new life.

A heavenly nature requires a heavenly inheritance, Heaven-born children must have a heavenly portion. Now I shall only ask you to notice that the inheritance which God has prepared for us has a fourfold description appended to it. First, as to its substance—it is “incorruptible.” The substance of everything earthly by degrees passes away. Even solid granite will rot and crumble. The substance of things seen, I may say in paradox, is devoid of substance.

Empires have grown great, but the inward corruption within their constitution has at length dissolved them. Dynasties have been wrecked, and thrones have tottered by internal corruption, but the inheritance of the saints of God has nothing within it that can make it perish. Forever and forever shall the blissful portion of the sanctified be theirs. Heaven, and the streets thereof, are all said to be of precious stones and pure gold, because they are imperishable.

Next, for purity—it is “undefiled.” Earthly inheritances are often defiled in the getting. Some men have grown rich by fraud, by violence, by oppression of the poor. How many a heritage is polluted all over with the slime of the serpent! And he that inherits the goods of such a one inherits therewith a curse, for God will surely avenge injustice and wrong doing, even to the third generation.

But our inheritance is undefiled, for it was won by the obedience, the perfection, and sufferings of Jesus. No thought of wrong was used in the getting of the portion of the Well-Beloved of God. An inheritance may be defiled after it is possessed, but Heaven never shall be. Satan shall never enter there, nor sin of any kind pass through the gate of pearl. O Brethren, what a joy is this! Defilement is on everything in this fallen world. We cannot purge ourselves completely—earthly things all bring a measure of defilement with them. But up yonder our portion shall not be stained with sin, we shall be perfect, and all around us perfect, too.

And then it is added for its beauty, “it fades not away.” The substance of a thing might endure after its beauty was gone, but in Heaven there shall be no declining in the beauty of anything celestial. Milton sings of the amaranth, which he describes as blossoming at the foot of the tree of

life in the garden of Eden. It was a flower of perpetual sweetness, whose beauty never faded. But he says —

***“Soon for man’s offense
To Heaven removed, where first it grew, there grows
And flowers aloft, shading the fountain of life,
And where the river of bliss through midst of Heaven
Rolls over Elysian flowers her amber stream;
With these, that never fade, the spirits elect
Bind their resplendent locks, wreathed with beams.”***

The amaranthine inheritance is yours. The garden of Paradise shall never cease to bloom, and the wreath of victory shall never wither from your brows. Oh, what joy is this for you! Your inheritance is for substance incorruptible, for purity undefiled, for beauty unfading. And then for possession, it is secure—“reserved in Heaven for you.” How I delight to dwell upon the thought that Heaven is not to be scrambled for, that the portion of each saint in Glory is given to him by lot even as was Canaan of old to Judah, to Reuben, to Manasseh, and the like.

There is a place in Heaven for me which none of you could fill. There is a harp which no fingers can strike but mine, and a crown which no brow can wear but this. And so with each of you—you shall have your own, your own appointed inheritance. He has begotten each one of you again—you are as truly begotten as any other Believer. You have the same hope, and you shall as surely stand in your lot at the end of the days. O clap your hands, you righteous! Shout for joy! Scanty is your portion here and hard your lot, it may be, but the undefiled inheritance will more than make amends. Therefore, lift up your hearts this day, and let not your hands hang down.

VI. Time fails us, therefore we must mention the sixth blessing at once, it is INVIOABLE SECURITY. The inheritance is kept for you, and you are kept for the inheritance. The word is a military one. It signifies a city garrisoned and defended. Think of a city besieged—Strasbourg, if you will—that is an emblem of your condition in this world. The enemy pour in their shot, they keep up the fire day and night, and set the city on a blaze, and even thus Satan bombards us with temptations, and beleaguers us with all the hosts of Hell.

Our great enemy has determined to raze the citadel of our faith even to the ground. His great guns are drawn up around our bastions. His sappers and miners are busy with our bulwarks. Even now it may be his shells are tearing our hearts, and his shot is setting our nature in a blaze.

Herein is our confidence—our great Captain has walled us around—He has appointed Salvation for walls and bulwarks. We are safe, though all the devils of Hell surround us, for we are garrisoned by Omnipotence. Each Believer is kept by that same power which “bears the earth’s huge pillars up,” and sustains the arches of Heaven. Jerusalem, you are besieged, but you may laugh your enemy to scorn, he shall never break through your ramparts—

***“Munitions of stupendous rock
Our dwelling place shall be,
There shall our soul without a shock
Our vanquished foemen see.”***

Our enemies shall assemble, but when they perceive that God is known in our palaces for a refuge, they shall be troubled and hasten away. Fear

shall take hold upon them, and pain, as of a woman in travail. Every Believer is kept by the power of God, but the power of God does not produce in us sloth—but faith. We are commanded to watch, that is what we are to do. But we are told both to watch and *pray*, because our watching is not enough. We need God's watching, also, and we are to pray for it. Faith is the under captain of the city. God's power protects it—"the King is in the midst of her." But Faith is the high constable of the tower. He it is that goes on the walls, arms the warders, strengthens the bastions, and brings help out of the sanctuary. While the sword of the Lord and of Gideon is at work, the Midianites cannot prevail.

This keeping, observe, my Brothers and Sisters, for I must leave the point—this keeping is complete and continuous—it will never end until we shall need keeping no longer. We shall be kept "unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." I believe this means that we shall not only be kept till our souls reach Heaven, but we shall be kept till the advent. You say, "Why is that necessary?" I reply, only half of our manhood goes to Heaven at death, the other part, namely, our body, waits below till the resurrection. Yet our dust is precious in God's sight, and therefore it is watched over until the day of Christ's appearing—for that is the appointed hour for the redemption of the body—

***"Sweet Truth to me, I shall arise,
And with these eyes, my Savior see."***

Wherever my dust may be scattered, though to the four winds of Heaven it is divided, though it pass through every conceivable change and combination—yet each atom of my dust shall hear the sound of the archangel's trump—or if not each earthly particle of this my frame, yet each essential constituent shall hear the voice of God. And bone to bone each bone shall come, and the body shall rise intact and perfect, for it is kept by the power of God unto the salvation ready to be revealed.

O my Brethren, what a glorious thing it is to know that the salvation God has given us in Christ is a perfect salvation of our complete manhood! There shall not a hair of your head perish. You shall go into the furnace, you shall walk amid the glowing coals of death, but you shall come forth with not a smell of fire passed upon you. At the Lord's appearing you shall be none the worse for the fall of Adam. You shall be none the worse for your own transgressions. You shall be none the worse for all the scars of battle. You shall be none the worse for dying—you shall be in Heaven as bright as God Himself could have made you if you had never fallen, and never sinned!

Do I exaggerate? No, verily, for it is written, "We shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is." We shall wake up in His likeness. Oh, the glory of complete victory over Satan's arts, and Satan's strength! He shall be defeated all along the line! He shall gain nothing by all his attacks upon our God, and upon us—but we in the image of Jesus shall laugh at the complete defeat of evil, and glorify God and the Lamb forever!

VII. The best I have reserved for the last. Out of the seven treasures of the Christian the last comprehends all, is better than all, though what I have already spoken is everything—it is A BLESSED GOD. We left this to the last, though it comes first—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is joy to have Heaven, it is joy to possess a new life

to fit me for Heaven—but the greatest of all is to have my God, my own Savior’s God, my Father, my own Savior’s Father, to be all my own!

God Himself has said, “I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” He has not given you earth and Heaven only, though that were much. He has given you the Heaven of Heaven—Himself. Herod spoke of giving the “half of his kingdom.” But the Lord has not given you the *half* of His kingdom, nor even the whole of His kingdom only—but His own Self the blessed God has in Covenant made over to you. Will not this make you rejoice? Methinks you may go forth with those that make merry and rejoice before God with a joy that knows no bound—“Sing unto God, sing praise,” sing, unto God, sing praises! Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice.”

Brethren, the practical point is, show your gratitude and your joy by blessing God. You can bless Him with your voices. Sing more than you do. Singing is Heaven’s work, practice it here. At your work, do if you can, quietly raise a hymn and bless the Lord. But oh, keep the fire on the altar of your hearts always burning! Praise Him, bless Him. His mercy endures forever, so let your praises endure.

Bless Him also with your substance. He is a blessed God. Do not give Him mere words—they are but air—and tongues but clay. Give Him the best you have. In the old superstitious times the Churches used to be adorned with the rarest pearls and jewels, with treasures of gold and silver—for men then gave mines of wealth to what they believed to be the service of God.

Shall the true faith have less operative power upon us? Shall the “lively hope” make us do *less* for God than the mere dead hope of the followers of Rome? No, let us be generous at all times, and count it our joy to sacrifice unto our God. Let us give Him our efforts, our time, our talents. Bless the Lord this afternoon, you Sunday school teachers. Teach those dear children under a sense of your own obligations to God. You who go from house to house this afternoon, you who will preach in the streets and lift up your voices in the corners of the thoroughfares—preach as those who are begotten unto a lively hope by the abundant mercy of God.

Preacher, live more intensely and ardently than ever you have done. Deacons, serve the Church more thoroughly than you have done as yet. Elders, give your whole souls to the care of Christ’s flock, which He has redeemed with His blood. Each one of you workers for Jesus Christ work not for Him after an ordinary sort, as men do for a master whose pay is no larger than he can be compelled to make it—but work with heart, and soul, and strength for Him who loved you to the death and poured out His soul to redeem you from going down into Hell.

Thus prove that the Divine Nature is truly in you, and that you possess the “lively hope” implanted by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The Lord bless you all, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

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

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

THE CHRISTIAN'S HEAVINESS AND REJOICING NO. 222

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, NOVEMBER 7, 1858
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“Wherein you greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations.”
1 Peter 1:6.***

THIS verse to a worldly man looks amazingly like a contradiction. Even to a Christian man, when he understands it best, it will still be a paradox. “You greatly rejoice,” and yet “you are in heaviness.” Is that possible? Can there be in the same heart great rejoicing and yet a temporary heaviness? Most assuredly. This paradox has been known and felt by many of the Lord’s children and it is far from being the greatest paradox of the Christian life. Men who live within themselves and mark their own feelings as Christians will often stand and wonder at themselves. Of all riddles, the greatest riddle is a Christian man. As to his pedigree, what a riddle he is! He is a child of the first Adam, “an heir of wrath, even as others.” He is a child of the second Adam—he was born free. There is therefore now no condemnation unto him. He is a riddle in his own existence. “As dying and behold we live. As chastened and not killed.”

He is a riddle as to the component parts of his own spiritual frame. He finds that which makes him akin to the devil—depravity, corruption—binding him still to the earth and causing him to cry out, “O wretched man that I am.” And yet he finds that he has within himself that which exalts him not merely to the rank of an angel, but higher still—a something which raises him up together and makes him “sit together with Christ Jesus in heavenly places.” He finds that he has that within him which must ripen into Heaven and yet that about him which would inevitably ripen into Hell, if grace did not forbid. What wonder, then, Beloved, if the Christian man is a paradox, that his condition should be a paradox, too! Why marvel when you see a creature corrupt and yet purified, mortal and yet immortal, fallen but yet exalted far above principalities and powers—why marvel that you should find that creature also possessed of mingled experience, greatly rejoicing and yet at the same time, “in heaviness through manifold temptations”?

I would have you this morning, look first of all at *the Christian’s heaviness*—He is “in heaviness through manifold temptations.” And then, in the next place, at *the Christian’s great rejoicing*.

I. In the first place, HIS HEAVINESS. This is one of the most unfortunate texts in the Bible. I have heard it quoted ten thousand times for my own comfort but I never understood it till a day or two ago. On referring to most of the commentaries in my possession I cannot find that they have a right idea of the meaning of this text. You will notice that your friends often say to you when you are in trouble, "There is a need for this affliction." There is a *need*, say they, "for all these trials and troubles that befall you." That is a very correct and Scriptural sentiment. But *that* sentiment is not in the text at all. And yet, whenever this text is quoted in my hearing, this is what I am always told, or what I *conceive* I am always told to be the meaning—that the great temptations, the great trials which befall us—there is a *need* for them. But it does not say so here—it says something better—not only that there is a need for our temptations but that there is a need for our heaviness under the temptation.

Now, let me show you the difference. There is a man of God, full of faith—strong. He is about to do his Master's work and he does it. God is with him and gives him great success. The enemy begins to slander him. All manner of evil is spoken against him falsely for Christ's sake. You say there is a *need* for that and you are quite correct—but look at the man. How gallantly he behaves himself! He lifts his head above his accusers and unmoved amidst them all he stands like a rock in the midst of a roaring tempest never moved from the firm basis on which it rests. The scene changes and instead of calamity perhaps he is called to endure absolute persecution, as in Apostolic times. We imagine the man driven out from house and home, separated from all his kindred, made to wander in the pathless snows of the mountains. And what a brave and mighty man he appears to be—when you see him enduring all this his spirits never sink. "All this can I do," says he, "and I can greatly rejoice in it, for Christ's name's sake. For I can practice the text which says, 'Rejoice you in that day and leap for joy!'"

And you tell that man there is a need for his persecution. He says, "Yes, I know it and I fear not all I have to endure. I am not cowed by it." At last imagine the man taken before the Inquisition and condemned to die. You still comfort him with the fact that there is a *need* that he should die—that the blood of the martyrs must be the seed of the Church—that the world can never be overcome by Christ's Gospel except through the sufferings and death of His followers—that Christ stooped to conquer and the Church must do the same—that through death and blood must be the road to the Church's victory. And what a noble sight it is to see that man going to the stake and kissing it—looking upon his iron chains with as much esteem as if they had been chains of gold! Now tell him there is a *need* for all this and he will thank you for the promise. And you admire the man—you wonder at him.

Ah, but there is another class of persons that get no such honor as this. There is another sort of Christians for whom this promise really was intended who do not get the comfort of it. I do admire the man I have pictured to you—may God long preserve such men in the midst of the Church. I would stimulate everyone to imitate him. Seek for great faith and great love to your Master that you may be able to endure, being “steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.” But remember that this text has not in it comfort for such persons—there are other texts for them. This text has been perverted for such a use as that. This is meant for another and a feebler grade of Christians who are often overlooked and sometimes despised.

I was lying upon my couch during this last week and my spirits were sunken so low that I could weep by the hour like a child—and yet I knew not what I wept for. A very slight thing will move me to tears just now. A kind friend was telling me of some poor old soul living near who was suffering very great pain and yet she was full of joy and rejoicing. I was so distressed by the hearing of that story and felt so ashamed of myself that I did not know what to do. I wonder why I should be in such a state as this—while this poor woman who had a terrible cancer and was in the most frightful agony—could nevertheless, “rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” And in a moment this text flashed upon my mind with its real meaning. I am *sure* it is its real meaning. Read it over and over again and you will see I am not wrong. “Though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness.”

It does not say, “Though now for a season you are suffering pain, though now for a season you are poor—but you are ‘in heaviness.’ Your spirits are taken away from you. You are made to weep. You cannot bear your pain. You are brought to the very dust of death and wish that you might die. Your faith itself seems as if it would fail you.” *That* is the thing for which there is a need. *That* is what my text declares—that there is an absolute need that sometimes the Christian should not endure his sufferings with a gallant and a joyous heart. There is a need that sometimes his spirits should sink within him and that he should become even as a little child smitten beneath the hand of God.

Ah, Beloved, we sometimes talk about the rod—but it is one thing to *see* the rod and it is another thing to *feel* it. And many a time have we said within ourselves, “If I did not feel so low spirited as I now do, I should not mind this affliction.” And what is that but saying, “If I did not *feel* the rod I should not mind it?” It is just how you feel. That is, after all, the essence and marrow of your affliction. It is that breaking down of the spirit, that pulling down of the strong man that is the very fester of the soreness of God’s scourging—“the blueness of the wound, whereby the soul is made better.” I think this one idea has been enough to be food for me many a day. And there may be some child of God here to whom it may bring some

slight portion of comfort. We will yet again dwell upon it. "Though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations."

And here let me for a moment or two try to explain why it is that there is an absolute need, not merely for temptations and troubles, but likewise for our being in *heaviness* under them.

In the first place, if we were not in heaviness during our troubles we should not be like our Covenant Head, Christ Jesus. It is a rule of the kingdom that all the members must be like the Head. They are to be like the Head in that day when He shall appear. "We shall be like He is, for we shall see Him as He is." But we must be like the Head also in His humiliation, or else we cannot be like He is in His glory. Now you will observe that our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, very often passed through much of trouble without any heaviness. When He said, "Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head," I observe no heaviness. I do not think He sighed over that. And when thirsty when He sat upon the well and said, "Give me to drink," there was no heaviness in all His thirst. I believe that through the first years of His ministry, although He might have suffered some heaviness, He usually passed over His troubles like a ship floating over the waves of the sea.

But you will remember that at last the waves of swelling grief came into the vessel. At last the Savior Himself, though full of patience, was obliged to say, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." And one of the Evangelists tells us that the Savior, "began to be very heavy." What does that mean but that His spirit began to sink? There is a more terrible meaning yet, which I cannot enter into this morning. But still I may say that the surface meaning of it is that all His spirits sank within Him. He had no longer His usual courage and though He had strength to say, "Nevertheless, not My will, but Yours be done"—still the weakness did prevail and He said, "If it is possible let this cup pass from Me." The Savior passed through the brook, but He "drank of the brook by the way." And we who pass through the brook of suffering must drink of it, too. He had to bear the burden, not with His shoulders omnipotent, but with shoulders that were bending to the earth beneath a load. And you and I must not always expect a giant faith that can remove mountains—sometimes even to us the grasshopper must be a burden, that we may in all things be like unto our Head.

Yet again—if the Christian did not sometimes suffer heaviness he would begin to grow too proud and think too much of himself and become too great in his own estimation. Those of us who are of elastic spirit and who in our health are full of everything that can make life happy, are too apt to forget the Most High God. Lest we should be satisfied from ourselves and forget that all our own springs must be in Him, the Lord sometimes seems to sap the springs of life, to drain the heart of all its spirits and to leave us

without soul or strength. Then it is that we discover what we are made of and out of the depths we cry unto God, humbled by our adversities.

Another reason for this discipline is, I think, that in heaviness we often learn lessons that we never could attain elsewhere. Do you know that God has beauties for every part of the world? And He has beauties for every place of experience? There are views to be seen from the tops of the Alps that you can never see elsewhere. Yes, but there are beauties to be seen in the depths of the dell that you could never see on the tops of the mountains. There are glories to be seen on Pisgah, wondrous sights to be beheld when by faith we stand on Tabor. But there are also beauties to be seen in our Gethesmanes and some marvelously sweet flowers are to be culled by the edge of the dens of the leopards. Men will never become great in divinity until they become great in suffering. "Ah," said Luther, "affliction is the best book in my library." And let me add, the best leaf in the book of affliction is that blackest of all the leaves, the leaf called *heaviness*, when the spirit sinks within us and we cannot endure as we would wish.

And yet again—this heaviness is of essential use to a Christian if he would do good to others. Ah, there are a great many Christian people that I was going to say I should like to see afflicted—but I will not say so much as that. I should like to see them heavy in spirit. If it were the Lord's will that they should be bowed down greatly I would not express a word of regret. For a little more sympathy would do them good. A little more power to sympathize would be a precious gift to them and even if it were purchased by a short journey through a fiery furnace they might not rue the day afterwards in which they had been called to pass through the flame.

There are none so tender as those who have been skinned themselves. Those who have been in the chamber of affliction know how to comfort those who are there. Do not believe that any man will become a physician unless he walks the hospitals. And I am sure that no one will become a divine, or become a comforter, unless he lies in the hospital as well as walks through it and has to suffer himself. God cannot *make* ministers—and I speak with reverence of His Holy name—He cannot *make* a Barnabas except in the fire. It is there and there alone that He can make His sons of consolation. He may make His sons of thunder anywhere. But His sons of consolation He must make in the fire. Who shall speak to those whose hearts are broken? Who shall bind up their wounds but those whose hearts have been broken, also, and whose wounds have long run with the sore of grief? "If need be," then, "you are in heaviness through manifold temptations."

I think I have said enough about this heaviness, except that I must add it is but for a season. A little time, a few hours, a few days, a few months at most and it shall all have passed away. And then comes the "eternal weight of glory, wherein you greatly rejoice."

II. And now to the second part of the text. Here we have something far more joyous and comfortable than the first. "WHEREIN YOU GREATLY REJOICE." And can a Christian greatly rejoice while he is in heaviness? Yes, most assuredly he can. Mariners tell us that there are some parts of the sea where there is a strong current upon the surface going one way, but that down in the depths there is a strong current running the other way. Two seas do not meet and interfere with one another. But one stream of water on the surface is running in one direction and another below in an opposite direction. Now the Christian is like that. On the surface there is a stream of heaviness rolling with dark waves. But down in the depths there is a strong undercurrent of great rejoicing that is always flowing there. Do you ask me what is the cause of this great rejoicing? The Apostle tells us, "*Wherein* you greatly rejoice." What does he mean? You must refer to his own writings and then you will see. He is writing "to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus," and so forth. The first thing that he says to them is that they are, "elect according to the foreknowledge of God"—"wherein we greatly rejoice."

Ah, even when the Christian is most "in heaviness through manifold temptations," what a mercy it is that he can know that he is still the elect of God! Any man who is assured that God has "chosen him from before the foundation of the world" may well say, "Wherein we greatly rejoice." Let me be lying upon a bed of sickness and just revel in that one thought. Before God made the heavens and the earth and laid the pillars of the firmament in their golden sockets, He set His love upon me! Upon the breast of the great High Priest He wrote my name and in His everlasting book it stands, never to be erased—"elect according to the foreknowledge of God." Why, this may make a man's soul leap within him and all the heaviness that the infirmities of the flesh may lay upon him shall be but as nothing. For this tremendous current of his overflowing joy shall sweep away his grief.

Bursting and overleaping every obstacle, it shall flood all his sorrows till they are drowned and covered up and shall not be mentioned any more. "Wherein we greatly rejoice." Come, Christian, you are depressed and cast down! Think for a moment. You are chosen of God and precious. Let the bell of election ring in your ear—that ancient Sabbath bell of the Covenant. And let your name be heard in its notes and say, I beseech you, "Does not this make you greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations"?

Again—you will see another reason. The Apostle says that we are "elect through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ"—"wherein we greatly rejoice." Is the obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ girt about my loins to be my beauty and my glorious raiment? And is the blood of Jesus sprinkled upon me to take away all my guilt and all my sin—and shall I not in this greatly rejoice? What

shall there be in all the depressions of spirits that can possibly come upon me that shall make me break my harp—even though I should for a moment hang it upon the willows? Do I not expect that yet again my songs shall mount to Heaven? And even now through the thick darkness do not the sparks of my joy appear—when I remember that I have still upon me the blood of Jesus and still about me the glorious righteousness of the Messiah?

But the great and cheering comfort of the Apostle is that we are elect unto an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fades not away, reserved in Heaven. And here, Brethren, is the grand comfort of the Christian. When the child of God is sore-stricken and much depressed—the sweet hope, that living or dying, there is an inheritance incorruptible, reserved in Heaven for him—may indeed make him greatly rejoice. He is drawing near the gates of Death and his spirit is in heaviness. He has to leave behind him all his family and all that life holds dear. His sickness brings upon him naturally a depression of spirit. But you sit by his bedside and you begin to talk to him of the—

***“Sweet fields beyond the swelling floods
Arrayed in living green.”***

You tell him of Canaan on the other side the Jordan—of the land that flows with milk and honey—of the Lamb in the midst of the Throne and of all the glories which God has prepared for them that love Him. And you see his dull leaden eye light up with seraphic brightness. He shakes off his heaviness and he begins to sing—

***“On Jordan’s stormy banks I stand,
And cast a wishful eye,
To Canaan’s fair and happy land,
Where my possessions lie.”***

This makes him greatly rejoice. And if to that you add that possibly before he has passed the gates of Death his Master may appear—if you tell him that the Lord Jesus Christ is coming in the clouds of Heaven. That though we have not seen Him, yet believing in Him we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, expecting the second advent. If he has grace to believe in that sublime doctrine he will be ready to clap his hands upon his bed of weariness and cry, “Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly! Come quickly!”

And in drawing to a close I notice there is one more doctrine that will always cheer a Christian and I think that this perhaps is the one chiefly intended here in the text. Look at the end of the 16th verse—“Reserved in Heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.” This, perhaps, will be one of the greatest cordials to a Christian in heaviness—that he is not kept by his *own* power—but by the power of *God*. That he is not left in his own keeping, but he is kept by the Most High. Ah, what should you and I do in the day when darkness gathers round our faith if we had to keep ourselves? I can never understand what

an Arminian does when he gets into sickness, sorrow and affliction—from what well he draws his comfort, I know not. But I know from where I draw mine. It is this—“When flesh and heart fails, God is the strength of my life and my portion forever.” “I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.”

But take away that doctrine of the Savior's keeping His people and where is my hope? What is there in the Gospel worth my preaching, or worth your receiving? I know that He has said, “I give unto My sheep *eternal life* and they shall *never perish*, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.” But Lord, suppose they should grow faint—that they should begin to murmur in their affliction? Shall they not perish then? No, they shall never perish. But suppose the pain should grow so hot that their faith should fail—shall they not perish then? No—“*they shall not perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.*”

But suppose their sense should seem to wander and some should try to pervert them from the faith—shall they not be perverted? No—“*they shall never perish.*” But suppose in some hour of their extremity Hell and the world and their own fears should all beset them and they should have no power to stand—no power whatever to resist the fierce onslaughts of the enemy—shall they not perish then? No—they are “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed and *they shall never perish*, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.” Ah, *this* is the doctrine, the cheering assurance, “wherein we greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, we are in heaviness through manifold temptations.”

One word before I send you away. There are some of you here to whom this precious passage has not a word to say. Our heaviness, O worldling, “our heaviness is but for a season.” Your heaviness is to come. And it shall be a heaviness intolerable because hopelessly everlasting. Our temptations, though they are manifold are but light afflictions and are but for a moment and they “work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

But your joys that you now have are evanescent as a bubble and they are passing away and they are working out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of misery. I beseech you, look at this matter. Search and see whether all is right with your spirits—whether it is well for you to venture into an eternal state as you are. And may God give you grace that you may feel your need of a Savior, that you may seek Christ, lay hold upon Him and so may come into a gracious state wherein you shall greatly rejoice, even though for a season, if need be, you should be in heaviness through manifold temptations!

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

A PASTORAL LETTER

NO. 222A

I AM a prisoner still. Weakness has succeeded pain and languor of mind is the distressing result of this prostration of my physical powers. It is the Lord's doing. In some sense I might say with Paul, "I am a prisoner of Jesus Christ." But ah, my bonds are more easy and less honorable to wear than his! Instead of a dungeon my lot is cast in an abode of comfort. I am not restrained from my accustomed ministry by a chain forged by man, but by the silken cord of Gods Providence—no rough jailer, but loving relatives and friends attend upon me in these tedious hours of my bondage. I beseech you therefore, my Beloved, let your many prayers to God on my behalf be each and all mingled with thanksgiving. Gratitude should ever be used in devotion, like salt of old was in sacrifice, "without prescribing how much."

And now, though unable to stand in the pulpit, I will endeavor to give you a short address—or rather, I will attempt to express the feelings of my heart in a few broken sentences.

And first, to you my well-beloved and trusty Brothers and Sisters in Christ and in the family tie of Church fellowship—to you I tender my fondest regards, my sincerest thanks, my sweetest love. I feel refreshed by your sympathy and my heart is overwhelmed at the estimation in which you hold me. It brings the hot blush to my cheek and well it may. Tenderly as a husband thinks of the doting affection of his wife, as a father receives the fond homage of his children, as a brother when he is held in honor by all the family circle—so tenderly and even more tenderly, I remember your care of me. The tone of your supplications during my affliction has been grateful to me beyond measure. I rejoice that you have with humble submission kissed the rod. Not impatiently asking my recovery but meekly acquiescing in the Providence of our heavenly Father, craving most of all that the Lord would sanctify the pains of your pastor and guard with his own watchful eye the flock. "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you, through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord."

Yet again, in the still chamber of retirement I anxiously remember some who would have been baptized on a profession of their faith and received into membership of the Church had not my health been thus impaired. Be not fretful concerning this delay: accept it as an ordained trial of your patience. If a farmer has a field of corn severed by the sickle from its native earth, but not yet housed in the garner, is he not concerned lest he suffer loss? How much more, as a minister of Christ, am I concerned for you—the converts God has given me? Oh, Beloved! Be steadfast. Commit not the great sin. Beware lest Satan take advantage of you—for we are not ignorant of his devices. Draw not back. It is written in the Law, “No devoted thing that a man shall devote unto the Lord of all that he has, shall be sold or redeemed: every devoted thing is most holy unto the Lord.” The Israelite might not retract the beast that he dedicated from his fold for an offering—far less the Christian, when he has resolved to yield up his heart, his life, his soul to Jesus. I speak not thus to grieve you. Think not that my jealousy bodes a suspicion, but rather that it expresses my love. “We are not of them that draw back unto perdition. But of them that believe to the saving of the soul.” “My little children, these things I write unto you that you sin not.”

To those who have worshipped during the past two years in the Surrey Music Hall—the preacher’s greetings and his love. You have heard how the Prophet Samuel set up a stone and called the name of it EBEN-EZER, saying, “Hitherto has the Lord helped us.” That stone marked the place where the Lord gave the children of Israel a great victory over the Philistines. But it likewise marked the “very place where, twenty years before, the Israelites were defeated, and the Ark of God was taken.” Let us rejoice, O my people, with trembling. Two years ago that Hall was the scene of such discomfiture, such dire calamity and death as we hardly dare to think of. Surely that was the night of my heart’s bitterest anguish. “Howbeit our God turned the curse into a blessing.”

For ninety-nine successive Lord’s days was I enabled to supply the pulpit. No congregation could have been more evenly sustained. Never were sermons more widely echoed. God has owned

these services to the quickening of many souls, to the establishing of many in our most holy faith and by them through His goodness has the Blessed Spirit stirred up many of my Brethren in the ministry to a righteous emulation. “According to this time it shall be said, What has God worked!” Ah, Sirs, if you knew in what fear we began, and with what anxiety we have continued—if you knew the unrequited exertions of those beloved Brethren whose names are unknown to fame but whose good offices were essential to keep the place open—if you knew, once more, how many times your minister has prostrated himself as a broken-hearted sinner before God to renew his first vows of unreserved self-dedication—if you knew these things, you would not be backward in that ascription of praise never more meet to flow forth in liquid strains with weeping eyes—“Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Your name give glory.” My beloved Brethren, “Be you steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”

Yet I have other friends. They are scattered far and wide throughout this country and the sister isles. To you let me drop a word. You have received me kindly. Faster friendships were never surely made in fewer hours than I have cemented with some of you. You are of my kith and kin. I will guarantee you that my God has graciously proportioned my strength to my days while I have been among you “in labors more abundant.” When I have labored most for His glory, I have feasted most on the provisions of His grace. And blessed be God, when oftentimes called to visit a people unknown to me, He has given me the key of David to unlock the secret springs of your hearts. No, He holds the key in His own hand. He opens and no man can shut. Keep, Beloved, the Word of His patience and He will keep you from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth.

Finally, my Brethren, I am cheered and comforted beyond measure by the joyous hope that on the coming Sabbath I shall again appear among you. This prospect is as oil to my bones and although I cannot hope to fulfill my ministry with my accus-

tomed vigor, yet to attempt to address you will be as rich medicine—as a tonic to my fluttering heart. Brethren, pray for me.

Yours in covenant,

C.H. SPURGEON.

November 2nd, 1858.

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THE TRIAL OF YOUR FAITH

NO. 2055

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, DECEMBER 2, 1888,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“The trial of your faith.”
1 Peter 1:7.

IT is a great thing if any man can truthfully speak to you, my Brothers and Sisters, about “your faith,” for all men have not faith and wherever faith is found, it is the token of Divine favor. True faith is, in every case, the operation of the Spirit of God. Its nature is purifying, elevating, heavenly. It is, of all things that can be cultivated in the human breast, one of the most precious. It is called, “like precious faith,” and it is styled “the faith of God’s elect.” Wherever faith is found, it is the sure mark of eternal election, the sign of a blessed condition, the forecast of a heavenly destiny. It is the eye of the renewed soul, the hand of the regenerated mind, the mouth of the newborn spirit. It is the evidence of spiritual life—it is the mainspring of holiness—it is the foundation of delight—it is the prophecy of glory—it is the dawn of endless knowledge.

If you have faith, you have infinitely more than he who has all the world and yet is destitute of faith. To him that believes it is said, “All things are yours.” Faith is the assurance of sonship, the pledge of inheritance, the grasp of boundless possession, the perception of the invisible. Within your faith there lies Glory, even as the oak sleeps within the acorn. If you have faith, you need not ask for much more, save that your faith may grow exceedingly and that all the promises which are made to it may be known and grasped by you. Time would fail me to tell of the powers, the privileges, the possessions and the prospects of faith. He that has it is blessed. For he pleases God, he is justified before the throne of holiness, he has full access to the Throne of Grace and he has the preparation for reigning with Christ forever.

So far everything is delightful. But then comes, in this word, which somewhat startles and, if we are cowardly, may also frighten—“The *trial* of your faith.” Do you see the thorn which grows with this rose? You cannot gather the fragrant flower without its rough companion. You cannot possess the faith without experiencing the trial. Nor eat the lamb without the bitter herbs. These two things are put together—faith and trial. And it is of that *trial* of your faith that I am going to speak at this time, as God shall help me.

It may be, my Brothers and Sisters, that words said at this good hour shall comfort you while you undergo the sorer trial of your faith. May the Holy Spirit, who nurtures faith and preserves and perfects it under its trial, help our thoughts at this hour!

I. And, first, let me say of it, **YOUR FAITH WILL BE SURELY TRIED.** You may rest assured of that. A man may have faith and be for the present without trial. But no man ever had faith and was all his life without trial. That could not—must not be. For faith, in the very nature of it, implies a degree of trial. I believe the promise of God. So far my faith is tried in believing the promise, in waiting for the fulfillment of the promise, in holding on to an assurance of that promise while it is delayed and in continuing to expect the promise and to act upon it until it is in all points fulfilled to me.

I do not see how that can be faith at all which is not tried by its own exercise. Take the very happiest and smoothest lives. There must, at any rate, be the trial of faith in taking the promise and pleading it before God in prayer and expecting the fulfillment of it. Be not mistaken, God never gave us faith to play with. It is a sword but it was not made for presentation on a gala day, nor to be worn on State occasions only, nor to be exhibited upon a parade ground. It is a sword that was meant to cut and wound and slay. And he that has it girt about him may expect, between here and Heaven, that he shall know what battle means.

Faith is a sound sea-going vessel and was not meant to lie in dock and perish of dry rot. To whom God has given faith, it is as though one gave a lantern to his friend because he expected it to be dark on his way home. The very gift of faith is a hint to you that you will need it—that at certain points and places you will especially require it and that—at all points and in every place, you will really need it. You cannot live without faith—for again and again we are told—“the just shall live by faith.” Believing is our living and we, therefore, need it always.

And if God gives you great faith, my dear Brethren, you must expect great trials. For, in proportion as your faith shall grow, you will have to do more and endure more. Little boats may keep close to shore, as becomes little boats. But if God makes you a great vessel and loads you with a rich freight, He means that you should know what great billows are and should feel their fury till you see “His wonders in the deep.” That God, who has made nothing in vain, especially makes nothing in the spiritual kingdom in vain. And if He makes faith, it is with the design that it should be used to the utmost and exercised to the full.

Expect trial, also, because trial is the very element of faith. Faith is a salamander that lives in the fire, a star which moves in a lofty sphere, a diamond which bores its way through the rock. Faith without trial is like a diamond uncut, the brilliance of which has never been seen. Untried faith is such little faith that some have thought it no faith at all. What a fish would be without water, or a bird without air, that would be faith without trial. If you have faith, you may surely expect that your faith will be tested—the great Keeper of the treasures admits no coin to His coffers without testing.

It is so in the nature of faith and so in the order of its living—it thrives not, save in such weather as might seem to threaten its death. Indeed, it is the honor of faith to be tried. Shall any man say, “I have faith, but I

have never had to believe under difficulties”? Who knows whether you have any faith? Shall a man say, “I have great faith in God but I have never had to use it in anything more than the ordinary affairs of life, where I could probably have done without it as well as with it”? Is this to the honor and praise of your faith? Do you think that such a faith as this will bring any great glory to God, or bring to you any great reward? If so, you are mightily mistaken.

He that has tested God and whom God has tested, is the man that shall have it said of him, “Well done, you good and faithful servant.” Had Abraham stopped in Ur of the Chaldees with his friends and rested there and enjoyed himself, where had been his faith? He had God’s command to leave his country to go to a land which he had never seen, to sojourn there with God as a stranger, dwelling in tents. And in his obedience to that call his faith began to be illustrious. Where had been the glory of his faith, if it had not been called to brave and self-denying deeds? Would he ever have risen to that supreme height, to be “the Father of the faithful,” if he had not grown old and his body dead and yet he had believed that God would give him seed of his aged wife Sarah, according to the promise? It was blessed faith that made him feel that nothing was impossible to God. If Isaac had been born to him in the days of his strength, where had been his faith?

And when it came to that severer test, “Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love and offer him for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell you of.” When he rose up early and gathered the wood and took his son and went three days’ journey, setting his face like a flint to obey the Command of God—when at last he drew the knife, in faithful obedience to the Divine Command—then was his faith confessed, commended and crowned. Then the Lord said, “Now I know.” As if, even to God, the best evidence of Abraham’s faith had then been displayed—when he staggered not at the promise through unbelief, reckoning that God could restore Isaac from the dead if need be—but that it was his to obey the supreme Command and trust all consequences with God, who could not lie.

Herein his faith won great renown and he became “the Father of the faithful,” because he was the most tried of Believers and yet surpassed them all in childlike belief in his God. If God, then, has given to anyone of us a faith which is honorable and precious it has full surely been submitted to its own due measure of trial. And if it is to be still more precious, it has yet more trials to endure.

We remember, also, two reasons for the trial of faith. The trial of your faith is sent to prove its sincerity. If it will not stand trial, what is the good of it? That gold which dissolves in the furnace and disappears amid the flame is not the gold which shall be current with the merchant. And that faith of yours, which is no sooner tried than straightway it evaporates, are you not well rid of it? Of what use would it be to you in the hour of death and in the Day of Judgment? No. You can not be sure that your faith is

true faith till it is tried faith. You can not be certain that it is worth having till it has been fitly tested and brought to the touchstone of trial.

It must also be tested to prove its strength. We sometimes fancy that we have strong faith when, indeed, our faith is very weak. And how are we to know whether it is weak or strong till it is tried? A man that should lie in bed week after week and perhaps get the idle whim into his head that he was very strong would be pretty certain to be mistaken. It is only when he sets about work requiring muscular strength that he will discover how strong or how weak he is. God would not have us form a wrong estimate of ourselves. He loves not that we should say that we are rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing when we are the reverse. And therefore He sends to us the trial of our faith that we may understand how strong or how weak it is.

And besides that, dear Friends, the trial of our faith is necessary to remove its dross. There are many accretions of sordid matter about our purest graces. We are apt, ourselves, to add to the bulk of our graces without adding to the real value of them. We mistake quantity for quality. And a great deal of what we think we have of Christian experience and Christian knowledge and Christian zeal and Christian patience is only the supposition that we have these graces and not the real possession of them.

So the fire grows fiercer and the mass grows smaller than it was before. Is there any loss therein? I think not. The gold loses nothing by the removal of its dross and our faith loses nothing by the dissipation of its apparent force. Faith may apparently lose, but it actually gains. It may seem to be diminished, but it is not truly diminished. All is there that was worth having. "Why, a week ago," says one, "I used to sing and think that I had the full assurance of faith. And now I can scarcely tell whether I am one of God's people or not." Now you know how much faith you really possess.

You can now tell how much was solid and how much was sham. For had that which has failed you been real faith, it would not have been consumed by any trial through which it has passed. You have lost the froth from the top of the cup but all that was really worth having is still there. It must be so—for as faith is not born of earthly things—neither can earthly things kill it, nor even take from it one true particle.

Understand, then, dear Friends, that for many necessary purposes there is a need be for trial. Peter says here, "If need be" that there should be a trial of your faith. You will get that trial, because God, in His wisdom, will give faith what faith needs. Do not be anxious to enter into trial. Do not fret if temptation does not come just now. You will have it soon enough. Between the day of our new birth and the day of our entering into our inheritance, we shall have quite sufficient trials of our faith. We need not be uneasy if for a while we are at ease, for there are months enough left to the year to give winter its full measure of frosts and storms.

II. Now, secondly, YOUR FAITH WILL BE TRIED IN VARIOUS WAYS. The trial of our faith does not come to all persons in the same way. There

are some whose faith is tried each day in their communion with God. They pray this prayer—"Search me, O God and know my heart: try me and know my thoughts: and see if there is any wicked way in me. And lead me in the way everlasting." That prayer is heard constantly. The visitations of the Lord are granted to them and as the Lord comes, He tries them. For, believe me, there is no surer trial of our souls than the drawing near of God to our souls.

Apart from any outward affliction, that searching thought, that inward feeling which is somewhat more than thought, that holy, secret trembling which comes upon our spirit when God draws near, is God's constant trial of our graces. If you walk away from God and live without fellowship with Him, you may retain in your heart much falsehood and fancy that you are full of spiritual gifts and graces. But if you draw near to God and walk with Him, you will not be able to retain a false opinion of yourself. Remember what the Lord is. Our God is a consuming fire.

I have often reminded you of the way in which people try to improve upon the Scripture when they say, "God out of Christ is a consuming fire." The Bible does not so speak. It says, "For our God is a consuming fire." That is, God in Christ, who is our God, is a consuming fire. And when His people live in Him, the very Presence of God consumes in them their love of sin and all their pretentious graces and fictitious attainments so that the false disappears and only the true survives. The presence of perfect Holiness is killing to empty boastings and hollow pretences. You need not ask for any of those various forms of trial which God sends in the order of Providence—you may rest quite satisfied with His Presence, as the most effectual purgation. For "His fan is in His hand and He will thoroughly purge His floor."

Whenever Jesus abides with us, "He shall sit as a refiner." Whoever He may leave alone in their defilement, "He will purify the sons of Levi." It is the Lord Himself that will be as a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. Who may abide the day of His coming? Who that loves holiness would wish to escape it? Our prayer should be—"Refining fire go through my soul." Yes, let the devouring flame go through me and through me yet again, till this earthly grossness shall begin to disappear. As Moses soon put his shoes off from his feet when he beheld God at the burning bush, so shall we put off the superfluities of our supposed spiritual experience and come to the real, naked foot of the Truth of God, if we are permitted to stand before God in accepted sincerity. Thus you see there is a constant trial of our faith, even in that which is its greatest joy and glory, namely its power to make us see the Lord.

But the Lord uses other methods with His servants. I believe that He frequently tries us by the blessings which He sends us. This is a fact which is too much overlooked. When a man is permitted to grow rich, what a trial of faith is hidden away in that condition! It is one of the severest of providential tests! Where I have known one man fail through poverty, I have known fifty men fail through riches. When our friends get on in the world and have a long stretch of prosperity, they should invite their

Brethren to offer special prayer for them, that they may be preserved—for the thick clay is heavy stuff to walk upon and when the feet slip into it, and it adheres to you, it makes traveling to Heaven a very difficult thing.

When we do not cling to wealth, it will not harm us. But there is a deal of stickiness in money. You that have no riches may yet find a test in your daily mercies—your domestic comfort, that loving wife, those dear children—all these may tempt you to walk by sight instead of by faith. Yes, and continued health, the absence of all depression of spirit and the long abiding of friends and relatives may all make you self-content and keep you away from your God.

It is a great trial of faith to have much for sight to rest upon. To be in the dark—altogether in the dark—is a grand thing for faith. For then you are sure that what you see is not seen of the flesh but is in very deed a vision of spiritual faith. To be under a cloud is a trial, truly—but not one-half so much a trial as it is to have continually the light of this world. We are so apt to mistake the light of carnal comfort for the light of God, that it is well to see how we fare without it.

One form of this trial is praise. You know how Solomon puts it—“As the fining-pot for silver and the furnace for gold, so is a man to his praise.” A Christian minister may go on preaching very earnestly and God will help him, though everybody opposes him. But when the world comes and pats him on the back and pride whispers, “You are a fine fellow. You are a great man!” Then comes the test of the man. How few there are that can endure the warm atmosphere of congratulation! It is dangerously relaxing to the spirit. Yes, nobody can keep himself right under it, unless the almighty Grace of God shall sustain his faith.

When the soft winds blow they bring with them the temptation, “Now preach the doctrines that tickle men’s ears!” “Go in to be scientific and learned and clever! Get the approbation of the great ones of the world and the leaders of advanced thought in the Church.” And unless you say, “Get you behind me, Satan: for you savor not the things that are of God,” such a trial of faith may be too much for you. “Oh,” says one, “that will not fall to my lot.” No, no. You will not be a popular preacher, perhaps. But then, you may be very acceptable in the company wherein you move and worldly people may flatter you to the verge of ruin.

You sing very nicely, do you not? Well, they may want you to sing them a song that is not one of the songs of Zion. Because of your natural attainments and the amiability of your temper, you may become a great favorite with ungodly people. And that is an intense trial to the faith of a child of God. The friendship of the world is as much enmity with God as it used to be in Apostolic times. It is a bad sign when a courtier is in great favor with the king’s enemies. Stand up and stand out as the servant of God and in whatever sphere you move, make it your one and only business to serve your God, whether you offend or please. Happy shall you be if you survive the trial of your faith which this will involve!

Another trial of faith is exceedingly common and perilous nowadays and that is heretical doctrine and false teaching. There are some who are

carried away with this wind of doctrine and others carried away with the other—and blessed is he who is not offended in Christ. For, naturally, the Cross of Christ is offensive to the minds of men. There are temptations that rise out of the Gospel itself, yes, out of its very depth and breadth. There is a trial of faith in reading the Scriptures. You come across a doctrine which you cannot understand and because you cannot understand it, you are tempted not to receive it. Or, when a Truth which you have received appears to be hard and speaks to you in an unlovely fashion, so that your natural feelings are aroused against it—this is a trial of your faith.

Remember how our Lord Jesus lost quite a company of disciples on a certain occasion. He had taught a doctrine about eating His flesh and drinking His blood. And from that hour many went back and walked no more with Him, till the Savior had to say, even to the twelve, “Will you also go away?” Truth is not always welcome to our ignorance—or to our prejudice—and herein is a trial of faith. Will we believe ourselves or our God? Do we want to believe God’s Truth, or do we wish to have the Lord’s message flavored to our taste? Do we expect the preacher to play our chosen tunes and speak our opinions?

Beloved, it does us good to be well rasped sometimes. To have a word come to us, not as a sweet wine but as a purging medicine that shall search us through and through and make us enquire before God, “Are we true men, or are we aliens?” If we run in the same line with God’s Truth, we are true. But when we run counter to the Truth of God, we are ourselves untrue. It is not the Book that is to be altered—our hearts need altering. Happy is that man whose faith can endure the trial of the Book. “Is not the Word of the Lord like a fire or a hammer?” This is so even to the Lord’s own people.

But the trial of our faith usually comes in the form of affliction. Our jealous Lover uses tests that it may be seen whether he has our heart. The trial of your faith comes thus—You say, “Lord Jesus, I love you. You are my best Beloved.” “Well,” says the heavenly Lover, “if it is so, then the child that nestles in your bosom will sicken and die. What will you say then?” If you are indeed true in what you have stated concerning your supreme love to Jesus, you will give up your darling at His call and say, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.”

The Lord is very jealous of our love. I do not mean that He is so towards all of you—I speak of His own people. The more He loves us, the more He tests us. Whatever it may be with us poor creatures, it is always so with Jesus, that His love goes with His jealousy and His jealousy with His love. Sometimes He says, “Good woman, I shall take away your husband, on whom you lean, that you may lean the more on Me.” I remember Mr. Rutherford, writing to a lady who had lost five children and her husband, said to her, “Oh, how Christ must love you! He would take every bit of your heart to Himself. He would not permit you to reserve any of your soul

for any earthly thing.” Can we stand that test? Can we let all go for His sake? Do you answer that you can? Time will show.

My Lord sometimes comes to me in this fashion. He says, “I have made you to trust Me these many years. I have supplied the wants of your work by liberal friends. I am about to remove a generous helper.” I go to the grave of my friend and the suggestion dings me, “Who is to provide for the Orphanage and the College, after other dear Friends are buried? Can you trust God then?” Blessed be the name of the Lord, this fiery trial has never even left the smell of fire upon me. I know whom I have believed.

Then a dear Brother, our best worker, our heartiest helper, comes to me and says, “Goodbye, dear Pastor. Perhaps I may never see you again on earth.” He is very ill and about to lie under the surgeon’s knife and the fear is that he may not rally. I go home and say to myself, “What shall I do without this useful man?” And then I have to say, “Do? Do what I have done before—trust in the living God.” If you once get to walk the walk of faith, the Lord will often try you in this way, to see whether you come up to your own confession—whether you really trust in the Lord and have your expectation from Him alone. Can you truly say—

**“Yes, should You take them all away,
Yet would I not repine”?**

If every earthly prop were knocked away, could you stand by the lone power of your foundation? God may not send you this or that trial but He will send you a sufficient amount of trials to let you see whether your faith is truth or talk, whether you have truly entered the spiritual world, or have only dreamed of doing so. Believe me, there is a great difference between a diamond and a paste gem. So, you see, the trials of faith are very varied.

III. In the third place, YOUR FAITH WILL BE TRIED INDIVIDUALLY. The text says, the trial of *your* faith. O dear Friend, it is an interesting subject, is it not, the trial of faith? It is not quite so pleasant to study alone the trial of your faith. It is stern work when it comes to be *your* trial and the trial of *your* faith. You have not gone much into that particular department, perhaps. Well, I say again, do not wish to do so. Do not ask for trials. Children must not ask to be whipped, nor saints pray to be tested. There is a little book which you will have to eat and it will be bitter in your mouth, but sweet in your stomach—that book is the trial of your faith.

The Lord Jesus Christ has been glorified by the trial of His people’s faith. He has to be glorified by the trial of *your* faith. You are very obscure, perhaps, dear Brother. You have but few talents, my dear Sister. But, nevertheless, there is a particular shape and form of trial that will have to be exercised upon you rather than upon anyone else. “Oh,” say you, “I know it, Sir. I know it.” Well, then, if you know it, do not complain of it. Because when you have your own trial and the trial of your own faith, you are only treated like the rest of the family. What son is there whom the father chastens not?

You are only treated like the Head of the family. You are only treated in the way which the great Father of the family knows is necessary for us all. God had one Son without sin but He never had a son without trial and He never will have until He has taken us all Home out of this world. Why should we expect that God should deal better with us than He does with the rest of His chosen? Indeed, it would not be better, after all, because these trials are the means of working out our lasting good. But if it were not so, who am I, and who are you, that God should pamper us?

Would we have Him put us in a glass case and shield us from the trials which are common to all the chosen seed? I ask no such portion. Let me fare as the saints fare. I only wish to have their bread and their water and love their Father and follow their Guide and find their home. We will take our meals with them, whatever God puts upon the table for them, will we not? The trial of our faith will be all our own and yet it will be in fellowship with all the family of grace.

IV. YOUR FAITH WILL BE TRIED SEARCHINGLY. It will be no child's play to come under the Divine tests. Our faith is not merely jingled on the counter like the shilling which the tradesman suspects but it is tried with fire. For so it is written, "I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction." The blows of the trial of tribulation are not given in sport but in awful earnest, as some of us know who have been chastened sorely, almost unto death. The Lord tries the very life of our faith. Not its beauty and its strength alone but its very existence. The iron enters into the soul. The sharp medicine searches the inmost parts of the belly. The man's real self is made to endure the trial. It is easy to talk of being tried but it is by no means so simple a matter to endure the ordeal.

V. Let me yet further observe, that **YOUR FAITH WILL BE TRIED FOR AN ABUNDANTLY USEFUL PURPOSE.** The trial of your faith will increase, develop, deepen and strengthen it. "Oh," you have said, "I wish I had more faith." Your prayer will be heard through your having more trial.

Often in our prayers we have sought for a stronger faith to look within the veil. The way to stronger faith usually lies along the rough pathway of sorrow. Only as faith is contested, will faith be confirmed. I do not know whether my experience is that of all God's people. But I am afraid that all the Divine Grace that I have got out of my comfortable and easy times and happy hours, might almost lie on a penny. But the good that I have received from my sorrows and pains and griefs, is altogether incalculable. What do I not owe to the hammer and the anvil, the fire and the file? What do I not owe to the crucible and the furnace, the bellows that have blown up the coals and the hand which has thrust me into the heat?

Affliction is the best bit of furniture in my house. It is the best book in a minister's library. We may wisely rejoice in tribulation because it works patience, and patience, experience, and experience, hope. And by that way we are exceedingly enriched and our faith grows strong.

The trial of our faith is useful, not only because it strengthens it but because it leads to a discovery of our faith to ourselves. I notice an old Puritan using this illustration. He says you shall go into a wood when you

please but if you are very quiet, you will not know whether there is a partridge, or a pheasant, or a rabbit in it. But when you begin to move about, or make a noise, you very soon see the living creatures. They rise or they run. So, when affliction comes into the soul and makes a disturbance and breaks our peace, up rise our graces. Faith comes out of its hiding and love leaps from its secret place.

I remember Mr. William Jay saying that birds' nests are hard to find in summertime but anyone could find a bird's nest in winter. When all the leaves are off the trees the nests are visible to all. Often in the days of our prosperity, we fail to find our faith. But when our adversity comes, the winter of our trial bares the boughs and we see our faith at once. We are sure that we believe now, for we feel the effect of faith upon our character. "Before I was afflicted I went astray," said David, "but now have I kept Your Word." He found that his faith was really there by his keeping God's Word in the time of his affliction. It is a great mercy, then, to have your faith tried, that you may be sure beyond all manner of question that you are a true Believer.

Besides, when faith is tried it brings God glory. Oh, how it honors God when a man can say with a smiling face in prospect of death, "Good-bye, dear Sir, I may never see you here again but we shall meet above!" We who are in health envy the Brother who has such joy amid sharp pain. I went the other day to see a dear Brother who has since then gone above. He was swollen with dropsy and was close to the brink of the grave. But to hear the song of assurance and the utterances of his joy was most sweet and cheering. It made me feel how good God is to His servants. He never leaves nor forsakes them when they come to their most painful times.

This trial of our faith does good to our fellow Christians. They see how we are supported and they learn to bear their troubles bravely. I do not know anything that is better for making us brave than to see others believe in Christ and bear up manfully. To see that blind saint so happy makes us ashamed to be sad. To see content in an inmate of the workhouse compels us to be thankful. Sufferers are our tutors. They educate us for the skies. When men of God can suffer—when they can bear poverty, bereavement or sickness and still rejoice in God—we learn the way to live the higher and more Christ-like life.

When Patrick Hamilton had been burned in Scotland, one said to his persecutors, "If you are going to burn any more, you had better do it in a cellar, for the smoke of Hamilton's burning has opened the eyes of hundreds." It was always so. Suffering saints are living seed. Oh, that God might help us to such faith that when we come to suffer in life, or to expire in death, we may so glorify God that others may believe in Him! May we preach sermons by our faith which shall be better than sermons in words.

My time has gone and I have much to say to you. I wanted to say to you about the trial of your faith, dear Friends, that **SOME ARE TRIED VERY SPECIALLY**. Some endure many more tests than others and that is because God has a great favor to them. Many men God does not love well

enough to whip them. They are the devil's children and the heavenly Father does not trouble them. They are none of His and so He lets them have a happy life and perhaps an easy death—"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."

But they are to be pitied and not envied. Woe unto you that laugh now, for you shall weep! Woe unto you who have your portion in this life for it shall go ill with you in the world to come! God's children are often much chastened because they are much loved. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." Men take most trouble with that which is most precious. A common pebble will be let alone but a diamond must be fretted on the wheel till its brilliance is displayed.

Some persons are also much tried in their faith because they are very fit for it. God has fitted the back for a heavy burden and the burden will be sent. He has constituted them on purpose that they should be helpful in filling up "that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ, for His body's sake, which is the Church." Men build strong columns because they are meant to carry great weights. So God makes great Christians on purpose that they should bear great afflictions for His Glory.

He does this also because He would have some men do Him a special service. What an honor it is to do the Lord a special service! When some man in our army behaves himself very grandly and wins a battle, what will her Majesty do? Why, she will send for him next time a war arises. If any of you are brave in bearing affliction, you shall have the honor of enduring more affliction. Does not every soldier court the opportunity of service? He that looks over his soldiers says of a certain one, "I shall not send him—he is feeble and faint-hearted. Yonder veteran is the man for me."

Do not think that you would be honored by being allowed to ride to Heaven on a feather bed. True honor lies in being permitted to bear and suffer side by side with Him of the bloody sweat and of the five open wounds. This is the reward of the saints—that they should on earth be decorated with—

"Many a sorrow, many a tear."

They shall walk with their Lord in white, for they are worthy.

Yes, dear Friends, the Lord often sends us greater trials than others because He means to qualify us for greater enjoyments. If you want to make a pool capable of holding more water, you dig it out, do you not? And many a man has been dug and enlarged by affliction. The enlargements of trial enable us to hold more Divine Grace and more glory. The more a gracious man suffers, the more he becomes capable of entering into fellowship with Christ in His sufferings and so into fellowship with Christ in His Glory by-and-by.

Come, let us be comforted as to the trial of our faith. There is no hurt in it. It is all for good. The trial of our faith is entirely in the hands of God. Nobody can try us without God's permission. He will try us just as much as we ought to be tried and no more. While He tries us with one hand He will sustain us with the other. If He gives us bitters, He will give us sweets

in full proportion. A dear Sister said to me this week, "When I used to be in poverty and in trouble, the Word of God was much more sweet to me than it is now that I am prospered."

I do not wonder at it. I have made a similar remark when I have been long without an illness. Some of us have cried, "Take me back to my sickness again. Take me back to slander and rebuke again." A Scotch saint said that when they met in the moss, or by the hillside, and were harried by Claverhouse and his dragoons, Christ was present at the sacraments in the heather much more than He ever was afterwards when they got into their Church and sat down quietly. Our worst days are often our best days and in the dark we see stars that we never saw in the light. So we will not care a pin what it is that may befall us here, so long as God is with us and our faith in Him is genuine.

Christian people, I am not going to sympathize with you but congratulate you upon your troubles, for the Cross of Christ is precious. But you that do not love my Lord and Master, if you roll in riches, if your eyes stand out with fatness, I mourn over you. Bullocks fattened for the slaughter, your joys are but the prelude to your woes. Oh, that God would have mercy upon you and that you would have mercy upon yourselves and flee at once to Jesus and put your trust in Him! Faith in the work, offices and Person of the Lord Jesus is the way of salvation. May He help you to run in it at this hour, for His name's sake! Amen.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON.

DEAR FRIENDS—In answer to a general desire that I should let my beloved Readers know of my condition, I will write a line or two each week. Owing to extreme weakness it has taken me the whole week to reach my sunny retreat but at each stage I have found myself a little better and I can now walk a little—a very little. Yet for this I am deeply grateful to Him "who restores our life." I hope, by rest in this genial climate, to recover tone, strength and freshness of mind and then I trust all will be spent, in future days, for God's glory.

Through the blessing of God upon the labors of Messrs. Fullerton and Smith a cheering work is going on at the Tabernacle. I beg my readers to pray that the Lord may be glorified among the people in the absence of the usual worker and that the printed sermons may speak with power when the preacher himself is silent.

Yours, dear Friends, in Christ Jesus,

C. H. SPURGEON.

Mentone, November 24, 1888.

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SALVATION AS IT IS NOW RECEIVED

NO. 3223

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 1910.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 23, 1872.

“Whom having not seen, you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.”
1 Peter 1:8, 9.

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text is #698, Volume 12—
SEEING IS NOT BELIEVING, BUT BELIEVING IS SEEING—
Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

We usually speak of the greater benefits of salvation as being in the future. We desire that we may be found in Christ in the day of His appearing and that we may have a share in His eternal Glory. But, Beloved, salvation is not altogether a thing of the future—it is very decidedly a present matter, a blessing to be possessed now and to be enjoyed now—and our text brings out that idea very clearly! Peter does not write about the elect strangers hoping to receive salvation, by-and-by, but putting it all in the *present* tense, he says, “Whom having not seen, *you love. Though now...you rejoice... receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.*” The perfection of salvation is reserved for the Second Coming of the Lord, for at present the body is mortal because of sin—it is subject to pain and it will die unless the Lord should first come and it will, for a while, lie in the grave. But at His appearing shall be a resurrection of the body and then body and soul reunited shall experience the fullness of salvation! In that respect, therefore, salvation still remains in part a matter for the future, yet with the true child of God, the essence of salvation is a thing of today. Even now we rejoice with unspeakable joy and full of glory, receiving the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls!

I am going to speak upon this matter in the following way. First, we will enquire, *what part of salvation do we receive here and now?* Secondly, *how do we now receive salvation?* And then, thirdly we will make the solemn enquiry for all here, *Have we received salvation, and if so, how far have we gone in the reception of it?*

I. My first question is, WHAT PART OF SALVATION DO WE RECEIVE HERE AND NOW?

My first answer to the question is that, *in a certain sense, we already possess the whole of it*, for all salvation is wrapped up in Christ and Chr-

ist is ours if we are truly believing in Him. He is this day our Savior and our All-in-All—He is already “made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.” There is nothing of salvation that is outside of Christ and, therefore, since Christ is ours, the whole of salvation is ours. It is ours by the grip of faith and the Grace of hope—that living hope which is sure of realization—that well-grounded hope which cannot be disappointed. Our expectation is of so vivid a character that it brings not only near to us, but into actual present possession, joys which as yet are not revealed! So again I say that, in a sense, it is true for us to say that we have received in faith and hope the salvation of our souls if we have truly believed in Jesus, for—

**“The moment a sinner believes,
And trusts in his crucified God,
His pardon at once he receives,
Redemption in full through Christ’s blood.”**

But, secondly, if we are to answer the question distinctly and in detail, we should say that if we have really trusted in Jesus, we have so far received the salvation of our souls that we have, at this moment, *the assurance of the perfect pardon of all our sins*. Let me repeat those words—if we have really believed in Jesus, we have, at this moment, the assurance of the perfect pardon of all our sins! And I will venture to put it as strongly as this and to say that yonder white-robed spirits before the eternal Throne of God are not more clear of the guilt of sin before the bar of Infallible Justice than was the dying thief the very moment that he turned his eye in faith to Christ upon the Cross of Calvary—or than you are if you are now trusting to the same Savior, or than I am as now depending alone upon the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior! The pardon which God gives to Believers in Jesus is not a semi-pardon. It is not a putting away of some of their sins, or a putting them away for a time—it is a perfect putting away of their sins forever, a casting of them, once and for all, behind God’s back into the depths of the sea so that they shall never be found again! Yes, they shall be so completely put away that they shall cease to be, according to that Divine declaration, “The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none.” Oh, what a glorious Truth of God is this, that although a poor tried child of God may feel the force of his inbred sin and have to continually struggle with it—and though he may, from day to day, be conscious of his many imperfections, yet before those Eyes that see everything, there is no spot to be seen upon the Believer in Christ—I mean no spot in this respect—that he can never be condemned or punished for his sin! His sin is finally and forever pardoned! God has blotted it out like a cloud that has been blown away and completely dispersed. Therefore let our spirits rejoice if we are truly trusting in Jesus! And oh, that some who have never done so before, would now look believingly unto Him! If they do thus look this moment, they shall obtain perfect pardon and so shall receive the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls! I

cannot help repeating that sweet verse of Kent's which I have often repeated to you, which sounds so strange, but which is, I believe, absolutely true—

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

And next, Beloved, we have received the salvation of our souls in this sense, that *the alienation of our hearts from God is now effectually removed*. We are saved from that alienation and that is a very great part of salvation. Once our backs were turned towards God, but now our faces are turned towards Him. At one time we did not admire His Character, nor desire to imitate Him, nor wish for His friendship nor, perhaps, even so much as think of His existence, much less did we aspire to give Him honor! But now, having believed in Jesus, we have undergone a complete change! We are not yet what we ought to be—we are still a long way off what we expect to be one day—yet we do desire to be what we should be. We admire the Character of God even though we have to prostrate ourselves in the dust when we see how far our own character is from likeness to it, and the whole set and current of our desires is towards purity and holiness. If we could have our way, our way would not be a sinful one. If our will could be gratified, our will would be that God should have His will with us and that we should be in all things conformed to the Divine Will! All true Christians are conscious that it is so with them and this is a great part of salvation. Indeed, it is destruction to be alienated from God, and it is salvation to be reconciled to Him! It is destruction to anyone to be a lover of sin. The man who loves evil is a destroyed man—a man who is broken in pieces—that which should be the glory of his manhood is absent from him. But when he is brought to love God, the ruins are rebuilt! And though, as yet, every part of the renovated building may not be finished, the Divine Architect who drew the plans of it from eternity, will never leave the work till the last stroke of the sacred hammer and chisel shall have been given—and the completed structure shall have had the headstone placed upon it amid shouts of, “Grace, Grace unto it!” Blessed be God that we have this salvation, now, in that we are saved from our former alienation of heart from God!

In the next place, we have received the salvation of our souls in the sense that *we are saved from the killing power of sin*. Before we believed in Jesus, we were not capable of those sacred actions which are now our daily delight. We could not pray. We may have “said our prayers,” as so many do, but the living breath of true God-inspired prayer was not in us. How could it be in us while we were still dead in trespasses and sins? We could not believe. How could we do so when we had not received the gift of faith from the ever-blessed Spirit? The fact is, we were under a terrible bondage and just as a corpse is under bondage to death and cannot stir hand or foot, lip or eye, so were we under bondage to sin and Satan. But

we are under that deadly bondage no longer, for we are living men, free men in Christ Jesus our Lord who has overcome that death for us! Now we can pray! Now we can praise—not always as we would like to do, but still, the aspiration is there and the power is there—and when God graciously helps us by His Holy Spirit, we rise to a high degree of vigor in both those sacred exercises! So, when the killing power of sin is gone, what a mercy it is! What a bliss it is! And in this sense, also, we receive the salvation of our souls.

More than that, Beloved, *the reigning power of sin has now gone from every Believer*. Once we were slaves to sin, under sin's domination. Sin said to us, "Go," and we went, or sin said to us, "Stay! Obey not God," and we stayed and at sin's bidding disobeyed God. But now, sin no longer has dominion over us, for we are not under the Law, but under Grace. And though we even now sometimes hear sin's mandate and the flesh inclines us to yield obedience to it, there is a blessed spirit of rebellion against sin within our heart so that we will not obey sin's commands, but seek after that which is just and holy and right in the sight of God!

Now I am going to take another step and possibly some of the feebler folk among us may think it is too long a step for them to take. Yet I pray God that many of us may practically prove that we have taken it. Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, it is possible and it ought to be the general rule for Christians to enjoy present salvation in the sense of *being now free, to a very high degree, from sin in their daily life and conduct*. No, more—they ought not to be satisfied without aspiring to be absolutely free from it! It is after this that they should seek, even though they do not attain to it. I am fully persuaded the perfection in the flesh is not attainable here, yet that Truth of God, as I believe it is, has been used by a great many persons as a sort of damper to the sad ambition of renewed spirits! I do not think it ought to be so used, nor that it would legitimately be so used. Suppose I am a sculptor? If it is not possible for me to attain to the perfection of Praxiteles or Phidias, yet I must come as close to them as I can—and I shall not be a master of the sculptor's art unless I seek to imitate those who have been the most proficient in it. Suppose, also, that through the infirmity of the flesh, I shall never in this life be perfect, like Christ—yet I must have no lower model, nor must I say to myself, "I cannot imitate that perfect Model," but, crying to the Strong One for strength, I must believe that the Omnipotence of God can overcome every sin! And I must also believe that it is possible for me, by the Grace of God, to get every sin beneath my feet. And I must never say to any one sin, "I shall have to spare you, for you are too strong for God to slay." It would be blasphemy to talk like that!

I fear that some Brothers and Sisters think that a quick temper can never be overcome. But it *must* be overcome! The reason why so many professors so often fall into that sin is that they do not believe that it is conquerable and, therefore, they do not pray it down! Another person, perhaps, has a sluggish disposition and he thinks, "I must always be so.

It is my nature and the flesh is weak.” It is true that the flesh is weak, but it is equally true that God is Almighty! And it is not our own strength but Divine strength that is to procure the deliverance of our soul from sluggishness! So we must cry mightily unto the Lord for Divine Grace to overcome this or any other sin to which we are peculiarly prone. God has not put us into Canaan and said to us, “You may spare some of those Amorites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hittites, Girgashites, Hivites and Jebusites!” His command to us is, “Slay them all! Let not one of them escape!” There must be no sin tolerated in any Believer in Christ! And though you are not perfect, you must never say, “Up to this point, I am perfect, and that is as far as God can make me perfect.” Dear Friends, do you believe in an Infinitely powerful God? Do you believe that the Holy Spirit is able to work in you anything and everything that He wills to work? Then, Brothers and Sisters, stop not short of the highest point that is attainable by mortal men and seek to be “holy as God is holy!” Alas, some professors of religion are hardly even moral! Their pretended Christianity is a stench even in the nostrils of worldlings, for they do not conform to the common rules of ordinary decent society—and what true Christians long for is to possess real holiness, to walk with God as Enoch did, to abide in Christ, to shun every false way, to have—

“A heart from sin set free”—

and a conscience tender as the apple of the eye! Oh, that we could all come up to this standard! And we can! It is possible! This is attainable, by the Grace of God, through the effectual working of the Holy Spirit. I again say that I do not think that *absolute perfection* can be reached here, but I cannot tell how near we can come to it. *That* I would like to prove by happy personal experience—and I beseech every Brother and Sister in Christ here to join with me in seeking to know how we may, even now, receive the salvation of our souls from the power of sin!

I am quite sure that there are many Christians who have been completely delivered from sins into which they readily fell in their early days. You know that infants suffer from a great many diseases. All through the period of babyhood, they are liable to various ailments which no longer afflict us who are grown-up men and women. So it is with some Christians—when they have grown in Grace to the stature of men in Christ, they do not have the little complaints of babyhood. I do not say that this is true of all professors of Christianity, for alas, there are many of them who have to be wheeled about in baby carriages although they are 50 or 60 years of age! While they were little children, we had to dandle them on our knees and carry them in our arms and give them milk—and they still want milk, and still want dandling now that they are getting gray—gray-bearded babies! But we need to get them out of that state of babyhood, for there is something far better even on earth than being spiritually mere babes all our lives! May all of us who are in Christ grow to the stature of men and women in Christ! The more of such any Church shall

have among her members, the better will it be for her and the more will God be glorified! Let us who are the Lord's, resolve that everything that is to be had of God this side of Heaven, we will have! Let us not be content to get just inside Christ's house and to sit down there and say, "Thank God, we are safe. We have got over the threshold," but let us seek to press onward to the chief table of rich refreshment and inner fellowship with Christ and to know the secret of the Lord which is with them that fear Him, that so we may find that "glory begun below" of which Dr. Watts so truly sings—

***"The men of Grace have found
Glory begun below!
Celestial fruits on earthly ground
From faith and hope may grow."***

II. And now, secondly, (and with greater brevity, not professing to dive into the depths of the text, but merely skimming its surface, as the swallow touches the brook with its wing)—HOW DO WE NOW RECEIVE THE SALVATION OF OUR SOULS?

First, it is entirely from Jesus Christ—"Whom having not seen, you love, *in whom*, though now you see Him not, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." Everything of salvation that a Believer receives, comes to him out of the one storehouse wherein all fullness abides—that is in Christ Jesus! Never believe, Christian, that you will ever get any Divine Grace out of yourself! It is a dreary and useless task to send the bucket down into the dry well of our nature in the hope of drawing up a supply of Grace. Oh no, Beloved, look away from self and look alone to Jesus, for from Him, and from Him, only, do we receive the salvation of our souls!

Then note that the channels through which we receive salvation from Christ are first, *faith*—"in whom, though now you see Him not, yet believing, you rejoice." None of us have seen Christ. We sometimes foolishly wish that we had, but *believing* in Him is better than merely seeing Him—for many saw Him when He was upon the earth—and yet perished! But no man ever truly believed in Him and then perished. Faith is that eye which savingly sees Christ on the Cross. And it is only as we continue to look to Him by faith that we receive the present salvation of our souls from sin. You can never kill any sin if you turn your eyes away from the Cross. There is no stream that can cleanse from inward lusts but the precious blood of Jesus that flowed on Calvary. Whoever has been victorious over any temptation, it may truly be said of him, "he overcame through the blood of the Lamb." So that there is no way of receiving the blessings of a present salvation except through believing in Jesus!

Our text also tells us that another channel of salvation is *love*—"Whom having not seen, you love." The love of Christ is the great force that enables Grace to kill sin! The love of Christ and sin are like the two bal-

ances of a pair of scales—if sin goes up in our esteem, our love to Christ is going down! And whenever our love to Christ goes up, sin must go down in the same proportion. With little love to Christ, you will walk unwarily, but with great love to your Lord, you will walk carefully before Him and your practical holiness will become manifest to all around you. Though we have not seen Christ, we love Him! And through that love we receive a further assurance of the salvation of our souls from inward as well as outward sin. This is the precious golden conduit through which the power of Divine Grace flows freely into our souls. Oh, for more fervent love to Christ!

Then our text stays that we also receive this present assurance of salvation through *joy in the Lord*—“In whom...believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” This joy is a flaming sword like that which the cherubim waved at the gates of the Garden of Eden! It blazes, it cuts, it kills. Once let us really rejoice in Christ as our Savior and we become immediately guarded from sin. I believe that many sins are hatched beneath the wings of doubt and fear, but when we get away from those ugly things and live rejoicing in God, then we say, “Down with sin! We cannot endure to have it in our lives.” He who has sweet flowers in his hand flings away evil-smelling weeds! And he who has such a diamond of Heaven as “joy unspeakable and full of glory” casts away the pebbles of earth with which He was pleased before. He who rejoices with joy unspeakable is not likely to be allured by the paltry joys of earth—they have lost all their former charm to him. Their siren songs have no attraction to his ears for he has heard the celestial note of the harps of Heaven! What bliss it is to be able to rejoice in Christ as our Savior, for this guarantees to us the salvation of our souls, not only now, but to all eternity!

Why does the Apostle say that we rejoice with *joy unspeakable*? Is it not, first, because this joy is too great to be told? He is indeed rich who cannot count his wealth. He has so much that he does not know how much he has and he is indeed full of joy who has so much joy that he cannot tell anyone how much he has!

I also think that Peter calls our joy, “unspeakable,” because if we were to try to explain or describe it to carnal men, they could not understand us. You cannot explain to a person who has never tasted honey, how sweet it is. Neither can you explain to a man who knows not the joy of the Lord, how joyous a thing it is. He could not comprehend what your words meant—you would be talking to him in an altogether unknown tongue!

Moreover, Brothers and Sisters, you all know the old proverb, “Still waters run deep.” The worldly joy barely covers the stones of his daily sorrow and, therefore, it babbles like a shallow brook as it runs along in its narrow bed. But the Christian’s joy is broad and deep and it scarcely makes any sound as it majestically rolls on like some great river on its way to the sea! The Christians joy is unspeakable because it is unfa-

thomable even by those who enjoy it! And wherever this joy comes, it has a purifying effect, delivering us from sin and making us thus receive the salvation of our souls.

This joy is also said to be “full of glory.” Now, the joys of this world have no true glory in them. Look at the worldly man who is most joyous and glad—what glory is there about him? Any so-called joy that comes through sin is just the opposite of glorious! The drunk’s joy puts him below the level of beasts. But there is an elevating power about the Christian’s joy—the joy of salvation, the joy of adoration, the joy of gratitude, the joy of love to God, the joy of being made like Christ, the joy of expecting His coming—all this is glorious joy and it is “full of glory!” I saw lately a picture representing the Coming Man, the Lord Jesus Christ. It represented Him as having in His hands cannons, triumphant arches, flags, kings, emperors and all the insignia of royalty—and blowing them away as chaff is driven before the wind! Come, O blessed Coming Man! You know how we need You! Well, He will come at the right time—and all the glory of this world will fly away just like that when He comes! But our joy is full of a glory which the Coming Man who is, “over all God, blessed forever,” will keep on increasing so that it shall be to us the more full of glory forever and ever! Such joy as this glorious joy is, makes us look down upon the world’s joys and sin’s joys as utterly despicable! And so, by lifting us up above them, it further enables us to receive, here and now, the salvation of our souls!

III. There was much more that I wanted to say, but my time has almost gone. In the good old Puritan times, they had an hourglass on the pulpit and when the sands were running out, the minister was warned that it was time to stop. But he often turned it over, again, and went on for another hour! I cannot do that, so I must hasten to a close with the solemn enquiry, **HAVE WE RECEIVED THE SALVATION OF OUR SOULS? AND IF SO, HOW FAR HAVE WE GONE IN THE RECEPTION OF IT?**

The first and most vital question for you, my Hearers, is this—*have you received the salvation of your souls?* I know that you have heard about salvation and many of you know what the Bible says about it. But that is not enough. “I know what salvation means,” says one, “I know the way.” Then take heed that you do not perish in the light! If two men have to go out in the dark, which is the one to whom the darkness is the more dense? Why, the one who has been sitting in the light! If you go out of your brilliantly illuminated room, you realize how dark it is outside where there is no light above or below. Take care, you who are sitting in the Light of God today, lest for you there should be “reserved the blackness of darkness forever” because you shut your eyes to the Light and will not receive the salvation of your souls.

“Ah, but,” say some, “we profess to be saved.” I am glad to hear that and I would not even hint that your profession is not sincere, but I would urge you to hint to yourself that there is a possibility that all may not be

well with you! Are there not many who think they have received the salvation of their souls, but who have not really done so? In St. Peter's, at Rome, I saw monuments to James III, Charles III, and Henry IX—kings of England—but these potentates were quite unknown to me! Certainly they never reigned in this land, so the royal names upon their monuments are only a subject for ridicule and scorn! And you profess and call yourselves Christians? If you really are so, it is well, but if you are not so, I can conceive that in the next world there may be spirits that shall say to you, "You professed to be Christians, yet you are in Hell! You sat at the Lord's Table and ate the bread and drank the wine in memory of His death—that death in which you had no saving interest—the Atonement that never redeemed you!" O no, my Hearers, may this never be true of any of us! But may God, in His Infinite Mercy, save us and so may we really and truly receive, and not merely profess to have received the salvation of our souls! If we have really cast ourselves upon Christ, though we have not seen Him—if we do truly love Him and if we have, to some extent, at least, the joy unspeakable and full of glory within our hearts—then, indeed, we have received the salvation of our souls!

Then comes the other question, *how far have we received this salvation?* If we had a sacred thermometer given to us in order to measure our spiritual heat, what would our temperature be? Are you, Brother, above freezing? I fear that some here are below zero! Have any of you come up to anything like blood heat yet? What a wondrous heat of love that must have been when the lifeblood of Jesus flowed from His wounds as He hung upon the Cross of Calvary! Oh, that we could always have our religion at such blood heat! Have we reached that spiritual temperature yet? There have been saints—and there are still saints willing to suffer the loss of all things for Christ's sake. Nothing has been too hot, too hard, or too heavy for them to endure in His blessed service. They have counted shame and loss to be honor and gain if they might but "glorify God and enjoy Him forever." Have we come anywhere near to them? We do have occasional communion with Christ, but have we *abiding fellowship* with Him? Do we dwell near to Christ?

But what about these who have not yet believed in Him? I heard an evangelist say one night in this Tabernacle, "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life. H—A—S—that spells, 'got it.'" That is an odd way of spelling, but it is sound divinity! The Lord enable you all to believe in Jesus! Then you will have "got it," as our friend said. Or, as Peter, writing under the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit wrote, "Believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 PETER 1.**

Verse 1. *Peter, an Apostle of Jesus Christ.* It must have been very pleasant to his heart to write those words—not “Peter, who denied his Master.” Not, “Peter, full of imperfections and infirmities—the impetuous and changeable one of the twelve,” but, “Peter, an Apostle of Jesus Christ,” as truly sent of God as any of the other Apostles and with as much of the Spirit of his Master resting upon him! “Peter, an Apostle of Jesus Christ”—

1, 2. *To the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.* You might go for 50 years to some places of worship and never hear the word, “elect,” ever mentioned! Modern ministers seem to be ashamed of the grand old Doctrine of Election, but it was not so with the Apostles and the early Christians! They were accustomed to speak of one another as the elect of God. The Doctrine of Election was most precious to their hearts and, therefore, Peter writes, “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father”—

2. *Through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.* We not only need Grace, but we need much Grace! And also peace. And we need a greatly increased measure of both those blessings. Do not be satisfied, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, with the Grace that you already have. Be thankful for it, but ask for the Divine multiplication of it—regard the Grace which you have already received as being like the boy’s loaves and fishes—and expect that Christ will continue to multiply it for you and for thousands of others round about you! “Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.”

3-5. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in Heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.* [See Sermon #948, Volume 16—A STRING OF PEARLS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] What a vast mass of meaning is packed away in these words! Men’s books, even when they are good, are like gold-leaf—a little precious metal is very thinly hammered out so as to cover a wide surface—but almost every Word in the Bible seems to contain a whole mine of heavenly wealth! Note, Beloved, what Peter says concerning your new birth—you are begotten by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! At your first birth, you were born in sin. But now you have been born-again, through Grace, by the almighty power of God! Notice, also, unto what you are born—unto a hope that is full of life, a lively hope, a hope of immortality, a hope whose root is in the grave of Christ, the empty grave from which He has risen and which is the assurance that because He has risen, *you also shall rise.* See, further, to what you have been born—“to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away.” See, also, how that in-

heritance is entailed upon you, for it is “reserved in Heaven for you.” And see, too, how you are kept for it, for you “are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

6. *Wherein you greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if necessary, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations:* [See Sermon #222, Volume 4—THE CHRISTIAN’S HEAVINESS AND REJOICING—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] What? Can there be rejoicing and heaviness in the same heart at the same time? Oh, yes! Our experience has taught us that we can be at the same moment in heaviness of heart and yet rejoicing in the Lord!

7-9. *That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it is tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: whom having not seen, you love; in whom though now you see Him not, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.* You have that already if you have believed in Jesus! You have received a present, immediate salvation! There are some who do not understand or realize this. They miss the whole joy of our holy religion. They are always hoping to be saved, by-and-by, but those who are in Christ Jesus by a living personal faith, receive here and now the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls!

10-12. *Of which salvation the Prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the Grace that should come unto you: searching what or what manner of the time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you with the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.* [See Sermons #1524, Volume 26—YOUR PERSONAL SALVATION and #2697, Volume 46—ANGELIC INTEREST IN THE GOSPEL—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Observe, dear Brothers and Sisters, that the Prophets did not speak without due consideration, but they “enquired and searched diligently” into the meaning of that salvation of which they “testified beforehand.” Holy Scripture must not be read by us carelessly. We ought to peer, pry and search into it to get at its hidden meaning. And the prophecies as well as the rest of the Word are to be searched into by us upon whom the ends of the earth have come. Observe, also, that this Divine Revelation is of great interest to the holy angels before the Throne of God—they stand gazing down as if they were trying to understand the wondrous mystery of Redemption and the great and glorious Gospel of the Grace of God.

13-16. *Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the Grace that is to be brought unto you at the Revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as He which has called you is holy, so*

be you holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, be you holy; for I Am holy. Be not only moral, upright, truthful and so forth, but, “be you holy.” That is a very high attainment! “Be you holy” and observe the reason for obedience to the command—“for I Am holy.” Children should be like their fathers. There are many children who bear in their very faces, evidence of their sonship. You know who their fathers were by the image that the children bear. Oh, that it were always so with all the children of God! “Be you holy; for I Am holy.”

17. *And if you call on the Father, who without respect of person judges according to every man’s work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.* You are only here for a while. You are sojourners, foreigners, pilgrims passing through a country where you have no abiding place. Be, therefore, careful and even fearful lest you should become like the people among whom you dwell! Have a holy dread of the contaminations of sin—“Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.”

18-21. *Forasmuch as you know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by Him do believe in God, that raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.* What a well of joy this always was to Peter, that God had raised His Son, Jesus Christ, from the dead! And this is our joy today! This is one of the facts which are proved beyond all question, that Jesus Christ, who died upon the Cross and was buried in Joseph’s tomb, did actually rise again! This is the cornerstone of the Christian faith—one of the great facts upon which we found our confidence as to salvation by Jesus Christ.

22, 23. *Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that you love one another with a pure heart fervently: being born-again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which lives and abides forever.* God’s Word never dies! God’s Word never changes! There are some who think we ought to get a new Gospel every few years or even every few weeks—but that was not Peter’s notion. He wrote and he was Divinely Inspired to write concerning “the Word of God, which lives and abides forever.”

24, 25. *For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower thereof falls away: but the Word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you.* [See Sermon #999, Volume 17—THE WITHERING WORK OF THE SPIRIT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

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

SEEING IS NOT BELIEVING, BUT BELIEVING IS SEEING

NO. 698

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 1, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT CORNWALL ROAD CHAPEL, BAYSWATER.

“Whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.”
1 Peter 1:8, 9.

A VERY formidable difficulty frequently besets earnest but uninstructed minds who are seeking the Savior. They do not find it difficult to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, that He is a Savior, that He is mighty to save—their difficulty lies in getting at Him. They believe that the medicine will cure, but their question is, how shall they drink it? They are convinced that a touch of the hem of the Savior’s garment would heal their diseases, but their question is how to touch. By what means shall they be brought into contact with Christ and a Savior become the Savior of their souls? The constant aim of the Gospel ministry should be to remove such difficulties as these out of the way of coming souls, and we shall try this morning, as God shall help us, to lift out that stone and fill up that miry place in the king’s highway that some may *today* be enabled to come to Jesus—understanding what that coming means—and exercising it before they leave this house.

It is very common to meet with persons who say, “I wish that I had heard the Savior—actually heard Him speak. If I could have listened to that matchless eloquence of which it is written, ‘Never man spoke like this Man,’ I should have been convinced, melted, led to penitence and inspired with faith. I wish I could have heard Him pronounce those words, ‘Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.’ I would have leaped from among the crowd, and I would have cried, ‘Master, I come! Your invitation draws me! Here I am, a heavy-laden sinner, give me rest.’”

You have also wished that you had been able literally to touch Him—to have put your finger into the print of the nails—and to have thrust your hand into His side. It seems to you that *then* you could have believed. If you might have been privileged with even the touch of the woman who did but touch the hem of His garment, much more if you might have been privileged to lean your head upon His bosom with John, you would then have believed, you think, as a matter of course, and there would have been no sort of difficulty in the way of your salvation. You have sighed, “Oh that I could have heard, have touched, and have seen Him! These would have been three pearly gates through which I might have come at Him. I could have reached Him then, if I might but have exercised my senses upon His blessed Person.”

Your soul has lingered over the thought of seeing Him. You have especially wondered whether it would have been possible to have seen Him upon Tabor with His garments glistening whiter than any fuller could

have made them, and yet not have believed! You have thought it impossible! You have said, "If I could have been among the disciples in the garden of Gethsemane to have seen the bloody sweat and marked the tokens of the drops of blood on the frosty ground. And if I could, with tearful eyes have seen Him at the scourging and the spitting. If I could have wondered and wept with Mary at the foot of the Cross and seen the blood drop from His hands and feet, I should then have been saved! It would have been easy to believe if there had been something to see."

At first sight, indeed, this is a very plausible statement and seems as if there must be truth in it. But believe me, my dear Hearer, there is none at all! And I may say of the Savior very much what Abraham said of Lazarus, You have the Gospels and the Epistles, and you have the abiding Presence of the Holy Spirit. And if you believe not, neither would you have believed if you had been among the company who saw Jesus, touched Him and listened to His voice. It is a mistake, a great mistake—as I think a moment's reflection would show you—to conceive that contact with Jesus through the senses would produce faith.

Mark the fact that out of the mass who *did* see Jesus, and who did hear Him, few, very few believed. The crowd which gathered round the Crucifixion, which might seem to be the most moving scene in the story, were not bettered by what they saw. As the multitude gazed, instead of tears they yielded laughter! Instead of penitence they exhibited blasphemy! There they gathered, thousands of them of all sorts, the highest and the lowest, the intelligent and the uneducated, and all alike they spat the venom of their hatred upon the Crucified One. They cried, "If He is the Son of God, let Him come down from the Cross." Seeing was *not* believing, but disbelieving and hating!

They had beheld His miracles before His being nailed to the Cross. They had seen dead Lazarus come forth from the tomb and marked those that had leprosy and other incurable diseases suddenly healed. They had, moreover, feasted upon the bread which He Himself had created for them, and yet they believed not. Why, then, do you conclude that *you* would have done so? There is nothing better in your heart than in the hearts of other men! Doubtless you would have seen all, and have been astonished and possibly affected—but the probabilities are that you would have remained what you are now, if not something worse—an unbeliever, an unsaved one.

Besides, it should never be forgotten that those who *did* believe in Jesus Christ in His own day had to get out of and beyond the sphere of the senses in order to believe. Let me show you what I mean. I am not certain that what they saw helped them to believe. I think it did the reverse. I grant you that to see the holiness and the self-consecration of the Lord Jesus must have had a convincing influence upon gracious hearts. But then, let me ask you, would the sight of the deep poverty of the Man of Sorrows lead you to believe in His Godhead? Would an association with Him in His rejection and dishonor lead you to believe in His celestial Glory?

Is it likely that if you had seen Him betrayed and dragged away to an ignominious doom that the shameful scene would have been an *assistance* to your faith? Would not your *faith* have had need to triumph over all that the eye beheld, and would it not have been needful to use the *soul's* eyes rather than the poor optics of the body in order to see the Son of God in

the Son of Man? How was the Messiah-ship, the Godhead, the Glory and the power of Christ to be seen by the eye? That which was seen was to a great extent hostile to faith, contradictory to it, and faith, to be exercised, had to struggle with what it saw.

Does not the Prophet tell us that when we shall see Him there is no beauty that we should desire in Him? He is a root out of a dry ground. He is a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. That which was seen of the Christ was a difficulty in the matter of faith instead of being an assistance to it. Yet further, I say when they *did* believe they went beyond the mere evidence of sense. Even Thomas, in that celebrated interview with Christ, when he made the utmost use of seeing, and touching, and handling, went much farther than mere sight could conduct him. The putting of his finger into the print of the nails, and thrusting his hand into the side was convincing evidence that Christ had risen, but it does not seem to me to be evidence of what Thomas drew from it—namely, “My Lord and my God.”

Here faith went beyond what the finger revealed. The eye and hand showed a wounded man—but faith could see Godhead and authority—and therefore bowed and accepted the risen Man as being from now on her Lord and her God! Now a number of reflections of this kind I think would go very far to show you that instead of it being certain that had you seen and heard and touched the Savior you would have believed, it is, on the contrary, quite certain that you might *not* have believed. And that if you had done so it would not have been the result of your *seeing*, but it would have had to be accounted for on quite another ground, namely, that described by the Savior, when He said to Peter, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this unto you.”

You would not have had faith in Christ as the result of *sight*. The Holy Spirit must have worked faith in you if you had received it. That same Spirit who is able and willing to give you faith *today* though now you see not the Savior! The question returns, “If I cannot come into contact with the Savior by seeing, by hearing, by touching, tell me how I may, for I do desire that virtue should come out of Him to me. I am sick. I would be healed. I am lost. I would be saved. But by what means can I attain unto that salvation which He came upon earth to bestow?”

The answer is in the text and we shall bring it out by the following method—First, we will observe how we come into contact with Jesus. Secondly, what virtue flows from that contact. And then, thirdly, what then?—What are the inferences from this Truth of God?

I. To begin, then, upon this point—HOW DO WE COME INTO CONTACT WITH JESUS? The uppermost point of contact, the most apparent and visible in the Believer’s life, is *love*. Observe—“Whom having not seen you love.” The Apostle Peter twice puts in the “not seen,” as if he felt that though he, himself, had seen or had been with Jesus in the most private of His retirements, yet these Hebrew saints, strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, had not seen Jesus.

He dwells much on the fact because he knew that they were types and specimens of all succeeding Believers, of us among the rest. Therefore, recording the fact that they had *not* seen Jesus, he describes them as loving Him whom they had not seen. Now then, dear Fiends, the first point of contact with Christ is *love* and I think I can show you that we can, no, that we *do* love Him whom we have not seen! Jesus Christ is Incarnate

God. He who fills all things and yet is not contained by all things that are made because He is greater than them all, condescended to become bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh.

He was born of the virgin and laid in the manger. In His flesh we have not seen Him. We might have gazed upon that Infant's face and seen Him in the flesh and yet we might not have *loved* Him. But now, as our believing hearts think of Him as Incarnate, our minds go back to Bethlehem and Nazareth, and our recollection pictures Him as a Man among us men. And as our soul sees Him, first as an Infant of a span long, and then suffering all our infirmities and tempted in all points like as we are—and when we reflect that He need not have suffered so, but condescended to cast aside His Glory wherein He counted it not robbery to be equal with God that He might be on a level with us—why, then, without seeing Him we love Him!

Blessed Man, blessed God, condescending to be Man for me! At the very thought of Your leaving the highest throne of Glory, I love You! Foxes have holes and the birds have nests, but You had not where to lay Your head, and yet You were Lord of All! My soul needs not to see You—she loves You!

We believe, moreover, that as a Man there were beauties in His Character of such a sort that it must have been impossible, spiritually, to appreciate them without loving Him. Now we never saw Him when He forgave His enemies, when He answered meekly those who railed at Him. We never saw Him in all His splendid life of disinterested philanthropy, nor do we regret that we did not. But when we read the story of His life, our heart pictures Him who went about doing good—and falling adoringly by faith at His feet, we say—Such a character is lovely! Such a Person commands our hearts! And though we have not seen Him, yet the mental sight of His portrait as it is drawn by those four master artists, the Evangelists, wins our affections and holds our souls fast.

It is true, too, that we never saw the Redeemer's grief. We never peered into that face, more marred than that of any man. We did not see Him in the garden in His agony, nor behold Him upon the Cross when the cry of, "Lama Sabachthani!" startled Heaven and earth. But we have mused upon all, and with the spirit's eye have seen all. We need no great strength of imagination to think of Him until Ecce Homo—"Behold the Man!"—rings as clear from the page of Scripture as though it came from Pilate himself.

We have realized, by meditation, the scars upon His back where the plowers made deep furrows. We have thought upon the crown of thorns and marked the ruby drops. We have considered Him staggering beneath His Cross along the Via Dolorosa. We have marked Him as His hands and feet were pierced. We have counted the purple drops and said, "Thus our sins were washed away." And though we have not *seen* Him, we do not need sight to make us *love* Him, for the very thought of Him—the contemplation of His intense agony for us who were His enemies—constrains us to love Him. We are fastened to that Cross forever, crucified with Him—the nails which fasten us being the mighty love He bore us.

Now, Beloved, though we never saw Him dead and did not handle that sorely marred but blessed Body—that casket for awhile deprived of its inestimable jewel, His sinless soul—yet when we think of Him as lying in the cold prison of the tomb, embalmed in spices, we cannot but shed tears which are only wiped away by the glorious truth of His Resurrection! So

all the story through we feel that in each one of the positions the Savior commands from us as much love as if we had been present there to see Him.

No, perhaps the sight might have produced too much astonishment, if not terror, to have permitted us to indulge with freedom the holy passion of consecrated love. Possibly we might have been so amazed, astounded—perhaps even alarmed when we saw the circumstances which surrounded the Master's grief—that we might have forgotten Him in His surroundings. But now we can sit alone in our little upper room, or beneath some silent shade in the calm retreat which so well agrees with prayer and praise—and there, all alone and quiet—we can bring the Savior before our mind and feel that we love Him.

Now, my dear Hearer, I think you will see that this, although it does not seem to be so real a contact as touching Him, is truly, if you think of it, more real. I may see things and yet not truly perceive them. You may travel through a country without understanding it. You see a thousand things in daily life which do not sufficiently catch your mind for you really to grasp them. But here is a case in which, without the exercise of sight, it is quite plainly within the range of our ability to get the very soul, and heart, and essence of the entire matter. And after all, it is not the seeing—that must ever be external—it is the *thinking* upon the thing, the *understanding*, the being affected with it which is the real point of contact.

So, love to Christ becomes as real a means of union, as strong a bond to bind as ever sight and touch could be, and infinitely more so. You may touch without realizing, but you cannot love a fiction, you cannot love a myth. Love makes the Savior real to the heart. When I preach sometimes, and my love is cold, and my zeal is flagging, I talk about the Master as though He were but an historical person, someone that had lived and gone. But when my heart is warm towards Him! Then I talk of Him as though He were in the pulpit with me! As though I could see Him! As though you, too, could see Him! As though I was speaking of our own familiar Friend who was here in the midst of us! Beloved, every spiritual mind knows, and I need not remind him of it, that love realizes Christ and thus the contact which love makes between Christ and the soul is more real than any which the hands or the eyes could form.

But the text tells us of another point of contact—"Though now you do not see Him, yet believing." We are again reminded here that we do not see, but we are assured of the possibility of *believing* in Him without sight. I must take you again to the Savior's life. Beloved, we did not see Him die—that terrible misery, that fearful ignominy we never did behold. We did not sit still during the three hours of black darkness which covered all the land! We did not hear Him say, "I thirst," nor mark them as they thrust the sponge full of vinegar up to His blessed lips! But we have *believed* on Him.

Ah, have I not, by faith, made real to myself the Savior on the Cross? Have I not, by faith, seen Him and cast myself there and said, "Ah, Lord, I trust my whole eternity with You? My soul, my spirit, my body, everything that is mine trusts in You." I know, and you know who have believed Him, that you could not, if you saw Him, trust Him more really than you do now. His death is the unsupported pillar of your confidence and the sole foundation of your hope. In Christ you have believed, and you know that

your sins are forgiven, that His righteousness is imputed to you, and that you stand accepted in the Beloved.

This is not to you a matter of hope—it is a matter of firm *conviction*. If you perish you will perish at the foot of the Cross. But you are convinced you will never perish there. You have not seen, but you have *believed*. As to His Resurrection, also, you did not see Him when He rose early in the morning from the tomb and the watchmen in terror fled far away. But you have believed in Him as risen. Have you not thus believed? We are persuaded that Jesus lives and we derive consolation from the fact. We believe concerning Him that death has no more dominion over Him. Immortal, He cannot die again. The lamb of the Jewish Passover was slain every year, but He, our Lamb, lives no more to die for He has accomplished the work of His death and now lives to carry on the work of His great after-life.

We trust Him! Why not? What more reason for trust could I have if I had seen Him rise than I have now, when I believe the fact? I cast myself upon the Truth of God that my Lord is risen! I believe that because He lives I shall also live! And it is possible to believe this as firmly as though we saw it! Beloved, at this moment Christ is in Heaven pleading for us! We cannot see the ephod and the breastplate. We cannot hear the tones of majestic love in which our great High Priest pleads before His Father's Throne! But we believe that He intercedes successfully for us.

We choose Him to be our Advocate in every case of sore distress, in every case of grievous sin! We believe that because He is at the Father's right hand He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him and we leave our suit with Him in perfect confidence. Believing in Jesus brings us into as real a contact with Him as seeing Him could possibly produce, for you cannot believe in what you think to be fiction. You cannot trust your soul and your best and most weighty interests with a mere myth. Your faith must be convinced of Christ and must have had communion with Him, or else it would not be faith at all! So you see, dear Friends, both love and faith are two clear points of contact. These are the two bonds which unite us to the Savior.

While some go about teaching that there is a connection with Jesus brought about by infant sprinkling and by confirmation—by what certain gentlemen are pleased to call “the blessed Sacraments”—we solemnly testify in the name of Him that lives and was dead, that the true way of coming to Jesus lies in faith and love. And without these you may baptize and confirm and give sacraments ad nauseam—but you have not approached the Lord! The true Christ is not there at the font, nor there with the lawn sleeve, nor there at the altar, nor with your acolytes and other performers—He is to be found where the heart longs after Him, where the soul trusts Him, where the spirit loves Him. Even the two Scriptural ordinances are but in the outer court and are nothing of themselves. The true keepers of the door of Jesus' house are faith and love.

I read the other day of a certain renovated Puseyite synagogue having a path up to it called the Via Crucis. I must confess to having had but slender acquaintance with the play-things and nursery games of that sect. I have no idea of what is meant by their Via Crucis, but this I know, the true Via Crucis, or Way of the Cross, is to *believe* and to *love*. We were told not long ago by an Anglican priest that the history of the spiritual life was portrayed in the edifice in which he officiated. He began with *regen-*

eration in the font, and led his hearers by easy stages till he *perfected* them in the chancel or up in the steeple, I cannot remember which!

All that may sound very pretty—I think it shamelessly immature! To me it looks like a return to the absurd superstitions of the Dark Ages. I have no more reverence for their genuflections, performances, and theatrics than for the incantations of an old hag who pretends to be a witch! There is nothing manly, much less Divine, in the new-fangled Romanism! God's religion is *spiritual*—theirs is carnal and sensuous. "The day comes, and now is, when they that worship the Father must worship Him in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeks such to worship Him."

For spiritual men there is not needed incense, banners, wide-sleeved garments, or crosses, nor any external thing—only the mental action of the inward nature exercised upon the Lord Jesus in love and trust. How simple this is! There is a story told of a certain farmer in France who, in the days of bad farming, produced wonderful crops from his ground. All his neighbors believed him to be addicted to witchcraft and when they summoned him for the practice of it, he brought up before the court his two sturdy lads, his oxen, and his plows. He said, "These are the implements of my witchcraft! I simply work hard."

Now I fear there are many who, if asked what is the way of their coming into union with Christ, have all sorts of mysterious, laborious inventions. But we bring before you nothing but just these—trust and love! These are the instruments of our religion. Like the Apostles, we need no wagon to carry with us our altar, our vestments and other paraphernalia—we preach the Gospel and exhort men to faith and love—we have no need of drapery, architecture, rubrics and ceremonies. Trust and love! These two things bring the spirit into contact with the Lord Jesus Christ! And we are prepared against all the world to hold these two things and believe that were those other things to fail, and turn out to be a delusion and a lie, these will succeed to the salvation of the soul. "Whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice."

Still, the point is that carnal people will imagine that if there could be something to touch or smell they should get on, but mere believing and loving are too hard for them. Yet such thought is not reasonable and I can show you why. Occasionally one meets with an illiterate working man who will say to those whose occupation is mental, "I work hard for my living," insinuating that the mind-worker does not work at all. Yet I ask any man who is engaged in a mental pursuit whether he does not know that mental work is quite as real work—and some of us think more so—as working with your hands. The thing is mental, but is none the less real.

An illiterate man cannot see that it is work, but he who is capable of mental labor soon feels the reality of it. Just transfer that thought. Coming into contact with Christ by touch looks to most people to be most real because their animal nature is uppermost. Coming into contact with Jesus by the *spirit* seems to them to be unreal only because they know nothing of spiritual things. Thoughtless persons think that mental pain is nothing. Mere animal men will often say, "I can understand the headache, I can understand the pain of having a leg cut off." But the pain of injured affection, or of receiving ingratitude from a trusted friend—this is by the rough mind thought to be no pain at all. "Oh," he says, "I could put up with that."

But I ask you who have minds, Is there any pain more real than mental pain? Is it not the sharpest when the iron enters into the soul? Just so the mental operation—for it is a mental operation—of coming into contact with Christ by loving Him and trusting Him is the most real thing in all the world! And no one will think it unreal who has once exercised it. So then, poor seeking Sinner, it comes to this—you have not to *go* anywhere, or *say* anything, or *do* anything—but, sitting where you are, if you can trust the Son of God with your soul, if you can love the altogether Lovely One, the thing is done!

There is life in a look, we often say, but this is the kind of look—the look is *loving* and *trusting*—they go together, they are born at the same time. We love those we trust, and we trust those we love, and if you love and trust Jesus you are saved.

II. I must have your patient attention to the second part of the subject—WHAT VIRTUE IS THIS WHICH FLOWS FROM HIM? When a soul has touched Him by love and faith, what virtue comes? The Apostle answers, “Whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.” The first result of trusting and loving Christ is joy, and joy of a most singular, remarkable kind. It is far above all common joy. It is spoken of as “inexpressible”—“joy inexpressible.”

Now earth-born joys can be told to the full. One man can tell his joy to his fellow and his fellow understands, for he is earth-born, too. But spirit-born joys cannot be told because we have not yet received a spiritual language. I suppose that is the language reserved for Heaven where spiritual minds shall talk to spiritual minds without being confined to the poor poverty-stricken words of earth so necessary to us while yet in the body. The joy is inexpressible because you cannot possibly describe its true essence. If a man should try to tell all spiritual joys to his fellow he would feel silenced like Paul, and feel that he had heard things which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

Holy Rutherford, in his letters, has gone far to picture to us what the Christian’s joy is, and so has Solomon in the Book of the Song. But carnal men cannot comprehend Rutherford, and as to the Canticles, there is no book in the Bible which staggers a worldling so much as the Song. He says, “Oh, it is a mere love tale.” Of course it is to you, O carnal Reader, but the reason is in yourself. It was not possible for Solomon to put into language the experience of Divine Love, except by the use of metaphors. He had to describe love as we have to describe God, speaking after the manner of men, and so he must speak after a natural sort and therefore the golden Cantic looks as if it were an earthly nuptial ode, whereas it is so high that the uninstructed cannot attain to it.

The joy of Believers is unspeakable because there is no telling it. Earthly joy is often exaggerated. You can describe it in words too flatteringly expressive, but you cannot act thus with a Christian’s joy. His joy is one that speaks better through his eyes than his lips! It makes his countenance glow with delight. I have seen men’s faces lit up with Heaven’s sunlight when the joy of the Lord has been shed abroad in their hearts. The very people who a day ago looked dull and heavy look as if they could dance for mirth because they have found the Savior and their soul is at peace through Him.

The Apostle adds that it is full of glory. Many sensual joys are full of shame—a man with a conscience dares not tell them to his fellows. The joys of sense are oftentimes unfit to be whispered in the dark, and the joys of the world are mostly too selfish to be boasted of. The joy of making money is not full of glory, nor is the joy of killing one's fellows in battle. There is no joy like that of the Christian, for he dares to speak of it everywhere, in every company. We will tell the devils in Hell that we are not ashamed to glory in the Cross and we will tell unbelievers upon earth the same!

We will dare to say it to the teeth of the worst of men that we have a joy they know nothing about. And in Heaven we shall not be ashamed to tell to principalities and powers of those draughts of love which we have been made to drink from the well of Christ Jesus—in whom, though now we see Him not—yet believing, we rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory! Why is this joy of the Christian so inexpressible and full of glory? I think it is because it is so altogether Divine. It is God's own joy! It is Christ's own joy! Can you guess what the joy of God is? No, perhaps not—but every Christian has within himself a portion of the joy of God, for God joys in Christ and glorifies Himself in Jesus—and so do we, also, joy and glory in Him whom having not seen, we love.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus, it is for you to prove to the world by your daily walk and conversation that it is so! For my own part, I will bear my own personal witness that I never knew the meaning of that little word "joy" till I knew Christ. I knew the childish glee of boyhood. I understand, alas, something of the frothy joy upon the cup of sin, but let me say—I am speaking to those of my own age especially—if I had to die like a dog and there was no hereafter. If I had nothing for my faith but the happiness which it yields me in this life, I would be a Christian sooner than I would be any conceivable form of existence.

I would sooner be a believer in Jesus in the depth of poverty, racked with bodily suffering and oppressed with the greatest possible persecution, than I would be without faith in Christ! I would rather be a believer in Christ Jesus than have the noblest possible position with the greatest possible earthly enjoyments—for there is nothing at all like the joy inexpressible and full of glory! Sometimes, when it is flood-tide with us, our joy is so great that we think we shall die—our joy is too strong for our frail body! And even when it is ebb-tide with us, yet we have a peace of God which passes all understanding—a peace which the world cannot give, and which, thank God—it cannot, cannot take away!

Now, Brethren, many of you know this, and you know also that this joy inexpressible and full of glory is not dependent upon circumstances. You have had great success—this joy inexpressible and full of glory was not increased by that success—you rather trembled lest you should sin through being in high places. And you who have had great trouble—this joy inexpressible has not been diminished by it. You have felt that God was with you and that all things would work together for your good! You have wept over your children when they have died—a mother's grief has filled the eyes with tears—but still the joy inexpressible has cheered the heart.

You have lost property and been wrongfully despoiled of reputation, but the joy inexpressible has been unaffected by all this. You have done with your crown jewels what many of the princes on the Continent have done

with theirs—you have sent them where they are safe—you have put your treasure in the better land on the other side of Jordan, in the islands of the blessed, in the land of the hereafter where Jesus is. The Apostle mentions another blessing received by loving and trusting Christ. He says, “receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.”

Every man who trusts and loves Christ is saved. The common idea is that perhaps we shall get saved when we die. I know nothing of such a salvation! True salvation saves NOW. The Apostle, when he writes to Believers, always speaks to them as persons who are saved, not who *shall* be, but *are*. When salvation is once done, it is done forever! If you are saved, you are saved—you will be never lost. Those who trust Jesus and love Him are saved. But it will be said, “How is that a matter of fact?”

Well, it is a matter of fact two ways. First, they are conscious that they are saved from the guilt of sin. Of this they are conscious in themselves. The guilt of sin, when it is on a man’s conscience, is unmistakably there, for it weighs him down to such an extent that he cannot doubt it. Well do some of us recollect when we could not even sleep by night much less have comfort by day because sin was on our conscience. We wished sometimes, as John Bunyan says, that we had been made frogs or snakes rather than men, for sin on the conscience makes manhood odious and life itself undesirable. But when we believed and loved Jesus we knew that our guilt was taken off the conscience.

You say, “How did you know?” We knew just as we knew when it was on. If a man has a burden on his back, even though he has no eyes, he can *feel* it. And as soon as it is gone, though he has no eyes he can feel that it is removed. So was it with us—when we believed in Jesus, our sin was all gone! Our feelings were altogether different from what they were—

**“Now, oh joy, my sin is pardoned,
Now I can and do believe.”**

We began to sing for very joy of heart! The removal of guilt is no fiction. It will be said it is a mere brain-sick enthusiasm. Have you ever tried it? If you have not, you are not fit to judge about it! But if you have experienced it you will say of it, “Oh if it is enthusiasm, blessed enthusiasm! Let me never be rid of it! If this is a dream it is so Divine that it should be true!” When we trusted Jesus, though we used no forms and ceremonies, we received the salvation of our souls! Here is a point more tangible still—they who trust and love Christ are saved from the *power* of sin—and this is a practical point to be seen even by the eye.

For instance, a man with a horrid temper—almost insane from his anger—was led to trust Jesus and to love Him. There may be traces of that old temper in the man still, but I will defy you to find a gentler or more patient soul than he is now! That same man whose fist was so soon doubled and whose eye so rapidly flashed fire will now hear a vast amount of teasing and look on and feel, “If I were what I once was I would join in this row, but now I pity and forgive.” I can picture you another. There was a man who spent every night in the beer house or in worse places. His house was a Hell—his wife and family afraid to see him—the man a drunkard, a fornicator and everything that was foul. But he came to believe and trust Christ.

Now it is a matter of fact that he is a new man through believing. Ask his wife and she says, “Never was there such a change! Our home is happy, our children happy! We have happy mornings and evenings for my

husband prays! That is not all, Sir—my husband is such a heavenly-minded man that you could no more believe him to be the same man than you could believe that a lamb was once a lion.” Ah, the man has received the salvation of his soul! How did he receive it? Did we *baptize* a new heart into him? Did we *confirm* him into morality? Did we *perfume* him, *intone* him and *confess* him into holiness? No! No! He trusts Jesus and loves Him, and all is done! He received the salvation of his soul by these simple means.

Now every man who has trusted and loved Jesus becomes a living witness to this. The vital power of religion is perceived by each man in himself. If you have a faith which has left you what you used to be, throw your faith to the dogs! If you have a faith in Christ which does not make you desire holiness it is a *delusion* that will drag you to the bottomless pit! Only the faith that works by love and purifies the soul is genuine. True trust in Jesus and love to Him always does this—it makes the man receive the salvation of his soul from the enslavement of his baser powers, delivers him from the dominion of Satan and of sin and he becomes at once a sinner saved by Divine Grace—and all this by the two points of contact you cannot see—trusting and believing.

III. I must not stop longer, but finish by a few words upon the third point. WHAT FOLLOWS, THEN, FROM THE WHOLE OF THIS? It follows, in the first place, that a state of joy and salvation is the fitting, proper, and expected condition of every believer in Christ. If you are a believer in Jesus, and I see you sorrowing, what must I say? I do not mean sorrowing as the effect of mere Providential arrangements—of course we sorrow as other men—and Jesus wept. I mean this—if I see you *constantly* without joy inexpressible—if I mark that all your joy and hope are gone, what must I say?

I begin to doubt whether you can be a Believer. And if I may not raise that question, and if it is certain that you *have* faith and love to Christ, I must say to you, my dear Friend, that you have suspended their action and therefore you have suspended the enjoyment of their result. Go back again to where you were! Go and stand at the foot of the Cross and trust Christ and love Him—and your joy will return. I am sure it will. I have tried it—I have tried it hundreds of times!

I am unbelieving by constitution, frequently desponding, very often depressed. But I have never been in the depths of despondency without almost immediately coming up from them as soon as ever I have thought of Him, and my soul has rested upon Him and leaned on Him.

There is another inference to be drawn from my subject, and that is to the seeking soul. If you want comfort this morning, go to Christ. But I have here the old answer again—I have heard it scores of times—“Sir, you say come to Christ. How can I come? If Jesus Christ were at New York I should know how to get at Him. I should understand what He meant by ‘come.’ If there were some appointed place in London where every soul might go, I could understand it.” Yes, that is to say, you could understand the mere carnal act of coming. But this coming is a *spiritual* thing and it is just as real as if it were carnal. You come to Christ by *thinking* of Him, *trusting* Him, and *loving* Him though you have not seen Him.

I say, then, come to Christ! Trust Him and love Him! And whatever your infirmities and spiritual difficulties, you shall get over them all—for if Christ undertakes to get you through them He will do it. He is mighty to

save! But you say, "I cannot believe, 'Faith is the gift of God.'" I know it is, but perhaps you have it already. Dead men cannot believe, but the quickened can. The Son of God bleeds for sinners! The Son of God, on the tree, offers an Atonement for human sin! Can you trust Him? You answer, "I do trust Him." Then you not only have the power to do it, but you *are* doing it!

If you are convinced that Jesus is able to save you, and are *willing* to trust Him, you certainly *can* trust Him for inability lies in the will, and as your will is now right, all your inability is gone. The power which the Holy Spirit gives is spiritual—a power which removes our natural opposition to Jesus—and when this is removed the power is given! If you do now *trust Christ*, fall before Him and say, "Savior, God, deliver me! By Your life and by Your death. By Your griefs and passion. By Your resurrection and Your pleading at Your Father's Throne, deliver me! I trust You to deliver me. I cast myself upon You!"

If you do this you are saved—you are saved now—you have no sin in God's book. Every sin is blotted out and therefore being justified by *faith*, you shall have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord. But you reply, "My sins are very great." Yes, but however great your sin it matters not. The same hand which can receipt a little bill can receipt a great one—it takes no more when the money is paid. Christ has paid all the debts of those that trust Him and He can readily forgive you. "Come now and let us reason together, said the Lord. Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "Yes, but," says another, "it is my propensity to sin that I am afraid of. How shall I ever break the neck of my corruptions?"

You will never do it, but He will! Do you not remember that when they pierced His side there flowed blood—that was for pardon. And there flowed water—what was that for? That was for *cleansing*. He will be sin's double cure. Is it some sin or some lust that you would conquer, or an angry disposition? Take it to Him! Those vipers die at the sight of Christ! There is no form of sinfulness to which you are captive which Christ cannot remove! You must give them up. Remember there is no going to Heaven and keeping your sins—you must give them all up. But then you are not to give them up in your own strength. You shall receive a strength which shall make you more than a man—you shall be a man with God living in you—for the Holy Spirit dwells in us! We are temples of God.

When God dwells in the temple He can purge out a great deal which we cannot purge out. He can make us clean though otherwise we must have remained impure. "Still," says another, "I have such a need of tenderness this morning. I have not thought about these things. I have lived a careless giddy life—must I not give some week or month or two to the consideration of these things—and then come to Christ? Must I not go home and humble myself before God and then believe and love?"

My dear Hearer, do what you will *after* trusting, but trusting is the immediate remedy this morning! *Now* is the accepted time! Now is the day of salvation! May you and I come to trust and love—and we shall soon prove to ourselves, if we cannot prove it to others—that there is a power and vitality in faith and love not to be found in all the performances of the priests who are laboring to bring our nation back to the midnight of Romanism!

YOUR PERSONAL SALVATION

NO. 1524

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 22, 1880,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“Receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls. Of this salvation the Prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the Grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did indicating, when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To whom it was revealed, that not to themselves, but to us they did minister the things which are now reported to you by them that have preached the Gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven—which things angels desire to look into.”
1 Peter 1:9-12.

“Let Your mercies come also unto me, O Lord, even Your salvation, according to Your Word.”
Psalm 119:41.

THESE two texts will be, to me, as a bow and a sword—the first for shooting the arrows of the Truth of God and the second for close quarters in dealing with individual consciences. You will see the reason for the pair of texts as we proceed. May the Holy Spirit make use of both according to His own mind. Last Sabbath I preached upon the God of salvation [#1523—*The Royal Prerogative*]*—*this morning our principal objective is to speak of that salvation, itself. I then tried to show that God is always the same and that the God of the Old Testament, unto whom belongs the issues, or *escapes* from death, is *still* the God of our salvation.

My first text runs upon the same line, for it teaches us that the Prophets of old, who spoke by the power of the Holy Spirit, testified concerning the same salvation which has been reported to us by the Apostles as actually accomplished. There has been no new salvation! There has been a change in the *messengers*, but they have all spoken of one thing and, though their tidings have been more clearly understood in these latter days, the substance of the good news is still the same. The Old Testament and the New are one, inspired by the same Spirit and filled with the same Subject, namely, the one promised Messiah.

The Prophets foretold what the Apostles reported. The Seers looked forward and the Evangelists look backward—but their eyes meet at one place—they see eye to eye and both behold the Cross. I shall aim, this morning, at commending the salvation of God to those of you who possess it, that you may be the more grateful for your choice inheritance. But I will still more labor to commend it to those who possess it not, that having some idea of the greatness of its value, they may be stirred up to seek it for themselves. Ah, my unsaved Hearers, how great is your loss in missing the salvation of God!

“How shall you escape if you neglect so great a salvation?” O that you might be rescued from such folly! Perhaps God the Holy Spirit will show

you the preciousness of this salvation and then you will no longer neglect, despise, or refuse it, but will offer the prayer which I have selected as a sort of second text and entreat the Lord to let His mercies come to you, even His salvation. The prayer may be helpful in enabling you to take with you words and turn to the Lord. God grant it may be so!

I. First, I shall in much simplicity, with a vehement desire for the immediate conviction and salvation of my hearers, try to COMMEND THE SALVATION OF GOD by opening up what Peter has said in the verses before us. Let me urge you to give earnest heed to the salvation of God, because it is a salvation of Grace. The 10th verse says, "Of this salvation the Prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the Grace that would come to you." Salvation is altogether of Grace—Grace which comes from God in His mercy to man in his helplessness! The Gospel does not come to you asking something of you, but its hands are laden with gifts more precious than gold which it freely bestows upon guilty men. It comes to us, not as a reward for the obedient and deserving, but as a merciful gift for the disobedient and undeserving.

It deals with us, not upon the ground of justice, but upon terms of pure mercy. It asks no price and exacts no purchase. It comes as a benefactor, not as a judge. In the Gospel, God gives liberally and upbraids not. We are accustomed not only to say, "Grace," but, "Free Grace." It has been remarked that this is a tautology. So it is, but it is a blessed one, for it makes the meaning doubly clear and leaves no room for mistakes! Since it is evidently objectionable to those who dislike the doctrine intended, it is manifestly forcible and, therefore, we will keep to it. We feel no compunction in ringing such a silver bell twice over—Grace, Free Grace! Lest any should imagine that Grace can be otherwise than free, we shall continue to say, not only Grace, but Free Grace, so long as we preach!

You are lost, my dear Hearer, and God proposes your salvation, but not on any ground of your deserving to be saved, else the proposal would most assuredly fall to the ground in the case of many of you—I might have said in the cases of us *all*, though some of you think not. The Lord proposes to save you because you are miserable and He is merciful! Because you are needy and He is bountiful. Why, I think every man who hears this good news should open both his ears and lean forward, that he may not lose a word! Yes, and he should open his heart, too, for salvation by Grace is most suitable to all men and they need it greatly.

Only give intimation that goods are to be had free and your shop will be besieged with customers! Those who want us to notice their wares are often crafty enough to put at the head of their advertisement what is not true, "To be given away." But salvation's grand advertisement is true—salvation is everything for nothing—pardon free, Christ free, Heaven free! "Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Our good Physician has none but gratis patients. Since the gifts which the God of All Grace grants to sinful men are beyond all price, He does not barter and dicker with them, but makes His blessings free as air! I am sure that if you feel yourselves to be guilty, the very idea of being saved by Grace will have a charm for you. To a thirsty man, the sound of a rippling stream is music and to a convicted conscience, free pardon is as rivers of

water in the wilderness! Oh, that all the world would listen when we have such a message to tell!

Again, your closest attention may well be asked to the salvation of God when you are told in the text that it is by faith. "Receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls." Salvation is not obtained by painful and humiliating penances. Nor by despondency and despair. Nor by any effort, mental or spiritual, involving a purchase by labor and pain. It is entirely and *only* by faith, or trust, in the Lord Jesus! Do you ask—"Is it really so, that salvation is by believing, simply *believing*?" Such is the statement of the Word of God! We proclaim it upon the guarantee of Infallible Scripture! "All that believe are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the Law of Moses." "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." "He that believes in Him is not condemned." "He that believes on Him has everlasting life."

These are a mere handful of proof texts gleaned from wide fields of the same kind. "Repent and believe the Gospel," is our one plain and simple message. We cry again and again, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." "Believe only," and, "Jesus only," are our two watch-words! Now, it is singularly foolish that men should quibble at this which ought to please them! What? Shall it be that the Gospel shall be regarded as too easy a thing? Will men quarrel with Mercy for being too generous? If there is a condition, is it wisdom on our part to contend with God because that condition seems to be too slight? What would *you* have for a condition? Would you have it proclaimed that men must be saved by works?

Which among you would, then, be saved? Your works are imperfect and full of evil! The Law cannot justify you, it condemns you! As long as you are under the Law, has not the Holy Spirit declared that you are under the curse? Ought you not, you sons of men, bless God that salvation is of faith that it might be by Grace and that it might be possible to you and sure to all the seed? The sinner cannot keep the Law of God—he has already broken it most terribly and he is, himself, enfeebled and depraved by the Fall. Adam did not stand when he was in his perfection—what shall we do who are ruined by his fall and full of evil?

By the Grace of God the sinner can believe in Jesus! This is ceasing from his own power and merit and leaving himself in his Savior's hands. Salvation by faith thus sets an open door before those whom the Law shuts out! It is in every way adapted to the case of the guilty and fallen—and such characters should hasten to accept salvation thus presented to them! O my God, how is it that this message does not, at once, awaken all who hear it to an eager acceptance of Your salvation? O that the Spirit of God would make these appeals powerful with you! The Gospel of salvation ought to be regarded by you, for it has engrossed the thoughts of Prophets! The text says, "Of this salvation the Prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the Grace that would come to you."

Those great men, the choice spirits of the ages which they adorned, were delighted to preach of this salvation as a blessing to be hereafter revealed! They did not, themselves, altogether understand what they were called to reveal, for the Holy Spirit often carried them beyond themselves

and made them utter more than they understood. The Inspiration of the Bible is *verbal* Inspiration. In some cases it must have been *only* verbal—in *every* case it must have been mainly so! The human mind is not able to understand and to express all the thoughts of God, they are too sublime and, therefore, God dictated to the Prophets the very language which they should deliver—language of which they, themselves, could not see the far-reaching meaning.

They rejoiced in the testimony of the Spirit within them, but they were not free from the necessity to search and to search diligently, if they would, for themselves to derive benefit from the Divine Revelation. I know not how this is, but the fact is clearly stated in the text and must be true. Oh, my Hearers, how diligently you ought to search the Scriptures and listen to the saving Word of God! If men that had the Holy Spirit and were called, “Seers,” nevertheless searched into the meaning of the Word of God which they, themselves, spoke, what ought such poor things as *we* are to do in order to understand the Gospel?

It should be our delight to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest the Doctrines of Grace. Surely it must be a crime of crimes to be living in utter neglect of a salvation which gained the attentive mind of Daniel and Isaiah and Ezekiel! O that the long list of great and holy men would have some weight with thoughtless ones! I would cause a noble line of Prophets to pass before you this morning that you may see how many of them spoke of Christ and His salvation. From Abel, whose blood cried from the ground, down to him who spoke of the Sun of Righteousness and His Resurrection—they all spoke in Jehovah’s name for your sakes! From Moses down to Malachi, all of these lived and many of them died that they might bear witness to “the Grace that would come to you.”

They, themselves, were, no doubt saved. But still, the full understanding and enjoyment of the Truth was reserved for us! Unto them it was revealed, that not to themselves, but to *us*, they ministered the things of God! They lighted lamps to shine for future ages! They told of a Christ who was actually to come in later days to work out His Redemption after they had all died in faith without a sight of His actual coming! You and I live in the light of a finished salvation! God has appeared in human flesh! Christ has borne the guilt of man! His Atonement is complete! Jesus has risen from the dead and gone into Glory pleading for Believers!

Surely that which Prophets thought worth their while to study night and day, though they knew that they would never see it, ought to be thought worthy of the devout attention of those immediately concerned in it! If Daniel set his face, by prayer and study—in fasting and in loneliness—to search out the salvation of the *future*, we ought at once to seek for the salvation which is now present among us! If Isaiah spoke with a golden tongue as the very Chrysostom of the old dispensation; if Jeremiah wept, like a Niobe, rivers of tears; if Ezekiel, despite the splendor of his princely intellect, was almost blinded by the splendor of his visions—if the whole goodly fellowship of the Prophets lived and died to study and to foretell the great salvation—we ought to give most earnest heed to it! If they pointed us to the Lamb of God and, according to the best of their light, foretold the coming of the Redeemer, then woe unto us if we trifle

with Heaven's message and cast its blessings behind our backs! By all the Prophets whom the Lord has sent, I beseech you, give His salvation a hearty welcome and rejoice that you have lived to see it!

Furthermore, when prophecy had ceased, the Holy Spirit came upon another set of men of whom our text speaks. Peter says of these things, that they "are now reported to you by them that have preached the Gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven." The Apostles followed the Prophets in testifying to this salvation and with the Apostles there was an honorable fellowship of earnest Evangelists and preachers. I will not stay to point out to you the admirable character of these men, but I would beg you to observe that, having personally seen Christ Jesus for themselves, they were not deceived. Many of them had eaten and drank with Him—all the Apostles had done so—they had been with Him in familiar conversation and they were resolute in bearing witness that they had seen Him after He had risen from the dead.

These men spoke with the accent of conviction! If they were duped, there certainly never was another instance of such persons and so many of them being so utterly deluded. They continued throughout all their lives to bear hardships and to endure reproaches for the sake of bearing witness to what they had seen and heard—and all the Apostles but one died a martyr's death rather than allow the slightest suspicion to be cast upon the truth of their report! The text says that they reported these things when they preached the Gospel by the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven. I see them going everywhere preaching the Word of God!

They were dressed in no robes but those of poverty. They had no distinctions but those of shame and suffering. They had no power but that of the Holy Spirit. I hear them fearlessly lifting up their voices among a warrior population, or gently testifying in peaceful homes. They evangelized the open country and they instructed the capital itself—Caesar's household hears of them! I see them far away among the Parthians and Scythians telling the barbarians that there is salvation and that Jesus has accomplished it! With equal joy I see them telling cultured Greeks that God was in Christ a Man among men and that the Incarnate God died in man's place that believing men might be delivered from the wrath of God and from the plague of sin.

These noble bearers of glad tidings continued to report this salvation till they had finished their missions and their lives and, therefore, I feel that for us, in these times, to trifle with God's Word and give a deaf ear to the invitations of the Gospel is an insult to their honored memories! You martyr them a second time by contemptuously neglecting what they died to hand to you! From the dead they bear witness against you and when they rise again they will sit with their Lord to judge you! Nor have we merely Prophets and Apostles looking on with wonder, but our text says, "Which things angels desire to look into."

We know very little of these heavenly beings. We do know, however, that they are pure spirits and that the elect angels have not fallen into sin. These beings are not concerned in the Atonement of Christ so far as it is a ransom for *sin*, seeing as they have never sinned—they may, however, derive some advantage from His death, but of that we cannot now speak

particularly. They take such an interest in us, their fellow creatures, that they have an intense wish to know all the mysteries of our salvation. They were pictured, you know, upon the Ark of the Covenant as standing upon the Mercy Seat and looking down upon it with steady gaze. Perhaps Peter was thinking of this holy imagery. They stand intently gazing into the marvel of Propitiation by blood!

Can you quite see the beauty of this spectacle? If we knew that a door was opened in Heaven, would not men be anxious to look in and see Heaven's wonders? But the case is here reversed, for we see a window opened towards this fallen world and heavenly beings looking down upon the earth, as if Heaven, itself, had no such Object of attraction as Christ and His salvation! Watts sang not amiss when he gave us the verse—

***“Archangels leave their high abode
To learn new mysteries here and toll
The love of our descending God,
The glories of Immanuel.”***

Paul tells us that to principalities and powers in the heavenly places shall be made known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God. For men to be lessons to angels, books for seraphs to read, is a strange fact! Perhaps the angelic enquirers ask such questions as this—How is God just and yet the Justifier of the ungodly? At first it must have been, I think, a wonder that He who said, “In the day you eat thereof you shall surely die,” could have permitted man to live on and to have a hope of eternal life.

How could He who says that He will by no means clear the guilty yet bestow His favors upon guilty men? Angels wonder as they see how, through the Substitution of Jesus Christ, God can be sternly just and yet abundantly gracious! And while they learn this, they long to discover more of the Truth of God wrapped up in the one great Sacrifice—they peer and pry and search and consider and, therefore, the doctrines of the Gospel are spoken of as “things which the angels desire to look into.”

Now think—if these glorious spirits who need not to be redeemed—intently gaze upon the Redeemer, should not *we*, also, desire to look into the mysteries of His death? O men and women, is it nothing to you that the Son of God should give His life as a ransom for many? If these spotless ones marvel at that sacred bath of blood by which sin is washed away, will not *you*, who are covered with defilement, stop awhile to see the Lord whose flowing veins afford such purging? I think if I saw an angel intently gazing upon any object, if I were a passerby, I should stop and look, too. Have you never noticed in the streets that if one person stands still and looks up, or is occupied with gazing into a shop window, others become curious and also look? I would enlist that faculty of curiosity which is within every man and prompt you to search with the angels as they pry into the underlying meaning of the fact and doctrine of Atonement!

They stand at the foot of the Cross ravished, astounded, yes, all Heaven to this day has never ceased its amazement at the dying Son of God made sin for men! And will none of you spare an hour to look this way and see your best Friend? Shall it be that time out of mind we must come into our pulpits and talk of Christ to deaf ears and speak to our fellow men about the Grace which is brought to them, only to find that they treat it as an old wives' fable or a story with which they have nothing to do? Ah, my

careless Hearer, I wish you were in the same plight as I was in once when I was burdened with a sense of my transgressions. If you felt as I did, you would grab that word, "Grace," right eagerly and be delighted with the promise made to "faith."

You would make up your mind that if Prophets searched out salvation; if Apostles reported it; if angels longed to know it, you yourself would find it or perish in searching after it! Do you forget that you must have eternal life or you are undone forever? Do not trifle with your eternal interests! Do not be careless where earth and Heaven are in earnest! Prophets, Apostles, angels all beckon you to seek the Lord! Awake, you that sleep! Arise, O sluggish soul! A thousand voices call you to bestir yourself and receive the Grace which has come to you!

We have already gone a long way with this text, rising step by step. We have stood where angels gaze. Now behold another wonder—we rise *beyond* them to the angels' Master. Christ is the substance of this salvation! For what says the text? The Prophets spoke "beforehand of the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow." Ah, there is the point! To save men Jesus *suffered*. The Manhood and the Godhead of Christ endured inconceivable anguish! All through His life our Lord was "a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief." His was the bravest heart that ever lived and the gentlest spirit that ever breathed, but the most crushed and down-trodden! He went from one end of our heavens to the other like a cloud of sympathy, dropping showers of blessing.

All the trials of His people He carried in His heart and all their sins pressed heavily upon His soul—His daily burden of care for all His people was such as none can sympathize with to the fullest, even though like He they have kept the flock of God. I have sometimes had intense sympathy with Moses—I hope I am not egotistical in comparing small things with great—when he cried, "Why have You afflicted Your servant? And why have I not found favor in Your sight, that You lay the burden of all this people upon *me*? Have I conceived all this people? Have I begotten them, that You should say to me, Carry them in your bosom as a nursing father bears the sucking child, to the land which You swore unto their fathers? I am not able to bear all this people alone because it is too heavy for me."

But what was the care of the tribes in the wilderness on Moses' heart compared with the myriads upon myriads that lay upon the heart of Christ, a perpetual burden to His spirit? The sufferings of His life must never be forgotten, but they were consummated by the agonies of His death. There was never such a death! Physically it was equal in pain to the sufferings of any of the martyrs. But its peculiarity of excessive grief did not lie in His bodily sufferings—His *soul*-sufferings were the soul of His sufferings! Martyrs are sustained by the Presence of their God, but Jesus cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" That cry never came up from the stakes of Smithfield, or from the agonies of the Spanish torture chambers, for God was with His witnesses! But He was not with Christ! Here was the depth of His woe!

Now, I pray you, if you will manifest some sign of thought and softness, remember that if the Son of God became a man so that He might suffer to the death for men, it is astonishing that men should turn deaf ears to the

salvation which He accomplished! I hear from His Cross His sad complaint, "Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by? Behold and see if there was ever sorrow like My sorrow, which is done to Me." Oh, if you are born of woman and have a heart that has any flesh about it, think well of the salvation, "the Grace, which is brought unto you," by the sufferings of the Son of God! One other step remains. It cannot be higher—it is on the same level and I beseech you to stand upon it and think a while, you that have thought so little of yourselves and of your God.

It is this. The Holy Spirit is the witness to all this. It was the Holy Spirit that spoke in the Prophets. It was the Holy Spirit who was with those who reported the Gospel at the first. It is the same Holy Spirit who every day bears witness to Christ. Do you not know that we still have miracles in the Christian Church? Scoffers come to us and say, "Work a miracle and we will believe you." We work miracles every day! Had you been present at a meeting held here last month you would have heard something not far short of one hundred persons, one after another, assert that by the preaching of the Gospel in this place lately, their lives have been completely changed. In the case of some of these the change is very obvious to all persons acquainted with them.

How was this great change achieved? By the Holy Spirit through the Gospel of your salvation! But I need not quote those special cases. There are many here who would tell you, if this were the time to speak, where they used to spend their Sundays and what was their delight. All things have become new with them. They now seek after holiness as earnestly as they once pursued evil! Though they are not what they want to be, they are not what they used to be. They never thought of purity or goodness, or anything of the kind, but they loved the wages of unrighteousness and now they loathe the things they once loved! I have seen moral miracles quite as marvelous in their line as the healing of a leper or the raising of the dead! This is the witness of the Holy Spirit which He continues to bear in the Church and, by that witness I entreat you to stop and think of the blessed salvation which can work the same miracle in you.

From the first day in which man fell—when the Holy Spirit, at the gates of Eden presented the Gospel in the first promise—all down the prophetic ages and then by Christ and by His Apostles and onward by all the men whom God has sent, since, to speak with power, the Holy Spirit entreats you to consider Christ and His salvation! To this end He convinces the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment to come—that men may turn unto the salvation of God and live forever! By the Spirit of the living God I entreat you, dear Hearers, to neglect no longer the great salvation which has won the admiration of all holy beings and has the seal of the Triune God upon its forefront!

II. So far I have commended my Lord's salvation and now I would desire you, with all this in your minds, to turn to the prayer in the 119th Psalm—"Let Your mercies come also unto me, O Lord, even Your salvation, according to Your Word." Use the prayer with this intent—Lord, I have been hearing what Prophets and Apostles and angels think of Your salvation. What Your Son and what Your Spirit think of it. Now let me humbly say what I think of it—Oh that it were mine! Oh that it would

come to me! This, then, is my second head. I would RECOMMEND THE PRAYER OF THE PSALMIST.

I will say about it, first, that it is, in itself, a very gracious prayer, for it is offered on right grounds. "Let Your mercies come also unto me." There is no mention of merit or desert. His entreaty is only for mercy. He pleads guilty and throws himself upon the prerogative of the King who can pardon offenders. Are you willing, my dear Hearer, you who have never sought the Savior—are you willing at this moment to stand on that ground and to ask for salvation as the result of mercy? You shall have it on such terms, but you can never be saved until you will acknowledge that you are guilty and submit to Justice.

Observe the plural, "Let your *mercies* come unto me," as if David felt that he needed a double share of it, yes, a sevenfold measure of it! Elsewhere he cried, "According unto the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions." Our sense of sin leads us to use similar language. Lord, I need much mercy, manifold mercy, multiplied mercy! I need mercy upon mercy! I need forgiving mercy! I need regenerating mercy! I need mercy for the present as well as for the past and I shall need mercy to keep me in the future if I am to be saved at all! Friend, set your plea on that ground! Multiplied sins crave multiplied mercies. "Let Your mercies come also unto me, O Lord."

It is a gracious prayer, because it asks for the right thing—"Your salvation"—not a salvation of my own invention, but, "Your salvation." God's salvation is one in which His Divine Sovereignty is revealed and that Sovereignty must be accepted and adored. Do not dispute against God's salvation, but accept it in its entirety, just as it is revealed. Receive the salvation which the Lord planned in eternity—which He worked out on Calvary and which He applies to the heart by the Holy Spirit. You need salvation from sinning as well as salvation from Hell and the Lord will give you that. You need salvation from self to God and that, too, He will bestow. Ask for all that the Lord intends by His salvation and includes in it. "Let Your mercies come also unto me, even Your salvation."

You see, dear Brothers and Sisters, that the prayer is put in the right form, for it is added, "Even Your salvation according to Your Word." He wishes to be saved in the manner which the Lord has appointed. Dear Hearer, where are you? Are you hidden away in the foggy corners? I wish I could get a hold of your hand and speak as a Brother to you. You do not want God to go out of the way of His Word to save you, do you? You are willing to be saved in the Scriptural way, the Biblical way! People nowadays will do anything but keep to the Word of God! They will follow any book but the Bible! Now, pray the Lord to give you the salvation of the Bible in the Bible's own way.

Lord, if Your Word says I must repent, give me Your salvation and cause me to repent! If Your Word says that I must confess my sin, give me Your salvation in the confession of sin! If You say I must trust Christ, Lord, help me, now, to trust Him—only grant me Your salvation according to Your Word. Observe that the whole prayer is conceived and uttered in a humble spirit. It is, "Let Your salvation come also unto me." He admits his helplessness. He cannot get at the mercy! He needs it to come to him. He

is so wounded and so sick that he cannot put on the plaster nor reach the medicine and, therefore, he seeks the Lord to bring it to him.

He is like the man half dead on the road to Jericho and needs that someone should pour on the oil and wine, for he cannot help himself by reason of his spiritual lethargy and death. "Let Your mercies come to me, O Lord." This implies that there is a barrier between him and the mercy. The road appears to be blocked up. The devil intervenes and his fears hedge up the way and he cries to God to clear the road. "Lord, let Your mercies come! Did you not say, Let there be light and there was light? So let Your mercy come to me, a poor dying sinner and I shall have it, Lord! But it must come to me by Your power. Lo, here I lie at Hell's dark door and feel within my spirit as if the sentence of condemnation were registered in Heaven against me! But let Your mercies come also unto *me*, O God, even Your salvation, according to Your Word." That is a very gracious prayer.

In the second place this prayer may be supported by gracious arguments. May the Spirit of God help you to plead them. I will suppose some poor heart painfully longing to use this prayer. Here are arguments for you. Pray like this. Say, "Lord, let Your mercy come to me, for I need mercy." Do not go on the tack of trying to show that you are good, because mercy will then pass you by. To argue merit is to plead against yourself! Whenever you say, "Lord, I am as good as other people. I try to do my best," and so on, you act as foolishly as if a beggar at your door should plead that he was not very badly off, not half so needy as others and neither scantily fed nor badly clothed. This would be a new method of begging and a very bad one!

No, no! State your case in all its terrible truthfulness. Say, "O Lord, I feel that nobody in all this world needs Your mercy more than I do! Let my need plead with You! Give me Your salvation. I am no impostor, I am a sinner—let Your mercy and Your Truth visit me in very deed." Your soul's wounds are not such as sham beggars make with chemicals—they are real sores—plead them with the God of all Grace! Your poverty is not that which wears rags abroad and fine linen at home—you are utterly bankrupt and this you may urge before the Lord as a reason for His mercy.

Next plead this—"Lord, You know and You have made me to know somewhat of what will become of me if Your mercy does not come to me—I must perish, I must perish miserably! I have heard the Gospel and have neglected it. I have been a Sabbath-breaker, even when I thought I was a Sabbath-keeper. I have been a despiser of Christ, even when I stood up and sang His praises, for I sang them with a hypocrite's lips. The hottest place in Hell will surely be mine unless Your mercy comes to me. Oh, send that mercy, now." This is good and prevalent pleading—hold on to it.

Then plead, "If Your mercy shall come to me, it will be a great wonder, Lord. I have not the confidence to do more than faintly hope it may come, but, oh, if You ever do blot out my sins I will tell the world of it! I will tell the angels of it! Through eternity I will sing Your praises and claim to be, of all the saved ones, the most remarkable instance of what Your Sovereign Grace can do! Do you feel like that, dear Hearer? I used to think if the Lord saved me He would have begun on a new line altogether—that

His mercy would have sent up her song an octave higher than before! In every man's case there will be a conviction that there is something so special about his guilt that there will be something very special about the mercy which can put that guilt away.

Plead, then, the peril of your soul and the Glory which Grace will gain by your rescue. Plead the greatness of the Grace needed, for Christ delights to do great marvels and His name is Wonderful. "Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great. Lord, save me, for I am a nobody and it will be a wonder, indeed, if Your Grace shall visit me." Then you can put this to the good Savior. Tell Him if He will give you His salvation, He will not be impoverished by the gift. "Lord, I am a thirsty soul, but You are such a River that if I drink from You there will be no fear of my exhausting Your boundless supply." They put up over certain little nasty, dirty ponds by the roadside, "No dogs may be washed here." Pity the dogs if they were!

But no one puts up such a notice on the banks of great, glorious Old Father Thames! You may wash your dogs if you like and his flood will flow on! There is too much of it to be so readily polluted. So is it with the boundless mercy of God! God permits many a poor dog of a sinner to be washed in it and yet it is just as full and efficacious as ever! You need not be afraid of enjoying too much sunlight, for the sun loses nothing by your basking in his beams. So is it with Divine Mercy—it can visit you and bless you and remain as great and glorious as ever! Out of the fullness of Christ millions may still receive salvation and He will remain the same overflowing Fountain of Grace! Plead, then, "Lord, if such a poor soul as I shall be saved, I shall be made supremely happy, but none of Your attributes or glories shall be one jot the less illustrious! You will be as great and blessed a God as ever."

You may even say, "Lord, now that Your Son Jesus has died, it will not dishonor You to save me. Before the atoning Sacrifice it might have stained Your Justice to pass by sin, but now that the Sacrifice is offered, You can be just and yet the Justifier. Lord, none shall say You are unjust if You save even *me* now that Jesus Christ has bled. Since You have made my salvation possible without infringement of Your Law, I beseech You fulfill the design of the great Sacrifice and save even me!" There is another plea implied in the prayer and a very sweet argument it is—"Let Your mercies come also unto me, O Lord." It means—"It has come to so many before, therefore let it also come unto me. Lord, if I were the only one and You had never saved a sinner before, yet would I venture upon Your Word and promise! Especially would I come and trust the blood of Jesus! But, Lord, I am not the first by many millions. I beseech You, then, of Your great love, let Your salvation come unto me."

You notice in the parable of the prodigal that the forlorn feeder of swine was the only son that had gone astray and consequently the first that ever tried whether his father would receive him. The elder brother had not gone astray and was there at home to grumble at his younger brother. But the poor prodigal son, though he had no instance before him of his father's willingness to forgive, was bold to try, by faith, his father's heart! None had trod that way before, yet he made bold to explore it! He felt that he should not be cast out. But when we hear any of you say, "I will arise and

go to my Father,” scores of us are ready to leap out of our seats and cry, “Come along, Brother, for we have come and the gracious Father has received us!”

I do not know whether the elder brother is here to murmur at a penitent sinner. I am happy to say I have none of his spirit. It will make my heart happy! The bells of my whole nature will ring for joy if I may only bring one of my poor, prodigal brothers back to my great Father’s house! Oh, come along with you and let this be the plea—“You have received so many, O receive me!” Cry, “Bless me, even me, also, O my Father!” The Lord has not come to the end of His mercy. Jesus has not come to the end of His saving work. There is room for you and there will be room for thousands upon thousands until the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door. He has not risen up, nor closed the door as yet and still His mercy cries, “Come to Me! Come to Me! Come to Me and he that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.”

I will close by assuring you that this blessedly gracious prayer which I have helped to back up with arguments will be answered by our gracious God. Oh, be sure of this! He never sent His Prophets to preach to us a salvation which cannot be ours! He never sent His Apostles to report to us concerning a mere dream! He never set the angels wondering at an empty speculation! He never gave His Son to be a Ransom which will not redeem and He never committed His Spirit to witness to that which will, after all, mock the sinner’s need! No, He is able to save—there is salvation—there is salvation to be had, to be had now, even now!

We are sitting in the light in this house while a dense fog causes darkness all around, even darkness which may be felt. This is an emblem of the state of those who are in Christ—they have light in their hearts, light in their habitations, light in Jesus Christ! O come to Him and find salvation now! May God bring any that have been in darkness into His marvelous light and bring them *now* and unto His name shall be praise forever and ever! Amen and amen.

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

ANGELIC INTEREST IN THE GOSPEL NO. 2697

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 21, 1900.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 25, 1881.

“Which things the angels desire to look into.”
1 Peter 1:12.

THE Apostle Peter wrote his first Epistle to a persecuted people, many of whom were in great heaviness through manifold trials. The sufferings of the early Christians are something terrible even to think upon—the world has scarcely ever beheld more relentless cruelty than that which pursued the first servants of our Divine Lord and Master. Peter, therefore, when he wrote to these tried saints, sought to cheer and encourage them. What, then, did he write about? Why, about the Gospel! For there is nothing like the simple Doctrine of Salvation by Redemption to comfort the most distressed spirits.

The chapter from which our text is taken is just as plain as the Gospel itself. Peter here tells the elect strangers that they were “begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away.” And he also reminds them that they “were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold,” “but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” In this Chapter we have all the great central Truths of the Gospel—Election, Redemption, Regeneration, Effectual Calling, Sanctification and Final Perseverance. Brothers and Sisters, whenever we need consolation, let us never go away from the Gospel to find it! The child of God always finds his best comfort in the things of God. If your comforts can only come to you from worldly society, it is quite clear that you belong to the world—but if you are one of God's true children, all that you need to cheer you under the heaviest trial is already provided for you in the Gospel of Christ—and will speedily be applied to you by the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, if you only seek it at His hands.

Peter here prescribes a remedy for lowness of spirits and for general depression. That remedy is to take a deeper interest in the things of God, to give ourselves more intensely to the consideration and contemplation of them. They are well worthy of all the thought that we can give to them, for if the Prophets, those men with the grandest of human minds, Divinely Inspired, yet had to search deeply to understand God's Word as

revealed to them, there must be something in it that we shall do well to search out! And if the holy angels, those mighty intelligences, do not so much see, as “desire to look into,” the things of God, there must be some very deep things hidden within the simplicities of the Gospel which you and I ought to search out! If we did search them out, we would be greatly cheered and comforted. Our minds would be taken off those trials which now so often vex us. We would be lifted high above them. We would not travel slowly and painfully over this rough road and have our feet cut with every sharp flint—and our spirit pierced with every sore trial—but we would rise, as on eagle’s wings, and ride on the high places of the earth and rejoice in the Savior who has done such great things for us! We would eat the fat things, full of marrow, which God has provided for those who diligently study His Word and prize it above all earthly treasures.

I am not going to say anything at this time about the high interest which the ancient Prophets took in God’s Word, but I shall confine myself very much to the interest which angels take in it in order that I may stir you up to imitate their example. I want, first, to remind you that *angels take an active interest in the Gospel of our salvation*. And, secondly, to show you that *angels are eager students of it*—“which things the angels desire to look into.”

I. First, I want to remind you that ANGELS TAKE AN ACTIVE INTEREST IN THE GOSPEL OF OUR SALVATION.

It is true that *they are not interested in it for themselves*. They have never sinned and, consequently, they need no atonement and no forgiveness. Doubtless, they have some sort of indirect interest in it which I will not attempt to explain just now, but, certainly, as far as the Gospel brings salvation, healing, pardon, justification and cleansing, angels do not need it. Never having been defiled, they need not to be washed. And being perfect in their obedience, they need not to be forgiven for any shortcomings. And yet they take a deep interest in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ! What, then, shall I say of the madness of those who are defiled by sin and yet have no interest in the Fountain where they can be washed whiter than snow? What shall I say of the fatal folly of those who are guilty and yet take no thought about the method of pardon which God has provided in Christ Jesus, His Son, and our only Savior?

The angels are not even interested in the Gospel because of *its relation to any of their fellows*, for fallen angels have no part nor lot in its provisions. When they fell from their first estate, God left them forever without hope—and they live in their rebellion against Him, waiting for the awful day when they shall receive the full recompense of their infamous revolt. There is no mercy for fallen spirits! I see how God exercised His Sovereignty, for when men and angels had both sinned, He passed by the greater sinners and took up the lesser ones. The fallen spirits “He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of The Great Day.” Yet He looked on men, the creatures of a day, with eyes of pity and compassion and sent His Son to earth, in our nature, that He

might redeem us from the wrath which was justly our due! The angels have no direct interest in the death of Christ, or the blood of Christ because of any blessing which will come through Him to any of their former angelic companions. Yet they desire to look into these things. What, then, shall I think of myself, and of you, my Brothers and Sisters, if, being saved, we take little or no interest in the Gospel as the one means of saving our fellow men? Shame upon us if we have less pity for mankind than angels have, for men are our brothers, and nothing can save them but the Gospel of Jesus! Our common humanity ought to make us seek their welfare and we ought to take the deepest imaginable interest in the things which make for the peace of their immortal souls!

Angels take a deep interest in the Gospel *because they observe God's interest in it*. That for which God cares, angels care for at once. That which grieves the Holy Spirit must be grievous to holy angels, too, and that which gladdens the heart of God must also make glad the spirits that bow adoringly around His Throne. The holy ones cry, each one to his fellow, "God is glorified in saving sinful men. Our blessed Lord and Leader went down to earth to accomplish the redemption of the fallen and, therefore, let us learn all we can concerning His wondrous work! And wherever there is anything that we can do to help it on, let us stand with outspread wings, eager to fly at the command of God."

Doubtless, the angels also take an interest in the Gospel *because they are full of love*. Those pure spirits love as surely as they live, and not only do they love their God, and love one another, but they also love us who were made a little lower than the angels. They have a great affection for us—very much more, I imagine, than we have for them. We are their younger brothers, as it were, and we are, by reason of our flesh and blood, linked to materialism, while they are pure spirits. Yet they do not envy us the love of God, neither do they despise us on account of our faults and follies, though, I think, they must often wonder at us. They must sometimes be ready to ask questions concerning our strange behavior, just as two of them did when Christ had risen from the dead and Mary Magdalene was weeping. Those angels were full of joy because Christ had risen, so they said to her, "Woman, why do you weep?" What could there be to weep about when Jesus had risen from the dead?! Ah, Beloved, the angels must often be astonished at us and think we are the strangest creatures that can be! Yet they love us and, therefore, they take a great interest in that Gospel which promotes our highest good. They know what we too frequently forget—that nothing can make us so happy as for us to be holy—and that nothing can make us holy but being washed in the blood of Jesus and being renewed by the Holy Spirit. Out of their homage to God and their brotherhood to man, comes that interest which makes them desire to look into the deep things of God and His Gospel.

The angels have always taken an interest in all that concerns men. Some of them stood at the gate of Eden, with a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep our first father out, should he attempt to force

his way back when he had lost his right to all its joy, even as the most loving spirit in the world is still upon the side of justice and believes that God is righteous, even though Paradise is lost, and man is doomed to eat bread in the sweat of his face. They are on man's side, but much more on God's, and they say, "Let God, the ever Just One, be glorified, whatever becomes of the sons of men."

After that fatal day of the Fall, the angels constantly watched over men here below, and frequently spoke with one and another of them as God sent them with messages of mercy to Abraham, or to Isaac, or to Lot, or to Jacob, or to others of the human race. But there was a great day when, in solemn pomp, the chariots of God, which are "twenty thousand, even thousands of angels," came down to Mount Sinai, when the Law of God was proclaimed. The angels were there as the courtiers of the great King, to give additional solemnity to the declaration of the Law of God. That they should have been present on that august occasion shows their interest in the sons of men.

But I like better to speak to you of their coming to announce the birth of Him of whom we sing, "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given." When that birth, which they had announced, took place, how gladly did they come and hover over Bethlehem's fields and sing the grand chorale, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." It was their intense interest in us that made them glad that our Redeemer was born. Then, as we sang at the commencement of this service—

***"In all His toils and dangerous paths
They did His steps attend,
Oft paused, and wondered how at last
The scene of love would end."***

At that notable time when He was tempted in the wilderness, and was with the wild beasts, when the devil had left Him, angels came and ministered to Him. They were always near Him while He was here—always invisibly attendant upon His footsteps. You remember how there appeared unto Him an angel strengthening Him when He was in His agony in the Garden of Gethsemane—it was a wondrous thing that the Son of God should have strength infused into Him by an angelic messenger! With what awestruck interest the angels must have watched our Lord upon the Cross!—

***"As on the tottering tree He hung,
And darkness veiled the sky,
They saw, aghast, that awful sight,
The Lord of Glory die!"***

But glad were they to descend to His empty sepulcher, and to enter it, and guard the place where, for a while, the sacred casket of His body had lain. They spoke to His disciples and comforted them by telling them that He had risen from the dead and, all along, they took such interest in everything relating to Him because they recognized in Him the Savior of sinful men—

"They brought His chariot from above,

***To bear Him to His Throne,
Clapped their triumphant wings and cried,
“The glorious work is done!”***

Nor is this all. We know, from Scripture, that they not only watched over the Savior, but *they rejoice over penitents*. The Lord Jesus has told us that “there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents.” That is to say, there is joy in God’s heart and the angels can see it. They stand in God’s Presence and they can see that God is glad! And we know that they also share that gladness. In the parable of the lost sheep, our Savior represents the shepherd calling together his friends and his neighbors, and saying to them, “Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.” So they do, I am sure—they rejoice over every rescued one that is brought home upon the shoulders of the Good Shepherd!

And, Beloved, *they watch over every believing soul*. This is one of their chief offices, for, “are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” That promise which Satan misquoted is true to every child of God—“He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. They shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone.” From what spiritual evils they guard us, it is not for me to attempt to tell, nor to try to describe how, often, in mid-air, there are fierce fights between the demons from Hell and the good spirits from Heaven. Or how the prince of the power of the air is baffled and driven back by Michael the archangel as he comes to take care of the living body of Christ, as once of old he guarded the dead body of Moses. Ah, we little know how much we owe these invisible agents of the ever-blessed God! They are deeply interested in all His children. The parable tells us that Lazarus died, “and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom.” What that expression means, I shall not attempt to explain, but I am quite sure that when we who love the Lord, die, angels will have something to do with our departure and with our introduction into the world of happy spirits—and into the presence-chamber of the Lord our God! I like Bunyan’s account of the pilgrims passing through the river and the shining ones meeting them on the other side, and leading them up the steep ascent into the Celestial City where they see their Master’s face with joy, and go no more out forever.

Nor will they have done with us even then, for when we shall be with God eternally shut in, and safe from all danger of falling and sinning, the angels will swell the music of our continual song, for they shall sing, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.” Yet we shall be able to sing what they cannot, “You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and have made us unto our God, kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth.”

Further, these dear attendants of our wandering footsteps here below, these patient guardians of our nightly hours, these angel guides who

shall be our companions in death when wife and child and friend can go no farther with us—*these glorious beings shall learn from our lips in Heaven the manifold wisdom of God.* They will cluster around us amazed and gladdened as, one by one, we stand upon the sea of glass—and they will ask us to rehearse again and again the wonders of redeeming love and to tell them what Conversion meant, and what Sanctification meant, and how the power and wisdom and Grace and patience of God were seen in the experience of each one of us—and we shall be their joyful teachers, world without end!

Have I not proved to you that angels take an active interest in the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? And may I not come back to this practical point—do *you*, also, take an active interest in the Gospel—you in whose nature Christ appeared—you sons of men—you who must be forever lost unless the precious blood of the bleeding Lamb is sprinkled upon you?—

***“Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by,
Is it nothing to you that Jesus should die?”***

It was for such as you that He died, even for the guilty sons and daughters of men, “for verily He took not on Him the nature of angels, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham.” He took up men, not angels—shall they, then, be interested in the Gospel, and shall not you, whom it especially concerns, also be interested in it? I have already reminded you that they have no brother angels to be converted by the Gospel. They have no sister angels to be turned to God by the story of Calvary, yet they are deeply interested in the Gospel and also in us! And will not you, my fellow Christians, take a deeper interest in the work of God and in the propagation of the Gospel, when your own flesh and blood must be converted by it, or else must eternally die? Our sisters and brothers, our sons and daughters, our wives and husbands, possibly even our parents, will perish forever unless Jesus Christ is brought to them—and they are brought to Him. What are you doing, you careless professors, you who can go calmly to sleep while men and women are being damned? What are you thinking of, you who eat the fat and drink the sweet in the courts of the Lord’s House and yet never show to the prisoners this way to liberty, nor tell to the dying the good news that, “there is life for a look at the Crucified One”—nor say to the perishing that there is salvation even for them in Christ Jesus your Lord? Up, up! I charge you by every swift-winged angel who takes an interest in the Cross of Christ, and in the salvation of men, AWAKE, sons of men! If you may, any way, be the means of saving some, be active in the service of that Savior who gave His all for you! God bless that exhortation to all whom it concerns!

II. Now we turn to the second point, which is this—that ANGELS ARE EAGER STUDENTS OF THE GOSPEL, and of all the Truths of God connected with it—“Which things the angels desire to look into.”

It is quite certain, then, that *angels do not know all that is in the Gospel*, for they desire to look into it. All the Gospel is not known to them and I do not think that it is all known to any of us. I have occasionally

met with certain brethren who have professed to have the whole of the Gospel condensed into five points of doctrine, so that they could put it all into their waistcoat pocket and carry it there. And they seemed to think that they had not anything more to learn. If one tried to teach them any other Truth of God beside what they already knew, they were angry, for they did not need to know anymore. They are not like the holy angels, for they desire to look into these things. Dr. John Owen was, perhaps, the most profound Divine who ever lived, yet Dr. John Owen could not know, on earth, as much about certain things as angels did! And I should say that, this very day, he still desires to look into the mystery of redeeming love and the Glory of Christ of which he wrote with such wonderful power.

The Apostle Paul had been converted many years when he wrote the Epistle to the Philippians, yet in it he expressed the longing of his heart that he might know Christ. But did he not know Him? And if *he* did not, who did? No doubt he felt that there was so much of Christ that he had not known that what he *did* know amounted to very little. I have heard the word, perfection, used very glibly by some who seemed to me to know little of its meaning. But will any sane man claim that he has attained to perfection in *knowledge*? To the Corinthians, Paul wrote, "If any man thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know." The mystery of Redemption was hidden in Christ from eternity, and it was only made known to the Church or even to the angels gradually. They do not yet know everything. Concerning His Second Coming, our Lord said to His disciples, "But of that day and hour knows no man, no, not the angels of Heaven, but My Father only."

The devil also does not know everything. I am sure that Satan did not know that Christ came into the world to redeem men by dying for them, or else he would never have stirred them up to put Him to death. He would have been far too cunning for that—he would have tried, if possible, to keep Christ alive so that we might not have been redeemed by Him. The devil does not know as much as he thinks he knows, even now. And, often, he is outwitted by a simple-hearted child of God who knows how to believe in God, and is brave enough to do the right thing. Neither men, nor Prophets, nor angels, nor devils know all about the Gospel! They need to still go on studying, meditating and contemplating, as the holy beings before the Throne of God are doing—"which things the angels desire to look into."

But, Brothers and Sisters, though they do not yet know all about Christ and His Gospel, *they want to know all they can*. They have many other subjects to study. There are all the worlds that God has made, and possibly they have liberty to range over them all, yet I do not read with reference to the marvels of astronomy, "which things the angels desire to look into." Angels doubtless know much more than all our scientific men do concerning the former ages of this world. They could tell much about the various formations and strata of which geologists talk, yet I do not find it recorded that the angels have any particular desire to look into

those things. When God created the world, “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.” They have oftentimes admired the Providential arrangements of God and praised the wise Ruler who guides all things with Infinite Wisdom. But now their chief contemplations seem to be fixed on Christ and His Gospel!

Just notice two or three passages of Scripture. Turn first to Exodus 25:20, where we read concerning the cherubim, who belong to one order of angels, “The cherubim shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the Mercy Seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another, toward the Mercy Seat shall the faces of the cherubim be”—“toward the Mercy Seat,” as if their eyes were continually fixed upon the redemption of Christ, the Propitiation worked out by His Sacrifice. In Daniel’s day these blessed spirits took the greatest conceivable interest in knowing all they could about our redemption. If you turn to Daniel 8:13, you can read what that man of God wrote. “Then I heard one saint—‘one holy one’—speaking, and another holy one said unto that certain holy one which spoke, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation?” “How long?”—that was the question which the holy ones asked long before Christ descended to earth! Read also Daniel 12:5—“Then I Daniel looked, and, behold, there stood two others, the one on this side of the bank of the river, and the other on that side of the bank of the river. And one said to the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?”

They asked again and again, “How long?” All their thoughts were concentrated upon the things of God and they desired to look into them. Now I want you to remember, in order that it may humble us, that angels have very keen intellects. I believe that they far excel us in their prayers of thought and yet, though they have learned so much about the Gospel, they do not pretend to have come any further than this—they desire to look into it. You and I, perhaps, suppose that we know all about the Gospel and that we do not need to have hours of study, and thought, and prayer, and the unction of the Holy Spirit. Poor miserable fools! Angels, who are vastly superior to us in intelligence, have gone no further than to have the *desire to learn and to know*. I am afraid that many of you have not got as far as that. It is a grand thing to desire to look into these things—it proves that we already know something of their worth when we desire to know more.

Remember, also, that *the intellects of angels have never been warped by prejudice*. There is not a man among us who is not prejudiced to some extent. Our parents warped us in one direction and our companions have warped us another way and we have, all of us, the propensity to take a one-sided view of things, even though we may be perfectly ignorant of the bias and, sometimes, this prejudice of ours prevents us from seeing clearly. But it is not so with the angels. There is no beam, nor even a mote, in their eyes! Their knowledge is not infinite, but it is amazing

knowledge as far as it goes. Yet even they see not all that there is in the Gospel, for, of it, as of the love of God, it can truly be said—

***“The first-born sons of light
Desire in vain its depths to see.
They cannot reach the mystery,
The length, and breadth, and height!”***

Then, again, *the angels have been long looking into these things*. I know not what the age of the angels may be. We know nothing of any creation of angels since the creation of the world. In the long ages before man trod this earth, angels had begun to think of looking into the wonders of God’s Grace. Yet, after thousands of years, they do not fully comprehend the mysteries of redeeming love. Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, the Gospel is a boundless thing, even as your ruin was infinite and horrible beyond conception. And woe to the man who tries to make out that there is but a little Hell, and a little God, and but little wrath of God! As surely as your overthrow was inconceivably terrible, so the designs of God for your redemption and your exaltation in Christ are inconceivably magnificent! “It does not yet appear what we shall be.” Some of us have very large expectations of what God means to make even of His creatures who are now cooped up in flesh and blood, but our highest anticipations will probably be far exceeded by the glorious reality! Even angels do not yet fully know, after all their study, what the mighty love of God has done and will yet do for us!

Do not forget, too, dear Friends, that *angels are not subject to such infirmities as we are*. I know that I have forgotten a great deal more than I know, and I suppose that most of you have done the same. And when we have learned a thing, we are often like people who take up a handful of water—it is soon all gone. What leaky sieves our memories are! Angels, however, have no such failure of mind. They have never sinned and, therefore, from much of our infirmity, they must be altogether free. Yet, though far superior to us in this respect, this is the position they have reached—they stand over the Mercy Seat, with wings outstretched, and with their eyes continually fixed upon that token of the Propitiation, desiring to look into it! That is where you and I also stand—if we are truly humble, we feel that this is as far as we have come as yet.

Now, let us enquire—*What are the things which the angels desire to look into?* I can only refer very briefly to them.

They are, first, the Incarnation, life, and death of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The way in which God could be just, and yet justify the ungodly. That sacred art by which the suffering of the Law-Giver made a sufficient recompense to the offended Law of God. The wondrous power of those sufferings God-ward and manward—how these sufferings have broken men’s hearts and separated them from their sins. How they have given them joy and peace and united them forever to their God. You and I have only seen the sparkle on the surface of the crimson sea of Redemption—we cannot understand the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ our Lord—so let us still desire to look into it, as the angels do.

Next, they desire to know something concerning the Resurrection of Christ. "How do you know that?" you ask. Why, the verse before the one containing our text speaks of "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." So angels love to think of Christ as risen from the dead, of Christ ascended, and of Christ yet to come in His Glory. They desire to gaze into that mystery and to learn how the glorious God can become yet more glorious by taking upon Himself our nature and so magnifying His Grace above all His name, by redeeming fallen men, and by lifting them up into communion with God.

Angels desire to look into all the mystery of human hearts—how they are fallen, how they are regenerated, how they are preserved, how they are sanctified, how they are strengthened, how they are taught, how they are perfected. There is a wonderful field for their inspection, there, in the work of the Holy Spirit upon the sons and daughters of Adam by virtue of the death of Christ!

And angels want also to know what God is going to do with this poor world. It is an awful problem to us and so it is to them, I expect. Can you make this world out? Did you ever try to understand it? It is a dreadful nut for anyone to crack—all these millions of men continually dying without God and without Christ—and without hope. What are to be the eternal issues of it all? How will it come out that God is glorified at the last when such multitudes perish? There are some Brothers and Sisters who think they know all about this mystery—they have a philosophy which explains it all. I have no such philosophy, nor do I wish to have. I sometimes found, when I was a child, that it was a pleasant thing for me to be with my father and to hear him talk even when I did not fully understand what he was talking about. And so I find it a blessed thing to get near to God and to see what He is doing, even when I do not know what He is doing, for I am perfectly satisfied that He cannot do anything that is wrong! Still, angels and men may join in the common desire to look into the wonderful working of God's Providence and Grace.

But the angels also desire to look into the glory that shall follow. What is the glory that is yet to come to those spirits of just men made perfect who, as yet, have not their glorified bodies, but are waiting for them until the resurrection trumpet shall sound? What will be the glory of that moment when, in the twinkling of an eye, the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and the living shall be changed? And what will be the glory of that dread hour when Heaven and earth shall gather before the last tribunal and, on the Great White Throne, the Judge shall sit, and all born of woman shall be gathered before Him to give an account of the deeds done in the body, whether they have been good, or whether they have been evil? And what glory it will be, before that day has closed, when over all the world of sinners the waves of God's Infinite Wrath shall roll, and they shall sink to the bottom like a stone, never to taint the earth again! And what a glory it will be when all those on the King's right hand, all the blood-washed, all the redeemed, shall stream up to their everlasting thrones to sit forever with their conquering Leader, and reign eter-

nally, peers in the palace of the King, forever adoring, forever blessing His holy name! Oh, what glory will be there! I will not attempt to describe it, for even the angels, who are in Heaven, desire to look into this mystery! Even they scarcely know what will be the glory of “the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in Heaven.”

You know that the Greeks had, every now and then, a great gathering of all the nation in what they called their general assembly. Everyone was represented there—poet and philosopher, tragedian and military man. All the glories of Greece were there. Well, there is to come a general assembly, an ecumenical council of the entire Church of God. And when they shall all be there on the plains of Heaven—Prophets, confessors, Apostles, martyrs, humble men and women from every part of the world—not one of the redeemed will be absent! They will all be there, with their King in the midst of them, and what a shout of victory, what hallelujahs, what songs of joy, what triumphant *jubilates* shall welcome that glad day! By God’s Grace, I shall be there. My Hearer, will you be there? Are you sure of it? If so, let the glad anticipation of it rejoice your heart even now, though you do not know what the full realization of it will be, for even angels, who have seen the lesser gatherings of the saints, have not yet seen the one universal assembly—the gathering of all the clans, the coronation of the Prince, the marriage of the bride, the Lamb’s wife and all the Glory of God—and the splendor of the infinite meridian brilliance that will be displayed before the wondering eyes of God’s elect saints and God’s elect angels! They do not know what it is to be, nor do you, but we, as well as they, desire to look into it, and I hope we all desire to be there!

Now let me close by saying that *as the angels are such deep students of the things of God, let us try to be the same*. I wish that I could stir up all my dear friends who are saved to try to look more closely into the things of God. I am afraid that we are going to have a greater proportion of superficial Believers than we have had in the past, for we have so many people who are always hallooing about their religion. God bless them and let them halloo as loudly as they like, but I wish that they had something more to halloo about. There are some who are always crying, “Believe, believe, believe!” But, for the life of them, they could not tell you what it is that you have to believe. And many shout, “Hallelujah!” who do not know what “Hallelujah!” means, or they would be far more reverent towards that blessed word, “Praise to Jehovah!” We want, Brothers and Sisters, that you who are saved should seek to know how and why you were saved! You who have a hope of salvation should know the reason for the hope that is in you!

Study the Scriptures much. In the Puritan days, there used to be a number of contemplative Christians who shut themselves up to study the Word of the Lord, and so became masters of theology. Perhaps some were not so practical in winning souls as they ought to have been, but now we are getting to the opposite pole of the compass. We have many who are rushing about and professing to feed the people—but what do they give them? Where is your bread, Sir? “Oh, I could not let these poor

people wait.” But why do you not go and fill your basket? You have nothing in it. “Oh, I had not time to do that. I wanted to go and give them”—Give them what? Give them half of the nothing that you have brought? That will do them no good at all!

There is nothing like having good seed in the basket when you go out to sow. And when you go to feed the hungry, there is nothing like having good bread to give them. And that cannot be the case, *spiritually*, unless we are diligent students of the Word, unless we search the deep things of God! By all means let us advance our forces into the recesses of the enemy’s country, but let us secure our communications and let us have a good firm basis of Scriptural knowledge, otherwise mischief will come to our scattered powers. By all means be enthusiastic. By all means be intense, but you cannot keep a fire burning without fuel, and you cannot keep up real intensity and enthusiasm without a knowledge of Christ and an understanding of the things of God, “which things the angels desire to look into.”

Now, dear Friends, those of you who have nothing to do with this matter, I would like you to go away thinking that if an angel cares about these things, and if an angel studies them, it is time that you did the same. I know that you are going to take your degree at the University, good Sir, and I am very glad that you are likely to secure a good position in life. But I hope that you are not so foolish as to think that you know more than the angels! And if they desire to look into these things, permit me to ask you to study your Bible as well as all the other classics, for, after all, this is the best classic! I know, dear Sir, that you are a masterly thinker. You can make a great many hypotheses and pull them to pieces again, but I wish, for once, that you would consider this hypothesis—that, perhaps, you are not as wise as the angels. I should not wonder if that hypothesis should prove to be true!

I have often noticed that people who rail at the Gospel do not know what it is. Many speak against the Bible, but if they were asked, “Did you ever read it?” they would have to answer, “No.” He who studies God’s Word is usually conquered by it—he falls in love with it and feels the power of it. So, as the holy angels desire to look into it, look into it, yourself, good Sir, and, on your looking there, may God give you to see Jesus, for all who look unto Him shall be saved forever! May you be one of that blessed company, for His dear name’s sake! Amen.

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

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—304, 290, 853.

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

A SEASONABLE EXHORTATION

NO. 1909

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 11, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober and hope
to the end for the Grace that is to be brought unto you
at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”
1 Peter 1:13.*

To read the whole chapter is most helpful to the understanding of our text. If we have studied it carefully, we must have said to ourselves, “How full of their Lord were the minds of these holy writers!” Peter can scarcely write a verse without an allusion to the Lord Jesus Christ. He was not only, “Peter, an Apostle of Jesus Christ,” but you can see that his heart was steeped and saturated in memories of his Master—he could hardly get through a sentence without some allusion to the death, the Resurrection, or the Second Coming of his beloved Lord. Oh that my ministry might always be of the same sort, dripping with the holy unction of the Savior’s name! Brethren, may your conversations and your lives be full of the Lord Jesus Christ, that men may take knowledge of you—that you have been with Jesus and have learned of Him.

A second thought will have occurred to you—How ardently these men expected the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ! Peter was continually speaking of it and so was his beloved Brother, Paul. They hoped that Christ might come while they were yet alive—they evidently looked upon His Advent as very near. They were not mistaken in this last belief. It is very near. A long time has passed, you say? I answer, By no manner of means! Two thousand years is not a long time in the count of God, nor in reference to so grand a business! If a thousand years is with God as one day, if the Lord does not come for the next 20,000 years, we shall not be truthfully able to say that He delays His coming, for with a history of which the chief fact is the death of Christ, there may well be due pause and ample time for working out its infinite problems. We are dealing with eternal things and what are ages? Let us patiently wait. “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise as some men count slackness.” Let us persevere in the same belief which filled the minds of the early Believers—that Jesus will come, that He may come at any time—and that He will surely come quickly! Brothers and Sisters, before the word which now proceeds from my lips shall have reached your ear the Lord may come in His Glory! Be you as men that look for His coming at any moment.

It is equally noticeable that while Apostolic men looked for the coming of Christ, they looked for it with no idea of dread, but, on the contrary,

with the utmost joy! In this chapter Peter sets forth the glorious Advent of our Lord as an event to be hoped for with eagerness. He speaks of “the Grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” It was to him, therefore, not a day of terror and of thunder and overwhelming confusion, but a day of the consummation of the work of Grace, a period in which Glory should crown the Grace received through the first manifestation of the Lord! It was all joy to the early Believers to think of the Lord’s appearing. The falling stars, the darkened sun, the blood-red moon, the quivering earth, the skies rolled up like an outworn vesture—all these things had no horror for them since Jesus was, thus, coming. Though all creation should be on a blaze and the elements should melt with fervent heat, yet *Jesus* was coming and that was enough for them—the Bridegroom of their souls was on His way and this was rapture to their expectant spirits!

Observe also, once more, how constantly they were urging this as a motive! Peter never holds it out as a mere matter of speculation, nor exclusively as a ground of comfort, but he is *constantly* using the Lord’s glorious appearing as the grand motive for action, for holiness, for watchfulness! Our text is a case in point—“Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober and hope to the end for the Grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” My Brothers and Sisters, let us not set aside a Truth of God which is evidently meant for our stimulus, our strength and our sanctification—but let us receive it into our hearts and pray that God may bless it to our practical profiting in all time to come.

I intend to handle the text with special view to the present time. It seems to me that there never was a text more appropriate for any day than this one for the time now passing. It begins, as you notice, with *girding up the loins of your mind*. These are days of great looseness—I see great laxity of doctrinal belief—and gross carelessness in religious practice everywhere! Christian people are doing, today, what their forefathers would have loathed! Multitudes of professors are but very little different from worldlings. Men’s religion seems to hang loosely about them, as if it did not fit them—the wonder is that it does not drop off them! Men are so little braced up as to conscientious conviction and vigorous resolve that they easily go to pieces if assailed by error or temptation. The teaching necessary for today is this—“Gird up the loins of your mind,” brace yourselves up! Pull yourselves together—be firm, compact, consistent, determined! Do not be like quicksilver which keeps on dissolving and running into fractions—do not fritter away life upon trifles, but live to purpose, with undivided heart and decided resolution.

These are equally days in which it is necessary to say, “*be sober*.” We are always having some new fad or another brought out to infatuate the unstable. Very good but very weak-minded people are apt to make marvelous discoveries and to cry them up as if they had found the philosopher’s stone! In my short time I have heard, “Lo here!” and I have listened. And, “Lo there!” and I have listened—the call has come from a third, fourth, fifth, sixth quarter in quick succession and, after all, there was

nothing worth a thought! The whole world was going to be enlightened by some new light which Peter and Paul never saw—something far superior to anything known by any of the saints or sages of the Church! But the grand illumination has not yet come. “Be sober,” keep your feet; possess your souls; do not be carried away with every wind of doctrine! Do not be little babies, to believe everything that is told you, whether it is a ghost story or a fairy tale. Be sober—quit yourselves like men that have their wits about them. A very necessary word is this in times when everybody seems excited and some are so bewildered that they do not know their head from their heels! Crowds are prepared to follow any kind of foolery, whatever it may be, as long as it is advocated by clever men and is made to tickle their fancy. Do but shout loudly enough and many will answer! Do but set open the door and beckon and they will rush in, whatever the entertainment may be! Brothers and Sisters, “be sober,” and judge for yourselves.

Nor is the third exhortation at all unnecessary—“*Hope to the end.*” Certain of us have to confess that the outlook appears to us very dark and dismal. Our surroundings seem full of fear and we are apt to grow despondent, if not almost despairing. Wisely, then, does bold Peter say to us, “Hope to the end.” You who love the Truth of God, do not despair of its success! You who hold to the good old ways, do not dream that everybody will desert them! Do not give way to distrust as to the issues of the conflict. Be so hopeful as to be “calm mid the bewildering cry, confident of victory.”

Put these three exhortations into one—pull yourselves together, be steady, and be hopeful. There you have the practical run of the text. I desire earnestly that, by God’s Spirit, we may carry it into practice from this day on and always.

In asking your attention to the text, I notice, first, *an argument*—“Therefore.” Secondly, *an exhortation*—“Gird up the loins of your mind; be sober, and hope to the end.” And thirdly, *an expectation*—“hope to the end for the Grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

I. First, then, here is AN ARGUMENT, indicated by “therefore.” True religion is not unreasonable—it is common sense set to heavenly music. Albeit that true religion may be *above* reason, it is never *contrary* to reason, but if we had the reason of God, our reason would teach us what His Holy Spirit has revealed. Pure religion is pure truth—God help us to be sure of this! Holiness is also a direct logical inference from Revelation. I like to notice the Epistles with their, “therefores” and, “wherefores.” If you read the First Epistle of Peter, you have in this verse, “therefore,” and in the 18th verse, “forasmuch,” and in the 22nd verse, “seeing then.” The second chapter begins with, “therefore.” The sixth verse has its “wherefore;” the seventh its, “therefore,” and the rest of the chapter is studded with the argumentative word, “for.” Peter might seem to be too impetuous to be argumentative, but it is clear, to him, godliness was a matter of argument—he saw a distinct connection between the Doctrines of Grace and a holy life! Here in our text he says, “Therefore gird up the loins of your mind.”

Will you kindly follow me while I run over his argument? I shall have to give you only an outline of it. Here it is.

He begins by saying, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." See, Brothers and Sisters, you are elected to a very high privilege! You are chosen of God from before the foundation of the world, out of His free favor, that you should be a sanctified, obedient and cleansed people! Therefore, since God has chosen you to this, do not give way to the world, but gird up your loins to contend with it! Be not carried away with every novelty, be sober. Do not be downcast and dispirited, but bravely hope. Shall the elect of God be timorous? Shall those who are chosen of the Most High give way to despair? God forbid! There is an argument, then, in the first and second verses, forcibly supporting the precepts of the text. If we had time to elaborate it, we should see that it well behooves the elect of God to choose his service resolutely, to abide in it steadfastly and hope for its reward with supreme confidence.

But next, Peter declares that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has "begotten us again unto a lively hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." O you begotten of God, see that you live as such! You are twice-born men! Live not the low life of the merely natural man. You are of the blood royal, you are descended from the King of Kings—degrade not your descent! You are born, not to death, as you were at your first birth, but unto life! Though you pass through the grave, you shall not remain there. The morgue is no home for your body—you shall come up out of the grave, for you are begotten again unto a hope most full of life by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Therefore, gird up your loins! If it is so that there is this new life in you, a life eternal as the life of God, then be not cast down! Pull your belt close about you! Keep yourself free from the oppressive cares and temptations of the world and stand with holy hope, expecting the coming of your Lord from Heaven! That is a good argument, is it not? Your election and your regeneration call you to holy living!

Further, the Apostle goes on to say that you are heirs of "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and that fades not away, reserved in Heaven for you." For you, the harp of gold! For you, the starry crown, the endless victory, the sight of the King in His beauty! For you, the sitting upon the Throne of Jesus, even as He has overcome and has sat down with His Father upon His Throne! Courage, then, Brethren, if this is your destiny! Within a month you may be in Heaven! If within a brief period you shall be exalted to share the rest of your Redeemer, do not be cast down, nor overwhelmed with trouble, nor dismayed by the abounding of sin, nor even by your own personal temptations. "Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober and hope to the end," for your end must be glorious! Good argument, is it not?

Then he goes on to say that you are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." God Himself surrounds you as with a wall of fire. Until Omnipotence can be vanquished, until Immutability can be changed, until the Immortal God can

die, not one of His chosen people shall be destroyed! “Kept by the power of God,” what power can destroy us? Therefore, Brothers and Sisters, be brave and confident. Shall such a man as I flee? Kept by the power of God, shall I tremble? If the power of God keeps me, shall I “reel to and fro and stagger like a drunken man?” If the power of God keeps me, shall I be hopeless? Shall I speak like one that has no hereafter to rejoice in? It cannot be so! If God keeps us, we will keep our hope even to the end. Is not that a good argument?

Further, the Apostle goes on to say that we may be passing through necessary trial, but it is only for a little while. “Wherein you greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if necessary, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it is tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.” See, Beloved, the Apostle declares that you must be tried even as gold must be put into the furnace—you have faith and faith must be tested—it is according to its nature and Divine purpose! The faith of Abraham was sharply tried and so must the faith of all Believers. That your religion may be really solid metal and not an imitation of it, or a mere gilded bauble, you *must be tried!*

Your Master was tried—not without fighting did He win His crown! Not without labor did He enter into His reward. There is a necessity for our present affliction. God has a design in it—that He may have praise and Glory and honor at the appearing of His dear Son—a praise, Glory and honor in which we shall share! Come, then, Brethren, if this fire is to be passed through, let us gird up our loins to dash through it! Let us not fear, for the Lord has said, “When you pass through the fire I will be with you, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you.” My Brethren, if for a little time we must be tried, let us set our faces like flints to bear the trial. Let us not be intoxicated with sorrow or fear. Since God has a grand design in it, let us bow ourselves to His Divine will and only ask that His holy design may be fully answered. Let us hope to be sustained in the trial and sanctified as the result of it—and let no unbelieving fear cast a cloud over our sky. Is not this a good argument?

Nor is this all. He tells us that even while we are in trial we are still full of joy. Read the eighth verse concerning, “Jesus Christ, whom, having not seen, you love; in whom, though now you see Him not, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” Beloved, we who love the Lord have our joy even in our present adversity! We have two heavens—a Heaven here and a Heaven hereafter! Jesus is with us and this is Heaven—we are soon to be with Jesus and that is another Heaven! Though sometimes cast down, we are glad at heart—

***“I would not change my blessed estate
For all that earth calls good or great.”***

Give me but the company of the sweet Lord Jesus and I ask no greater happiness! Yes, let me go back to my bed and my pain if I may have Jesus there! Better to lie in a dungeon and pine on bread and water with Christ’s company than to sit in a parliament of kings and be their emperor

and be without the Lord! Saints find everything in Christ when they have nothing else—and they equally find everything in Him when earthly comforts are multiplied! Beloved, if it is so, then let us gird up the loins of our mind, be sober and hope to the end! He that is with us now and makes all our sorrows work for good will be with us even to the end! Come life, come death, our Lord's Presence provides us with an all-sufficiency. If His Presence shall go with us and He will give us peace, we need not stipulate as to the road. Therefore let us not be dismayed, nor even think of doubting. Is not this a good argument?

Once more—the Apostle goes on to say that the Gospel which we believe and which we teach, and for which we are ready to suffer and even to die—is a Gospel that comes to us with the sanction of the Prophets. The Holy Spirit moved upon those choice spirits so that they spoke to us concerning the sufferings of Christ and the Glory which should follow. It seems to me, Brothers and Sisters, that with such men as Moses and David, Isaiah and Jeremiah to support our faith, we need not be ashamed of our company, nor tremble at the criticisms of the moderns! We ought, rather, to gird up the loins of our mind and give our whole soul to the proclamation of a Gospel which is rendered venerable by the testimony of inspired men of all ages! Be sober and steadfast in the belief of the old faith! Never be moved by anything that modern rationalism or ancient unbelief may have to say! For not only do the Prophets assure us that we follow no cunningly-devised fable, but the angels stand gazing into it with strong desire to know more of it! The daily study of cherubim and seraphim is the Revelation of God in Christ. I tell you, Sirs, that the Gospel which, today, is hacked in pieces by the wise men of this world who tell us that they have found out something more in harmony with growing enlightenment, is still the admiration of every holy one who walks yon golden streets, or waits before the burning Throne of God! Still do angels and principalities and powers admire the mystery of the Incarnate God and the substitutionary Atonement made for men by the crucified Lord! They never cease to wonder and adore concerning the glorious Gospel of the blessed God! Standing, then, side by side with Prophets, looking with intent gaze to the same Object which fixes the attention of angels, we are not abashed by ridicule, nor disquieted by opposition! We stand fast, as upon a rock, girding up the loins of our mind and hoping to the end! There again is a right good argument. Is it not so?

II. I beg you, dear Friends, to follow me to the next head of discourse, namely, THE EXHORTATION. The exhortation is a triplet—“Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober and hope to the end.”

The first exhortation, “*Gird up the loins of your mind,*” sounds very sweet in my ears. I do not know whether it raises echoes in your minds, as it does in mine. I fancy that Peter had a noticeable habit of pulling his garments together. I read of him that he, “girt his fisher's coat unto him, for he was stripped.” Almost everybody has some personal peculiarity and mannerism. And it may have been the way of Peter to be often tightening his belt. Hence the Savior—and here is the music of the text to me—said to him by the sea, after He had said, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love

Me?”—“When you were young, you girded yourself and walked where you would; but when you shall be old, you shall stretch forth your hands and another shall gird you and carry you where you would not. This spoke he, signifying by what death he should glorify God.”

That word, “gird,” while it had something to do with Peter’s old habit, is now sanctified by that blessed word which his Master had given him. Turning to the Lord’s people, whom he desires to feed, he says to them, “Gird up the loins of your mind.” “My Master talked of my girding my loins and of my being girt. I say now to you, Gird up the loins of your mind.” Do you not think he borrowed the expression from the Lord Jesus? I think he did.

Moreover, he was writing to Hebrew strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia. May he not have had ringing in his ears for these Hebrews, the words of Moses to their fathers when they were strangers in Egypt? They were to eat the Passover with their loins girded and their staves in their hands. Thus would Peter have his brother “strangers” live in expectation of their complete deliverance and Home-going which was drawing near. I detect an echo of Egypt and the Paschal supper in this word.

Or did Peter wish them to be ready to rejoice in the great blessing which was soon to come to them? Were they to be ready to leap and run for joy? We read of Elijah, that when he heard the sound of an abundance of rain, he girded himself and ran before Ahab’s chariot—and so when we hear of the Grace that is to be revealed at the coming of our Lord, we are ready to run without weariness and walk without fainting! Oh that every servant of God would gird up his loins to run and meet his Master’s chariot, for the King is on His way! He comes! He comes! Go forth to meet Him. Meeting Him, it is but fit that you should be found as servants prepared to do His bidding and run on His errands.

The exact meaning of the metaphor, “Therefore gird up the loins of your mind,” is to be found in the form of Oriental dress, which requires the use of a belt and the girding of it tightly, lest the garments should entangle the feet of the traveler, or otherwise hinder his action.

“Gird up the loins of your mind.” My Brethren, that certainly teaches us, in the first place, *earnestness*. A man going to work tucks up his sleeves and tightens his robes. He has something to do which demands all his strength and, therefore, he cannot afford to have anything hanging loosely about him to hinder him. We brace ourselves for a supreme effort—and the Christian life is always such. We must always be in earnest if we would be disciples of our earnest Lord.

Does it not also mean *preparedness*? When a man has girt his garments about him, he is ready for his work. A true Believer should be ready for suffering or service—ready, indeed, for anything. A servant standing with his loins girt signifies that whatever the message may be from his Master, he is ready to deliver it. Whatever the errand, he is ready to run upon it. He only needs the word and he will not hesitate, but will obey at once. This is the position which Christian people should always occupy—you should be earnestly prepared for the will of the Lord, let it be what it

may. The future is unknown to you, but you are in a fit condition to meet it, whatever form it may assume.

But the figure means more than this, does it not? It means *determination* and hearty resolution. The man who girds himself up for a work means that he is resolved to do it at once. He has made up his mind—no shilly-shallying remains with him, no hesitancy, no questioning, no holding back—he is set upon his course and is not to be moved from it. You will never get to Heaven, any of you, by playing at religion! There will be no climbing the hill of the Lord without effort; no going to Glory without the violence of faith. I believe that the ascent to Heaven is still as Bunyan described it—a staircase, every step of which will have to be fought for. He heard sweet singers on the roof of the palace singing—

“Come in! Come in!

***Eternal Glory you shall win.*”**

Many had a mind to enter the palace and win that eternal Glory, but then, at the doorway stood a band of warlike men, with drawn swords, to wound and kill every man that ventured to enter! Therefore many who would have liked to have walked on the top of the palace did not care for so dangerous an enterprise—they desired the end but not the way to it! At last there came one with a determined countenance and he said to the writer with the inkhorn by his side, “Set down my name, Sir.” And when his name was duly recorded, he drew his sword and rushed upon the armed men with all his might! It was a fierce conflict, but he meant to conquer or die, and he did conquer! He cut a lane through his enemies and, by-and-by, he, too, was heard singing with the rest—

“Come in! Come in!

***Eternal Glory you shall win.*”**

By conflict throughout a whole life we come to our rest—*there is no other way*. You cannot go round to a back door and enter into Heaven by stealth! You must fight if you would reign! Therefore, gird up the loins of your mind.

Once more, the figure teaches us that our life must be *concentrated*. “Gird up the loins of your mind.” We have no strength to spare. We cannot afford to let part of our force leak away. We need to bring all our faculties to bear upon one point and exert them all to one end. Much can be done by concentration. The rays of the sun are warm, but if you collect them into a focus, by a magnifying glass, you produce a fire which otherwise you could not find in them. Concentrate your faculties upon faith in Jesus! Concentrate your emotions upon the love of Jesus! Concentrate your whole being upon the Glory of Jesus! You will accomplish marvels if you do this. A man who is all over the place is nowhere, but he whose life is one and indivisible, is strong—and his influence will be felt in the service of his Master.

I cannot stay long upon one point, though there is so much to be said. The second exhortation is—“*Be sober.*” And does not that mean, first, moderation in all things? Do not be so excited with joy as to become childish. Do not grow intoxicated and delirious with worldly gain or honor. On the other hand, do not be too much depressed with passing troubles.

There are some who are so far from sobriety that if a little goes wrong with them, they are ready to cry, "Let me die." No, no!

"Be sober." Keep the middle way—hold to the golden mean. There are many persons to whom this exhortation is most necessary. Are there not men around us who blow hot today and cold tomorrow?—their heat is torrid, their cold, arctic! You would think they were angels from the way they talk one day, but you might think them angels of another sort from the manner in which they act at other times. They are so high up, or so low down, that in each case they are extreme. Today they are carried away with this and the next carried away with that. I knew a Christian man right well to whom I was accustomed to use one salutation whenever I saw him. He was a good man, but changeable. I said to him, "Good morning, Friend! What are you now?" He was once a valiant Arminian, setting young people right as to the errors of my Calvinistic teaching. A short time after, he became exceedingly Calvinistic, himself, and wanted to screw me up several degrees! But I declined to yield. Soon he became a Baptist and agreed with me on all points, so far as I know. This was not good enough and, therefore, he became a Plymouth Brother! And after that he went to the church from which he originally set out. When I next met him, I said, "Good morning, Brother, what are you now?" He replied, "That is too bad, Mr. Spurgeon, you asked me the same question last time." I replied, "Did I? But what are you *now*? Will the same answer do?" I knew it would not. I would earnestly say to all such Brethren, "Be sober. Be sober." It cannot be wise to stagger all over the road in this fashion! Make sure of your footing when you stand. Make *doubly* sure of it before you shift!

To be sober means to have a calm, clear head, to judge things after the rule of right and not according to the rule of mob. Be not influenced by those who cry loudest in the street, or by those who beat the biggest drum. Judge for yourselves as men of understanding. Judge as in the sight of God with calm deliberation.

"Be sober," that is, be clear-headed. The man who drinks and thus destroys the sobriety of his body is befogged, muddled and has lost his way. Ceasing to be sober, he makes a fool of himself. Do not commit this sin spiritually. Be especially clear-headed and calm as to the things of God. Ask that the Grace of God may so rule in your heart that you may be peaceful and serene and not troubled with idle fear on one side or with foolish hope on the other.

"Be sober," says the Apostle. You know the word translated, "be sober," sometimes means, "be watchful." And, indeed, there is a great kinship between the two things. Live with your eyes open. Do not go about the world half asleep. Many Christians are asleep. Whole congregations are asleep! The minister snores theology and the people in the pews nod in chorus. Much sacred work is done in a sleepy style. You can have a Sunday school and teachers and children can be asleep. You can have a tract-distributing society, with visitors going round to the doors all asleep! You can do everything in a dreamy way if so it pleases you. But says the Apostle—be watchful, be alive! Brothers and Sisters, look alive! Be so awakened by these grand arguments with which we have plied you already,

that you shall brace yourselves up and throw your whole strength into the service of your Lord and Master!

Finally, let us “*hope to the end.*” Never despair; never even doubt. Hope when things look hopeless. A sick and suffering Brother rebuked me the other day for being cast down. He said to me, “We ought never to show the white feather, but I think you do, sometimes.” I asked him what he meant and he replied, “You sometimes seem to grow desponding and low. Now I am near to die, but I have no clouds and no fears.” I rejoiced to see him so joyous and I answered, “That is right, my Brother, blame me as much as you please for my unbelief, I richly deserve it.” “Why,” he said, “you are the father of many of us! Did you not bring me and my friend over yonder to Christ? If you get low in spirit after so much blessing, you ought to be ashamed of yourself!” I could say no other than, “I am ashamed of myself and I desire to be more confident in the future.”

Brethren, we must hope and not fear. Be strong in holy confidence in God’s Word and be sure that His cause will live and prosper. Hope, says the Apostle. Hope to the end. Go right through with it. If the worst comes to the worst, still hope. Hope as much as ever a man can hope, for when your hope is in God you cannot hope too much!

But let your hope be all in Grace. Do not hope in yourself or in your works, but “hope in the Grace,” for so the text may be read. Hope, moreover, in the Grace which you have not yet received—in “the Grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” Bless God for the Grace that you have not yet obtained, for He has it in store for you! Yes, He has put it on the road and it is coming to you. When for the moment you seem to be slack in present Grace, say, “Glory to God for all the Grace I have not tasted yet.” Hope for the Grace which is to come with your coming Lord.

III. This has brought me to my last head, in which there is much sweetness. I ask your patience while I dwell upon it. The third point is EXPECTATION—“Hope to the end for the Grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” What you have got to hope for, Brothers and Sisters, is more Grace! God will always give you Grace. He will never deal with you upon the ground of merit—that door is shut—He has begun with you in Grace and He will go on with you in Grace. Therefore, “hope to the end for the Grace.”

Next, it is Grace that is on the way to you. The Greek should be rendered, “Hope to the end for the Grace that is being brought to you,” or, “the Grace that is a bringing to you.” Grace is coming to you with all speed. Jesus Christ is coming! He is on the way to earth—look for Him to appear soon! The Grace you are to look for is Grace linked with your Lord Jesus Christ—you never received any Grace apart from Him—and you never will.

The Grace you are to hope for is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. He has been revealed once, at His First Advent—therefore the Grace you *have*. He is to be revealed very soon in His Second Advent, therefore the Grace that is *coming* to you. Think of the Grace that is coming. “My ship is coming home,” says the child. So, also, is mine—Jesus is

coming—and that means all things to me. The golden chariot of my Lord is coming loaded down with unutterable love, infinite joy and eternal delight! Rejoice this morning for the Grace that is coming, Grace that is linked with Jesus Christ.

But what can this Grace be that will be received at His coming? Justification? No, we already have that by His Resurrection. Sanctification? No, we already have that, by being made partakers of His life. What is the Grace that is to be revealed at His coming? Just look at the chapter and you will read in the fifth verse, “Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.” *Perfect salvation* is one part of the Grace which is to be brought in the last time when Christ comes! When He comes there will be perfection for our souls and salvation for our bodies. Perhaps we may be alive when He comes. If so, we shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye into perfection, for, “this corruption must put on incorruption.” Perhaps we may die before He comes. If so, it does not matter—though corruption, earth, and worms may have devoured this flesh, yet, at His coming, our body shall rise in the image of Christ’s glorious body! We look for perfect salvation at the coming of Christ. This is the Grace that is coming to us and is on the road now.

And that is not all. The second Grace that Christ will bring with Him when He comes is the *perfect vindication* of our faith—“that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it is tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.” Today they sneer at our faith, but they will not do so when Jesus comes! Today we, ourselves, tremble for the Ark of the Lord, but we shall not do so when He comes! The coming of Christ in all the Glory of the Father will be a vindication of our faith! Then shall all men say that Believers were wise, prudent, philosophical. Those who believe in Jesus may be called fools, today, but men will think otherwise when they see them shine forth as the sun in the Father’s Kingdom! Wait a wee bit—all will soon be cleared.

Copernicus declared the truth that the earth and the planets revolve around the sun. His opponents replied that this could not be true, for if the planet Venus revolved around the sun, she must present the same phases as the moon. This was very true. Copernicus looked up to Venus but he could not see those phases, nor could anyone else! Nevertheless he stuck to his statement and said, “I have no reply to give, but in due time God will be so good that an answer will be found.” Copernicus died and his teaching had not yet been justified. But soon after, Galileo came forward with his telescope and, on looking at Venus, he saw that she did pass through exactly the same changes as the moon. Thus Wisdom is justified of her children. the Truth of God may not prevail today or tomorrow, but her ultimate victory is sure! Today they say that the Doctrines of Grace are antiquated, obsolete and even injurious. We are at no trouble to answer the charge. We can wait and we do not doubt that public thought will alter its tone.

I hear the sneering words, "You orthodox are fools, for you hold to exploded notions." Truly, Sir, we do believe that which you please to say is exploded, but we shall be found to be right when your new systems have come and gone like vapors which appear for a little time and then vanish away. He is coming who will justify all who believe in Him and award praise, glory and honor to their faith. If our Gospel is a lie, it will prove to be a lie at His coming! But it is so true that we are not troubled at the prospect of the Last Great Judgement! The mysteries which now perplex us will be solved when the mists are rolled away. Therefore, hope on for the Grace that is to be revealed.

Once more—when Christ comes there will be a revelation of *perfect Glory*. Read the 11th verse—"Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the Glory that should follow." Now this is the Grace which is to come to us when Christ appears. "Grace," you say, "You mean Glory." I do. Yet what is Glory but Grace come to perfection? Grace is Glory in the bud and Glory is Grace in the full flower! You believe in Jesus Christ, but as yet you do not see the Glory that awaits you. Wait a little while. "It does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is."

I have brought you back to the Second Coming of Christ. I told you it was a practical doctrine. I want to leave that impression upon your minds that you may go back to your daily work and constant struggle with the world. "Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober and hope to the end"—because there is wondrous Grace to be revealed to you, by-and-by. I should like you to act as the American—Colonel Davenport—did, upon a certain occasion. One day, many years back, a thick darkness came over the United States. Now and then in London we have dreadfully dark days for which we can scarcely account, but this was quite a new experience for the New Englanders and caused a terrible sensation. So exceedingly black was it that the barn-door fowls went to roost in the middle of the day!

The darkness grew worse and people trembled in their houses, declaring that the end of the world was coming. They were all excited and alarmed. One of the houses of legislature adjourned under the belief that the Day of Judgment was come. The other house was sitting and the blackness was so intense that everybody was awed. A motion was made that they should break up, as the end of the world had certainly arrived. Colonel Davenport objected, saying, "The Judgment is either approaching, or it is not. If it is not, there is no cause for adjourning. And if it is, I choose to be found doing my duty. I wish, therefore, that candles may be brought."

Brothers and Sisters, it is dark. But whatever is going to happen, or whatever is *not* going to happen, let us be found girded, sober and hopeful! In these dark political times, these dark religious times, I call for candles, for we mean to go on working! Amen.

GIRDED FOR THE WORK

NO. 2649

**A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 19, 1899.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JULY 18, 1882.**

***“Therefore gird up the loins of your mind.”
1 Peter 1:13.***

WE noticed, in reading the chapter from which our text is taken, that the Apostle Peter first mentioned the glorious Doctrines of Grace and the marvelous benefits bestowed by God upon Believers and he, afterwards, drew from them a practical inference. “Therefore,” he said, “gird up the loins of your mind.” A Doctrine of God may become dangerous if it is not reduced to practice—and all the Doctrines of God’s Word may readily be turned to good and practical account if we are willing to so employ them. Those who regard a Doctrine of God simply as a subject for debate or an opportunity for displaying one’s argumentative powers, miss the mark altogether, for we are taught the Truths of God in order that they may lead us to holiness of life. This is the object of God in giving us more of His Light—that, by that Light, we may become more full of the Light of God and be the means of conveying His Light to others. Therefore, when your mind is instructed concerning some grand Truth of God, after you have sucked the honey and joy out of it, always say to yourself, “But what are the bearings of this Doctrine upon my life? How should it influence me? What would God have me do as the result of receiving such teaching as this?” From what Peter had already said, like a true logician, he draws a wise inference and says, “Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the Grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

We shall only have time to consider the first few words of the Apostle’s exhortation, “Therefore gird up the loins of your mind.” And, concerning them, we will ask three questions, First, *What are we to do?* Secondly, *Why are we to do it?* And, thirdly, *How are we to do it?*

I. First, let us enquire, WHAT ARE WE TO DO? “Gird up the loins of your mind.”

The metaphor used by Peter is a very simple one. The garments of the Easterns, as you know, are not like ours, but are long flowing robes and, unless the raiment is well gird about the wearer, there is little or nothing that he can do in the way of active exercise. In a spiritual sense, the injunction, “Gird up the loins of your mind,” is a very proper one to be addressed to those of us who have various loose and flowing things which are almost as natural to us as garments are to the body. They must be

gird about us very tightly or else they will become an encumbrance and a hindrance.

We may possibly understand what is meant by our text if we, first, *consider the opposite condition*. Some persons are notorious for their laxity—whatever they have about them is very loosely attached to them. I am grieved to say that there are some professing Christians who are very lax even in matters of morality. It is a great shame that it should be so with any of them and we feel that there must be hypocrisy at the bottom of such a state of things as that. Others are very lax in their beliefs—they are ready to believe anything or nothing according to whatever is said by the last speaker to whom they have listened. Some are very lax in their observance of Gospel ordinances. They act as though Christ had given them commands which they might obey or disregard according to their own pleasure. Nothing connected with them seems to be really fastened to them so as to hold them and, for their part, they hold nothing firmly—everything is loose and slipping away from them.

Now, I take it that the Apostle exhorts all professing Christians of that character to get out of such a state of heart! And I would urge you, dear Friends, to do the same. Gird up the loins of your mind as to your personal conduct. Be strict about it, not lax! Never fear incurring the opprobrium of being too precise. If the name of Puritan is appended to you, accept it joyfully as a badge of honor and wish that you were more of a Puritan than your assailants suspect! Whoever else is lax, you remember that you serve a jealous God and, therefore, be very jealous of the honor of His Word, and jealous of the observance of His commands, and jealous concerning your whole life. In this sense, “gird up the loins of your mind.”

Some professors are ready enough to believe, but they have no intensity in their beliefs. They are orthodox as far as they go, but they do not go far enough. They have no great concern about religion—they are merely tattooed with Christianity. It is only skin deep with them, it never gets into their hearts or affects their souls. There are many preachers, nowadays, who hold various views of the Truth of God, but they hold nothing tenaciously. I have often wished to ask some Broad Churchmen if they did not think that the martyrs were great fools in laying down their lives in defense of the Truth, for I am sure that, according to the teaching of many whom I know, they must regard those who were faithful unto death as little better than madmen! I think that some of the teachers of the modern school believe that there is no Truth of God that is worth a man’s dying for. They say that something is white, but they add that white is a very, very light shade of black if you look at it from a certain standpoint. Another thing is undoubtedly black, but that is merely a somewhat darker shade of white! Here is a certain Truth which they say they believe, but there are some circumstances or conditions in which they do *not* believe it, so practically it is not a matter of faith to them at all. If ever you press them too closely upon any point, they always have a back way of escape open—in fact, they do not really believe anything at all with their heart and soul!

Now, when religion is held in that fashion, it is tantamount to irreligion. If I held doctrines which did not hold me, I should stammer in the declaration of them and I could not suppose that anyone else would accept them from my halfhearted advocacy. He who has not a fixed fulcrum for his lever, whatever machinery he may have, will never move the world—and nothing will be accomplished *by* you, my Friend, or accomplished *in* you, unless there are certain Truths of God which you no more question than you question your own existence—certain munitions of rocks behind which you make your soul's dwelling place and find yourself at ease. "The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks," and they thus prove their wisdom! And when a man, whatever his feebleness may be, has certain rocky fundamental Truths into which he tunnels so as to hide himself, then he is well protected. But all that looseness of which I have been speaking is a throwing away of strength. Laxity is the helper of unbelief and tempts to all manner of evil the souls of those who are under its malign influence.

Therefore, dear Friends, do not be lax in your belief, but believe what you believe. Hold what you hold and know what you know. Do you ask, "How can that be?" Well, by being taught of God, for God teaches Infallible Truth. What a man teaches himself, or learns from his fellow men, may all have to be laid aside, for it is liable to be erroneous. But that which God the Holy Spirit burns into his heart and conscience, as with a hot iron, shall never be taken from him! You may kill him, but you will not take the Truth of God from him. You may cut him in pieces, but the man is so joined to the Truth that he cannot be separated from it. "Therefore gird up the loins of your mind." Get your mental straps tightened up. Bind the blessed Truth of the Gospel more closely than ever to your soul!

Further, this condition of mind to which Peter refers is not only the opposite of laxity and looseness, but it is also opposed to that effluence, or lack of grip, lack of unity, lack of concentration which runs away with the usefulness and force of so many professors. These men love God after a fashion and hold His Truth in a way, but, then, there are many other things which they love and hold quite as much! Their energies run—no, I should say, *trickle* into a hundred channels—but there is no force in them. If they could all be made to flow in one channel, they might rush onward like a torrent and bear everything before them, yet it is not so with them, but quite the opposite! They are all in pieces. They never get to be one entire man. The prayer of David has never been fulfilled in their experience, "Unite my heart to fear Your name." They cannot cry with the sweet Psalmist of Israel, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise."

And not being fixed to one point, neither are they united as one person. Their condition is exactly described by the Prophet Hosea, "Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty." It is a blessed thing for a Christian to be strapped up in one bundle and not to be divided into a number of separate parcels. "Set your affections on things above," is a misquotation that I have heard many times, but there is not such a text as that in the Bible. Paul wrote to the Colossians, "Set your *affection* on

things above,” that is, have all your affections bound up into one supreme, all-embracing affection, and then fix it all upon Christ. When the many men within the man become all one man and he is, as we say, “all there,” and you *know* that he is “all there,” then he has, indeed, girded up the loins of his mind. May we all obey this Apostolic command and earnestly avoid the opposite!

In trying further to show what our text means, I would say that I think the short way of putting it is this, “Pull yourself together.” We often say, in some great crisis or emergency, “I must, somehow or other, pull myself together.” That is just the meaning of the Apostle here. Do you not sometimes find yourself very listless, languid and limp? You hope the life of God is within you, but you almost question whether it is or not, for it is not vigorous or joyous. You do not seem to take an interest in the things of God as you once did. You say, with Cowper—

***“Your saints are comforted, I know,
And love Your House of Prayer!
I sometimes go where others go,
But find no comfort there.”***

Somehow or other you appear to have fallen to pieces—there is no cohesion about you and you are sure that you are not in a right condition. Well, then, our text is the very message you need, as it means, first, concentrate all your powers and faculties to the service of God and the worship of God. Let this be your song—

***“O bless the Lord, my Soul!
Let all within me join,
And aid my tongue to bless His name,
Whose favors are Divine.”***

“Gird up the loins of your mind,” that is, let the Truth of God go right around you, so that no part of you is left out of the hallowed circle. Be completely contained within the belt of pure and precious Truth. Nobody knows what he can really do when he is “all there.” The capacities of manhood are something terrible when they are turned into the wrong channel. Look at a man who goes insane. Insanity is, in some senses, a weakness, yet, sometimes, when a man has become insane, he has possessed the strength of five or six ordinary men! Now, if we could have just the opposite of that—a sanity which nevertheless concentrated and increased all the powers of our entire being—what is there that we might not be able to do? This is what the Apostle means when he urges us to gird up the loins of our mind.

This expression further signifies not only concentration, but full awakening. We are not half-awake, Brothers and Sisters, as a rule. Sometimes we are, but when God the Holy Spirit gives us the new Life in all its fullness, there is then within us ecstatic joy, firmness of resolution, strength of will and a bravery of holy faith that can risk everything upon the faintest word of the unseen God. But, oftentimes, we need to cry as David did, “Quicken me, O Lord, for Your name’s sake.” In the 119th Psalm, how very frequently that prayer occurs, “Quicken You me.” The Psalmist was a living man, or he could not have prayed to be made alive, but, being alive, he wanted to be made *more alive*. I have told you before of a strange picture which I saw at Brussels, in which the artist has repre-

sented the Resurrection in a very remarkable fashion, showing the people as partly alive. There is one man with his head restored to life, but his arms remain as skeletons. There is another alive down to his breast, but his legs and the rest of his body are still under the dominion of death. It is an extraordinary idea, yet I am afraid that there are many so-called Christians who are just like that. They have just enough life in them for the salvation of their souls, but scarcely enough to make them earnest and diligent in the cause of God. Now, Brothers and Sisters, if this is the case with you, wake yourself up, pull yourself together, “gird up the loins of your mind.”

If you do so, in addition to this concentration and awakening, there will be a holy resoluteness about you, an intensifying of any resolve that you have made to serve the Lord. Sometimes, you feel, “This is the proper time for me to draw near to God, but I really do not feel in the spirit for it.” Now, pull yourself together and determine that you will not allow any of this nonsense! We must pray—and when we feel that we cannot pray, then is the time when we must pray more earnestly than ever! We are never so much in need of prayer as when we have the least inclination to the holy exercise. I delight in preaching the Gospel when I am conscious that the Lord is with me, but there are times when I have to say, “I do not feel fit for this great task.” Whenever that is true of any of us, we must hear Peter saying to us, “Gird up the loins of your mind.” Brother, it is the devil who wants to keep you from serving the Savior! He expects that God is going to be with you and to bless you, so he tries to unfit you for the service. Then say, “By the Grace of God, I mean to do it, and if ever in my life I poured out my very soul, it shall be now. Instead of running away from the task, I will run to it! Into the very center of the enemy will I rush, like David when he said, ‘By You I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall.’” Oh, for that firm putting down of the foot, that steadfast determination that the duty of the hour shall be performed and the privilege of the hour shall be enjoyed! We will not be drifted from it, or driven from it, or bribed from it! What have you and I to do with going to sleep? Those who are children of darkness may sleep in the night, but we are children of the day, the Sun of Righteousness has risen upon us! So, “let us not sleep as do others,” but let us gird up the loins of our mind and, in the name of the Most High God, let us resolve not to be found half-hearted and lukewarm, but to be wide awake and all-alive in the service of our Lord!

Still further to explain our text, let me say that it must also mean, “*Get rid of hindrances.*” The Oriental girds up his loins that he may not be tripped up by his long flowing garments—and this is the kind of thing that acts as a hindrance to a Christian’s progress. Not hindrances from Satan and the world, alone, but from himself—from things about himself that cling as much to him and seem as necessary for him as garments are for our bodies. These things will often get in the way and trip us up when we are running, or hinder us when we are walking.

When does this happen? Sometimes there creeps over the mind of the Believer the thought of security and, consequently, of there being little need of watchfulness. There is true security in Christ and that sets the

mind on its watch-tower. But there is a false security in which Satan says, "All is well with you. You are not like these young people who have lately joined the Church—you are an old experienced Christian—so there is no fear of your falling into temptation. You are an old fox, you cannot be caught in the traps of which they will have to beware. You may go a great deal further than those young people may, and do a great many things which would be dangerous for them, for you are all right." When you are deceived by the tempter, you sit down and say to yourself, "My mountain stands firm; I shall never be moved." You fold your hands and smile with a delusive happiness—under the notion that all must go well with you!

O dear Friends, there is nothing that will lead to stumbling and falling sooner than this fancied security! This is, indeed, having loose garments! You have special need to watch and pray. Always be afraid of that experience which Satan tells you exempts you from the necessity of being on your guard, for you are in an enemy's country and there is a foe lurking behind every bush! And he alone is safe who cries to God, "Hold You me up and I shall be safe." But they who are carnally secure are in the very midst of danger. Let us not get into that lax and loose condition, but let us gird up the loins of our mind.

Some are all ungirt and have their garments hanging so loosely about them that they are unable to do anything effectively because they are continually perplexed with a thousand wandering thoughts. They do not think rightly about anything because they think in a loose fashion about everything. They never act as do the bees which I have often watched. These busy little creatures find the bell of a flower and plunge right in till you cannot see them. What are they doing? They are getting all the honey that is stored at the bottom of the flower! Meanwhile, what has the butterfly done? He has flitted lightly over half the flowers of the garden and he laughs at the bee for wasting so much time in one flower, yet, at night, the butterfly has nothing to do but die, while the bee has been storing her house with sweet nutriment. It is a blessed thing when we get right into the bell of the flower of the Gospel and are determined to penetrate its secret places to extract the delicious essence of the Word, that we may feed thereon and grow thereby. It is no use having a brain that is taken up with 50 different subjects and yet does not master any one of them.

There was a class of men called the Encyclopedists, who endeavored to gain universal knowledge and, certainly, some of them were prodigious scholars. But with you and with me, Beloved, it will be well to call in all these wandering thoughts and make the Lord Jesus Christ our Encyclopedia, and to determine not to know anything among men save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. When you act thus, you have secured the choicest honey in all the world, while those who attempt to learn a thousand other things may really gather nothing that is worth preserving. A man of one book is, after all, the man of power. And the man who has but one objective in life—who lives only for Christ and lives alone upon Him—is the gracious man whom God will use for blessed ends!

Another loose garment that is likely to trip us up is too much care about the things of this world. I think that a man needs, sometimes, to hesitate as to whether he should enlarge his business. He may have just enough to do to keep going what he already has in hand—and he will be able to steal out to the weeknight services and to take his place in the Sunday school. But it may be that if he undertakes more responsibilities, he will be unable to spare any time for his Lord's service. His capital is small, though it has sufficed him up to now—but if he tries to make it serve in his larger undertakings, he will always be worrying about how he shall be able to meet his obligations—and he will be running from pillar to post with a thousand anxieties as to how he is to get over his difficulties. Is it not amazing that people should be so anxious to get more anxieties? The path of wisdom is to try to escape them and, especially as age increases, to feel that the last part of our life ought to be Sabbatic—it should be a period of rest. Surely, the last seventh of our lives, at least, should be a preparation for the everlasting Sabbath when we hope to dwell with our Lord forever! It is well for a man when he can make it so, but too much to do, too much to think of, too much care and too much trouble are very apt to trip up a Christian. "Therefore gird up the loins of your mind." Strap yourselves up a bit. You know riches take to themselves wings and fly away. One of the best things you can do is to clip their wings every now and then—and send the feathers round to the College, or the Orphanage, or the Colportage Society, or some other good work! In that way you are more likely to keep what you now possess and to have a blessing with it.

Frequently, too, men who do not gird up the loins of their minds are tripped up by mental troubles. They are troubled about this and worried about that. Things are not according to their mind and, instead of doing their best, and then leaving the matter with God, they are constantly fretting and fuming. I know some good women who make their home utterly miserable by being always in a worry. Often, it is only about whether such-and-such a room has been dusted, or whether something has been washed. And there are plenty of husbands who go on in the same foolish way, for we are all of one race and we are all far too anxious to borrow trouble when we have none of our own. Yes, and some are very adept at manufacturing troubles! They have a little trouble factory at the top of the house and they like to get up there and try to make something to be disquieted about. A trouble that God sends, He will take away, but if you make it yourself, you may take it away yourself. Homemade troubles are just like homemade clothes—they do not often fit very well, but they last longer than any others. So I warn you against them—the troubles, I mean—pray put them aside! Obey Peter's injunction, "Therefore gird up the loins of your mind," and let these fancied troubles go to the winds!

There are others whose loins are not gird up because they are fearful, despondent, discouraged in their work for the Lord. Have you not heard them moaning in this style—"I do not think I shall ever take my class any more." "I do not feel that I can stand up and preach at the corner of the streets again." "I do not see how I can give another tract to that man—he

swore so dreadfully.” Come, Brother, “gird up the loins of your mind.” You need to pull that strap more tightly around you and to get your garments well secured. I see that they are beginning to fly about in the wind and, if you are not careful, one by one they will blow away from you. Be not discouraged! Fear not! Do not despair of success! The God whom you serve will not let His Word fall to the ground, but you shall see that though you went forth weeping, bearing precious Seed, you shall come back rejoicing, bringing your sheaves with you!

I need not go over all the many ways in which a Christian man’s garments may impede his labors, but our text applies to them all. One other meaning of Peter’s words, “Gird up the loins of your mind” is, *be ready*, as a man who has his coat buttoned up is prepared to face the storm. Be ready for troubles. Be ready for evil tidings. Be ready for service. Be ready for suffering, be ready to live, be ready to die. Take for your motto the sailors’ cry, “Ready, yes, ready,” and say, “Whatever my Lord’s will may be, I, His servant, with my loins gird and my staff in my hand, am ready for it.” As old Master Trapp says, “Be handy with your loins gird about.” Have your robes all well fastened so that you will not be tripped up by them. Being handy, in this sense, is also to be handsome—no man looks better than when his garments are well gird about him. When they became loose, they spoil the appearance of his figure, but when he keeps himself well prepared for his service, then is he beautiful in the sight of his Master who loves to see His servant ready for fighting, ready for journeying, ready for whatever may happen to him, or be required of him. Therefore, pull yourselves together and so “gird up the loins of your mind.”

II. Now, secondly, WHY ARE WE TO DO THIS?

First, *the fourfold character of the Christian life requires it*. A Christian ought to be at least four things, as well as many others which I have not time to mention now. First, he is a pilgrim. He is on a journey—he is passing through this world to a better one. How can a man travel swiftly and safely unless his garments are properly prepared for the journey? And the pilgrims to Zion must gird up the loins of their mind if they are to reach their destination.

A Christian is, next, a racer. He is running in a race and he needs to win the crown. He has started for the goal and the prize of his high calling is glittering before his eyes. He is the man who must heed the command, “Therefore gird up the loins of your mind.” How can you run with endurance the race set before you if you do not “lay aside every weight and the sin which does so easily beset you”? If entanglements are to be avoided, the garments of the racer must be tightly gird about him.

Moreover, the Christian is a warrior. How can he overcome his foe if he has not put on his armor and is not well clad for the struggle! How shall he fight while his movements are impeded by loose garments? You know what the old soldier said to the Duke of Wellington when he was asked whether he had been at Waterloo. He said that he had and then the Duke enquired of him, “Suppose that battle had to be fought again, how would you like to be dressed?” The man answered, “If I had to take part in that fight again, I should like to be in my shirtsleeves.” There was

great commonsense in that reply and it may teach us a useful lesson. A Christian man does not fight well for his Master unless he gets, as it were, into his shirtsleeves and takes off all his dignity and everything which hinders him from rendering effective service and doing the most he can do for Christ.

Beside being a pilgrim, a runner and a warrior, a Christian is a laborer—he is called to work in his Master's vineyard. Now, if a man does not gird up the loins of his mind, he will be a very poor laborer and will show a very bad day's work when the sun goes down. So again I say to you, dear Friends, pull yourselves together! With such holy work to do, endeavor to do it at your very best.

Remember, also, *the greatness of your task*. That should make you "gird up the loins of your mind." The Christian life is no child's play. To bear testimony for Christ is no trifle and if you wish to win souls, as I hope you do, Brothers and Sisters, you cannot do it unless your spirit is braced up to the very highest point by the Grace of God. Your work is such as might have filled an angel's heart! And it *did* fill your Savior's hands, so see to it that it is done in the best possible style.

The next reason why you should "gird up the loins of your mind" is *because of the slenderness of your strength*. You have so little power that you cannot afford to waste an ounce of it! If you are ever to thresh the mountains, there must be no wasting or throwing away, even inadvertently, of any of the little force which you have. If you would be mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strongholds, you must look well to your spiritual strength and never waste an atom of it.

Besides that, *remember the readiness of your foes*. If they can trip you up by laying hold upon a garment which is trailing behind you, they will do so. If it is possible for you to be vanquished, you will be vanquished, for you have enemies who watch you with eyes full of venom and malice because you belong to Christ. Therefore, "gird up the loins of your mind" and see that you put not any advantage in their way, or they will be quick to avail themselves of it!

Remember, also, *the misery you endure when you are not in a right condition*. If your minds are not girded up and you feel as I do, you must be very wretched. Whenever I feel that I cannot pray as I wish, I am very unhappy. When I come here and cannot join heartily in the song—well, I have to groan in the chorus somehow or other—but I am not satisfied with doing that. When I feel at all wandering from God and my heart is getting astray from Him, I am not happy, I cannot be! Oh, no, blessed be God, when He made us the second time, He made us so that we could not rest anywhere but in Himself. Even our first creation necessitated our coming to God if we would be blessed, but our second creation makes it even more so! If the Lord is with us, we are merry all the day long and can praise and bless His holy name. There is no fasting for us while the Bridegroom is with us! But if He is once withdrawn, then shall the children, even of the bride chamber, fast. You know that it is so. Therefore, Brothers and Sisters, do not be content to be in this sad, loose, lax condition, but, "gird up the loins of your mind." May the Lord, in His mercy, enable you to do so!

III. So I finish with just a few words upon the last question, which is, **HOW ARE WE TO DO THIS?**

One way is, when you are out of sorts, and out of order, *go and confess it*. Go and tell the Lord all about it. Search and see how you got into such a condition. Confess the sins that brought you into such a plight, then hate them with a perfect hatred. Feel that you cannot continue to live in such a state. Cry unto God, "O Lord, do not let me find any kind of happiness until I have it from Your own right hand and, until I am right with You, give me misery, brokenness of spirit and true godly sorrow for sin!" That confession will naturally melt into prayer for quickening. While you are mourning your misery, God will help you to pray yourself out of it! Never listen to the voice of the tempter who says, "Do not pray because you cannot pray," but say within yourself, "Now I must pray more than ever. Now I will pray and, however poor and broken my prayer may be, such as it is, it shall be presented to God."

Then, next, while you are on your knees, *resolve with energy that the evil shall not continue*. To make your resolution effective, cry to Him who first took you out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay—and set your feet upon a rock and established your goings—and ask Him to do that over again in another sense. He will as readily lift you up again as He did at the first. If you are willing to be half-dead, you may be wholly dead before long. If you are willing to be idle and sleepy, the spirit of slumber will steal over you just as if all the drugs that poison men had been poured into your soul! If it has been so with you to any degree, resolve, with hearty shamefacedness, that it shall not be so any longer.

And then, to help you carry out this resolution, *sit down and meditate much upon the love of God to you*—the eternal love, the boundless love, the love that chose you, the love that bought you, the love that sought you, the love that fought for you, the love that has worked in you all the good things there are in you! And, as you meditate upon that wondrous love of God, His Holy Spirit will work upon you. You will feel your heart beginning to thaw and the streams commencing to flow as the brooks do in the springtime when the icy grasp of winter has been relaxed. Therefore, give your heart up to such meditations as are likely to stir your spirit and to change its sad condition.

Then, also try to *let your understanding be convinced concerning your position and condition*. Think much about what the Lord's requirements really are. I like to see some passion in religion, but I am much more fond of *principle*. A man may be moved to great zeal and earnestness at certain revival meetings—and it is well if he has made the great decision—but I am glad if another man has sat down by himself and has calmly considered the whole question and, acting upon principle, has yielded himself to the Savior. He knows what is true. He knows what he is and where he is. He knows what God has done for him and what God expects from him and, without any passion or excitement, he steadily plods on and continues firmly confident in the Lord.

One translation of our text is, "Gird up the loins of your understanding." Get your understanding tightly strapped up, for, in proportion as you know the Truth of God, the Truth shall make you free. When you can

give to everyone who asks you for it, a reason for the hope that is in you, it is better than when you simply say, “I believe that I am saved because I am so happy,” for, perhaps tomorrow you may not be happy—and then you may fancy that you are not saved! That is simply going by your feelings and is a most unsatisfactory method. Rather say, “I understand, from the Scriptures, that the sinner is bid to believe in Jesus. And when he does so, God, Himself, assures him that he is saved.” Let your religious convictions be founded on good sound arguments! Get some “wherefores” and “therefores,” so that you may have something solid to stand upon. This is the meaning of the words, “gird up the loins of your understanding.”

I wish that all who profess to be converted knew what they were converted *from* and what they were converted *to*—and what being converted really means. I am afraid that a great many jump into what they call religion and then jump out of it again. If they only act according to the energy of the flesh, they will jump out of it before long. He who is converted only by eloquence will be unconverted when that eloquence is over. He who is converted merely by excitement is likely to be unconverted when that excitement has died away. But he who is *taught of God* and knows the solid Doctrines of God upon which we are grounded and settled, will steadfastly abide in the Truth of God.

I know that I have spoken all of this for nothing, so far as some of you are concerned, because you have nothing for which to gird up your mind and nothing with which to gird it. For you, as you now are, there is no inheritance. For you there is no place of joy, no hope of peace. O poor Soul, first remember that you must be born again, for it is no use to gird up the natural man that is unsaved! It is the new man that is to be girded about. Your first business is with God and with His Christ, and with the eternal Spirit. The first necessity for you is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to accept that Gospel which says, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” That being done, then you have something to gird up! God grant it to every one of you, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—660, 632, 659.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: 1 PETER 1:13-20.

Verse 13. *Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the Grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.* This is Peter’s practical application of the great Truths of which he had been writing. “Look ahead and expect great things. Live in the future. Project your thoughts beyond the centuries that are passing away into the ages which will never die.”

14, 15. *As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as He who has called you is holy, so be you holy in all manner of conversation.* Remember that you can never be really whole till you are holy, for holiness is spiritual sanity—it is the car-

ing of the mind and heart from the disease which sin brought upon them.

16. *Because it is written, Be you holy; for I am holy.* Children of God, be like your Father! Prove that you are His true children by manifesting His Character. Let His lineaments be seen in your countenance—"Be you holy; for I am holy." The Revised Version is, "You shall be holy; for I am holy."

17. *And if you call on the Father, who without respect of persons judges according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.* Be not presumptuous. Always remember that as there is a God who is to judge every man, you are to be judged and oh, that you might, through His Grace, be in such a condition of heart that you shall stand the last test and be found to be full weight when you are put into the balances of the sanctuary which God shall hold with steadfast hands!

18, 19. *Forasmuch as you know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.* You have seen the Character of your Father who is in Heaven. This should urge and help you to be like He—holy. Now you see the Character of your Redeemer, "a lamb without blemish and without spot." Let this influence you to be holy, also.

20, 21. *Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by Him do believe in God, that raised Him up from the dead and gave Him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God.* It is no use to place them anywhere else! All other vessels are too frail to bear such a heavy burden, but, if your faith and hope are in God, then you have a security which none can destroy.

22-25. *Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that you love one another fervently with a pure heart: being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which lives and abides forever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withers and the flower thereof falls away: but the Word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you.* Blessed be God for an everlasting Gospel, founded on the Everlasting Covenant, which brings with it everlasting life to all those who believe in Christ Jesus the Lord!

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

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

THE SAVIOR'S PRECIOUS BLOOD

NO. 3395

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 1914.

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

*"The precious blood of Christ."
1 Peter 1:19.*

We have come in our theological conversation to use that word, "blood," somewhat lightly. I think it should scarcely ever be pronounced without a shudder. "The blood is the life thereof." When shed, it indicates suffering—suffering more intense than that of chastisement or bruising. Wounds are inflicted which make the lifeblood to flow out. In the case of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the term, "blood," brings before us all His griefs and anguish and where the crown of thorns pierced Him. Behold the Man! Think of Gethsemane, where He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground! Think of Gabbatha, the pavement, where they scourged Him with rods, and with the scourge of the Roman lictors where the crown of thorns pierced Him. Behold the Man! Think, lastly, of Golgotha! There they pierced His hands and His feet and, at last, pierced by the spear, out of His side there came blood and water. Pass not lightly, therefore, over such a word as this—blood—the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son! And when you read of its being "precious," remember that the word never had such a wealth of meaning in it, before, in any of its applications. Precious metals—gold and silver. Precious stones—sardonyx, agate and diamond—these are but gaudy toys compared with Christ's precious blood! Precious, for He is God as well as Man. Precious, for He is Jehovah's Darling, the Lamb of God, without spot or blemish! Precious, when you think of God's design. Precious, when you see the effects which it produces. Precious, certainly, to the heart of every pardoned sinner and precious in the song of every glorified spirit before the Throne of God!

It is not, however, my objective, this evening, to pursue the sacred history, so much as to set forth the saving Doctrine, while I remind you of some of the uses of this precious blood. For, after all, the standard of preciousness, when we come to the very essence of it, is not scarcity, but usefulness, for there are things in this world exceedingly scarce and, therefore, precious among the sons of men, which will be left out and treated with contempt when we get into the land where the true standards of value are in use. That is the most precious which is the most serviceable. So in truth, the precious blood of Christ is beyond all estimation! I want to conduct you, step by step, through the application of

this blood and its effects upon the heart and conscience. And I shall pause at each step to ask you, dear Hearer, and to ask myself this question—Do you know the blood, the precious blood, in this respect? Have you felt it in this peculiar form of its efficacy? Beginning thus at the first—

I. THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST IS THE BLOOD OF THE ATONEMENT.

We read of the blood of the Atonement under the old Law. Christ, now under the Gospel, is the Propitiation for our sins. It is through the blood that God, infinitely just, without the violation of His Character, can pass by the transgression of the guilty. It is not possible that any one attribute of God should ever shadow another. He is perfect. He is infinitely merciful, but He will not be merciful at the expense of justice! Justice shall never triumph against mercy! Mercy, on the other hand, shall never cut off the skirts of the flowing robe of justice. It is in the Person of Jesus and especially in the blood of Jesus, that the great riddle of the ages is solved! God can be just and yet the Justifier of him that believes in Jesus. We have sinned. God must punish sin. According to the inexorable laws which God has stamped upon the universe, the sinner cannot go unpunished. His sin is, in fact, its own punishment and becomes the mother of unnumbered griefs. The Mediator steps in—the Son of God and the Son of Man, eternal, and yet as Man, born of Mary and slumbering in Bethlehem's manger—He comes as the Substitute for the guilty. "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed." And "now in Christ Jesus, we who some time were afar off, are made near by the blood of Christ." God can be gracious without the violation of the severity of His judgment. His moral government remains untarnished in all the majesty of its purity, and yet He puts out the right hand of reconciliation and love to all who approach Him making mention of the blood of the Atonement of His dear Son!

Are you, then, thus reconciled to God by the death of His Son, or are you still an enemy? Have you ever seen the distance between you and God bridged by the Cross? Have you seen at once how God, the infinitely Just, can commune with you without consuming you, because He poured His wrath upon Christ, instead of you? And then, accepted in Him and for His merits, you live because Jesus lives! Ah, dear Hearer, if you have not seen this, may the Lord open those blind eyes of yours and by His eternal Spirit bring you, with your burden of sin upon your back, to the foot of the Master's Cross, where you may look up and sing—

***"Oh, how sweet to view the flowing,
Of His sin-atonement blood!
With Divine assurance knowing,
That it made my peace with God."***

The blood of Jesus Christ has another effect upon us, namely—

II. IT CLEANSSES FROM SIN.

Surely we can never fail to remember that choicest of all Scriptural texts, "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin."

There is such music in it that when the spirits before the Throne of God desire to have a song of which they might never grow weary, they select that sentiment, and they sing before the Throne that they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Their purity before God is due to the fountain filled with blood wherein their stained garments, all soiled with sin, have been made clean! When the soul comes to Jesus Christ by faith and relies upon Him, then the sentence of the perfect pardon goes forth from God and the soul is purged from all the stains of accumulated years! In a single moment those who were black as Hell become white as Heaven through the application of the blood of sprinkling—for all sin disappears as soon as the blood falls on the conscience! That which the blood of bulls and of goats could not do, the blood of Jesus effectually accomplishes—cleansing from all sin!

Now, dear Hearer, have you ever been thus cleansed? Say not you had never need of cleansing, else you know not your natural condition and your actual transgressions. Man, you can never have seen yourself in the mirror of the Word of God, or you would perceive yourself to be totally defiled and altogether as an unclean thing! You would have bowed yourself before the Lord and joined in the confession, “We have erred and strayed from Your ways like lost sheep. We have done those things which we ought not to have done, and we have left undone those things which we ought to have done. And there is no health in us.” Well, if you have ever thus felt your guilt, have you ever realized your pardon? If not, give yourself no sleep till you have! Can you bear to live unpardoned, or in doubt whether or not God has absolved you? Can you ever take any kind of rest, much less indulge your soul with mirth, until the word, “Absolvo,” has come from God, Himself, the eternal Spirit bearing witness with your spirit that you are born of God? Happy are they who have been washed! They have need to come each night (even as Peter the Apostle had need) to wash their feet, but they need not except to wash their feet, for they are clean every whit. Jesus has made them clean through His blood! The third step is that—

III. THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST IS THE GREAT PRICE OF OUR REDEMPTION.

Redemption sometimes in Scripture is spoken of as being the same thing as pardon, and I shall not at all dogmatically attempt tonight to draw any nice distinction between the two. “We have redemption through His blood—to wit, the forgiveness of sin—according to the riches of His Grace.” But redemption seems rather to be in some sense the *effect* produced by a pardon than the actual pardon, itself. Man is a slave. As long as guilt is written in God’s book against us, we are in bondage. We feel for the present that we are slaves to sin and that for the future, the punishment of sin will inevitably come upon us to our eternal destruction. But the moment we are purged from the guilt of sin, we are set free from the slavery of it! Jesus Christ takes us from being slaves and makes us to be children! He gives us no longer “the spirit of bondage again to fear,

but the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father!" He was slain and He has redeemed us unto God by His blood! And in the liberty wherewith Christ makes us free, we rejoice to see that it was the blood which was the price, thereof, and because He suffered, therefore our chains have dropped off from us. We are free—the Lord's freemen—free henceforth to serve Him with renewed love and renewed hearts because of the abundance of the Grace which He has manifested towards us!

Now, Beloved, have you ever been redeemed by the blood of Jesus? I am not talking to you now about a redemption effected upon the Cross, but have you ever felt redemption in your own spirit from the curse of the Law, from the thralldom of a guilty conscience and from the power of sin? Let me ask you, are you the Lord's freeman tonight? Oh, happy are you, then, for you can say, "Lord, You have loosed my bonds and, therefore, I am Your servant." "We are not our own because we are bought with a price." And inasmuch as we are no more slaves to the Law from henceforth, for the love we bear His name who has redeemed us with such a price, we reckon ourselves to be His servants and we bear in our body the marks of the Lord Jesus! Ah, Friends, if you were never redeemed by the precious blood, then you are still slaves—slaves to sin and Satan—slaves under the vengeance of God and slaves to the Law of God. But may you never be content in slavery! May you pine after freedom, and may Jesus give it to you—give it to you tonight if it is His blessed will! In the fourth place, the blood of Jesus is spoken of in Scripture as—

IV. INTERCEDING.

"The blood of sprinkling speaks better things than that of Abel." It is said to be sprinkled within the veil, so that where the high priest could only go once a year, we may now go at all times, for the blood is there, interceding for us perpetually! Well, in fact, says one of our poets—

***"The wounds of Christ for us,
Incessantly do plead."***

Even after His death, remember, His heart for us poured out its flood. After death that heart was pierced and blood and water came. So, after His voice was silent and He could no longer say, "Father, forgive them," the wounds were still eloquent—and even when the suffering passed, they still continued to plead with God.

Now, Soul, have you ever come to God through the intercession of the blood? You have said prayers, you have repeated forms of devotion, you have gone to Church or to Meeting Houses. This is all well enough, but have you gone farther? For if not, all outward forms of devotion are but frivolous endeavors that may allure, but will deceive you! Did you ever come to God by the blood and did you ever, by faith, fix your eye upon "the High Priest who ever lives to make intercession for us," who with our names upon His bosom, still offering the blood, stands at this moment before the Father, God, pleading for us who love Him and trust Him? Happy they who look to the interceding Savior and who feel that His

blood speaks not revenge, but cries at every vein, "Mercy, mercy for the chief of sinners!" This leads me to remark that the blood of Jesus—

V. BECOMES THE MODE AND WAY OF ACCESS TO GOD.

We have boldness to enter into the holiest through the blood of Christ. After first cleansing the man and making him fit to come as a priest and a king unto God, then the blood, as it were, takes away the veil and opens up the pathway to God, Himself, for the forgiven and redeemed soul! Never let us attempt to come to God by anything but the blood! All other ways to God, except through the blood of Jesus, are presumptuous. All other fire that we may put upon the altar, except this, is strange fire, and the Lord's anger will go forth against us. May I never plead when on my knees before God anything but the precious merits and the dear wounds of the Man of Sorrows who is now exalted at the right hand of God. How close to God we should come if we did but always bring Christ with us! But what are our prayers when we leave Him behind? What are our devotions when we are met together, or when we are in secret, and we go to the Mercy Seat, but forget the blood that was sprinkled on it, oblivious of the new and living way through the rent body of Immanuel? Come, Brothers and Sisters, let us chide ourselves for sometimes having forgotten our Lord! And henceforth, be it ours never to think of drawing near to God except by this way of access—the crimson road which the blood has paved for us! To advance farther, the blood of Jesus Christ, according to the Word, is—

VI. SANCTIFYING.

Jesus sanctified His people by His own blood and, therefore, suffered outside the gate. By sanctification is usually meant in Scripture the setting apart of anything for the service of God and so making it holy. Now, the blood separates the saints from all others. It was the blood that was the distinguishing mark of Israel in Egypt. Every Egyptian house was without the blood, but every house of the seed of Abraham had the blood mark upon the lintel and the two side posts, and when God saw the blood He passed over them and spared them in the night of His furious anger. The blood, then, Beloved, if you have ever had it on your soul, is to be the distinguishing mark between you and the ungodly in the Day of Wrath and it should distinguish you now. You should, by your life and your conversation, make yourself to appear to be as the blood has made you—to really be a separated one! We are not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world. We have heard the mandate—"Come you out from among them; be you separate; touch not the unclean thing." We have left the world's sin and we have left the world's religion, too! We have separated ourselves at once from the world's goodness, as well as from the world's vileness, to walk in the path of nonconformity to the world, that we may tread in the footsteps of our crucified Redeemer! And the more the blood is applied, the more the obedience of Jesus is trusted in—and the sprinkling of the blood is relied upon—the more shall we become sanctified in spirit, soul and body by the power of the Holy Spirit. Let us

never forget the purifying power of Jesus in the heart. Wherever He is trusted to take away the *guilt* of sin, we must next seek the water which flowed with the blood to take away the *power* of sin! And we must ask to see Him sit as a refiner to purify, yes, it must be our prayer that He would take His fan in His hand and purge our hearts as He does His floor! Refining Fire, go through my soul! Oh, sweet love of Jesus, burn up the love of the world! Oh, death of Jesus, be the death of sin! Oh, life of Christ, be the life of everything that is gracious, God-like, heavenly, eternal! So shall it be in proportion as we partake of the power and the efficacy of that blood! The blood, furthermore, is—

VII. CONFIRMATORY.

We must not forget this one effect of it. It is called the Blood of the Covenant—the Blood of the Testament—the Blood of the New Testament. The Covenant was not in force in the olden times until there had been a sacrifice to confirm it. And a will stands not until the death of the testator has been proved to make it valid. The heart's blood of Jesus is, as it were, the establishment of His last will and testament. Jesus, the great Testator, has died, has made an end of sin and His blood is the great seal of His testament and makes it valid to us. If He had never died! Oh, dreadful, "if," only equaled in horror by that other, "if"—if He had never risen again from the dead! But now is Christ risen from the dead! Now has Christ slept and awoke as the first fruits of them that slept! Never doubt the promise of God, for the blood confirms it! Never doubt the love of God, for He spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all! How shall He not, with Him, also freely give us all things? If you need evidence as to the eternal goodness of God, His willingness to pardon, His power to save and to bless—look to the Cross of Calvary and see the bleeding Savior—and never doubt again!

Dear Hearer, did the blood so come to you as to confirm your hope, or is your hope a fancy, a delusion? Do you think it needs no confirmation? Have you ever in your moments of questioning and anxiety gone over, again, to the altar where is the Great Victim? Have you said once more—

***"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Your blood was shed for me!
And that You bid me come to Thee,
Oh, Lamb of God, I come!"***

Have you, then, got your consolation back? Have you received the witness of God? Have you heard the voice which bears witness both in Heaven and earth, the voice of the Spirit, and the water and the blood? And have you been satisfied because you needed no better confirmation than the witness of the blood of Jesus applied with power to your soul? The blood of Jesus has another effect of which we ought to think more than we do—that of—

VIII. NOURISHING, CHEERING AND SUSTAINING THE BELIEVER.

To this end the ordinance of communion with Christ in the breaking of bread and partaking of the cup of blessing has been instituted. When we come to the Lord's Table, we have set before us in the broken bread, of

which we eat, and in the wine of which we drink, this present fact—that the sufferings of our Master are now at this moment for our nourishment, sustenance, consolation and exhilaration. We have been washed in the blood—we are now to receive, after a spiritual sort, the precious blood of Jesus to nourish our faith, to comfort our hope, to excite in us the liveliest joy and to make us sing and be merry with holy confidence in Him who has redeemed us from all iniquity and made us unto God priests and kings, to reign with Christ forever and ever! There is no cordial for the heart like the blood of Jesus. To think of the atoning Sacrifice is the readiest way to consolation. Our sorrows are not worth a thought when once compared with His! Sit down under the shadow of the Cross and you will find a cooler shade than that of a great rock in a weary land. There is no pasturage for the sheep of Christ like that which grows on Calvary! There is nowhere to be found such wine that makes glad the heart of God and man, as that which comes from the sacred cup of His heart, of which Believers drink by faith when they have fellowship with Him and come into near and dear communion with Him! Although we do sometimes enjoy this without any emblems—without the bread and without the wine—these are still great assistants, blessed exponents, and they graciously help our forgetfulness! We are yet in the body and we need something that shall aid this lagging flesh to see something of the Lord.

Oh, feed then on Christ and do not be content unless day by day He is your daily bread! He who has given you life must sustain that life. He who has taught you how to rejoice must still supply you with power to continue in your daily rejoicing! The blood without cleanses. The blood within cheers, yes, sacredly inebriates the soul till the sinner drinks and forgets his sorrow and remembers his misery no more! And in the fullness of his delight he becomes sweetly oblivious, whether in the body or out of the body, as he rises into almost celestial communion with his unseen, but ever-present Lord! Once again, the blood of Jesus Christ has the effect of—

IX. UNITING CHRISTIANS TOGETHER.

Paul, speaking of Jew and Gentile, says that He “has made both one, through the blood of Christ,” and surely there is nothing that unites different denominations of Christians together like the precious blood of Jesus! Brothers and Sisters, we may dispute—I think we do well to dispute over important ordinances and doctrines, for wherein men err we are not to wink at their errors—and neither ask them to wink at ours. I have sometimes heard it said, “Spare such a Brother.” Yes, as a Brother—but who am I that I should be spared if I err, or who is he that he should be spared? What are we, or what are our feelings compared with the Truth of God? No, let questions be fought out as kindly, as lovingly, as valourously, as honorably as they possibly can! Truth fears not the shock of arms. Let the controversies go on. I believe that, after all, there is ten times more Truth in this world, now, with all the apparent divisions of

Christians, than there would have been if we had been united in a nominal union into some one great church which might, perhaps, have rotted as thoroughly as the old Church of Rome did before the days of Luther! But when we come to the foot of the Cross, what union there is! If the saints in prayer appear as one. If in the praise of the Infinite Jehovah they are one—much more and much more tenderly are they one when they behold Jesus bleeding and dying for them! My heart melts and breaks when I hear Christ preached. He who lifted up Christ would have offended me had he preached some other part of his creed. Had he talked over some Doctrine which I hold to be erroneous, he and I had differed, but when it comes to this, “HE loved me and gave Himself for me—He is the chief among ten thousand, the altogether lovely—His blood is precious”—I feel inclined to cry, “Brother, keep to that! Praise Him louder! Give Him all the honor!—

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

While we keep to that, we are none of us heretics over that! There shall be no schisms and divisions over the matter. Son of God and Son of Man, Redeemer of our souls from death and misery, all Your mother's children praise You! Every sheaf bows before Your sheaf! Sun and moon, and every star do obeisance unto You, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, Head over all things unto your Church, which is Your dwelling place, the fullness of Him that fills all in all! Since here we are one, when we get together as Believers, I wish we more often struck that key—the precious blood of Christ—and in our walks and talks with those Christians who differ from us in many points, let us sometimes try to turn those points aside and say, “We do agree to speak well of that dear name which is above every name, that name which charms all our fears and bids all our sorrows cease! That name which is the joy of the Believer on earth and the bliss of the saints in Heaven! I close now when I have noticed that the blood of Jesus Christ may be looked upon by us every day as—

X. THE GREAT INSTRUCTOR AND THE CARDINAL WITNESS OF DIVINE TRUTH.

God is to be seen in Nature and seen vividly there, but not as He is to be seen in Christ Jesus. Instruction as to the eternal power of the Godhead, some find in the skies above, in the fields around and in the sea beneath. But in the Cross there is more of God than in all the world besides! I have often felt, when I have been rambling in the Alps, that Nature was too small to set forth God. The mirror is not large enough to reflect the face of the Eternal. You stand in the Alps and hear the avalanche, like claps and peals of thunder resounding in the air. You gaze afar off and there it is, and it looks to you like the falling of a few flakes of snow. It is so inconsiderable that the grandeur seems to be destroyed. Though every one of those flakes may be a block of ice weighing a hundred tons, at such a distance the thing grows small. The water leaps down hundreds of feet from the crags, but up in the mountains it ap-

pears to be a little trickling creek scarcely worth notice. The very Alpine summits seem to dwindle down to small heaps of stones when one grows used to the scenery. God is too great for this earth to bear Him. The axles of this world's chariot would snap beneath the weight of Deity. We talk of going from Nature up to Nature's God, but the top of the highest Alps is far below His footstool! We do not get any conceptions of God out of Nature worthy of His august Majesty. But in contemplating the Cross, in discerning, there, how God can forgive, how willing He is to save the guilty, how His justice is magnified at the same time as His Grace, I am persuaded that those who have tried both forms of contemplation will tell you that this last is the better by far! You see God through the wounds of Christ as through windows of agate and gates of carbuncle—and you cry, “My Lord, and my God!”

In winding up this poor discourse of mine, let me say to you, Beloved, be more in meditation upon Jesus. I say to myself—Preacher, preach your Master more! Preach Him more after His own sort and endeavor to be yourself more like He! Dear Hearer, live nearer to the Cross. With all your study of Doctrine—and you do well to study it thoroughly—make Jesus Christ the first. Believe in Him. Let Him be your creed. Speak of a body of divinity—there never was in this world but one body of divinity and that is Jesus Christ! And he that understands Jesus Christ has got the only system of theology that is worth knowing! Get right into Him. Some of the early Fathers used to study every wound. They would write a treatise on almost every different spot where He was scourged! They had some tears to let fall and some sweet songs to sing for every step along the *Via Dolorosa*. Let us not treat lightly what those nearer to the Light of God treated so solemnly, but regarding the Master and thinking much of even the littles that concern Him (for the leaves of this Tree of Life are for the healing of the nations), let us study to understand Him and ask to be conformed to Him—even in His sufferings to be like He—and when we suffer, to see Him in our pangs! Let every grief be a glass through which to look into His life and love, and understand His Grace.

I wish you all knew this, and more than this. Oh, that I could hope that all this assembled company did trust in my Master! Poor Sinner, why not trust Him? You will never be saved unless you do! There is no other door of mercy for you than Jesus! Come, come, come, even though you think He will cast you away. If Christ had a drawn sword in His hand, yet I would bid you come! It were better to fall on the point of His sword than to live without Him! Come and rest upon Him. He never rejected a sinner yet, and He never can! The vilest of the vile can find mercy in Him! And all He asks—and that He gives—is that you rely on Him with all your heart and you shall be saved! God grant that you may! “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Obey the second precept as you have attained to the first. When you have believed in Christ crucified, dead and buried for you, then be dead and buried with Him in Baptism! Take the outward symbol of His death, burial and resurrection, and

ask to have the inward spiritual Grace that you, being dead to the world, and dead with Christ, and buried with Him, may rise again to newness of life through His quickening Spirit.

The Lord thus bless you, for Jesus' sake!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 PETER 1:1-16; MATTHEW 10:37-40.**

Verses 1, 2. *Peter, an Apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia. Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. Grace unto you, and peace be multiplied.* The first Christians were not so afraid of the Doctrine of Election as some are now-a-days. Peter was not ashamed to address the saints as the elect of God, for so, indeed, they are, if they are saints at all. It is He that chose them, not because they *were* sanctified, but that they might *be* sanctified—chose them to eternal life through sanctification. Oh, happy are they who, by Divine Grace have made their calling and election sure, and now ascribe all the glory of their salvation to the Sovereign choice of God! “Grace unto you, and peace be multiplied.”

3-5. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. To an inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in Heaven for you. Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed at the last time.* How full of Grace every sentence is! He blesses God because God has so freely blessed us! And he abounds in thanksgiving because he sees that abundant mercy by which Believers have been begotten again—born-again—made, therefore, children after a new sort and so made heirs of an inheritance very different from that upon which we enter by nature—“an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fades not away.” Brothers and Sisters, if you have, indeed, been born by Divine Grace, to what estates are you born—to what high dignities and sacred privileges! Rejoice and bless the Lord! But, perhaps the dark fear crossed your mind that, perhaps, after all, you may perish and miss the inheritance. Now notice the double consolation of a double keeping. The inheritance is kept. It is reserved in Heaven for you and you are kept, too. It is kept for you and you are kept for it, “For you, who are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation.”

6. *Wherein you greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations.* This is your life. This is like a rainbow made up of the drops of earth's sorrow in the beams of Heaven's love—a happy combination, after all.

7. *That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor*

and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. Gilt looks very much like gold but it will not stand the fire. It curls and disappears. Oh, to be solid gold through and through! If so, you need not mind the trials of today, since they will only prepare you for the eternal glories at the appearing of Jesus Christ!

8-10 *Whom having not seen, you love in whom, though now you see Him not, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory—receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Of which salvation the Prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the Grace that should come unto you.* Prophets knew about you. They did not taste of the Grace you know, but through the vista of the future they foresaw it and they almost envied you in this Gospel dispensation that you should live in so clear a light and should be fed upon such rare mercies. Oh, what Prophets and kings longed for, do not let us despise! And we shall despise these mercies if we do not make the most of them by entering into the fullness of the joy which they are meant to bring to us. These Prophets searched diligently.

11-12. *Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ who was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you, with the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.* See you not your privilege, then? You have what Prophets had not! You enjoy what angels desire to see! They cannot enjoy what you do. Rightly does our hymn put it—

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

And you have, this very day!

13. *Therefore gird up the loins of your mind.* Be ready to depart to your inheritance. Do not let your garments flow carelessly and loosely, as though you had no journey before you, but, “gird up the loins of your mind.”

13. *Be sober, and hope to the end for the Grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.* That is a very blessed subject. There is a Grace that was brought to you when Christ first came. There is another Grace and a higher Grace that is to be brought to you when Christ shall come the second time! Until that Second Coming of Christ, the Church on earth and in Heaven cannot be perfected. The bodies of the saints wait in the grave till He comes to give them resurrection—

**“O long expected day, begin!
Dawn on these realms of woe and sin.”**

For we wait for Your appearing, O Christ!

14-16. *As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance, but as He which has called you is holy, so be you holy in all manner of conversation: Because it its written. Be you*

holy, for I am holy. See your Model. See the Copy to which you are to write. You are far short of it. Try again. May the power of Jesus rest upon you and may He who has worked us to the same thing to which we have attained continue to work in us till we are like our Lord Himself!

MATTHEW 10:37-40.

Verse 37. *He that loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.* What a wonderful sight, then, the Church is, as it passes through this world. The Head of it is Christ, the Cross bearer, and following in the train are all His faithful disciples, all carrying crosses still—the very picture of a Church. You know how Simon carried the Cross after Christ—he is the type of all His disciples—

***“Did Simon bear the Cross alone,
And all the rest go free?
No, there’s a cross for everyone,
And there’s a cross for me.”***

38, 39. *And he that takes not his cross and follows after Me, is not worthy of Me. He that finds his life shall lose it: and he that loses his life for My sake shall find it.* You gain life by dying for Christ, but if you saved life by denying the faith you would in the worst sense lose all that makes existence to be life! There is an existence which is nothing but eternal death—and this is the doom of those who depart from Christ. But blessed are they who can give up this temporary mortal life for the sake of an eternal one! I have heard of one who used to often boast of what he would do if it came to his being burnt—but just before the day on which he was to be burnt alive for the faith, he recanted. He was allowed to go home. In a few months it happened that he was burnt alive in his house. Unhappy man that could not burn for Christ, but had to burn after all! “He that finds his life shall lose it: and he that loses his life for My sake shall find it.”

40. *He that receives you receives Me, and he that receives Me receives Him who sent Me.* Think of that, you that have received Christ! You have received God, Himself, and He has come to dwell and reign with your soul!

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

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

“THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST”

NO. 621

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 26, 1865,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“The precious blood of Christ.”
1 Peter 1:19.*

IT is frequently my fear I should fall into the habit of preaching *about* the Gospel rather than directly preaching the Gospel. And then I labor to return to the first principle of our faith and often take a text upon which it would not be possible to say anything new, but which will compel me to recapitulate in your hearing those things which are vital, essential and fundamental to the life of our souls. With such a text as this before me, if I do not preach the Gospel I shall do violence both to the sacred Word and to my own conscience. Surely I may hope that while endeavoring to unfold my text and to proclaim the saving Word, the Holy Spirit will be present to take of the things of Christ and to show them unto us and make them saving to our souls.

Blood has from the beginning been regarded by God as a most precious thing. He has hedged about this fountain of vitality with the most solemn sanctions. The Lord thus commanded Noah and his descendants, “Flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall you not eat.” Man had every moving thing that lives given him for meat, but they were by no means to eat the blood with the flesh. Things strangled were to be considered unfit for food, since God would not have man become too familiar with blood by eating or drinking it in any shape or form. Even the blood of bulls and goats thus had a sacredness put upon it by God’s decrees.

As for the blood of man, you remember how God’s threats ran, “And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man’s brother will I require the life of man. Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He man.” It is true that the first murderer had not his blood shed by man, but then the crime was new and the penalty had not then been settled and proclaimed. And therefore the case was clearly exceptional and one by itself. And, moreover, Cain’s doom was probably far more terrible than if he had been slain upon the spot—he was permitted to fill up his measure of wickedness, to be a wanderer and a vagabond upon the face of the earth—and then to enter into the dreadful heritage of wrath, which his life of sin had doubtless greatly increased.

Under the theocratic dispensation, in which God was the King and governed Israel, murder was always punished in the most exemplary manner and there was never any toleration or excuse for it. Eye for eye, tooth for

tooth, life for life was the stern inexorable law. It is expressly written, “You shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer which is guilty of death: but he shall surely be put to death.” Even in cases where life was taken in chance medley or misadventure, the matter was not overlooked. The slayer fled at once to a City of Refuge, where, after having his case properly tried, he was allowed to reside. But there was no safety for him elsewhere until the death of the high priest.

The general law in all cases was, “So you shall not pollute the land wherein you are: for blood defiles the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed there, but by the blood of him that shed it. Defile not, therefore, the land which you shall inhabit, wherein I dwell: for I, the Lord, dwell among the children of Israel.” Strange is it that that very thing which defiles should turn out to be that which alone can cleanse! It is clear, then, that blood was ever precious in God’s sight and He would have it so in ours.

He first forbids the blood of beasts as food of man, then avenges the blood of man shed in anger. And, furthermore, takes care that even accidents shall not pour it out unheeded. Nor is this all. We hear *within* us the echo of that law. We feel that God has truly made blood a sacred thing. Though some can, through use and habit, read the story of war with patience, if not with pleasure—though the sound of the trumpet and the drum and the tramp of soldiery will stir our heart and make us, for the moment, sympathize with the martial spirit—yet, if we could see war as it really is, if we could only walk but halfway across a battlefield or see but one wounded man, a cold shiver would shoot through the very marrow of our bones and we should have experimental proof that blood is, indeed, a sacred thing.

The other night, when I listened to one who professed to have come from battlefields of the American war, I felt a faintness and clammy sweat steal over me as he shocked and horrified us with the details of mutilated bodies and spoke of standing up to the tops of his boots in pools of human gore. The shudder which ran through us all was a sure confirmation of the sanctity with which God has forever guarded the symbol and nutriment of life. We cannot even contemplate the probability of the shedding of blood without fear and trembling.

And comforts which entail high risks in their production or procuring will lose all sweetness to men of humane dispositions. Who does not sympathize with David in his action with regard to the water procured by his three mighties! The three heroes broke through the hosts of the Philistines to bring David water from the well of Bethlehem. But as soon as he received that water, though very thirsty and much longing for it, yet he felt he could not touch it because these men had run such dreadful risks in breaking thrice through the Philistine hosts to bring it to him! He, therefore, took the water and poured it out before the Lord, as if it was not meet that men should run risk of life for any but God who gave life!

His words were very touching, “My God forbid it me, that I should do this thing! Shall I drink the blood of these men that have put their lives in

jeopardy? For with the jeopardy or their lives they brought it." I wonder at the cruelty of the great crowds who delight to see men and women running such fearful risks of life in rope-dancing. How is it that they can feed their morbid curiosity on such dreadful food and greet the man who is foolish enough to run such hazards with acclamations because of his foolhardiness? How much more Christ-like the regret of David that he should have led any man to risk his life for his comfort! How much more laudable was his belief that nothing short of the highest benevolence to man, or the highest devotion to God can justify such jeopardy of life!

Further permit me to observe that the seal of the sanctity of blood is usually set upon the conscience even of the most depraved of men—not merely upon gentle souls and sanctified spirits—but even upon the most hardened. You will notice that men, bad as they are, shrink from the disgrace of taking blood money. Even those high priests who could sit down and gloat their eyes with the sufferings of the Savior would not receive the price of blood into the treasury. And even Judas, that son of perdition, who could contemplate without horror the treachery by which he betrayed his Master—yet when he had the thirty pieces of silver in his palm, found the money too hot to hold! He threw it down in the temple, for he could not bear or abide the sight of "the price of blood." This is another proof that even when virtue has become extinct and vice reigns, yet God has put the broad arrow of His own Sovereignty so manifestly upon the very thought of blood that even these worst of spirits are compelled to shrink from tampering with it.

Now, if in ordinary cases the shedding of life is thus precious, can you guess how fully God utters His heart's meaning when He says, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints"? If the death of a rebel is precious, what must be the death of a *child*? If He will not contemplate the shedding of the blood of His own enemies and of them that curse Him without proclaiming vengeance, what do you think He feels concerning His own elect, of whom He says, "Precious shall their blood be in His sight"? Will He not avenge them, though He bears long with them?

Shall the cup which the Harlot of Rome filled with the blood of the saints long remain unavenged? Shall not the martyrs from Piedmont and the Alps and from our Smithfield and from the hills of covenanting Scotland yet obtain from God the vengeance due for all that they suffered and all the blood which they poured forth in the defense of His cause? I have taken you up, you see, from the beast to man—from man to God's chosen men—the martyrs. I have another step to indicate to you—it is a far larger one—it is to the blood OF JESUS CHRIST.

Here powers of speech would fail to convey to you an idea of the preciousness! Behold here, a Person innocent—without taint within, or flaw without! A Person meritorious who magnified the Law and made it honorable—a Person who served both God and man even unto death. No, here you have a Divine Person—so Divine that in the Acts of the Apostles Paul calls His blood the "blood of God." Place innocence and merit and dignity

and position and Godhead itself in the scale and then conceive what must be the inestimable value of the blood which Jesus Christ poured forth!

Angels must have seen that matchless blood-shedding with wonder and amazement, and even God Himself saw what never before was seen in creation or in Providence—He saw Himself more gloriously displayed than the whole universe beside. Let us come nearer to the text and try to show forth the preciousness of the blood of Christ. We shall confine ourselves to an enumeration of some of the many properties possessed by this precious blood.

I felt, as I was studying, that I should have so many divisions this morning that some of you would compare my sermon to the bones in Ezekiel’s vision—they were very many and they were very dry—but I am in hopes that God’s Holy Spirit may so descend upon the bones in my sermon—which would be but dry of themselves—that they being quickened and full of life you may admire the exceeding great army of God’s thoughts of loving-kindness towards His people in the sacrifice of His own dear Son.

The precious blood of Christ is useful to God’s people in a thousand ways—we intend to speak of twelve of them. After all, the real preciousness of a thing in the time of pinch and trial must depend upon its usefulness. A bag of pearls would be to us, this morning, far more precious than a bag of bread. But you have all heard the story of the man in the desert who stumbled, when near to death, upon a bag. He opened it, hoping that it might be the wallet of some passer-by, and he found in it nothing but pearls! If they had been crusts of bread, how much more precious would they have been! I say, in the hour of necessity and peril, the *use* of a thing really constitutes the preciousness of it. This may not be according to political economy, but it is according to common sense.

1. The precious blood of Christ has a REDEEMING POWER. It redeems from the Law. We were all under the Law which says, “Do this and live.” We were slaves to it—Christ has paid the ransom price and the Law is no longer our tyrant master. We are entirely free from it. The Law had a dreadful curse—it threatened that whoever should violate one of its precepts should die—“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us.”

By the fear of this curse the Law inflicted a continual dread on those who were under it. They knew they had disobeyed it and they were all their lifetime subject to bondage, fearful lest death and destruction should come upon them at any moment. But we are not under the Law, but under Grace, and consequently, “We have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but we have received the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’ ” We are not afraid of the Law now—its worst thunders cannot affect us for they are not hurled at us!

Its most tremendous lightning cannot touch us for we are sheltered beneath the Cross of Christ, where the thunder loses its terror and the lightning its fury. We read the Law of God with pleasure now! We look upon it as in the ark covered with the Mercy Seat and not thundering in

tempests from Sinai's fiery brow. Happy is that man who knows his full redemption from the Law, its curse, its penalty, its present dread!

My Brethren, the life of a Jew, happy as it was compared with that of a heathen, was perfect drudgery compared to yours and mine! He was hedged in with a thousand commands and prohibitions. His forms and ceremonies were abundant and their details minutely arranged. He was always in danger of making himself unclean. If he sat upon a bed or upon a stool he might be defiled. If he drank out of an earthen pitcher, or even touched the wall of a house—a leprous man might have put his hand there before him and he would thus become defiled. A thousand sins of ignorance were like so many hidden pits in his way. He must be perpetually in fear lest he should be cut off from the people of God.

When he had done his best any one day, he knew he had not finished—no Jew could ever talk of a finished work. The bullock was offered, but he must bring another. The lamb was offered this morning, but another must be offered this evening, another tomorrow and another the next day. The Passover is celebrated with holy rites—it must be kept in the same manner next year. The high priest has gone within the veil once, but he must go there again. The thing is never finished—it is always beginning. He never comes any nearer to the end. "The Law could not make the comer thereunto perfect."

But see our position—we are redeemed from this! Our Law is fulfilled, for Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness! Our Passover is slain, for Jesus died! Our righteousness is finished, for we are complete in Him! Our victim is slain, our Priest has gone within the veil, the blood is sprinkled! We are clean and clean beyond any fear of defilement, "For He has perfected forever those that were set apart." Value this precious blood, my Beloved, because thus it has redeemed you from the thralldom and bondage which the Law imposed upon its votaries.

2. The value of the blood lies much in its ATONING EFFICACY. We are told in Leviticus, that, "it is the blood which makes an atonement for the soul." God never forgave sin apart from blood under the Law. This stood as a constant text—"Without shedding of blood there is no remission." Meal and honey, sweet spices and incense would not avail without shedding of blood. There was no remission promised to future diligence or deep repentance—without shedding of blood pardon never came. The blood, and the blood alone, put away sin and permitted a man to come to God's courts to worship—because it made him one with God.

The blood is the great at-one-ment. There is no hope of pardon for the sin of any man except through its punishment being fully endured. God must punish sin. It is not an arbitrary arrangement that sin shall be punished, but it is a part of the very constitution of moral government that sin must be punished. Never did God swerve from that and never will He. "He will by no means clear the guilty."

Christ, therefore, came and was punished in the place of all His people. Ten thousands times ten thousands are the souls for whom Jesus shed His blood. He, for the sins of all the elect, has made a complete Atone-

ment. For every man born of Adam who has believed or shall believe on Him, or who is taken to Glory before being capable of believing, Christ has made a complete Atonement. And there is none other plan by which sinners can be made at one with God, except by Jesus’ precious blood.

I may make sacrifices. I may mortify my body. I may be baptized. I may receive sacraments. I may pray until my knees grow hard with kneeling. I may read devout words until I know them by heart. I may celebrate masses. I may worship in one language or in fifty languages—but I can never be at one with God except by blood—and that blood, “the precious blood of Christ.”

My dear Friends, many of you have felt the power of Christ’s redeeming blood! You are not under the Law now, but under Grace—you have also felt the power of the atoning blood—you know that you are reconciled unto God by the death of His Son. You feel that He is no angry God to you, that He loves you with a love unchangeable. But this is not the case with you all. O that it were! I do pray that you may know, this very day, the atoning power of the blood of Jesus! Creature, would you not be at one with your Creator? Puny man, would you not have Almighty God to be your Friend? You can not be at one with God except through the atonement. God has set forth Christ to be a Propitiation for our sins. Oh, take the Propitiation through faith in His blood and be at one with God!

3. Thirdly, the precious blood of Jesus Christ has A CLEANSING POWER. John tells us in his first Epistle, first chapter, seventh verse, “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son, cleanses us from all sin.” Sin has a directly defiling effect upon the sinner, from which comes the need of cleansing. Suppose that God, the Holy One, were perfectly willing to be at one with an unholy sinner which is supposing a case that cannot be. Yet even should the pure eyes of the Most High wink at sin, still, as long as we are unclean we never could feel in our own hearts anything like joy and rest and peace.

Sin is a plague to the man who has it, as well as a hateful thing to the God who abhors it. I must be made clean. I must have my iniquities washed away or I never can be happy. The first mercy that is sung of in the one hundred and third Psalm is, “Who forgives all your iniquities.” Now we know it is by the precious blood that sin is cleansed. Murder, adultery, theft—whatever the sin may be—there is power in the veins of Christ to take it away at once and forever! No matter how many, nor how deeply-seated our offenses may be, the blood cries, “Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

It is the song of Heaven—“We have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” This is the experience of earth, for none was ever cleansed except in this fountain opened for the house of David for sin and for uncleanness. You have heard this so often that perhaps if an angel told it to you, you would not take much interest in it—unless you have known *experimentally* the horror of uncleanness and the blessedness of being made clean. Beloved, it is a thought which ought to make our

hearts leap within us, that through Jesus’ blood there is not a spot left upon any Believer, not a wrinkle nor any such thing—

**“Though in myself defiled I am,
And black as Kedar’s tent, appear,
Yet when I put Your garment on,
Fair as the courts of Solomon.”**

You have no spiritual beauty, Beloved, apart from Christ. But, having Christ, He Himself says, “You are all fair, My Love, there is no spot in you.” Oh, precious blood which makes the Blackamoor white as snow and takes out the leopard’s spots! Oh, precious blood removing the Hell-stains of abundant iniquity and permitting me to stand accepted in the Beloved, notwithstanding all the many ways in which I have rebelled against my God!

4. A fourth property of the blood of Christ is ITS PRESERVING POWER. You will rightly comprehend this when you remember that dreadful night of Egypt, when the destroying angel was abroad to slay God’s enemies. A bitter cry went up from house to house as the first-born of all Egypt—from Pharaoh on the throne to the first-born of the woman behind the mill and the slave in the dungeon—all fell dead in a moment! The angel sped with noiseless wings through every street of Egypt’s many cities.

But there were some houses which he could not enter—he sheathed his sword and breathed no malediction there. What was it which preserved the houses? The inhabitants were not better than others. Their habitations were not more elegantly built—there was nothing except the *blood-stain* on the lintel and on the two side posts—and it is written, “When I see the blood I will pass over you.” There was nothing whatever which gained the Passover for Israel but the sprinkling of blood!

The father of the house had taken a lamb and killed it—had caught the blood in a basin. And while the lamb was roasted that it might be eaten by every inhabitant of the house, he took a bunch of hyssop, stirred the basin of blood and went outside with his children and began to strike the posts and to strike the door. And as soon as this was done they were all safe, all safe—no angel could touch them—the fiends of Hell themselves could not venture there.

Beloved, see, *we* are preserved in Christ Jesus! Did not God see the blood before you and I saw it and was not that the reason why He spared our forfeited lives when, like barren fig trees, we brought forth no fruit for Him? When we saw the blood, let us remember it was not *our* seeing it which really saved us—one sight of it gave us peace, but it was *God’s* seeing it that saved us. “When I see the blood I will pass over you.”

And today, if my eye of faith is dim and I see the precious blood so as to rejoice that I am washed but I can scarcely see it, yet God can see the blood and as long as the undimmed eyes of Jehovah look upon the atoning Sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, He cannot smite one soul that is covered with its scarlet mantle. Oh, how precious is this blood-red shield! My Soul, cover yourself down under it when the darts of Hell are flying! This is the chariot, the covering of purple—let the storm come and the deluge rise, let even the fiery hail descend beneath that crimson pavilion—my

soul must rest secure, for what can touch me when I am covered with His precious blood?

The preserving power of that blood should make us feel how precious it is. Beloved, let me beg you to try and realize these points. You know I told you before I cannot say anything new upon the subject, neither can I embody these old thoughts in new words. I should only spoil them and be making a fool of myself by trying to make a display of myself and my own powers, instead of the precious blood. Let me ask you to get here, right under the shelter of the Cross. Sit down, now, beneath the shadow of the Cross and feel, “I am safe, I am safe, O you devils of Hell, or you angels of God—I could challenge you all and say, ‘Who shall separate me from the love of God in Christ Jesus, or who shall lay anything to my charge, seeing that Christ has died for me?’ ”

When Heaven is on a blaze. When earth begins to shake. When the mountains rock. When God divides the righteous from the wicked, happy will they be who can find a shelter beneath the blood! But where will you be who have never trusted in its cleansing power? You will call to the rocks to hide you and to the mountains to cover you, but all in vain. God help you now, or even the blood will not help you then!

5. Fifthly, the blood of Christ is precious because of its PLEADING PREVALENCE. Paul says in the twelfth chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews, at the twenty-fourth verse, “It speaks better things than that of Abel.” Abel’s blood pleaded and prevailed. Its cry was, “Vengeance!” and Cain was punished. Jesus’ blood pleads and prevails. Its cry is “Father, forgive them!” and sinners are forgiven through it.

When I cannot pray as I would, how sweet to remember that the blood prays! There is no voice in my tongue, but there is always a voice in the blood. If I cannot, when I bow before my God, get farther than to say, “God be merciful to me, a sinner,” yet my Advocate before the Throne is not dumb because I am and His plea has not lost its power because my faith in it may happen to be diminished. The blood is always alike prevalent with God. The wounds of Jesus are so many mouths to plead with God for sinners—what if I say they are so many *chains* with which love is lead captive and sovereign mercy bound to bless every favored child?

What if I say that the wounds of Jesus have become doors of Divine Grace through which Divine love comes forth to the vilest of the vile and doors through which our wants go up to God and plead with Him that He would be pleased to supply them? Next time you cannot pray. Next time you are crying and striving and groaning up in that upper room, praise the value of the precious blood which makes intercession before the eternal Throne of God!

6. Sixthly, the blood is precious where perhaps we little expect it to operate. It is precious, because of its MELTING INFLUENCE on the human heart. “They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced and they shall mourn for Him, as one that mourns for his only son and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born.”

There is a great complaint among sinners, when they are a little awakened, that they feel their hearts so hard. The blood is a mighty melter. Alchemists of old sought after a universal solvent—the blood of Jesus is that. There is no nature so stubborn that a sight of the love of God in Christ Jesus cannot melt it, if Grace shall open the blind eye to see Christ. The stone in the human heart shall melt away when it is plunged into a bath of Divine blood. Cannot you say, dear Friends, that Toplady was right in his hymn—

**“Law and terrors do but harden
All the while they work alone.
But a sense of blood-bought pardon,
Soon dissolves a heart of stone”?**

Sinner, if God shall lead you to believe this morning in Christ to save you—if, then, you will trust your soul in His hands to have it saved—that hard heart of yours will melt at once! You would think differently of sin, my Friends, if you knew that Christ smarted for it. Oh, if you knew that out of those dear listless eyes there looked the loving heart of Jesus upon you, I know you would say, “I hate the sin that made Him mourn and fastened Him to the accursed tree.” I do not think that preaching the Law generally softens men’s hearts.

Hitting men with a hard hammer may often drive the particles of a hard heart more closely together and make the iron yet more hard. But oh, to preach Christ’s love—His great love with which He loved us even when we were dead in sins and to tell to sinners that there is life in a *look* at the Crucified One—surely this will prove that Christ was exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins! Come *for* repentance, if you cannot come repenting! Come *for* a broken heart, if you cannot come *with* a broken heart! Come to be melted, if you are not melted. Come to be wounded, if you are not wounded.

7. But then comes in a seventh property of the precious blood. The same blood that melts has A GRACIOUS POWER TO PACIFY. John Bunyan speaks of the Law as coming to sweep a chamber like a maid with a broom. And when she began to sweep there was a great dust which almost choked people and got into their eyes. But then came the Gospel with its drops of water and laid the dust and then the broom might be used far better.

Now it sometimes happens that the Law of God makes such a dust in the sinner’s soul that nothing but the precious blood of Jesus Christ can make that dust lie still. The sinner is so disquieted that nothing can ever give him any relief except to know that Jesus died for him. When I felt the burden of my sin, I do confess all the preaching I ever heard never gave me one single atom of comfort. I was told to do this and to do that and when I had done it all, I had not advanced one inch farther.

I thought I must *feel* something, or *pray* a certain quantity. And when I had done that, the burden was quite as heavy. But the moment I saw that there was nothing whatever for me to *do*, that *Jesus* did it long, long ago—that all my sins were put on His back and that He suffered all I ought to

have suffered—why then my heart had peace with God. Real peace by believing peace through the precious blood!

Two soldiers were on duty in the citadel of Gibraltar. One of them had obtained peace through the precious blood of Christ, the other was in very great distress of mind. It happened to be their turn to stand sentinel, both of them, the same night. And there are many long passages in the rock, which passages are adapted to convey sounds a very great distance. The soldier in distress of mind was ready to beat his breast for grief—he felt he had rebelled against God and could not find how he could be reconciled—when suddenly there came through the air what seemed to him to be a mysterious voice from Heaven saying these words, “The precious blood of Christ.”

In a moment he saw it all—it was *that* which reconciled us to God—and he rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory! Now did those words come directly from God? No. They did as far as the *effect* was concerned—they did come from the Holy Spirit. Who was it that had spoken those words? Curiously enough, the other sentinel at the far end of the passage was standing still and meditating when an officer came by and it was his duty, of course, to give the word for the night and with soldier-like promptness he did give it—but not accurately, for instead of giving the proper word, he was so taken up by his meditations that he said to the officer, “The precious blood of Christ.”

He corrected himself in a moment. But he had said it and it had passed along the passage and reached the ear for which God meant it—and the man found peace and spent his life in the fear of God, being in after years the means of completing one of our excellent translations of the Word of God into the Hindu language. Who can tell, dear Friends, how much peace you may give by only telling the story of our Savior! If I only had about a dozen words to speak and knew I must die, I would say, “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” The doctrine of Substitution is the pith and marrow of the Gospel, and if you can hold that forth, you will prove the value of the precious blood by its peace-giving power.

8. We can only spare a minute now upon ITS SANCTIFYING INFLUENCE. The Apostle tells us in the ninth chapter and the fourteenth verse that Christ sanctified the people by His own blood. Certain it is that the same blood which justifies by taking away sin does, in its after-action, act upon the new nature and lead it onward to subdue sin and to follow out the commands of God. There is no motive for holiness so great as that which streams from the veins of Jesus. If you want to know why you should be obedient to God’s will, my Brethren, go and look upon Him who sweat, as it were, great drops of blood and the love of Christ will constrain you, because you will thus judge, “That if one died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all that we which live might not henceforth live unto ourselves, but unto Him that died for us and rose again.”

9. In the ninth place, another blessed property of the blood of Jesus is ITS POWER TO GIVE ENTRANCE. We are told that the high priest never

went within the veil without blood. And surely we can never get into God's heart, nor into the secret of the Lord which is with them that fear Him, nor into any familiar communion with our great Father and Friend, except by the sprinkling of the precious blood of Jesus.

“We have access with boldness into this grace wherein we stand,” but we never dare go a step towards God except as we are sprinkled with this precious blood. I am persuaded some of us do not come near to God because we forget the blood. If you try to have fellowship with God in your graces, your experiences, your believing—you will fail. But if you try to come near to God as you stand in Christ Jesus—you will have courage to come. And on the other hand, God will run to meet you when He sees you in the face of His Anointed. Oh, for power to get near to God! But there is no getting near to God except as we got near to the Cross. Praise the blood, then, for its power of giving you nearness to God.

10. Tenthly—a hint only. The blood is very precious, in the tenth place, for ITS CONFIRMING POWER. No covenant, we are told, was ever valid unless victims were slain and blood sprinkled. And it is the blood of Jesus which has ratified the New Covenant and made its promises sure to all the seed. Therefore it is called “the blood of the Everlasting Covenant.” The Apostle changes the figure and he says that a testament is not of force except the testator is dead. The blood is a proof that the Testator died and now the Law holds good to every inheritor because Jesus Christ has signed it with His own gore.

Beloved, let us rejoice that the promises are yes, and amen, for no other reason than this—because Christ Jesus died and rose again. Had there been no bowing of the head upon the tree, no slumbering in the sepulcher, no rising from the tomb, then the promises had been uncertain, fickle things—not “immutable things wherein it is impossible for God to lie”—and consequently they could never have afforded strong consolation to those who have fled for refuge to Christ Jesus. See, then, the confirming nature of the blood of Jesus and count it very precious.

11. I am almost done. But there remains another. It is the eleventh one, and that is THE INVIGORATING POWER of the precious blood. If you want to know that, you must see it set forth as we often do when we cover the table with the white cloth and put the bread and wine on it. What do we mean by this ordinance? We mean by it that Christ suffered for us and that we, being already washed in His precious blood and so made clean, do come to the table to drink wine as an emblem of the way in which we live and feed upon His body and upon His blood.

He tells us, “Except a man shall eat My flesh and drink My blood, there is no life in him.” We do therefore, after a spiritual sort, drink His blood and He says, “My blood is drink, indeed.” Superior drink! Transcendent drink! Strengthening drink—such drink as angels never taste though they drink before the eternal Throne. Oh Beloved, whenever your spirit faints, this wine shall comfort you! When your griefs are many, drink and forget your misery and remember your sufferings no more!

When you are very weak and faint, take not a little of this for your soul's sake, but drink a full draught of the wine on the lees, well refined, which was set abroad by the soldier's spike and flowed from Christ's own heart! “Drink to the full. Yes, drink abundantly O Beloved,” says Christ to the spouse. And do not linger when He invites. You see the blood has power without to cleanse and then it has power within to strengthen. O precious Blood, how many are Your uses! May I prove them all!

12. Lastly and twelfth—twelve is the number of perfection. We have brought out a perfect number of its uses—the blood has AN OVERCOMING POWER. It is written in the Revelation, “They overcame through the blood of the Lamb.” How could they do otherwise? He that fights with the precious blood of Jesus fights with a weapon that will cut through soul and spirit, joints and marrow—a weapon that makes Hell tremble and makes Heaven subservient and earth obedient to the will of the men who can wield it!

The blood of Jesus! Sin dies at its presence, death ceases to be death—Hell itself would be dried up if that blood could operate there. The blood of Jesus! Heaven's gates are opened! Bars of iron are pushed back. The blood of Jesus! My doubts and fears flee, my troubles and disasters disappear! The blood of Jesus! Shall I not go on conquering and to conquer so long as I can plead that? In Heaven this shall be the choice jewel which shall glitter upon the head of Jesus—that He gives to His people “Victory, victory, through the blood of the Lamb.”

And now, is this blood to be had? Can it be got at? Yes, it is FREE, as well as full of virtue—free to every soul that believes. Whoever cares to come and trust in Jesus shall find the virtue of this blood in his case this very morning. Away from your own works! Turn those eyes of yours to the full Atonement made, to the utmost ransom paid! And if God enables you, poor Soul, this morning to say, “I take that precious blood to be my only hope,” you are saved and you may sing with the rest of us—

***“Now, freed from sin, I walk at large;
The Savior's blood's my full discharge.
At His dear feet my soul I'll lay,
A sinner saved and homage pay.”***

God grant it may be so, for His name's sake. Amen.

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THE NEW NATURE

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**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 30, 1861,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible,
by the Word of God, which lives and abides forever. For all
flesh is as grass and all the glory of man as the flower
of grass. The grass withers and the flower thereof
falls away: but the Word of the Lord endures
forever. And this is the Word which
by the Gospel is preached unto you.”
1 Peter 1:23-25.*

PETER had earnestly exhorted the scattered saints to love each other “with a pure heart fervently” and he wisely fetches his argument, not from the Law, nor from nature, nor from philosophy but from that high and divine nature which God has implanted in His people. Love each other with a pure heart fervently for you have been born again—not with corruptible seed—but with incorruptible.

I might compare Peter to some judicious tutor of the princes of the blood who labors to beget and foster a kingly spirit in the king’s sons. From their position and descent he brings argument for a dignified behavior—“Do not act foolishly—it would be unseemly in a king. Speak not so—ribald language would be unbecoming to a prince. Indulge not in these vanities—such would be degrading to the illustrious of the earth.”

So looking upon God’s people as being heirs of glory, princes of the blood royal, descendants of the King of kings, earth’s true and only real aristocracy—Peter says to them, “See that you love one another, because of your noble birth, being born of incorruptible seed.” Because of your pedigree, being descended from God, the Creator of all things. And because of your immortal destiny, for you shall never pass away, though the glory of flesh shall fade and even its very existence shall cease.

I think it would be well, my Brethren, if in a spirit of humility you and I recognized the free dignity of our regenerated nature and lived up to it. Oh, what is a Christian? If you compare him with a king he adds priestly sanctity to royal dignity. The king’s royalty often lies only in his crown but with a Christian it is infused into his very nature! Compare him with a senator, with a mighty warrior, or a master of wisdom and he far excels them all. He is of another race than those who are only born of woman. He is as much above his fellows through his new birth as man is above the beast that perishes.

As humanity towers in dignity high above the groveling brute, so does the regenerate man overtop the best of human once-born mortals. Surely

he ought to bear himself and act as one who is not of the multitude—one who has been chosen out of the world, distinguished by sovereign grace, written among “the peculiar people”—and who therefore cannot grovel as others grovel, nor think as others think. Let the dignity of your nature and the brightness of your prospects, O B

In the text there are three points which I think will repay our very serious attention. The Apostle evidently speaks of two lives—the one, the life which is natural, born, matured and perfected only by the flesh. The other, the life which is spiritual—born of the Spirit, in antagonism with the flesh, surviving it and triumphantly rising to celestial glory.

Now, in speaking of these two lives the Apostle brings out, first of all, *a comparison and a contrast between the two births*—for each life has its own birth. Then he brings out *a contrast between the manifest existence of the two lives*. And then lastly, *between the glory of the two lives*—for each life has its glory—but the glory of the spiritual life far excels the glory of the natural.

I. First then, the Apostle Peter draws A COMPARISON AND CONTRAST BETWEEN THE TWO BIRTHS WHICH ARE THE DOORWAYS OF THE TWO LIVES.

First, we have said that every life is prefaced by birth. It is so naturally—we are born. It is so spiritually—we are *born again*. Except a man be born he cannot enter into the kingdom of nature. Except a man be *born again* he cannot enter into the kingdom of Heaven. Birth is the lowly gateway by which we enter into life and the lofty portal by which we are admitted into the kingdom of Heaven.

Now there is a comparison between the two births. In both there is a solemn mystery. I have read, I have even heard sermons in which the minister seemed to me rather to play the part of a physician than of a divine, exposing and explaining the mysteries of our natural birth across which both God in nature and the good man in delicacy must ever throw a veil. It is a hallowed thing to be born as surely as it is a solemnity to die. Birthdays and death days are days of awe. Birth is very frequently used in Scripture as one of the most graphic pictures of solemn mystery. Into this, no man may idly pry and Science herself, when she has dared to look within the veil, has turned back awestricken, from those “lower parts of the earth” in which David declares us to be “curiously wrought.”

Greater still is the mystery of the *new birth*. That we are born again we know, but how, we cannot tell. How the Spirit of God opens the mind. How it is that He renews the faculties and imparts fresh desires by which those faculties should be guided. How it is that He enlightens the understanding, subdues the will, purifies the intellect, reverses the desire, lifts up the hope and puts the fear in its right channel we cannot tell. We must leave this among the secret things which belong unto God.

The Holy Spirit works, but the manner of His operation is not to be comprehended. “The wind blows where it wills and you hear the sound

thereof, but you cannot tell from where it comes nor where it goes, so is everyone that is born of the Spirit.” Oh, my Hearers, have you *felt* this mystery? Explain it you cannot, nor can I, nor ought we to attempt an explanation—for where God is silent it is perhaps profanity and certainly impertinence—for us to speak. The two births, then, are alike in their solemn mystery.

But then, we know this much of our natural birth, that in birth there is a *life created*. Yonder infant is beginning his being—another creature has lifted up its feeble cry to Heaven—another mortal has come to tread this theater of action, to breathe, to live, to die. And so in the new birth there is an absolute creation—we are made new creatures in Christ Jesus—there is another spirit born to pray, to believe in Christ, to love Him here and to rejoice in Him hereafter. As no one doubts but that birth is the manifestation of a creation so let no one doubt but that regeneration is the manifestation of a creation of God, as divine, as much beyond the power of man as the creation of the human mind itself.

But we know also that in birth there is not only a life created, but a *life communicated*. Each child has its parent. The very flowers trace themselves back to a parental seed. We spring not from our own loins. We are not self-created—there is a life communicated. We have links between the son and the father and back till we come to father Adam. So in regeneration there is a life, not merely created, but communicated, even the very life of God, who has begotten us again unto a lively hope. As truly as the father lives in the child, so truly does the very life and nature of God live in every child born heir of Heaven. We are as certainly partakers of the divine nature by the new birth as we were partakers of the human nature by the old birth—so far the comparison holds good.

Equally certain is it that in the natural and in the spiritual birth there is *life entailed*. There are certain propensities which we inherit from which this side of the grave we shall not be free. Our temperament brave or frivolous. Our passions slow or hasty. Our propensities sensual or aspiring. Our faculties contracted or expansive—are to a great measure an entailed inheritance as much linked to our future portion as are wings to an eagle or a shell to a snail. If I may so speak, there are those qualities that composition and disposition of nature which will naturally, if circumstances assist, work out in full development certain results.

So is it with us when we are born again—a heavenly nature is entailed upon us. We cannot but be holy. The new nature cannot but serve God—it must—it will pant to be nearer to Christ and more like Him. It has aspirations which time cannot satisfy—desires which earth cannot surfeit—longings which Heaven alone can gratify. There is a life entailed upon us in the moment when we pass from death unto life in the solemn mystery of regeneration.

In the old birth and in the new birth also, a *life* is also brought forth which is *complete in all its parts* and only needs to be developed. Yon in-

fant in the oracle shall never have another limb, or another eye. Its limb hardens, it grows, it gathers strength, its brain also enlarges its sphere, but the faculties are there already—they are not implanted afterward. Verily, so is it in the new-born child of God. Faith, love, hope and every grace are there the moment he believes in Christ. They grow, 'tis true, but they were all there in the instant of regeneration. The babe in grace who is just now born to God has every part of the spiritual man—it only needs to grow till he becomes a perfect man in Christ Jesus.

Thus, you perceive, that the two births have a very close resemblance to one another. I pray, now that I have introduced the subject, do not turn from it till you have thought of the reality of the new birth, as you must of the reality of the first. You were not here if you had not been born—you shall never be in Heaven unless you are born again. You had not been able today to hear, or think, or see if you had not been born. You are not today able to pray or to believe in Christ unless you are born again. The enjoyments of this world you could never have known if it had not been for birth. The saved delight of God you do not know today and you never shall know unless you be born again.

Do not look upon regeneration as though it were a fancy or a fiction. I do assure you, my Hearers, it is as real as is the natural birth. For spiritual is not the same as fanciful, but the spiritual is as real as even nature itself. To be born again is as much a matter of fact to be realized, to be discerned and to be discovered, as to be born for the first time into this vale of tears.

But now comes *the contrast*—"being born not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible." Herein lies the contrast between the two. That child which has just experienced the first birth has been made partaker of *corruptible seed*. The depravity of his parent lies sleeping within him. Could he speak, he might say so. David did—"Behold, I was born in sin and shaped in iniquity." He receives the evil virus which was first infused into us by the Fall. Not so, however, is it when we are born again. No sin is then sown within us. This sin of the old flesh remains but there is no sin in the new-born nature—it cannot sin because it is born of God Himself.

It is as impossible for that new nature to sin as for the Deity itself to be defiled. It is a part of the divine nature—a spark struck off from the rental orb of light and life and dead or dark it cannot be—because it would be contrary to its nature to be either the one or the other. Oh, what a difference! In the first birth—born to sin! In the next—born to holiness! In the first—partakers of corruption, in the next—heirs of incorruption. In the first—depravity. In the second—perfection. What broader contrast could there be! What should make us more thoroughly long for this new birth than the glorious fact that we are by its means consciously lifted up from the ruins of the Fall and made perfect in Christ Jesus?

In the birth of the flesh too, what *dread uncertainties* attend it! What shall become of yonder child? It may live to curse the day in which it was

born as did the poor troubled Patriarch of old. What sorrow may drive its plowshares along its yet unwrinkled brow? Ah, child, you shall be gray-headed one day but ere that comes you shall have felt a thousand storms beating about your heart and head. Little do you know your destiny, but assuredly you shall be of few days and full of trouble.

Not so in the Regeneration—we shall never rue the day in which we are born again—NEVER! We shall never look back upon that day with sorrow, but always with ecstasy and delight, for we are ushered then—not into the hovel of humanity—but into the palace of Deity. We are not then born into a valley of tears, but into an inheritance in the Canaan of God.

That child, too, so fondly the object of its mother's love may one day vex or break its parent's heart. Are not children doubtful mercies? Bring they not with them sad forebodings of what they yet may be? Alas for the pretty prattlers who have grown up to be convicted criminals! But blessed be God, they who are sons of God shall never break their Father's heart. Their new nature shall be worthy of Him that gave it existence. They shall live to honor Him, they shall die to be perfectly like Him and shall rise to glorify Him forever.

We have sometimes said that God has a very naughty family—but surely the naughtiness is in the old Adam nature—and not in Jehovah's gracious work. There is no naughtiness in the new creature. In that new creature there is no taint of sin. God's child as descended from His loins, can never sin. The new nature which God has put into it does never wander—death never transgress. It were not the new nature if it did. It were not God's offspring, if it sin—for that which comes of God is like He is holy, pure and undefiled, separate from sin. In this indeed lies a strange difference. We know not to what that first nature tends—who can tell what bitterness it shall bring forth? But we know where the new nature tends—for it ripens towards the perfect image of Him that created us in Christ Jesus.

Perhaps without my endeavoring to enlarge further you could yourselves muse upon this theme. It remains but for me upon this first head to return with earnestness to that point upon which I fear the greatest difficulty lies—the realization of this birth—for we repeat it, we are speaking of a fact—and not a dream, a reality and not a metaphor. Some tell you that the child is regenerated when the drops fall from priestly fingers. My Brethren, a more fond and foul delusion was never perpetrated upon earth. Rome itself did never discourse upon a wilder error than this. Dream not of it. O think not that it is so.

“Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” The Lord Himself addresses this sentence not to an infant but to a full-grown man. Nicodemus—one who was circumcised according to the Jewish Law, but who yet, though he had received the seal of that Covenant, needed as a man to be born again. We all without exception must know this change. Your life may have been moral, but it will not suffice. The most moralized

human nature can never attain to the *Divine* nature. You may cleanse and purge the fruit of the first birth but still the inevitable decree demands the second birth for all.

If from your youth up you have been so trained that you have scarcely known the vices of the people—so tended, hedged in—and kept from contamination with sin that you have not known temptation—yet you must be born again! And this birth, I repeat it, must be as much a fact, must be as true, as real and as *sure* as was that first birth in which you were ushered into this world. What do you know of this, my Hearer? What do you know of this? It is a thing you cannot perform for yourself. You cannot regenerate yourself any more than you could cause yourself to be born.

It is a matter out of the range of human power—it is supernatural, it is Divine. Have you partaken of it? Do not merely look back to some hour in which you felt mysterious feelings. No, but judge by the *fruits*. Have your fears and hopes changed places? Do you love the things you once hated and hate the things you once loved? Are old things passed away? Have all things become new? Christian Brethren, I put the query to you as well as to the rest. It is so easy to be deceived here. We shall find it no trifle to be born again. It is a solemn, it is a momentous matter. Let us not take it for granted because we have given up drunkenness that we are therefore converted.

Let us not presume because we do not swear, because now we attend a place of worship that we are born again. There is more wanted than this. Do not think you are saved because you have some good feelings, some good thoughts. There is more required than this—you must be *born again*. And oh, Christian parents, train up your children in the fear of God but do not be content with your training—they must be born again. And Christian husbands and Christian wives—be not satisfied with merely praying that your partner's characters may become moral and honest—ask that something may be done for them which they cannot do for themselves.

And you philanthropists who think that building new cottages, using fresh plans for drainage, teaching the poor economy, will be the means of saving the world. I pray you go further than such schemes as these. You must change the *heart*. It is but little use to alter the outward till you have renewed the inward. It is not the bark of the tree that is wrong so much as the sap. It is not the skin—it is the blood—no, deeper than the blood—the very essence of the nature must be altered. The man must be as much made anew as if he never had an existence. No, a greater miracle than this—these most be two miracles combined—the old things must pass away and new things must be created by the Holy Spirit.

I tremble while I speak upon this theme, lest I, your minister, should know in theory but not in experience a mystery so sublime as this. What shall we do but together offer a prayer like this—“O God, if we are not regenerate let us know the worst of our state. And if we are, let us never

cease to plead and pray for others till they, too, shall be renewed by the Holy Spirit.” That which is born of the flesh is flesh. Its best endeavors go no higher than flesh and the flesh cannot inherit the kingdom of God. That which is born of the Spirit alone is Spirit and only the Spirit can enter into spiritual things and inherit the spiritual portion which God has provided for His people.

I have thus passed through the somewhat delicate and extremely difficult task of bringing out the Apostle’s meaning—the comparison between the two births—which are the doorsteps of the two lives.

II. I now come to the second point—THE MANIFEST DIFFERENCE OF THE TWO LIVES RESULTING FROM THE TWO BIRTHS.

Brethren, look around you. To what shall we compare this immense assembly? As I look upon the many colors and the varied faces, even if it were not in the text, I am certain that a meadow thickly besprinkled with flowers would rise up before my imagination. Look at the mass of people gathered together and does it not remind you of the field in its full summer glory when the king-cups, daisies, cloves and grass blooms, are sunning themselves in countless varieties of beauty? Yes, but not only in the poet’s eye is there a resemblance—but in the mind of God—and in the experience of man.

“All flesh is grass.” All that is born of the first birth, if we compare it to grass in poetry may be compared to it also in fact—from the frailty and shortness of its existence. We passed the meadows but a month ago and they were moved in verdant billows by the breeze like waves of ocean when they are softly stirred with the evening gale. We looked upon the whole scene and it was exceedingly fair. We passed it yesterday and the mower’s scythe had cut asunder beauty from its roots and there it lay in heaps ready to be gathered when fully dry.

The grass is cut down so soon—but if it stood, it would wither and handfuls of dust would take the place of the green and colored leaves—for does not the grass wither and the flowers thereof fall avidly? Such is mortal life. We are not living, Brethren—we are dying. We begin to breathe and we make the number of our breaths less. Our pulse is “beating funeral marches to the tomb.” The sand runs down from the upper bulb of the glass and it is emptying fast. Death is written upon every brow. Man, know that you are mortal, for you all are born of woman. Your first birth gave you life and death together.

You do only breathe awhile to keep you from the jaws of the grave—when that breath is spent—into the dust of death you fall there and then. Everything, especially during the last few weeks, has taught us the frailty of human life. The senator who guided the affairs of nations and beheld the rise of a free kingdom lived not to see it fully organized, but expired with many weighty secrets unspoken. The judge who has sentenced many, receives his own sentence at the last. From this earth, since last we

met together, master-minds have been taken away and even the monarch on his throne has owned the monarchy of Death.

How many of the masses, too, have fallen and have been carried to their long home! There have been funerals, some of them funerals of honored men who perished doing their Master's will in saving human life and alas, there have been unhonored burials of others who did the will of Satan and have inherited the flame. There have been deaths abundant on the right hand and on the left and well have Peter's words been proved—"All flesh is grass and all the glory thereof is as the flower of the field. The grass withers and the flower thereof falls away."

Now, Brethren, let us look at the other side of the question. The second birth gave us a nature, too—Will that also die? Is it like grass and its glory like the flower of the field? No, most certainly not. The first nature dies because the seed was corruptible. But the second nature was not created by corruptible seed—but with incorruptible—the Word of God into which God has infused His own life—so that it quickens us by the Spirit. That incorruptible Word produces an incorruptible life. The child of God in his new nature never dies. He can never see death. Christ, who is in him, is the immortality and the life. "He that lives and believes in Christ shall never die."

And yet again—"Though he were dead yet shall he live." When we are born again we receive a nature which is indestructible by accident, which is not to be consumed by fire, drowned by river, weakened by old age, or smitten down by blast of pestilence. A nature invulnerable to poison—a nature which shall not be destroyed by the sword. A nature which can never die till the God that gave it should Himself expire and Deity die out. Think of this, my Brethren and surely you will find reason to rejoice. But perhaps, you ask me, why it is the new nature can never die? I am sure the text teaches it never can. "But not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, even of the Word of God which lives and abides forever."

If that does not teach that the spiritual nature which is given us by the new birth never dies, it does not teach anything at all. And if it does teach that, where goes Arminian doctrine of falling from grace? Where goes your Arminian fears of perishing after all? But let me show you why it is that this nature never dies. First, *from the fact of its nature*. It is in itself incorruptible. Every like produces in like. Man, dying man, produces dying man. God, eternal God, produces everlasting nature when He begets again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Christ from the dead. "As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy." The earthy dies, we who are earthy die, too.

"As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." The heavenly never dies and if we are born as the heavenly, the heavenly nature dies neither. "The first Adam was made a living soul." We are made living souls, too, but that soul at last is separated from the body. "The second Adam is made a quickening spirit," and that spirit is not only alive but

quickenings. Do you not perceive it?—the first was a quickened *soul*—quickened, receiving life full a season. The second is a quickening *spirit*, giving out life, rather than receiving it.

Like that angel whom some poet pictures who perpetually shot forth sparklers of fire, having within himself an undying flame, the fountain of perpetual floods of light and heat. So is it with the new nature within us—it is not merely a quickened thing which may die—but a quickening thing which cannot die, being Spirit like unto Christ the quickening Spirit. But then, more than this, the new nature cannot die because *the Holy Spirit perpetually supplies it with life*. “He gives more grace”—grace upon grace. You know the Apostle puts it thus—“If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more being reconciled we shall be saved by *His life*.”

Is not the Holy Spirit the divine Agent by whom the life of Christ is infused into us? Now, the life-floods which the Holy Spirit sends into us co-work with the immortality of the new-born spirit and so doubly preserve the eternity of our bliss. But then, again, *we are in vital union with Christ* and to suppose that the new nature could die out were to imagine that a member of Christ would die, that a finger, a hand, an arm, could rot from the Person of Jesus—that He could be maimed and divided. Does not the Apostle say, “Is Christ divided?” And was it not written, “Not a bone of Him shall be broken”?

And how is this true if we were broken from Him, or rolled from His body? My Brethren, we receive the divine sap through Christ the Stem. That divine sap keeps us alive but more—the very fact that we are joined to Christ preserves our life, “Because I live you shall live also.” The new life cannot die, *because God is pledged to keep it alive*. “I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand.” “My Father which gave them Me is greater than all and none shall pluck them out of My Father’s hand.” And yet again—“The water which I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life.”

And yet again—“He that believes in Me shall never hunger and never thirst.” And so might we repeat multitudes of passages where the divine promise engages omnipotence and divine wisdom to preserve the new life. So then, let us gather these all up in one. As a man born of the flesh, I shall die—as a new man born of the Spirit, I shall never die. You, O flesh, the offspring of flesh—you shall see corruption. You, O spirit, new-created spirit, offspring of the Lord—you shall never see corruption. With our glorious Covenant Head we may exclaim, “You will not leave My soul in Hell, nor will You suffer Your Holy One to see corruption.”

I shall die, yet never die. My life shall flee, yet never flee. I shall pass away and yet abide. I shall be carried to the tomb and yet, soaring upward, the tomb can never contain the quickened Spirit. Oh, Children of God, I know not any subject that ought more thoroughly to lift you out of

yourselves than this. Now let the divine nature live in you. Come, put down the animal for a moment, put down the mere mental faculty. Let the living spark blaze up. Come, let the divine element, the newborn nature that God has given to you—let that now speak—and let its voice be praise. Let it look up and let it breathe its own atmosphere, the Heaven of God, in which it shall shortly rejoice.

O God, our Father, help us to walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, seeing that we have by Your own self been quickened to an immortal life.

III. I now come to the last and perhaps the most interesting point of all. THE GLORY OF THE TWO NATURES IS CONTRASTED.

Every nature has its glory. Brethren, look at the field again. There is not only the grass but there is the flower which is the glory of the field. Sometimes many colored hues begem the pastures with beauty. Now the painted flower is the glory of the verdant field. It comes up later than the grass and it dies sooner, for the grass is up a long while before the flower blooms and when the flower is dead, the stalk of the grass still retains vitality. It is precisely so with us. Our nature has its glory, but that glory does not arrive for years.

The babe has not yet the glory of full manhood and when that glory does come, it dies before our nature dies, for “they that look out of the windows are darkened, the grinders cease because they are few.” The man loses his glory and becomes a tottering imbecile before life becomes extinct. The flower comes up last and dies first—our glory comes last and dies first, too. O flesh! O flesh! What contempt is passed upon you! Your very existence is frail and feeble but your glory more frail and feeble still. It grows but late and then it dies—alas how soon! Give me your attention for a moment while I tell you briefly. In some, the glory of the flesh is BEAUTY. Their face is fair to look upon and as the handiwork of the Great Worker, it should be admired. When a person becomes vain of it, beauty becomes shame. But to have well-proportioned features is, doubtless, no mean endowment. There is a glory in the beauty of the flesh but how late it is developed—and how soon it fades! How soon do the cheeks become hollow! How frequently does the complexion grow sallow and the bright eyes are dimmed and the comely visage is marred!

A part, too, of the glory of the flesh is *physical strength*. To be a strong man, to have the bones well set and the muscles well braced—to have good muscular vigor is no small thing. Many men take delight in the legs of a man and in the strength of his arm. Well, as God made him, he is a wonderful creature and it were wrong for us not to admire the masterpiece of God. But how late does muscular strength arrive! There are the days of infancy and there are the days of youth when as yet the strong man is but feeble.

And then, when he has had his little hey-day of strength, how does the stalwart frame begin to rock and reel! And the rotting teeth and the whit-

ened hair show that death has begun to claim the clay and will soon take possession of it for himself. "The glory thereof falls away." To others, the glory of the flesh lies rather *in the mind*. They have eloquence. They can so speak as to enchant the ears of the multitude. The bees of eloquence have made their hives between the lips of the orator and honey distils with every word. Yes, but how late is this a coming! How many years before the child speaks articulately and before the young man is able to deliver himself with courage!

And then, how soon it goes!—till, mumbling from between his toothless jaws, the poor man would speak the words of wisdom, but the lips of age deny him utterance. Or, let the glory be *wisdom*. There is a man whose glory is his masterly power over others. He can foresee and look further than other men, he can match craft by craft—he is so wise that his fellows put confidence in him. This is the glory of the flesh. How late is it in coming!—from the puking child, what a distance up to the wise man! And then how soon it is gone! How often, while yet the man himself in his flesh is in vigor has the mind strewn symptoms of decay! Well, take what you will to be the glory of the flesh, I will still pronounce over it "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." If the flesh is frail, the glory of the flesh is frailer still. If the grass withers, certainly the flower of the grass withers before it.

But is this true of the new nature? Brethren, is this true of that which was implanted at the second birth? I have just shown you, I think, that the existence of the new nature is eternal—because it was not born of corruptible seed—but of incorruptible. I have tried to show that it can never perish and can never die. But your unbelief suggests, "Perhaps its glory may." No, its glory never can. And what is the glory of the new-born nature? Why, its glory first of all is *beauty*. But what is its beauty? It is to be like the Lord Jesus. We are, when we shall see Him as He is, to be like Him.

And *that* beauty shall never fade. Eternity itself shall not hollow the cheeks of this seraphic comeliness, nor dim the brilliant eye of this celestial radiance. We shall be like Christ, but the likeness shall never be marred by time, nor consumed by decay. I said just now that the glory of the flesh consisted sometimes in its strength—so does the glory of the Spirit consist in its vigor—but then it is a force that never shall be expended. The strength of the new-born nature is the Holy Spirit Himself and while Deity remains omnipotent, our new nature shall go on increasing in vigor till we come first to the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus and next come to be glorified men standing before His Throne.

The flower of the new nature you cannot see much of yet—you see through a glass darkly. That flower of glory consists perhaps, too, in eloquence. "Eloquence," you say, "how can that be?" I said the glory of the old nature might be eloquence, so with the new—but this is the eloquence—"Abba Father." This is an eloquence you can use now. It is one which when you cannot speak a word which might move an audience,

shall still remain upon your tongue to move the courts of Heaven. You shall be able to say, "Abba Father," in the very pangs of death and waking from your beds of dust and silent clay, more eloquent still you shall cry, "Hallelujah!"

You shall join the eternal chorus, swell the divine symphony of cherubim and seraphim and through eternity your glory shall never part awry. And then, if wisdom is glory, your wisdom—the wisdom which you inherit in the new nature, which is none other than Christ's who is made of God unto us—your wisdom shall never fade. In fact it shall grow, for there you shall know even as you are known. While here you see through a glass darkly, there you shall see face to face. You sip the brook today, you shall bathe in the ocean tomorrow. You see afar off now, you shall lie in the arms of wisdom by-and-by. For the glory of the Spirit never dies, but throughout eternity expanding, enlarging, blazing, glorifying itself through God, it shall go on never, never to fail.

Brethren, whatever it may be which you are expecting as the glory of your new nature, you have not yet an idea of what it will be. "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him." But though He has revealed them unto us by His Spirit, yet, I fear we have not fully learned them. However, we will say of this glory, whatever it may be, it is *incorruptible, undefiled* and it *fades not* away. The only question we have to ask and with that we wish, is—are we born again? Brethren, it is impossible for you to possess the existence of the new life without the new birth and the glory of the new birth you cannot know without the new heart.

I say—*are you born again?* Do not stand up and say, "I am a Churchman, I was baptized and confirmed." That you may be and yet not be born again. Do not say, "I am a Baptist, I have professed my faith and was immersed." That you may be and not be born again. Do not say, "I am of Christian parents." That you may be and yet be an heir of wrath, even as others. Are you born again? May God the Holy Spirit reveal Christ to you and when you come to see Christ with the tearful eyes of a penitential faith—then you will know, by God's grace, that you are born again and that you have passed from death unto life.

"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, he that believes not shall be damned." God help you to believe!

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THE WITHERING WORK OF THE SPIRIT NO. 999

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 9, 1871,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass,
and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field:
the grass withers, the flower fades: because
the Spirit of the Lord blows upon it surely the people is grass.
The grass withers, the flower fades: but the Word of
our God shall stand forever.”
Isaiah 40:6-8.*

*“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible,
by the Word of God, which lives
and abides forever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the
flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower thereof falls away:
but the Word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the Word
which by the Gospel is preached unto you.”
1 Peter 1:23-25.*

THE passage in Isaiah which I have just read in your hearing may be used as a very eloquent description of our mortality, and if a sermon should be preached from it upon the frailty of human nature, the brevity of life, and the certainty of death, no one could dispute the appropriateness of the text. Yet I venture to question whether such a discourse would strike the central teaching of the Prophet. Something more than the decay of our material flesh is intended here. The *carnal mind*, the flesh in another sense, was intended by the Holy Spirit when He bade His messenger proclaim those words.

It does not seem to me that a mere expression of the mortality of our race was needed in this place by the context. It would hardly keep pace with the sublime Revelations which surround it, and would in some measure be a digression from the subject in hand. The notion that we are here simply reminded of our mortality does not square with the New Testament exposition of it in Peter, which I have also placed before you as a text.

There is another and more *spiritual* meaning here besides and beyond that which would be contained in the great and very obvious Truth of God that all of us must die. Look at the chapter in Isaiah with care. What is the subject of it? It is the Divine consolation of Zion. Zion had been tossed to and fro with conflicts—she had been smarting under the result of sin. The Lord, to remove her sorrow, bids His Prophet announce the coming of the long-expected Deliverer, the end and accomplishment of all her warfare and the pardon of all her iniquity.

There is no doubt that this is the theme of the prophecy. And further, there is no sort of question about the next point—that the Prophet goes on to foretell the coming of John the Baptist as the harbinger of the Messiah. We have no difficulty in the explanation of the passage, “Prepare you the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.” For

the New Testament again and again refers this to the Baptist and his ministry. The object of the coming of the Baptist and the mission of the Messiah, whom he heralded, was the manifestation of Divine Glory.

Observe the fifth verse—"The Glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it." Well, what next? Was it necessary to mention man's mortality in this connection? We think not. But there is much more appropriateness in the succeeding verses if we see their deeper meaning. Do they not mean this: In order to make room for the display of the Divine Glory in Christ Jesus and His salvation, there would come a withering of all the glory wherein man boasts himself—the flesh should be seen in its true nature as corrupt and dying, and the Grace of God alone should be exalted.

This would be seen under the ministry of John the Baptist first, and should be the preparatory work of the Holy Spirit in men's hearts, in all time, in order that the Glory of the Lord should be revealed and human pride be forever confounded. The Spirit blows upon the flesh, and that which seemed vigorous becomes weak, that which was fair to look upon is smitten with decay. The true nature of the flesh is thus discovered, its deceit is laid bare, its power is destroyed, and there is space for the dispensation of the ever-abiding Word, and for the rule of the Great Shepherd, whose words are Spirit and Life.

There is a withering worked by the Spirit which is the preparation for the sowing and implanting by which salvation is worked. The withering before the sowing was very marvelously fulfilled in the preaching of John the Baptist. Most appropriately he carried on his ministry in the desert, for a spiritual desert was all around him. He was the voice of one crying in the wilderness. It was not his work to plant, but to hew down. The fleshly religion of the Jews was then in its prime. Phariseeism stalked through the streets in all its pomp—men complacently rested in outward ceremonies only—and spiritual religion was at the lowest conceivable ebb.

Here and there might be found a Simeon and an Anna, but for the most part men knew nothing of spiritual religion, but said in their hearts—"We have Abraham as our father," and this is enough. What a stir John made when he called the lordly Pharisees a generation of vipers! How he shook the nation with the declaration, "Now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees"! Stern as Elijah, his work was to level the mountains, and lay low every lofty imagination. That word, "Repent," was as a scorching wind to the verdure of self-righteousness—a killing blast for the confidence of ceremonialism.

His food and his dress called for fasting and mourning. The outward token of his ministry declared the death amid which he preached, as he buried in the waters of Jordan those who came to him. "You must die and be buried, even as He who is to come will save by death and burial." This was the meaning of the emblem which he set before the crowd. His typical act was as thorough in its teaching as were His words. And as if that were not enough, he warned them of a yet more searching and trying Baptism with the Holy Spirit and with fire, and of the coming of One whose fan was in His hand, thoroughly to purge His floor.

The Spirit in John blew as the rough north wind, searching and withering, and made him to be a destroyer of the vain glorying of a fleshly relig-

ion, that the *spiritual* faith might be established. When our Lord Himself actually appeared, He came into a withered land, whose glories had all departed. Old Jesse's stem was bare, and our Lord was the Branch which grew out of his root. The scepter had departed from Judah, and the law-giver from between his feet, when Shiloh came.

An alien sat on David's throne, and the Roman called the Covenant land his own. The lamp of prophecy burned but dimly, even if it had not utterly gone out. No Isaiah had arisen of late to console them, nor even a Jeremiah to lament their apostasy. The whole economy of Judaism was as a worn-out vesture. It had waxed old, and was ready to vanish away. The priesthood was disarranged. Luke tells us that Annas and Caiaphas were high priests that year—two in a year or at once—a strange setting aside of the laws of Moses. All the dispensation which gathered around the visible, or as Paul calls it, the “worldly” sanctuary, was coming to a close.

And when our Lord had finished His work, the veil of the temple was rent in two, the sacrifices were abolished, the priesthood of Aaron was set aside and carnal ordinances were abrogated—for the Spirit revealed spiritual things. When He came who was made a Priest, “not after the Law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life,” there was, “a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.” Such are the facts of history.

But I am not about to dilate upon *them*—I am coming to your own *personal* histories—to the experience of every child of God. In every one of us it must be fulfilled that all that is of the flesh in us, seeing it is but as grass, must be withered, and the comeliness thereof must be destroyed. The Spirit of God, like the wind, must pass over the field of our souls and cause our beauty to be as a fading flower. He must so convince us of sin, and so reveal ourselves to ourselves, that we shall see that the flesh profits nothing—that our fallen nature is corruption itself—and that “they who are in the flesh cannot please God.”

There must be brought home to us the sentence of death upon our former legal and carnal life so that the incorruptible seed of the Word of God, implanted by the Holy Spirit, may be in us, and abide in us forever. The subject of this morning is the withering work of the Spirit upon the souls of men! And when we have spoken upon it, we shall conclude with a few words upon the implanting work, which always follows where this withering work has been performed.

I. Turning, then, to THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT IN CAUSING THE GOODLINESS OF THE FLESH TO FADE, let us, first observe that the work of the Holy Spirit upon the soul of man in withering up that which is of the flesh is *very unexpected*. You will observe in our text, that even the speaker himself—though doubtless one taught of God—when he was bid to cry, said, “What shall I cry?” Even he did not know that in order to the comforting of God's people, there must first be experienced a preliminary visitation.

Many preachers of God's Gospel have forgotten that the Law is the schoolmaster to bring men to Christ. They have sown on the unbroken fallow ground and forgotten that the plow must break the clods. We have seen too much of trying to sew without the sharp needle of the Spirit's convicting power. Preachers have labored to make Christ precious to

those who think themselves rich and increased in goods—and it has been labor in vain. It is our duty to preach Jesus Christ even to self-righteous sinners, but it is certain that Jesus Christ will never be accepted by them while they hold themselves in high esteem.

Only the sick will welcome the physician. It is the work of the Spirit of God to convict men of sin, and until they are convicted of sin, they will never be led to seek the righteousness which is of God by Jesus Christ. I am persuaded that wherever there is a real work of Divine Grace in any soul, it begins with a pulling down—the Holy Spirit does *not* build on the old foundation. Wood, hay, and stubble will not do for Him to build upon. He will come as the fire, and cause a conflagration of all proud nature's Babels. He will break our bow and cut our spear in sunder, and burn our chariot in the fire.

When every sandy foundation is gone, then, but not till then, behold He will lay in our souls the great Foundation Stone, chosen of God, and precious. The awakened sinner, when he asks that God would have mercy upon him, is much astonished to find that, instead of enjoying a speedy peace, his soul is bowed down within him under a sense of Divine Wrath. Naturally enough he enquires—"Is this the answer to my prayer? I prayed the Lord to deliver me from sin and self, and is this the way in which He deals with me?"

"I said, 'Hear me,' and behold He *wounds* me with the wounds of a cruel one. I said, 'Clothe me,' and lo, He has torn off from me the few rags which covered me before, and my nakedness stares me in the face. I said, 'Wash me,' and behold He has plunged me in the ditch till my own clothes abhor me. Is this the way of Divine Grace?" Sinner, be not surprised—it is even so. Do you perceive not the cause of it? How can you be healed while the proud flesh is in your wound? It must come out. It is the only way to heal you permanently—it would be folly to film over your sore, or heal your flesh, and leave the leprosy within your bones.

The Great Physician will cut with His sharp knife till the corrupt flesh is removed, for only thus can a sure healing work be worked in you. Do you not see that it is divinely wise that before you are clothed you should be stripped! What? Would you have Christ's lustrous righteousness outside whiter than any fuller can make it, and your own filthy rags concealed within? No, Man! They must be put away! Not a single thread of your own must be left upon you. It cannot be that God should cleanse you until He has made you see *somewhat* of your defilement. For you would never value the precious blood which cleanses us from all sin if you had not first of all been made to mourn that you are altogether an unclean thing.

The convincing work of the Spirit, wherever it comes, is unexpected, and even to the child of God in whom this process has still to go on, it is often startling. We begin again to build that which the Spirit of God had destroyed. Having begun in the Spirit, we act as if we would be made perfect in the flesh. And then, when our mistaken rebuilding has to be leveled with the earth, we are almost as astonished as we were when first the scales fell from our eyes. In some such condition as this was Newton when he wrote—

"I asked the Lord that I might grow

***In faith and love and every Grace,
Might more of His salvation know,
And seek more earnestly His face.
It was He who taught me thus to pray,
And He, I trust, has answered prayer.
But it has been in such a way
As almost drove me to despair.
I hoped that in some favored hour,
At once He'd answer my request,
And by His love's constraining power
Subdue my sins, and give me rest.
Instead of this, He made me feel
The hidden evils of my heart.
And let the angry powers of Hell
Assault my soul in every part."***

Ah, marvel not, for thus the Lord is likely to answer His people. The voice which says, "Comfort you, comfort you My people," achieves its purpose by first making them hear the cry, "All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field."

2. Furthermore, *this withering is after the usual order of the Divine operation.* If we consider well the way of God, we shall not be astonished that He begins with His people by terrible things in righteousness. Observe the method of creation. I will not venture upon any dogmatic theory of geology, but there seems to be every probability that this world has been fitted up and destroyed, refitted and then destroyed again many times before the last arranging of it for the habitation of men. "In the beginning God created the Heaven and the earth." Then came a long interval, and at length, at the appointed time, during six days, the Lord prepared the earth for the human race.

Consider, then, the state of matters when the Great Architect began His work. What was there in the beginning? Originally, nothing. When He commanded the ordering of the earth, how was it? "The earth was without form and void. And darkness was upon the face of the deep." There was no trace of another's plan to interfere with the Great Architect. "With whom took He counsel, and who instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of judgment, and taught Him knowledge, and showed to Him the way of understanding?"

He received no contribution of column or pillar towards the temple which He intended to build. The earth was, as the Hebrew puts it, Tohu and Bohu, disorder and confusion—in a word—chaos. So it is in the new creation. When the Lord creates us new, He borrows nothing from the old man, but makes *all* things new. He does not repair and add a new wing to the old house of our depraved nature, but He builds a new temple for His own praise. We are spiritually without form and empty, and darkness is upon the face of our heart, and His Word comes to us, saying, "Light be," and there is light, and before long life and every precious thing.

To take another instance from the ways of God. When man had fallen, when did the Lord bring Him the Gospel? The first whisper of the Gospel, as you know, was, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her Seed. He shall bruise your head." That whisper came to man shivering in the presence of his Maker, having nothing more to say by way of excuse, but standing guilty before the Lord. When did the

Lord God clothe our parents? Not until first of all He had put the question, "Who told you that you were naked?" Not until the fig leaves had utterly failed did the Lord bring in the covering skin of the sacrifice, and wrap them in it.

If you will pursue the meditation upon the acts of God with men, you will constantly see the same thing. God has given us a wonderful type of salvation in Noah's ark. But Noah was saved in that ark in connection with death. He himself, as it were, confined alive in a tomb, and all the world besides left to destruction. All other hope for Noah was gone, and yet the ark rose upon the waters.

Remember the redemption of the children of Israel out of Egypt—it occurred when they were in the saddest plight, and their cry went up to Heaven by reason of their bondage. When no arm brought salvation, then with a high hand and an outstretched arm the Lord brought forth His people. Everywhere before the salvation there comes the humbling of the creature, the overthrow of human hope. As in the backwoods of America before there can be tillage, the planting of cities, the arts of civilization, and the transactions of commerce, the woodman's axe must hack and hew—the stately trees of centuries must fall—the roots must be burned, the odd reign of nature disturbed. The old must go before the new can come.

Even thus the Lord takes away the first, that He may establish the second. The first Heaven and the first earth must pass away, or there cannot be a new Heaven and a new earth. Now, as it has been outwardly, we ought to expect that it would be the same within us. And when these withering and fading occur in our souls, we should only say, "It is the Lord, let Him do as seems Him good."

3. I would have you notice, thirdly, that we are taught in our text *how universal this process is in its range* over the hearts of all those upon whom the Spirit works. The withering is a withering of what? Of part of the flesh and some portion of its tendencies? No, observe, "ALL flesh is grass. And *all* the goodness thereof"—the very choice and pick of it—"is as the flower of the field." And what happens to the grass? Does any of it live? "The grass withers," all of it. The flower, will not that abide? So fair a thing, has not that an immortality? No, it fades—it utterly falls away.

So wherever the Spirit of God breathes on the soul of man, there is a withering of everything that is of the flesh, and it is seen that to be carnally minded is death. Of course we all know and confess that where there is a work of Grace, there must be a destruction of our delight in the pleasures of the flesh. When the Spirit of God breathes on us, that which was sweet becomes bitter. That which was bright becomes dim. A man cannot love sin and yet possess the life of God. If he takes pleasure in fleshly joys in which he once delighted, he is still what he was—he minds the things of the flesh, and therefore he is after the flesh—and he shall die.

The world and the lusts thereof are, to the unregenerate, as beautiful as the meadows in spring, when they are bedecked with flowers—but to the regenerate soul they are a wilderness, a salt land, and not inhabited. Of those very things in which we once took delight we say, "Vanity of vanities. All is vanity." We cry to be delivered from the poisonous joys of

earth—we loathe them—and marvel that we could once riot in them. Beloved Hearers, do you know what this kind of withering means? Have you seen the lusts of the flesh, and the pomps and the pleasures thereof all fade away before your eyes? It must be so, or the Spirit of God has not visited your soul.

But mark, wherever the Spirit of God comes, He destroys the goodliness and flower of the flesh. That is to say, *our* righteousness withers as our sinfulness. Before the Spirit comes we think ourselves as good as the best. We say, “All these commandments have I kept from my youth up,” and we superciliously ask, “What do I lack?” Have we not been moral? No, have we not even been *religious*? We confess that we may have committed faults, but we think them very venial, and we venture, in our wicked pride, to imagine that, after all, we are not so vile as the Word of God would lead us to think.

Ah, my dear Hearer, when the Spirit of God blows on the comeliness of your flesh, its beauty will fade as a leaf, and you will have quite another idea of yourself. You will then find no language too severe in which to describe your past character. Searching deep into your motives, and investigating that which moved you to your actions, you will see so much of evil that you will cry with the publican, “God be merciful to me, a sinner!”

When the Holy Spirit has withered up in us our self-righteousness, He has not half completed His work. There is much more to be destroyed, and among the rest, away must go our boasted power of resolution. Most people conceive that they can turn to God whenever they resolve to do so. “I am a man of such strength of mind,” says one, “that if I made up my mind to be religious, I should be so without difficulty.” “Ah,” says another volatile spirit, “I believe that one of these days I can correct the errors of the past, and commence a new life.”

Ah, dear Hearers, the resolutions of the flesh are goodly flowers, but they must all fade. When visited by the Spirit of God we find that even when the will is present with us—how to perform that which we would, we find not. Yes, and we discover that our will is averse to all that is good, and that naturally we will not come unto Christ that we may have life. What poor frail things resolutions are when seen in the light of God’s Spirit! Still the man will say, “I believe I have, after all, within myself an enlightened conscience and an intelligence that will guide me aright. The light of nature I will use, and I do not doubt that if I wander somewhat I shall find my way back again.”

Ah, Man! Your wisdom, which is the very flower of your nature—what is it but folly—though you know it not? Unconverted and unrenewed, you are in God’s sight no wiser than the wild ass’ colt. I wish you were in your own esteem humbled as a little child at Jesus’ feet, and made to cry, “Teach You me.” When the withering wind of the Spirit moves over the carnal mind it reveals the death of the flesh in all respects, especially in the matter of power towards that which is good. We then learn that Word of our Lord—“Without Me you can do nothing.”

When I was seeking the Lord, I not only believed that I could not pray without Divine help, but I felt in my very soul that I could not. Then I could not even feel aright, or mourn as I would, or groan as I would. I longed to long more after Christ, but, alas, I could not even feel that I

needed Him as I ought to feel it. This heart was then as hard as adamant, as dead as those that rot in their graves. Oh, what would I, at times, have given for a tear! I wanted to repent, but could not! I longed to believe, but could not. I felt bound, hampered, and paralyzed. This is a humbling revelation of God's Holy Spirit, but a necessary one—for the faith of the flesh is not the faith of God's elect.

The faith which justifies the soul is the *gift* of God and not of ourselves. That repentance which is the work of the flesh will need to be repented of. The flower of the flesh must wither—only the seed of the Spirit will produce fruit unto perfection. The heirs of Heaven are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of man, but of GOD. If the work in us is not the Spirit's working, but our own, it will droop and die when most we require its protection. And its end will be as the grass which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven.

4. You see, then, the universality of this withering work within us. But I beg you also to notice *the completeness of it*. The grass, what does it do? Droop? No, wither. The flower of the field—what of that? Does it hang its head a little? No, according to Isaiah it fades. And according to Peter it falls away. There is no reviving it with showers—it has come to its end. Even thus are the awakened led to see that in their flesh there dwells no good thing. What dying and withering work some of God's servants have had in their souls!

Look at John Bunyan, as he describes himself in his, "Grace Abounding"! For how many months and even years was the Spirit engaged in writing death upon all that was the old Bunyan in order that he might become, by Divine Grace, a new man fitted to track the pilgrims along their heavenly way. We have not all endured the ordeal so long, but in every child of God there must be a death to sin, to the Law, and to SELF. And it must be fully accomplished before he is perfected in Christ and taken to Heaven.

Corruption cannot inherit incorruption. It is through the Spirit that we mortify the deeds of the body, and therefore live. But cannot the fleshly mind be improved? By no means. For "the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither, indeed, can be." Cannot you improve the old nature? No! "You must be born again." Can it not be taught heavenly things? No. "The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

There is nothing to be done with the old nature but to let it be laid in the grave. It must be dead and buried, and when it is so, then the incorruptible seed that lives and abides forever will develop gloriously! The fruit of the new birth will come to maturity and Grace shall be exalted in Glory. The old nature never does improve, it is as earthly, and sensual, and devilish in the saint of eighty years of age as it was when first he came to Christ. It is unimproved and unimprovable. Towards God it is enmity itself—every imagination of the thoughts of the heart is evil, and that continually. The old nature called "the flesh," lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other." Neither can there be peace between them.

5. Let us further notice that all *this withering work in the soul is very painful*. As you read these verses do they not strike you as having a very funereal tone? “All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withers, the flower fades.” This is mournful work, but it must be done. I think those who experience much of it when they first come to Christ have great reason to be thankful. Their course in life will, in all probability, be much brighter and happier. I have noticed that persons who are converted very easily, and come to Christ with but comparatively little knowledge of their own depravity, have to learn it afterwards.

And they remain for a long time babes in Christ, and are perplexed with masters that would not have troubled them if they had experienced a deeper work at first. No, Sir, if Divine Grace has begun to build in your soul and left any of the old walls of self-trust standing, they will have to come down sooner or later. You may congratulate yourself upon their remaining, but it is a false congratulation—your glorying is not good. I am sure of this, that Christ will never put a new piece upon an old garment, or new wine in old bottles—He knows the garment would be worse in the long run, and the bottles would burst.

All that is of nature’s spinning must be unraveled. The natural building must come down, wood and plaster, roof and foundation—and we must have a house not made with hands. It was a great mercy for our city of London that the great fire cleared away all the old buildings which were the lair of the plague. A far healthier city was then built. And it is a great mercy for a man when God sweeps right away all his own righteousness and strength. When He makes him feel that he is *nothing* and can be nothing, and drives him to confess that Christ must be All in All—and that his only strength lies in the eternal might of the ever-blessed Spirit.

Sometimes in a house of business an old system has been going on for years and it has caused much confusion, and allowed much dishonesty. You come in as a new manager and you adopt an entirely new plan. Now, try if you can, and graft your method on to the old system. How it will worry you! Year after year you say to yourself, “I cannot work it—if I had swept the whole away and started afresh, clear from the beginning, it would not have given me one-tenth of the trouble.” God does not intend to graft the system of Grace upon corrupt nature, nor to make the new Adam grow out of the old Adam.

But He intends to teach us this—“You are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” Salvation is not of the flesh but of the Lord alone. That which is born of the flesh is only flesh at the best. And only that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. It must be the Spirit’s work altogether, or it is not what God will accept. Observe, Brothers and Sisters, that although this is painful *it is inevitable*. I have already entrenched upon this, and shown you how necessary it is that all of the old should be taken away. But let me further remark that it is inevitable that the old should go, because it is, in itself, *corruptible*.

Why does the grass wither? Because it is a withering thing. “Its root is ever in its way, and it must die.” How could it spring out of the earth, and be immortal? It is no amaranth—it blooms not in Paradise—it grows in a soil on which the curse has fallen. Every supposed good thing that grows

out of your own self is like yourself—mortal—and it must die. The seeds of corruption are in all the fruits of manhood's tree. Let them be as fair to look upon as Eden's clusters, they must decay.

Moreover, it would never do, my Brothers and Sisters, that there should be something of the flesh in our salvation and something of the Spirit. For if it were so there would be a division of the honor. Up to now the praises of God—beyond this my own praises—if I were to win Heaven partly through what I had done, and partly through what Christ had done. And if the energy which sanctified me was in a measure my own, and in a measure Divine, they that divide the work shall divide the reward. And the songs of Heaven, while they would be partly to Jehovah, must also be partly to the creature.

But it shall not be. Down, proud flesh! Down, I say. Though you cleanse and purge yourself as you may, you are to the core *corrupt*. Though you labor unto weariness, you build wood that will be burned, and stubble that will be turned to ashes. Give up your own self-confidence and let the work be, and the merit be where the honor shall be, namely, with God alone. It is inevitable, then, that there should be all this withering.

7. This last word by way of comfort to any that are passing through the process we are describing, and I hope some of you are. It gives me great joy when I hear that you unconverted ones are very miserable, for the miseries which the Holy Spirit works are always the prelude to happiness. *It is the Spirit's work to wither.* I rejoice in our translation, "Because the Spirit of the Lord blows upon it." It is true the passage may be translated, "The Wind of the Lord blows upon it."

One word, as you know, is used in the Hebrew both for "Wind" and "Spirit," and the same is true of the Greek. But let us retain the old translation here, for I conceive it to be the real meaning of the text. The Spirit of God it is that withers the flesh. It is not the devil that killed my self-righteousness. I might be afraid if it were—nor was it *myself* that humbled myself by a voluntary and needless self-degradation—it was the Spirit of God. Better to be broken in pieces by the Spirit of God, than to be made whole by the flesh! What does the Lord say? "I kill." But what next? "I make alive." He never makes any alive but those He kills.

Blessed be the Holy Spirit when He kills me! When He drives the sword through the very heart of my own merits and my self-confidence, then He makes me alive. "I wound, and I heal." He never heals those whom He has not wounded. Then blessed be the hand that wounds! Let it go on wounding! Let it cut and tear! Let it lay bare to me myself at my very worst, that I may be driven to self-despair and may fall back upon the free mercy of God—and receive it as a poor, guilty, lost, helpless, undone sinner!

May we, by His Grace, cast ourselves into the arms of Sovereign Grace, knowing that God must *give* all, and Christ must *be* all, and the Spirit must *work* all—and man must be as clay in the potter's hands, that the Lord may do with him as seems to Him good. Rejoice, dear Brothers and Sisters, however low you are brought, for if the Spirit humbles you He means no evil, but He intends infinite good to your soul.

II. Now, let us close with a few sentences concerning THE IMPLANTATION. According to Peter, although the flesh withers, and the flower falls

away, yet in the children of God there is an unwithering something of another kind. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which lives and abides forever." "The Word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you."

Now, the Gospel is of use to us because it is not of human origin. If it were of the flesh, all it could do for us would not land us beyond the flesh. But the Gospel of Jesus Christ is super-human, Divine, and spiritual. In its conception it was of God. Its great Gift, even the Savior, is a Divine Gift. And all its teachings are full of Deity. If you, my Hearer, believe a Gospel which you have thought out for yourself, or a philosophical Gospel which comes from the brain of man, it is of the flesh and will wither—and you will die—and be *lost* through trusting in it. The only word that can bless you and be a seed in your soul must be the Living and Incorruptible Word of the eternal Spirit.

Now this is the incorruptible Word, that, "God was made flesh and dwelt among us." That, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." This is the incorruptible Word, that, "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." "He that believes on Him is not condemned: but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." "God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son."

Now, Brethren, this is the Seed. But before it can grow in your soul, it must be planted there by the Spirit. Do you receive it this morning? Then the Holy Spirit implants it in your soul. Do you leap up to it, and say, "I believe it! I grasp it! On the Incarnate God I fix my hope. The Substitutionary Sacrifice, the complete Atonement of Christ is all my confidence. I am reconciled to God by the blood of Jesus"? Then you possess the living Seed within your soul!

And what is the result of it? Why, then, there comes, according to the text, a new life into us, as the result of the indwelling of the Living Word, and our being born again by it. A new life it is. It is not the old nature putting out its better parts. Not the old Adam refining and purifying itself and rising to something better. No—have we not said aforetime that the flesh withers and the flower thereof fades? It is an entirely *new* life. You are as much new creatures at your regeneration as if you had never existed, and had been for the first time created.

"Old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new." The child of God is beyond and above other men. Other men do not possess the Life which he has received. They are but duplex—body and soul have they. He is of triple nature—he is *spirit*, soul, and body. A fresh principle, a spark of the Divine Life has dropped into his soul. He is no longer a natural or carnal man, but he has become a *spiritual* man, understanding spiritual things and possessing a life far superior to anything that belongs to the rest of mankind. O that God, who has withered in the souls of any of you that which is of the flesh, may speedily grant you the new birth through the Word.

Now observe, to close, wherever this new life comes through the Word, it is incorruptible, it lives and abides forever. To get the good Seed out of a

true Believer's heart, and to destroy the new nature in him, is a thing attempted by earth and Hell, but never yet achieved. Pluck the sun out of the firmament, and you shall not even, then, be able to pluck Divine Grace out of a regenerate heart. It "lives and abides forever," says the text. It neither can corrupt of itself nor be corrupted. "It sins not, because it is born of God."

"I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." You have a natural life—that will die, it is of the flesh. You have a spiritual life—of that it is written—"Whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die." You have now within you the noble and true immortality—you must live as God lives, in peace and joy, and happiness.

But oh, remember, dear Hearer, if you have not this you "shall not see life." What then—shall you be annihilated? Ah, no, but, "the wrath of the Lord is upon you." You shall exist, though you shall not live. Of life you shall know nothing, for that is the gift of God in Christ Jesus. But of an everlasting *death*, full of torment and anguish, you shall be the wretched heritor—"the wrath of God abides on him." You shall be cast into "the lake of fire, which is the second death." You shall be one of those whose "worm dies not, and whose fire is not quenched."

May God, the ever-blessed Spirit, visit you! If He is now striving with you, O quench not His Divine flame! Trifle not with any holy thoughts you have. If this morning you must confess that you are not born again, be humbled by it. Go and seek mercy of the Lord! Entreat Him to deal graciously with you and save you. Many who have had nothing but moonlight have prized it, and before long they have had sunlight.

Above all, remember what the quickening Seed is, and reverence it when you hear it preached, "for this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you." Respect it, and receive it. Remember that the quickening Seed is all wrapped up in this sentence—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. But he that believes not shall be damned." The Lord bless you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—

Isaiah 40:1-11; Luke 3: 1-17; 1 Peter 1:17-25.

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A SERMON FOR MEN OF TASTE

NO. 459

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 6, 1862,
 BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Therefore laying aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisies,
 and envies and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire
 the sincere milk of the Word, that you may grow
 thereby. If, indeed, you have tasted that
 the Lord is gracious.”*
1 Peter 2:1-3.

“IF, indeed, you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.” *“If.”* *If*, then, is not a thing to be taken for granted concerning all of the human race. “If”—then there is a possibility, and a *probability*, that some may *not* have tasted that the Lord is gracious. “If, if”—then this is not a general but a *special* mercy. And it becomes our business to enquire whether we are in that company, who know the Grace of God by inward experience.

There is no spiritual favor which may not be a matter for heart-searching. At the very summit of holy delight, we meet the challenge of sentinel “If”—“*If* you, then, are risen with Christ,” and at the very bottom, even at Repentance Gate itself, he meets us with a warrant of arrest until he sees whether our sorrow is the godly sorrow that needs not to be repented of. “*If* you are the Son of God,” is not always a temptation of the devil but often a very healthy enquiry most fittingly suggested by holy anxiety to men who would build securely upon the Rock of Ages.

If at the Lord’s Table, itself, it is proper for us to say, “Lord, is it I?” when there is a Judas in the company, and if after the most intimate fellowship, Christ exclaimed, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love me?”—let no enjoyment of ordinances, let no high and rapt fellowship which we may have known, exempt us from the great duty of proving ourselves whether we are in the faith.

But, Beloved, albeit this should be a matter of heart-searching, I take it that no man ought to be content while there is any such thing as an “if” about his having tasted that the Lord is gracious. I can understand Believers saying—

*“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 do not understand their being comfortable while their souls are under such suspense. I can comprehend the doubts which arise from jealousy and holy distrust, but I cannot understand the continuance of those doubts, without a desperate struggle to clasp the Savior with the hands of faith, and say, “I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him.”

Do not rest, O Believer, till you have a full assurance of your interest in Christ. Let nothing satisfy you till, by the infallible witness of the Holy Spirit bearing witness with your spirit, you are certified that you are a child of God. Oh, trifle not here. Let no “perhaps,” and “if,” and “maybe,” satisfy your soul. Build on eternal verities and verily build upon them. Get the sure mercies of David and surely get them. Let your anchor be cast into that which is within the vein and see to it that your soul is linked to the anchor by a cable that will not break.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Jesus, I exhort and stir you up to get beyond these dreary “ifs.” Abide no more in the howling wilderness of doubts and fears. Cross the Jordan of distrust and enter the Canaan of peace, where the Canaanite still lingers but which ceases not to flow with milk and honey.

Our text mentions a *taste*—“If, indeed, you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.” And the Apostle speaks of *the duty* of those men of taste who have received this special favor. These two things shall take up our time this morning—*the taste and the duties arising out of it*. And before we conclude, we shall go back to the Psalm with which we commenced this morning, and address those who as yet have never tasted that the Lord is gracious, in the words of David—“O taste and see that the Lord is good!”

I. First, then, TASTE is prominent in the text. I scarcely need observe, that in Scripture, the Holy Spirit uses natural things as figures by which to set forth spiritual mysteries. Inasmuch as our language was ordained to speak the thoughts of the mind and to describe the things of the body, it is not fitted, in itself, for the utterance of the things of the spirit. As much as the soul is higher than the body, so much superior is the spirit (that is, the new principle implanted in regeneration) to the mere soul which every man possesses. And, as you will clearly see, if our speech had only been made for the body and had not been adapted for a being that had a soul, we should have been strangely embarrassed for the expression of our mental emotions.

And now, as our speech only reaches unto the natural soul, if we would speak of the higher thoughts and impulses of the inner and newborn spirit, we can only do so by using the words we employ concerning natural objects. In this way we do not so much describe spiritual things as they are in themselves, but bring them down to our comprehension. When we shall become pure spirits, we may have a spiritual language. When we are caught up to the third Heaven, we shall use those words which now are not lawful for a man to utter—*spiritual* words fitted for *spiritual* things.

1. *The taste here meant is doubtless faith.* Faith, in the Scripture, is all the senses. It is *sight*. “Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth.” “They looked unto Him and were lightened and their faces were not ashamed.” It is *hearing*—“Hear and your soul shall live. And I will make an Everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.” Faith hears the voice of the Spirit in effectual calling—for the dead hear the voice of God, and “they that hear shall live.” Faith is also *smelling*. “All your garments smell of myrrh and aloes and cassia.” “Your name is as ointment poured forth.” “A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto Me.”

Faith is also *touch*. By this faith the woman came behind and touched the hem of Christ's garment and by this we handle the things of the good word of life. Faith is equally the spirit's taste. "How sweet are Your Words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my lips." "Except a man eat My flesh," says Christ, "and drink My blood, there is no life in him." We shall have an inward and spiritual apprehension of the sweetness and preciousness of Christ, as the result of living faith.

2. The taste here meant is faith *in one of its highest operations*. One of the first performances of faith is hearing. We hear the voice of God, not with the outward ear alone but with the inward ear. We hear it as God's Word, and we believe it to be so. That is the hearing of faith. Then our mind looks upon the Truth of God as it is presented to us. That is to say, we understand it, we see what it means—that is the *seeing* of faith. Then we perceive its preciousness to others, if not to ourselves. We begin to admire it and find how fragrant it is. That is faith in its *smell*. Then comes the appropriating act by which we lay hold of the mercies that are offered us in Christ. That is faith in its *touch*.

Then come enjoyments, peace, delight, communion—which are faith in its *taste*. Any one of these acts of faith is saving. To hear Christ's voice as the very voice of God in the soul will save us. But that which gives the true enjoyment is the aspect of faith wherein Christ, by holy taste, becomes assimilated to us. We feed on Him. He comes into us and becomes part of us. His living word sustains us and His precious blood cheers us as generous wine. Do you ask, "In what respect does faith *taste* that the Lord is gracious?" It is faith operating by *experience*.

Dear Christian Friends, you remember the time, when laden with guilt and full of fears, you looked to Jesus Christ—it was the eye of faith which looked. After a while Christ's sweet love assured you that your sins were forgiven and you felt a calm in your soul, such as you had never known before. That was *tasting* Christ. You knew His sweetness, you knew the power there was in Him to take the bitterness out of your mouth and to put in sweetness instead. Since that time you have been in trouble but you have tasted Christ, for He has comforted you and lifted up the light of His countenance upon you.

You have been often greatly tried but He has sustained you and you have experienced that He is a very present help in time of trouble. Temptation has assailed you but you have been able to meet it by, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." And perhaps even today your soul is as full as it can be, of delightful contemplations of the loveliness, the faithfulness, the affection, the power and the glory of your precious Lord Jesus Christ. Now, this is what is meant by *tasting*. It is enjoying Christ by an act of faith and finding Him to be the altogether lovely, sweet, and precious One.

It is something more than believing Christ to be precious. It is perceiving His worth, appreciating His sweetness, enjoying His loveliness. It is lying with His left hand under our head, while His right hand does embrace us. Thrice happy is the man who has thus tasted that the Lord is gracious. Follow me, while by a figure I make this point clear as noonday. There is a rumor running through the camp of Israel, that God on the

morrow, at the rising of the sun, will feed His people. The rumor is believed. That is faith as *hearing*. Israel has heard that God will feed and Israel believes. See now—before daybreak the hosts of Israel hasten to the borders of the camp and they see lying upon the ground certain grains like coriander seed.

“This, this,” they say, “is the food that God has sent to us.” That is faith as *seeing*. They take it up in their hands. They examine it, and feel of what sort it is. That is faith as the *touch*. They put it to their nostrils. They ascertain somewhat of its character by the very smell. This is faith judging and discerning as *smell*. But lo! They place it in their mouths, and one of them says, “It tastes like wafers made with honey.” And another says “It is as fresh oil.” This is faith *enjoying*, for now they have come, not to hear of, nor see, nor smell, nor touch, alone, but as men to *eat* angel’s food and are fed even to the full. Here you see faith in its progressive works ending by the high degree of *tasting*.

3. Faith as exhibited to us under the aspect of tasting, *is a sure and certain mark of Divine Grace in the heart. It is a sure sign of vitality.* Man, by nature, is dead in trespasses and sins. See if the dead can taste. Bring the most pungent drugs—do these arouse the palate? Give them a foul draught and see if nausea can be produced. Now, put sweets to the dead man’s tongue—do the eyes glisten? It is long since that corpse has fed—does it show any satisfaction in the presence of food? No. It is dead and taste has fled with the once sentient soul. Verily, Brethren, no man can taste of Christ in his natural estate, and if you or I know Christ to be precious, we may be sure that we are alive through the Holy Spirit.

We may not be able to say when the Spirit of God came into us—perhaps this may be a trouble to us—that we do not know the day when we were quickened from our death in sin. But dear Friend, the life itself is there. Do you enjoy Christ? Is His name sweet music to you? Oh, can you roll the doctrine of His atonement under your tongue as a sweet morsel? Say, is His flesh food to you? Do you rejoice in His redemption? Then you are alive, for no dead soul ever could taste heavenly things. To taste that the Lord is good is a certain evidence that the quickening Spirit abides in you. Or, to put it in another light. If men have a taste of Christ, *it is certain evidence of a Divine change*, for men by nature find no delight in Jesus.

Books of surgery tell us of a few persons without taste but the cure for such unfortunates is unknown. Their infirmity is beyond the reach of drugs or surgery. If a man should be without hearing, the surgeon might, perhaps, effectually operate. Or if blind, the film might be removed from the visual orb. But if without taste, the defect is beyond the range of mortal power. So, if any man has a taste for Christ, inasmuch as he had it not by nature, and he could not have obtained it of himself, his is a case out of the pale of human ability. That same Christ who raised the dead, must have given this holy taste to the tasteless palate and tongue of the sinner.

I do not enquire what your experience may have been, or may not have been. If Christ is precious to you, there has been a work of Divine Grace in your heart. If you love Him, if His Presence is your joy, if His blood is

your hope, if His glory is your object and aim, and if His Person is the constant love of your soul, you could not have had this taste by nature—for you were dead. You could not have acquired this taste by learning—for this is a miracle which none but the God who is supreme over nature could have worked in you. Let every tried and troubled Christian, who nevertheless does taste that the Lord is good, take consolation from this simple remark.

4. In the next place. This taste, where it has been bestowed by Divine Grace, *is a discerning faculty*. There have been instances of persons who could not discern between the various flavors. A man was well known to a certain surgeon, who could just detect the distinction between the smell of garlic and the fragrance of a rose, but was quite incapable of knowing any difference between the perfume of a rose and of a lily. And the same person in feeding could never distinguish between different meats or drinks, except between the more pungent and rancid and the more exquisitely sweet.

Now, there are some Christians of that kind, who have some taste for Christ, but their taste is not very discerning. You may preach to them a doctrine of “ifs,” and “ands,” and “buts,” and if it is warmly delivered and well disguised, they will hardly know what they are taking. Then, on another occasion, you may give them the sure mercies of David—“shalls,” and “wills,” and everlasting verities, and oaths, and covenants, and they like that, too. For they have not yet, by reason of use, become able to discern between the Truth of God and error.

Yet, mark you, there was never yet a Christian who did not know the difference between the Rose of Sharon and the garlic of Egypt. There was never yet a man renewed by Divine Grace who did not soon discover the difference between works and Gospel, between Law and Grace. Between the dead efforts of the flesh and the living power of the quickening Spirit of the living God. I have noticed that some Christians in these modern times have but little taste, and do you know to what I have ascribed it? I think they have taken a cold and have thus lost very much of their power of taste. Oh, how many Believers there are who sit in the draught of worldliness till they get stiff-necks of carnal pride and lose their taste for heavenly things! Besides, if a man will ruin his palate with the high-spiced food of earth, it is little marvel that when he comes back to his natural food, Christ Jesus, he should have lost some of his delight in Divine things!

Now, I know there are some professors who have such a taste for worldly joys, that it is no marvel that they cannot so well discern the Divine and exquisite pleasure that is in Christ Jesus, when they are fed upon by the Holy Spirit. Yet again, I say, though the degree of discernment may vary, there is a discerning power in faith as taste. If you can feed on a religion which gives you ceremonies to trust to, you have never tasted that the Lord is gracious. If, my Hearer, you can live upon a Gospel which leads you to depend upon yourself, you have no spiritual taste, or else you would loathe, as much as any Egyptian loathed to drink of the waters of the Nile when turned into blood.

You would only drink of the cool stream of the river of life which rises at the foot of the Throne of God and flows around the base of Calvary, where Jesus shed His blood. Say, Soul, do you love Jesus only? Is He all your salvation and all your desire, and do you trust and repose wholly and solely in Him? For if not, then you have no spiritual taste—and you have no reason to believe that you belong to Jesus Christ at all.

5. But, again, to pass on, having sufficiently enlarged upon that point. Faith as a *taste is not simply a discerning but a delighting faculty*. Men derive much satisfaction from the organs of taste. We ought not to be as the glutton, whose only reason for living is that he may eat. But everyone of us may be thankful that God has not made the repairing of our frame to be an obnoxious operation and that He has given us a capacity for enjoying the flavors of food. Certain critics have a faith which is very good for discerning but never for enjoying.

They have a fine nose for heresy. The moment it comes anywhere near them they discover it. And if there is half a word in a sermon they do not like, how sure they will be to take it home. One bad fish in our basket and it will be cried all round the town before tomorrow. But let us offer ever so much that is good, we can scarce win a notice. Dear Friends, I would have God's people discern, but the *discerning* propensity ought not to destroy the *enjoying* faculty. I bless God I love the Doctrines of Grace but I never considered the Doctrines of Grace to be like drawn swords with which to fight every man living.

I know it is a good thing to be like the armed men about the bed of Solomon, each with his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night. But for my part, to recline upon that royal bed and sleep with Jesus' bosom for a pillow, is better still. I pray you, dear Friends, delight yourselves in Christ! Let your faith so taste Jesus as to make you glad. Let your joy be as the joy of harvest and sing with Zechariah, "How great is His goodness and how great is His beauty! Corn shall make the young men cheerful and new wine the maids." Better is Christ to you than all earth's harvests. He is the cluster of Eshcol, so heavy that one man can never carry all of Christ! He is not one grape. But a cluster of sweetness is our Beloved unto us!

Feed to the full! Eat, yes, drink abundantly, O Beloved! Be satiated with delight, and let your soul rejoice as with marrow and fatness—so shall you understand in the fullest degree what this taste is which so delights the soul of man! King Solomon, during his lifetime, sat at a feast. The first rich course was one which he had asked for himself. It was *wisdom*. He tasted all its dainty morsels and he cried, "In much wisdom is much grief: and he that increases knowledge increases sorrow." Then an attendant, all bedecked with gold and silver, brought in the lordly dish of *riches* and Solomon ate thereof till he cried out, "All is vanity and vexation of spirit, there is no profit under the sun."

Then there came in one who looked most bewitching, bearing the dish of carnal and fleshly *pleasure* and Solomon greedily sat down to eat—for this time, he thought—he had full sure obtained the honey that would enlighten his eyes. So Solomon feasted to the very full, and at the last he

said, “vanity of vanities. All is vanity!” But he never would have said this concerning the *true wisdom*. For at the last, when the old man ceased to be a hunter of pleasure, he bore his willing testimony to the perfection of that love which is better than wine.

Dearly Beloved, you who know what it is to taste Christ can witness that Immanuel’s love makes you like Jonathan in the woods, who did but dip the end of his spear into the honey and his eyes were enlightened. Oh, what enlightenment, what joy, what consolation, what leaping of heart is there to that man who has learned to feed on Jesus, and on Jesus Christ alone!

6. We must remark, dear Friends, that this taste of ours *is in this life imperfect*. As old master Durham says, “It is but a taste!” You have tasted that the Lord is gracious, but you do not know how good and how gracious He is. I am sure my soul was hot within me when you were singing that verse just now—

***“But when I see You as You are,
I’ll praise You as I ought.”***

There is another verse, too, which I may aptly quote—

***“When I have tasted of the grapes,
I sometimes long to go
Where my dear Lord the vineyard keeps,
And all the clusters grow.”***

We have not yet rested beneath the vines of Canaan. We have only enjoyed the first fruits of the Spirit and they have set us hungering and thirsting for the fullness of the heavenly heritage. We groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption. We are like David. We have had a draught of water from the well of Bethlehem that is within the gate, brought to us through the valor of Christ Jesus. But we have not yet drank the clear, cool stream, in all its perfection, at the fountain head.

We are but beginners in spiritual education. We have learned the first letters of the alphabet. We cannot read words yet, much less can we read sentences—we are but infants. We have not come to the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus. As one says, “He that has been in Heaven but five minutes, knows more than all the general assembly on earth, though they were all learned divines.” We shall know more of Christ by one glimpse of Him in Heaven, than we shall know by all our learning here. It is but a taste here, and if a taste is so ravishing, what must it be to sit at the table and eat bread in the kingdom of God?

And here I must again remark that this imperfection of taste is in some Christians far more conspicuous than in others. There are some Believers who seem to have no appreciating taste for Christ—they hardly know the savor of His blessed name. I declare to you all, if Christ were not better than the visible Church, we might be weary of Him. His Church, alas, is but the blurred and blotted portrait of Himself—lovely she is. But sometimes those blots and blurs are so conspicuous to our anxious eyes that we rather mourn her uncomeliness than rejoice over her beauty. Oh, how many there are among you, professors of Christ, that are none of His!

What said the Apostle? “For many walk, of whom I have told you often and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the Cross of

Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly and whose glory is in their shame.” Dear Brethren, let us purge ourselves from the corruptions of these pretenders. Frivolity, pleasure, gain, worldliness, covetousness—what have these things to do with us? Get away from us! Get away from us! Be gone, you Fiends! But how many open their hearts and say, “Come, hide here, you unclean spirits. Come and dwell with us!”

Surely, surely, surely, you have but little taste, if any, for the manna of Christ, or you would never eat the dust which is the serpent’s meat. God quicken His people! Wash their mouths out, if necessary, even with bitter medicine, till they desire Christ anew and cleave to Him with full purpose of heart.

7. Though ours is an imperfect, we thank God *it is a growing taste*. Old Barzillai told David that he was too old a man to enjoy dainties. Said he, “Can your servant taste what I eat or what I drink?” We know that sometimes in the decline of life, the taste, like the other powers of manhood, decays. But glory be to God, a taste for Christ will never decay. The good bishop, when he was dying, was asked by his wife whether he knew her. But he shook his head, for memory had failed. His dearest friends and children, after repeating their names, asked whether their dear friend and father had not some recollection of them. But again he shook his head. “Do you remember Jesus?” said one. And oh, how he clasped his hands together, for that was a name he never could forget!

Our venerable friends who are present with us this morning, find—I hope they do—that they have a loosened grip for the world and a tighter grasp for Christ. While your eyes grow dim and you need your glasses, I hope you can see Christ more clearly than ever. God grant that some of you may be called up to the top of Pisgah and may have a view of the landscape. And there may you see your Master’s love in all the length and breadth of its fullness and richness, before yet you are raised up to Heaven by the kiss of the Most High. In dying moments, the Christian’s taste gets quickened. And whereas before he *thought* Christ sweet, now he *knows* He is! Where he once compared Him to honey, now He declares that honey from the honeycomb is sour compared with Christ.

And he can cry out with Rutherford, “Black heavens, black moon, black sun! But fair, fair, incomparably fair Lord Jesus!” He can now tread everything beneath his feet as he would a dead and corrupt thing. But his soul cries, “Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! You are brighter, fairer and more lovely to me than ever You were before!” God give us Grace that we may understand and know—*experimentally*—what it is to taste that the Lord is gracious.

II. MEN WHO HAVE THUS TASTED OF CHRIST HAVE SPECIAL SINS TO AVOID AND OBJECTS TO DESIRE.

We first dwell upon evils to be avoided. *Malice*. “Revenge is sweet,” is the proverb of the Italians and many an Englishman has half learned it, if not wholly. “Revenge is sweet.” But not to the man who has tasted Christ, for he says, “How can I have vengeance upon my fellow, when Christ has put away my sin?” Now, forgiveness is sweet and he loathes malice and turns aside from it as from venom itself.

Guile—that is craftiness whereby men rob their fellow creatures. Some men think guile a very fine thing. “That’s a sharp fellow,” says one. And sage fathers pat their boys on the back and say, “If you become a sharp fellow you will be an alderman yet.” See yonder trader, you must keep all your eyes open or he will take you in. He does not exactly tell lies but—well, he shaves very closely to the truth. It is guile—low craftiness and cunning. A man of God hates that thing. “What? I, I the servant of the God of Truth, crouch, bend, fawn, do anything but what is upright, to gain wealth?” As surely as the Lord says concerning the Laodicean Church, “I will spew you out of My mouth,” so the Believer says concerning anything that is not true and straightforward, “I am sick of it. I loathe it, I abhor it. I turn from it.”

The next thing is *hypocrisy*, whereby men are not so much robbed and injured as deceived. A Christian can be no hypocrite. Hypocrisy, like all other sins, lurks in man till the very last. But a Believer hates to pretend to be what he is not. A man who has once tasted that the Lord is gracious, is a true and transparent man in his profession. If any suppose him to be better than he is, he does not wish to wear feathers that are not his own. He would not be glorified by another man’s labors, nor build upon another man’s foundation. Hypocrisy he utterly detests and would sooner die a pauper than live a pretender. Any man among you who has tasted that the Lord is gracious, will, I am sure, without my exhortation this morning, loathe all malice, guile and hypocrisy.

Once more, put away *all evil speaking*. I am sorry to say that there are some, who I hope are Christians, who do not hate evil speaking. “Have you heard about Mrs. So-and-So?” I shall not mention names but there are fifty, perhaps a hundred, here, to whom it will apply. There is a little mischief in the village about Miss A, or Mr. B. And Mrs. Tittle-Tattle is up as early as possible and calls on Mrs. Scandal and says, “Have you heard the sad news? I hope it is not true.” “No, I have not heard it.” “Well, don’t mention it to anybody else, I hope it is not correct. But I have heard such-and-such.”

And the two sit down and they make such a breakfast over it. And they both say they hope it is not true, while all the time they are as glad of it in their hearts as ever they can be. They go on telling others they hope it is not true—and telling them not to mention it to anybody else—until they do all the mischief before they have stopped to enquire whether or not they are telling lies. Then there are the men. They like a bit of scandal in the newspapers every now and then. Public men have often to feel that evil speaking must be very sweet to the people, or surely it would never pay to print such barefaced lies.

A Christian should have nothing to do with scandal but should say in a company, “Stop! I cannot sit by and hear you say that of an absent person. If he were here, you might say what you liked, but as he is not, please hold your tongue, for I am here as a defender of those who are back-bitten.” Every absent man should have an advocate in a Christian. More especially should this be true when the rumor injures a Brother or

Sister in Christ. "It is an ill bird that fouls its own nest." And he is an ill Believer who tells tales about his fellow Christians.

If you, as a Church member, have anything against a Brother, tell him alone. And then, if it should be some public and crying sin, tell it in an orderly manner to the Church officers. But for you to go chattering about things you do not know to be true is such an offense against Church order, that if you are expelled from Church communion for it, the ejection will be justifiable. You certainly cannot expect to have fellowship with Christ if you mar the fellowship of Christ's Church by talking the one against the other.

See, now, among our different denominations, how pleased some ministers are if they can get a bone to pick against a Brother in another denomination. If there is a fresh hitch in the machinery of the Church of England, how often the Dissenter feels devoutly glad that there is likely to be an upsetting of the Episcopal communion. And I know that some Episcopalians, when they hear that in a Dissenting Church there is something wrong, say, "Well, it is a great pity." But they think to themselves, "Well, they will eat one another up and will be all the less trouble to us." Rinse your mouths! Rinse your mouths, all of you, who have said anything against your Brethren up to now and from this time forth. "If so be you have tasted that the Lord is gracious," eschew all evil speaking against your fellow men.

The Apostle, having told us what to avoid, tells us what to eat and drink. "As newborn babes desire the *sincere* milk of the Word." A most unfortunate translation, for who ever heard of "sincere milk?" "Unadulterated milk" is a more sensible translation. The Christian man should desire pure doctrine. He should desire to hear the Gospel plainly and truthfully preached. Not in the words which man's wisdom teaches, but in the words which the Holy Spirit teaches. It is a sign of declining health in a Christian when he does not love the means of Divine Grace. "But how, Sir, if I cannot get on with my minister?" Well, it may be your sin that makes him such a poor minister as you think him to be.

No doubt, while the pew is to be supplied by the pulpit, the pulpit is acted upon very greatly by the chilliness and hardness of the pew. If you prayed more for your minister you would feed better under him. But in London you have not this excuse, for there is such a choice of preachers of the Word here, that if you had a desire for the pure milk, you might obtain it somewhere or other. Oh, what a good thing it is to have spiritual hunger and thirst! When people are not hungry, you may set a fine meal before them, but they will turn up their noses at it. But let a man come fresh from the field, hungry—down he sits—no matter how rough the fare. He only wants it to be sweet, wholesome and nutritious, and he cuts huge slices for himself and feeds to the full.

Give me a congregation of hungry hearers, such as I usually see here on Sunday, with eyes that seldom turn from the preacher and with ears that catch every word! I think any man could preach to my congregation, for you come up here hungry. A minister would wish to be like the mother bird which comes back with the worm to the nest and finds all the

mouths open, everyone desiring to be fed. Now, this is just, I think, what the Apostle meant—"As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the Word." You know babes do not have set times for desiring their food. When they want it they *will* have it and will cry till they get it.

So should it be with Believers. They should have such unceremonious longings to be fed from the breasts of Heaven's consolation, that they will cry till they get the heavenly food from God their Father—that living food by which they grow and are made strong in Christ. I have thus enlarged upon the first part of the text. And now, two or three minutes only, upon the next. "O taste and see that the Lord is good!"

Dear Christian Friends, I have spoken to you of this taste. But among us this morning, in the galleries and down below here, there is a goodly sprinkle of men who do not know Christ. They have come up to this House of Prayer, not that they might know Christ, but that they might see a vast congregation and amuse themselves by novelty. Ah, how many come with this miserable object. Well, let them come for whatever they like, we are glad to see them, for being in the way, God may meet with them.

Now, to such of you who are not Believers in Christ and have never tasted that He is gracious, we say this—"O taste and see." By which we mean, *experience is necessary*. Taste and see. You cannot see without tasting. If you would know whether religion is a good and happy thing, try it. It is not rubbing the bread upon the cheek. It is *tasting*. You must have an inward sense of the things of God. "My son, give Me *your heart*." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." Let your heart believe in Jesus. Be not content with ceremonies. Rest not satisfied with outward morality. Only that which reaches the core will really affect the fruit of the tree. We must make the fountain pure, or else our filtering the stream is all in vain. "Taste and see."

Dear Hearers, I cannot insist too earnestly upon this. Get an inward religion—vital godliness—which goes into the secret parts of the heart and dwells in the inner man. Nothing but tasting can save your souls. And then we say, "Taste *and see*." We are quite sure that if you will taste you shall *see* that the Lord is good. I bear my willing witness that Christ makes a man blessed, that religion is a happy thing, and that "her ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace." But you do not believe me. Then taste and see for yourselves. "Seek the Lord while He may be found: call upon Him while He is near."

May the Spirit of God lead you to give your heart to Jesus, and you will find that the true religion of Jesus is a good thing for you. A good thing for you, young woman. A good thing for you, young man. Good for the trader; good for the gentleman. Good for the artisan—good for everyone of you. We feel very earnest that you should do this and therefore we say, "O taste and see that the Lord is good!" Do not despise our invitation! We beseech you, by the mercies of God, to give your hearts to Jesus. From our very souls, as though we pleaded for our own lives, we would beseech you. Give the things of God a patient consideration. Believe in Jesus. This is to taste. Trust Christ. This is to "taste and see that the Lord is good."

Yes, I know you will turn on your heels and say that religion is a good thing for Sundays but you do not see anything in it for everyday life. Ah, Sirs, it is for want of knowing better. If you would but taste and see, you would regret that you had not tasted before—and you would rejoice and bless the Lord that you were brought to taste at last. But you say, “*May I taste?*” Oh, yes! Divine Grace is free! Christ is free! If you will come, poor Sinner, there is none to push you back. If God has made you willing to take Christ, depend upon it, Christ was always willing to take you—for where God puts a renewed will into man, it is the image of His own eternal will. If you desire Christ, trust Him this morning. This is the way to escape from Hell and fly to Heaven.

Are you black with sin? The fountain is open—wash. Are you hungry? The door is not shut. It stands open all day—come, then, and eat. “Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters and he that has no money, come you, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” If any of you should ever regret of trusting Christ, come and blame me. Find my Master in your hearts and if He is not a good and precious Savior to you, if He does not feed your soul with gladness, keep you from sin and bring you at last to Heaven—come and tell me I am found a false witness unto Christ! From the depths of my soul I say it, I would sooner be a Christian than an emperor; sooner have Christ than a crown. And sooner bear His Cross than sit upon the throne of a Caesar.

Soul, taste and see that He is good. “But I am not fit to taste,” says one. Well but who is fit to eat? A hungry man? Are you hungry? Eat. “Oh but my hands are black with sin.” Never mind. It is not hand work here, it is mouth work. “Oh but I am afraid I have no taste and that if I did receive Christ into my heart, I should not taste His sweetness.” Mark, the taste is *in Him* and not in your mouth. Come and take Him as he is. A little child, however weak, can be fed. Put up your mouth, you weak and foolish Sinner, weary and heavy laden as you are, and by receiving Christ into your soul’s mouth, you shall find Him good, and you shall go your way rejoicing.

Hearken diligently unto the Lord and eat that which is good and let your soul delight itself in fatness. It will be an awful thing to feed on the wind forever and roll the morsels of Hell beneath your tongue to all eternity—but this *will* be your portion unless you taste of Christ. May He add His own blessing to His own glory. Amen.

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THE TEST OF TASTE

NO. 2168

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 12, 1890,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“If so be you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.”
1 Peter 2:3.***

I THINK there can be very little doubt that Peter is here quoting from Psalm 34:8: “O taste and see that the LORD is good.” As I read you the chapter just now, I could not help observing the constant traces of Old Testament language. It endears Peter to us when we see how he prizes the ancient Word of the Lord and, at the same time, it puts honor upon the Old Testament itself when we see the Holy Spirit in the New thus quoting from the Old. It is noteworthy that in Psalm 34:8 the Lord God is spoken of. The passage actually runs—“O taste and see that Jehovah is good” and Peter does not hesitate for a moment to apply the passage to the Lord Jesus. The word, “Lord,” is here used in its utmost fullness of meaning as the equivalent for Jehovah and it is applied to our Savior Jesus Christ.

That Peter is here speaking of Jesus we are sure from the context: “To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious.” The chosen foundation stone is, beyond question, the Lord Jesus and Peter uses words concerning Him which were written by Inspiration concerning Jehovah Himself. Evidently to Peter the Lord Jesus was Lord and God. He remembered the voice which he heard in the holy mount, when he was an eye-witness of His majesty: “For He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent Glory, This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

Let us continually pay Divine honor to our Lord Jesus Christ! If He is not God, our faith is vain and our hope is gone. But His Deity is no cunningly devised fable. His own works, as well as the Holy Scriptures, attest to His Godhead—the whole Church of Christ believes in Him as very God of very God and on this Rock we build our everlasting confidence. Peter had special knowledge of His Lord, for you remember that on one occasion he said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you, but My Father which is in Heaven” (Matt. 16:17).

The Father had manifested the Lord unto him as His only-begotten Son. We little wonder that he speaks of tasting that THE LORD is gracious, for by Revelation he was made to know and understand to a very high degree the Glory and Majesty of the Incarnate Son of God. That he should speak of His graciousness is also very natural, for he had himself

tasted of His Divine Grace. This same Peter had denied his Master with oaths and curses and when, after his Lord was risen, he sent a message to him by Magdalene—then he tasted that the Lord is gracious. Afterwards, when the Lord met him by the sea and put the question to him three times, “Do you love Me?” He betokened perfect reconciliation and Peter knew, then, that he was wholly pardoned and completely restored. By Jesus giving Peter, His once false disciple, the charge to feed His sheep and lambs, then Peter truly “tasted that the Lord is gracious.”

When Peter was made so useful at Pentecost, was made to work miracles, was released by an angel from prison and on many other occasions, Peter tasted “that the Lord is gracious.” It was Peter who used those explicit words concerning the Substitutionary Sacrifice of our Lord Jesus, “Who His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree,” for right well had he beheld the Lord Jesus as full of Grace and Truth and in his own personal experience he had tasted that the Lord is gracious. Taking these words out of the mouth of Peter, I shall ask you, my Brothers and Sisters, “Have you tasted that the Lord is gracious?” There is no doubt what is insinuated by Peter’s use of the word, “if”—for he believed that those to whom he wrote had feasted upon the love of the Lord Jesus.

Assuredly I would suggest no doubt concerning my Brethren by the use of the same words, yet I would put you upon a search to make assurance doubly sure. Dear Friends, have you tasted that the Lord is gracious? Is this fact past conjecture? Can you say positively, “We know in our own hearts the Grace of our Lord Jesus”? To help you to a happy conclusion, I purpose to handle my text in the following manner. First, here is *a royal dainty*—“The Lord is gracious.” Here is, secondly, *a special sense*, namely, taste—“If so be you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.” Then, thirdly, we shall ask *a searching question*—Have we tasted that the Lord is gracious? Oh, for Divine Grace to answer truthfully! In the last place, we shall consider *a series of practical inferences*. If so be we have tasted that the Lord is gracious, then such and such things follow. Throughout the whole discourse may the Spirit of the Lord rest upon us!

I. First, then, here is A ROYAL DAINTY—“The Lord is gracious.” Jesus is full of Divine Grace. Jesus flavors the mouth with Grace when we feed upon Him. In Him is Grace which can be tasted by us while here below. Once tasted, this Grace is remembered. Let me remind you that *the Lord is gracious in His Person, Nature and Character*. He would never have been Immanuel, God with us, if He had not been gracious. What brought Him from above to take upon Him our frail humanity? What held Him here while He endured “such contradiction of sinners against Himself”? What but His natural and innate graciousness as “the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and truth”?

What did He here that was not gracious? Was He not always feeding the hungry, healing the sick, teaching the ignorant, comforting the mourners, or raising the dead? If you read His life—take which you will of the four Evangelists—you cannot help feeling that you have beheld the face of One who was altogether love, goodness, graciousness. “He went about doing

good.” From His lips poured gracious words and from His hands streamed gracious deeds. Our precious Christ is gracious both as God and Man—gracious in His tone and manner and spirit. He is gracious in every office. He is gracious to all sorts and conditions of men. He is gracious in the promise of His coming and gracious in delaying it—that by His longsuffering men may be saved. The Lord is good—blessed are all they that put their trust in Him!

We know that our Lord Jesus is gracious by Nature. But, Beloved, we have found Him exceedingly *gracious in the manner of dispensing His salvation*. He is most free, spontaneous and generous in His gifts of Grace. He needs not to be prompted or persuaded in order to make Him gracious. We do not drag Grace from Him as from an unwilling giver, but He delights to bestow His mercy, for the Lord is essentially gracious. Remember His great love whereby He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins. “When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” When we were His enemies, He reconciled us to God by His blood. And when we had neither thought nor wish to come to Him for salvation, He came to us *with* salvation.

Many of us are living trophies of His conquering Grace—Grace unsought and utterly undeserved. “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us and sent His Son to be the Propitiation for our sins.” Though we now love the Lord our God, we cheerfully confess that “we love Him because He first loved us.” When we lay polluted in our blood—cast out and ready to perish—it was with Him a time of love. And He passed by and said to us, “Live,” and we did live through His eternal Word of Life. He began to deal with us when we had no dealings with Him. Remember His coming to the grave’s mouth when we lay wrapped in the grave clothes of trespasses and sins and were, like Lazarus, even beginning to stink. He came and by His mighty Voice He called us forth and we arose to newness of life! Gracious, indeed, is He who, in the freeness and sovereignty of His Grace, is found of them that sought Him not and is made manifest unto them that asked not after Him.

Beloved, as we know He is gracious by Nature and gracious in manner, so is He *gracious in His gifts*. How gracious was He when He gave Himself for us! This was a gift unspeakable. What priceless gifts follow! He gave us pardon and life. He took us from beneath the gallows and lifted us up to justification and acceptance. God-condemned and self-condemned, we stood shivering between the jaws of doom and then did Jesus come and speak our pardon—perfect, clear and irreversible—sealed with His own blood and spoken by His own Word. He gave us His pierced hands in token that we were accepted in the Beloved. Beloved, you know all about this, but I would stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance.

The Lord is gracious in blotting out our sins. Once we had not obtained mercy, but now we have. Because He is gracious He has put us among the children by the gift of adoption and has made provision for us as members of His family. We are clothed with His everlasting righteousness, nourished upon the Bread of Heaven. We are led and taught, and trained by

His wisdom. We are preserved, sanctified and prepared for the mansions of Glory by the power of His Holy Spirit. Oh, the gifts that He bestows upon worthless good-for-nothings like ourselves! Where sin abounded, Grace does much more abound. Oh, the wonders of love! Truly the Lord is gracious!

Since we have come to know our Lord, how gracious have we found Him to be! "*He gives more Grace.*" No word can express all that Jesus has been to us, but this word, "gracious," goes some way towards it. We have had many inward struggles and conflicts and much we have needed Divine Grace and as our need such has been our supply. It has sometimes gone hard with us, my Brothers and Sisters, while pressing on to God. But whenever we have been ready to slip with our feet, the Lord has held us up, for His mercy endures forever. Yes, and when we have stumbled, He has set us on our feet again, for He is always gracious. When He might have chided us sharply, yes, and might have laid on the rod, yet has He sweetly smiled and reminded us of His great love and restored us by His graciousness.

We have been full of faults, but He has removed them, all for He is gracious. We have been full of wounds, but He has healed them by His own stripes. We have been full of wanderings, but He has brought us again to His fold. Even now, sitting in this house, some of us feel ourselves to be the most unworthy creatures out of Hell—and yet we know that Jesus is ours and we are His. We cannot but cry out, "Depths of mercy!" We are the chief of sinners and yet in the matter of obtaining Divine Grace we are not behind any of His saints. We are both vile and precious—black as the tents of Kedar—and fair as the curtains of Solomon. Oh, the wonders of Free Grace, in its continuance and perseverance! Truly, "the Lord is gracious."

The Lord is gracious, for He hears prayer. Our course is set with memorials of the Lord's answering our pleas. That bedside of ours is a witness that the Lord is good. That old armchair, where you are likely to kneel, could tell strange stories of what you have sought and found. Everything has gone cross with you in business, but you have bowed the knee and found Divine Grace to help in time of need. You cried unto the Lord when the child was sick and you were comforted! You sought the Lord when the dear one was dead in the house and you found the living God to be your consolation as you went to the open grave. When your wounds were bleeding through bereavement they were stanching in answer to prayer. When your soul's windows were darkened, Grace was the sun which came shining into your gloom.

You have knelt before the Lord at times when you have been weighed down with a heaviness which you could not explain—and none could remove—but you have not knelt in vain. Dark night seemed settling down upon your spirit and neither moon nor star appeared, but even then—

***"Prayer made the darkened cloud withdraw,
Prayer climbed the ladder Jacob saw."***

You came forth from the closet rejoicing, for the Lord was gracious to you! He put off your sackcloth and girded you with gladness. Now you can sing—

***“In all my trials here below
I’ll humbly kiss His rod,
For this, through Grace, I surely know,
He’s still my gracious God.”***

I hardly need remind you of these things because they must be ever present with your soul. The Lord has been gracious, very gracious to you.

Beloved, some of you have been *avored with choice times*, “as the days of Heaven upon the earth.” You have climbed the mount and been alone with God—and there you have seen your Lord and heard His voice in your soul. Oh, the rapture of intimate fellowship with God! Those to whom the Lord is gracious often enjoy an experience which they would not dare to tell lest they should seem too familiar. If we were forced to tell our joys, we should have to use expressions like those of Rutherford, or say, rather, those of Solomon’s Song which alone can express the high, mysterious joys of those who lean their heads upon the bosom of their Lord—

***“When in my heart His heavenly love
He sweetly sheds abroad,
How joyfully He makes me prove
He is my gracious God!”***

Possibly your experience has been of a sadder kind—you have backslidden and *He has restored you in His Grace*. You grew cold. You took less delight in the things of God. You began to absent yourself from the House of Prayer. Your Bible grew dusty and your closet was forsaken. Perhaps you were almost carried away captive by the world. Though you had tasted of the heavenly gift and the powers of the world to come, you had almost fallen away—and if you had altogether done so, you know how it is written—“It is impossible to renew them again unto repentance.” But Jesus held you back from that fatal step, for the Lord is gracious! Your eyes were opened, your heart was broken, you were laid low in the dust of self-abasement and you began to cry unto the Lord—“Return, O Holy Dove, return.”

The Holy Spirit did return, and He brought you back to Christ and to peace and holiness. Then you sang sweetly, “He restores my soul.” In that day the Lord was seen to be a gracious God. Your face was black because the sun of this vain world had looked upon you and yet the Lord saw comeliness in you and still kept you in His heart. Though you had broken the holy vows which bound you to Himself—He would not cast you away—but still declared that He had espoused you unto Himself in faithfulness and that therefore you should know the Lord. Oh, the graciousness of our Lord to His erring ones! How kind is He to those who fall! And you do not know and I do not know, to the full, how gracious the Lord is.

Remember that *He is preparing us for a Glory inconceivable*. Everything is working out His perfect design. Here in this world we look upon the wrong side of the fabric that is being woven in the loom of Providence. When we ascend to Heaven we shall see the true pattern to which Christ

is working by all His dealings with us and then we shall perceive that He was carrying out a plan of Divine Grace by which we were made meet for Glory. Beloved, the Lord is preparing us for perfection of holiness and bliss! He is working us into the image of His Son and we shall be like He when we shall see Him as He is. He is making us fit to dwell among the angels of light and to drink eternally of the rivers of God's pleasure. We are being educated by all the processes of His Providence and of His Grace to dwell in that celestial land where the Lamb is the Light and the Lord God is the delight of His people.

"The Lord is gracious"—gracious to the uttermost! There is enough for a sermon in this one sentence! It is a great dish to taste of—"that the Lord is gracious." Before we go to the next point, I hope you have begun to enjoy the fragrant savor of your Redeemer's name and the exquisite flavor of His Word. Blessed be the name of Jesus, He is gracious! Grace is poured into His lips! His hands drop the sweet-smelling myrrh of Divine Grace and perfume all they touch!

II. But now let us think of A SPECIAL SENSE which is exercised in tasting that the Lord is gracious. Faith is the soul's eye by which it sees the Lord. Faith is the soul's ear by which we hear what God, the Lord, will speak. Faith is the spiritual hand which touches and grasps the things not seen as yet. Faith is the spiritual nostril which perceives the precious perfume of our Lord's garments, which smell of myrrh, aloes and cassia. Faith, also, is the soul's taste by which we perceive the sweetness of our Lord and enjoy it for ourselves. Taste is an *inward* sense, a private, powerful, personal appreciation. To taste is to know a thing in the essence, outcome and enjoyment of it. To taste is to exercise discernment, to make discovery and to gain assured knowledge of a thing. Apply this to the fact that the Lord is gracious and what a weighty matter it is to taste thereof!

In answering the question, what is meant by taste? I would bid you notice the likeness of the word, "taste," to another, namely, "test." *Taste is a test* as to things to be eaten. We prove and try an article of food by tasting it. He that goes to the market to buy cheese, draws out a piece and eats it, that he may judge of the bulk by the taste. So it is with anything the value of which depends upon the flavor—it has to be *tasted* that it may be *tested*—and taste is the best test. If you desire to know the graciousness of God, you must taste and see, by accepting His Grace and all its blessed influences. No test is superior to this. Experience teaches as nothing else can. The charlatan moves in danger, speculating at every step—but the man of experience walks on solid ground. Even so, we do not speculate upon the Grace of God, but "we have known and believed the love which God has toward us."

In order to spiritual taste, there must be *apprehension*. We must know and believe that the Lord is gracious. If I do not know the fact and believe that it is so, I cannot begin to taste it. We must have some idea of what being gracious means and some conviction that this is truly the Character of our Lord Jesus. The clearer the knowledge, the more distinct the taste may become. Some of you have come as far as that—you know and believe

that the Lord is gracious—though you fear that He may not be gracious to *you*. This is the first step, but it is evident that more is needed.

After apprehension must come *appropriation*. Martin Luther said—“And this I call tasting, when I do with my very heart believe that Christ has given Himself to me and that I have my full interest in Him—that He hears and answers for all my sins, transgressions and harms—and that His life is my life. When this persuasion is thoroughly settled in my heart, it yields wonderful and incredible good taste.” In order to taste, we must make a very close appropriation. We place the gift of God, not in our pocket, but in our mouth when we taste it. That is the closest appropriation—when we *taste* a blessing.

O my Hearers, I fear that many of you have heard of our gracious Lord for years and yet have never tasted that He is gracious! You believe that He is so, but you have never *personally* tried Him for yourselves. See, there is honey! Jonathan saw the woods to be flowing with it, for it dropped from many a bough! But this was not enough—he tasted and his eyes were enlightened. “O taste and see that the Lord is good.” Take to yourselves the blessings of His Grace! Appropriate Christ, I pray you! Let each one take Him to himself and then you will know what tasting means. But taste further means *appreciation*. You may have a thing within yourself and yet not taste it, even as Samson’s lion had honey within its carcass, but he was a dead lion and so could not taste it. A man may get the Gospel into his mind, but never taste it. It needs a living man and a living appropriation, and a living appreciation or else the royal dainty is not tasted.

Have you ever enjoyed the Truth that the Lord is gracious? “Oh,” you say, “not as I should like to do.” You have well spoken, but I only asked about a *taste*—I did not enquire about feasting to the full. “To be filled with all the fullness of God” is our inheritance. But just now it will suffice if we so taste as to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge. Just now we are talking about *tasting*—and a taste of Divine Grace, though it bring us but little joy—is a great thing as an evidence of more to follow! Have you tasted enough of your Lord to know that He is incomparably gracious? Have you taken enough of the Lord to yourself to be assured that there is none like He? Have you found all fullness dwelling in Him? There is no Grace like the Grace which comes from a dying Christ, a risen Christ, a reigning Christ, a coming Christ! Jesus is All in All to all who are in Him!

III. So, having considered the spiritual sense which tastes as heavenly meat, I now come to press upon you A SECOND QUESTION—“If so be you have tasted that the Lord is gracious”? Dear friends, *this is a very simple elementary question*. It is not, “If so be you have preached that He is gracious”? Many of you will never preach, nor even write for others. Nor does it say, “If so be you have laid it all down doctrinally in theological form.” No, no! Some of you will never be theologians, but that is not the matter in hand. Have you tasted that the Lord is gracious? I may not know what a dish is made of, but I may have tasted it for all that.

I may be grossly ignorant of the mysteries of cookery, but I can tell whether a dish is sweet to my taste. Our self-enquiry is about a primary matter in which even new-born babes in Grace are concerned. I put it to everyone here, whether babes or strong men—Have you tasted that the Lord is gracious? However simple is the question, *it goes to the root of the matter*—it takes in the whole case of a man's soul. Have you tasted that the Lord is gracious? Do you know Christ by personal reception of Him? If not, you are in an evil case! If you only know the Lord Jesus in the Book. If you only know Him by the ear through the preacher, what good will it do you? You are sick and there is the medicine—you can interpret the doctor's Latin and so you ascertain every drug in the mixture. Will this heal you? No! you must taste the medicine! You must receive it into your inward parts or you will derive no benefit from it.

Suppose you are hungry and before you is spread a meal. There is the menu and you read it through. Yes, you approve of every course. Will this satisfy you? No! You must sit down and handle that knife and fork and get to work or you will remain hungry. I do not need to press you—you are a willing guest at the table. But when I set forth the Truth of God that the Lord is gracious, many of you are content to *hear* about it and do not proceed to make the test and *taste* that the Lord is good! Oh, that you would come to the feast! Oh, that you would eat that which is good and let your soul delight itself in fatness!

Every man here must answer that question for himself. I hear a good wife say, "I hope my husband has tasted that the Lord is gracious." My good Friend, go on hoping—but your husband must know the Grace of God for himself or your hopes will be vain! A father here says, "I hope my daughter has tasted that the Lord is gracious." I am pleased that you have such a hope for her—but your daughter must taste for herself. We cannot, in this matter, be sponsors for one another! Tasting is an operation which must be performed by the individual palate. There is no other method of practicing it. No man can say that he has tasted my food for me and none may dream that they have tasted Christ because their friends have feasted on Him. We must know the Lord for *ourselves* or die in ignorance of Him!

I am afraid this question *will have to be answered in the negative* by many hearers, for they have never tasted Christ. This is an extraordinary thing with some of you, for you are very sound in the faith, religious in your conduct and moral in your lives. You would not be content with any preaching which was not the unadulterated milk of the Word, for your mind would reject the concoctions of heresy. And yet, though you know the Truth of God, you have not tasted this particular and all-important fact, that the Lord is gracious! What is the good of knowing that food is good if you leave it untasted? It must be a wearisome business to sit at a table and have the dishes all brought before you—and then taken away again! It must be tantalizing to have a sniff of the food but never to have a morsel in your mouth! Many hearers remain in that wretched state. The river of God is at their feet and yet they are dying of thirst! The banquet of Grace is spread at their door and yet they perish with hunger! Alas, the

mass of mankind have never tasted, do not know what it means to taste and do not care to know! Ah me, this is woe upon woe!

There are also those who rejoice that they have tasted that the Lord is gracious, yet confess it with a deep blush because *they have only tasted*. Still, there is a great deal in the tasting, for he that can taste will desire more. I would to God that all of us would go to Jesus and feed upon Him to the full. Oh, for a Divine hunger which would make us eat abundantly! I would be ravenous for Christ! Would God we thirsted after Him as the hart pants after the water brooks, for then we should soon be filled! I fear the most of us must confess that we have only tasted that the Lord is gracious, whereas we might have been sitting in His banqueting house, having our souls satisfied with the rich provisions of His house. Yet, blessed be the Lord, *we have tasted*. We have tasted that the Lord is gracious!

To us this taste has come through the Word. Have you not often cried, when you have gone out of this house, “Blessed be God for what we have heard today”? So, too, in reading the Scriptures, we have felt that the Lord is gracious. When we have enjoyed assurance of our salvation we have tasted that the Lord is gracious. In answered prayer, in Providential supplies, in gracious renewals we have tasted that the Lord is gracious. In our work or suffering, in our joys or sorrows, in our meditations or praises we have tasted that the Lord is gracious. There is no getting this Truth out of our soul’s creed—we are sure of it. If a man has tasted a thing, he knows the flavor of it and is not to be argued out of his knowledge.

I have eaten sugar and I find it sweet. Here comes a philosopher and declares that it is sour. Go on, philosopher, and philosophize as long and as much as you like, but my palate defies your philosophy! When last I took quinine I held very dogmatic views as to its bitterness. Men who have tasted are inclined to be positive. But, cries one, “It must be wrong to be dogmatic.” I care nothing about hard words—I will be dogmatic about what I positively know. When a man is sure of things, why should he pretend to be undecided? There are some matters about which I am past argument, past the power to doubt—and the graciousness of my God is one of these things. This I have seen and handled, and tasted—from now on let no man trouble me—the die is cast.

Let me tell you when we have tasted the graciousness of the Lord. We have done so *after great bitterness*. Our Lord, as George Herbert would say, has put His hand into the bitter box and given us a dose of wormwood and gall. We have drunk the cup in submission and afterwards He has made us taste that the Lord is gracious—and then all bitterness has clean gone and our mouth has been as sweet as though wormwood had never entered it! It is wonderful how the delectable Grace that is in Christ Jesus drowns the offenses of life and makes us say, “Surely the bitterness of death is passed.”

When a man is ill, he often loses his taste. The most delicious food is nauseous to him. “His soul abhors all manner of meat.” But such is the flavor of the Truth of God that the Lord is gracious, that it is more pleasant to us when we are sick than at any other time! The love of Christ is a

delicious refreshment for a sufferer. When our pains multiply and our spirits are depressed, then is a gracious Christ more precious to us than in the day of health and joy. We get fresh sips of sweetness and new tastes of delight when our tribulations abound.

The taste of Divine Grace is always on some men's palates—their mouths are filled all the day with the praises of the Lord. These are happy beings—let us be of their number! *When a man grows old* he sometimes loses his power of taste. Barzillai at fourscore years, said to David, “Can your servant taste what I eat, or what I drink?” Age had dulled his palate. But the natural law is not law in the *spiritual* world, for the older we get the more do we relish the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ! Believers grow more heavenly as they get nearer to Heaven, or at least they *should* do so. As earth goes, Christ comes. Christ is very choice to us when we are young, but when we are gray-headed He is sweetness itself! We realize our Lord more than ever and we have a keener perception of the Grace which He has manifested towards us. Shortly we shall be with Him where He is and shall behold and share His Glory—then will He be surpassingly delightful to our perfected taste.

Again I put the question—Do you know anything about it? I fear that some of you are quite at sea as to what I mean. You know the taste of fine old port, or sparkling champagne. You know the delicacies of the season—but you have never tasted that the Lord is gracious and you smile as you hear the question, for it seems to you too absurd. Why, you have no taste which could apprehend such things and, indeed, you have no spiritual life! Dead men cannot taste the food of the living! So men who are spiritually dead cannot taste spiritual delights. The Lord quicken you! May you this morning find Christ who is the resurrection and the life! The moment you live unto Him you will begin to crave the milk of the Word and soon you will have tasted that the Lord is gracious!

IV. So we come to our last point which is A SERIES OF PRACTICAL INFERENCES. I have seen by the glances of many of you that you feel you have been made to sit at the table of salvation. You have not partaken so fully as you hope to do, but yet you have, at least, tasted that the Lord is gracious. Well, then, as the text puts it, “*Desire the sincere milk of the Word.*” If you have tasted it, long for more of it! Do not hanker after the dilutions and concoctions of “modern thought,” which you will find vended in many a pulpit. Beware of dangerous foods compounded of speculations and heresies! If you have ever tasted the true milk of the Word, you will not desire any other, for there is none like it.

When the other foods come into the market, say to yourself, “The best is good enough for me and Christ Jesus is the best of the best. The Lord is so gracious that none can compare with Him for a moment and therefore I shall not leave Him.” Let others fly to poisoned cups of error, or intoxicating draughts of superstition—we will keep to that which is so grateful to our taste, so nourishing to our souls. Next, *expect to grow and pray that you may do so.* You, dear Friends, have tasted that the Lord is gracious and now you desire to be nourished in sound doctrine that your whole na-

ture may be developed. How do Christians grow? If they grow aright, they grow all over.

Some grow in knowledge, but they do not grow in virtue—this is as if a child's head should get bigger and bigger and the rest of his body should remain as it was—he will become a hideous creature or will die of water on the brain. Some say they will make their hearts grow and never mind their heads. This also will not do. If your head remains as a pimple while your hands and feet increase, you will be deformed. We must grow up into Christ in *all* things. How? Why, by drinking in the unadulterated milk of the Word! To feed thereon makes us grow. Why are some stunted? Because they do not take enough spiritual food, or else because it is not the true Word of God which they hear. It is sad that there should be so much evil teaching—it is the pest of our age.

One of the most active agencies in London for the spread of certain diseases is milk—and though persons take in their milk carelessly and think it is an innocent fluid, there may often be death in the can—and the pint of milk may be a pint of poison. The Gospel is the most sustaining food for the soul, but if it is adulterated it may convey spiritual disease and death into the soul. More mischief can be done by the pulpit than by all other agencies put together! Brothers and Sisters, pray for ministers, for if they preach the Gospel and water it down so that the Gospel loses its power—or if they preach the Gospel and poison it so that it ceases to be pure Truth of God—then the people cannot grow, nor even live! Brethren, let us pray for more faith, more hope, more love, more zeal and so let us grow. “Desire the sincere milk of the Word, that you may grow.”

Next, “If so be you have tasted that the Lord is gracious,” *abhor the garlic flavor of the world's vices*. I mean those alluded to in the first verse—“malice, guile, hypocrisies, envies and all evil speaking.” If the Lord is gracious to you, be gracious to others. If you have tasted that the Lord is gracious, do not carry about with you the bitterness of malice, or the sourness of envy. Have no savor of cunning about you, nor the least taint of hypocrisy, nor the foul tongue of evil speaking. Is not even a smack of evil too much? A man that has tasted that the Lord is gracious ought to have a sweet mind and a sweet mouth. He should judge charitably and speak kindly of others. If you do not do so, I advise you to taste again and again that the Lord is gracious till the powerful flavor of Divine Grace shall abide in your mouth and cast out all the noisome savors of hate.

I want you also, dear Friends, if you have tasted that the Lord is gracious, *to lose the taste for all earthly trifles*. Some amusements we are supposed to condemn, but we have not condemned them indiscriminately. We have nothing to say about their suitability for those who can be satisfied with them. Many diversions may be suited to those whose natures can be gratified with them. As to the children of God, we judge them by quite another rule. Let the ox have its grass and the horse its hay, but *souls* must feed on *spiritual* meat. A farmer takes me over his farm. I see that he keeps swine and I see the men bring out for them barley-meal and mash. The farmer asks me what I think of it. I think it is capital stuff for

those for whom it is prepared. I do not condemn the swine for enjoying it, nor the farmer for providing it for them. But if he asks me whether I will have some of the mash, I am quick at answering, “No, farmer, not I.” “Why not?” “Well, I have other tastes. In your own house I have eaten bread and beef, and other foods are not what I hunger for.” That is all I say.

Those who want vain amusements may judge themselves by their likings, but if so be that we have tasted that the Lord is gracious, our tastes are from now on spoiled for the world’s impure delights. To dispute about taste is acknowledged to be unwise—and when sin and holiness become matters of taste with men, we shall soon see what manner of men they are. The taste of the world will never be our taste. I hope it never will, for if it were, we should have grave cause to fear that we were of the world. If we were of the world, the world would love its own and we should love the world’s own as much as the world loves it. May you lose all taste for the apples of Sodom and the grapes of Gomorrah!

Lastly, if you have tasted that the Lord is gracious, *taste again*. For what does the next verse say? “To whom coming, as unto a living stone.” You have come to Jesus—keep on coming to Jesus. You tell me that you trust Christ—trust Him again, my Brothers and Sisters! “He is all my hope.” Hope in Him yet more! “He is my joy.” Rejoice in him still more! “He is my love.” Love Him with all your soul! If you have tasted and enjoyed, then *feast* and enjoy. “Eat you that which is good and let your soul delight itself in fatness.”

There is no stint at my Lord’s table and you need not restrain yourself from fear of surfeit or sickness. You can never partake too freely of the Grace of Christ Jesus your Lord. No man was ever made ill by feeding too freely upon heavenly things. No, the dainties of Heaven create an expansion of soul and as we receive we gain capacity to receive yet more of holy gifts! We feast on when once we have tasted that the Lord is gracious! The Lord feed you to the full, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—

1 Peter 1:17-25; 2:1-12.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—913, 724, 715.

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COMING—ALWAYS COMING

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

***“To whom coming.”
1 Peter 2:4.***

THE Apostle is speaking of the Lord Jesus, of whom he had previously said, “If indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious,” and He follows that sentence up with this, “To whom coming as unto a living stone.” Now, I want to call your special attention to this present participle—this act of coming—for there is much to counsel and to comfort us in the fact and the reflections it suggests. The Christian life is begun, continued and perfected altogether in connection with the Lord Jesus Christ! This is a very great blessing for us. Sometimes when you go on a journey, you travel so far under the protection of a certain Company—but then you have to change and the rest of your journey may be performed under very different circumstances—upon quite another kind of line.

Now *we* have not to go just so far to Heaven in the guardian care of Jesus Christ and then at a certain point to change, so as to have somebody else to be our leader, or some other method of salvation. No, He is the Author and He is the Finisher of our faith. If we begin aright, we go on aright—we go on with “Christ is All.” And if we finish aright we finish with “Christ is All.” It was a great delusion of some, in Paul’s day, that after they had begun in the Spirit, they hoped to be made perfect in the flesh. And there are some, nowadays, who begin as sinners resting upon Christ—but they want to go on as independent saints, resting on themselves.

That will never do, Brothers and Sisters. It is not, “Christ and Company.” The sinner knows that it must be Christ *only*, because he has nothing of his own. And the saint ought to know that it must be only Christ because he has less than nothing apart from Christ! I believe that if we grow out of Christ we grow in an unhealthy mushroom fashion. What we need is to grow up into Christ in all things, knowing Him more and more and being more and more satisfied that He is what we need. This is really a healthy growth and may God send more and more of it to us as long as we live!

Blessed be His holy name! With us it is Christ in the morning, when we are young and full of strength. It is Christ at noon, when we are bearing the burden and heat of the day. And it is Christ at eventide, when we lean on the staff for very age and the shadows lengthen and the light is dim. Yes, and it shall be only Christ when the night settles down and shades of death curtain our last bed. In all circumstances and conditions we look only to Jesus! Are we wealthy? Christ crowns it. Are we in poverty? Christ

cheers it. Are we in honor? Christ calms us. Are we in shame? Christ consoles us. Are we in health? He sanctifies it. Are we in sickness? He relieves it.

As He is at all times the same in Himself so He is the same to us. To the same Christ we must come and cling under every new circumstance. Our heart must abide faithful to her one only Lord and lovingly sing—

***“I’ll turn to You in days of light
As well as nights of care.
You are brightest amid all that’s bright,
You are fairest of the fair!”***

We have not to seek a fresh physician, to find a new friend, or to discover a novel hope, but we are to look for everything to Jesus Christ, “the same yesterday, and today, and forever.” “You are complete in Him.” Stand to this, my Brothers and Sisters! Never think that you need anything beyond the provision which is stored up in Him for sanctification, for satisfaction, or for safety! Cast not your eyes around you to find a supplement to the Lord Jesus, or you will deceive yourselves and dishonor Him.

It is not with our Lord as it was with Moses. Moses led the people through the wilderness, but he could not bring them into the promised land—that was reserved for Joshua. Brothers and Sisters, the Lord Jesus has led you so far through the wilderness and He will lead you over the Jordan and secure your heritage for you! He will see you safely landed in it—look not, therefore, for any other leader or lawgiver! It is not with Christ as it was with David. David collected the materials for the temple, but though he could gather together vast stores of great value, he could not build them up, for the Lord said that this honor should be reserved for his son that should be after Him and, therefore,, the construction of the temple was left for Solomon.

But our Lord Jesus Christ, blessed be His name, has not only gathered together His people and the precious treasures with which He is to build a living temple unto God, but He will also build it, stone upon stone, and bring forth the top stone with shouting! He shall build the temple of the Lord and He shall bear the Glory! Christ in the Christian’s alphabet is A, B, C right down to Z—and all the words of the pure language of Canaan are only compounds of Himself! Has He not said it, “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end”?

Our text speaks about coming to Him and I shall endeavor to expound it to you thus. This is a full picture of Christian life. I consider it to be a complete picture of a saint drawn with one stroke. It is not easy to make a portrait with one line, yet I remember seeing a somewhat famous portrait of our Lord in which the artist never lifted his pencil from the paper from beginning to end. He drew the whole of it with one continuous series of circles. So here I may say the whole Christian life is drawn in one line—coming unto Christ. “To whom coming.”

When we have spoken upon that, I shall answer two questions. The first—what is the best way of coming to Him at first? The other—what is

the best way of coming to Him afterwards? May the Holy Spirit bless the whole discourse to our souls.

I. First, then, **HERE IS A COMPLETE DESCRIPTION OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.** It is a continuous “coming” to Jesus. If you have your Bibles open at the text, I want you to notice that the expression occurs in connection with two figures. There is one which precedes it in the second verse, namely, the figure of a little child fed upon milk. “As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby. If indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious. To whom coming.” Children come to their parents and they frequently come rather longer than their parents like—it is the general habit of children to come to their parents for what they need.

They begin with coming to the mothers when they are newborn babes. Look at the little child. It cannot provide for itself. If it were left to shift for itself, it must die. But having tasted the unadulterated milk, it thirsts for more of it. When the time comes round for it to be fed, and it comes very often, it gives unmistakable signs even before it can speak that it needs its food! It knows where to come and it will not rest till it reaches its place and nestles down. As the child grows up it knows the breakfast hour, the dinner hour and knows where to come for the grateful meal and the hearty welcome. You do not need, in most of your houses, I suspect, to ring a bell to call your children together to the family table! They all carry little interior bells which let them know pretty accurately when mealtimes are and they come freely, without persuading or forcing.

Some of them are now getting to be 15 or 16 years of age and they still keep on coming! They come to your table just as they used to come. When first you had to lift them into their little chairs, they were coming. And now they take their big chairs as if they quite belonged to them—and they still keep on coming! Yes, and they come to you not only for bread and for meat, but they come for a great many things besides. In fact, the older they grow, the more they come! They used to come for little shoes and little garments, but now they need them cut of a larger size and of more expensive material—and they come accordingly. Though they cost you more, they come with greater freedom, for habit has made them very bold in their coming!

They do not require any entreaty or encouragement to come for what they need—they look for many things as a matter of course—and for the rest they come with all the readiness imaginable. Perhaps they let you know their desires a little sooner than you need them to, and when you think that they might manage a little longer with what they have, they press their claims with earnestness and vote them urgent! They very soon find out their requirements—you never have to call them together and say, “Now girls, I need you to earnestly consider whether you really need more dresses. Now boys, I need you to lay it to heart whether you really require new clothes.”

Oh, nothing of the sort! Your children do not need to be called in such a way. They come without calling! They are always coming for something,

as you very well know! Sometimes they constrain you to put your hands into your pockets so frequently and for such a variety of expenses that you wonder how long the purse will hold out and when your resources will be exhausted! Of one thing you feel quite sure—it will be easier to drain your purse than to stop your children from coming for one thing or another! They come to you, now, for a great many things they did not come for at first. It seems that there is no end to the things they come for, and I believe there is no end at all.

Some of them, I know, continue to come after they have got beyond their boyish years. Though you have a notion, I suppose, that they might shift for themselves, they are still coming for sovereigns where shillings used to suffice! There was a time when you could put them to bed at night with the reflection that you had found them food and raiment and house and home. You knew your expenses—but now the big fellows come to you with such heavy demands that you can hardly see the end of it! So it is. They are always coming!

Now, in all this long talk I have been showing you how to understand the figure of coming to Christ. Just what your children began to do from the first moment you fixed your eyes on them—and what they have continued to do ever since—that is just what *you* are to do with the Lord Jesus Christ! You are to be always coming to Him—coming to Him for spiritual food! Coming to Him for spiritual garments! Coming to Him for washing, guiding, help and health! Coming, in fact, for *everything*! You will be wise if, the older you grow, the more you come—and He will be all the better pleased with you.

If you discover other needs, come for more than you used to come for! You will prove, thereby, that you better understand and appreciate what manner of love it is that you should be called the sons of God. “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” Has He not said to you, “Open your mouth wide and I will fill it”? It is rather strange that you never have to tell your children to do that! They do it without any telling—but you have been told to do it and yet you do not do it! Our Lord complains, “you have not called upon Me, O Jacob.”

The infinite liberality of your heavenly Father has urged you to make great requests of Him and yet you have stuttered and stammered and been afraid to ask! He now tells you that “you *have* not because you *ask* not.” Beloved, let us learn from our children, and let it be the habit of our lives to be incessantly coming to the heavenly Father—coming more often, coming for more reasons, coming for larger blessings, coming with greater expectations, coming in one life-long perpetual coming—and all because He *bids* us come!

If you will look again at your Bibles, you will get a second illustration from the fourth and fifth verses, “To whom coming as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious. You also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” Here we have

the figure of a building. A building comprises, first, a foundation, and then the stones which are brought to the foundation and are built upon it.

This furnishes a very beautiful picture of Christian life. I have read that there has been discovered beneath Jerusalem an immense cavern or quarry near the Damascus gate. Travelers who have been into this quarry say that there are niches in the live rock out of which the magnificent stones were cut with which Solomon's temple was built. The temple is up there on the top of the rock, and then far down in the quarry can distinctly be seen where the huge stones used to be. Now there was a process of coming by which each stone came to the foundation. Some stones that were expected to form part of the building never reached it—there is one huge stone of that sort in the Bezetha cavern right now.

It is still there for this reason—though it is squared and chiseled on the front and two sides and also on the top and the bottom—yet it has never been cut away at the back. And so it cleaves to the rock of which it is naturally a part and remains in its original darkness. Now, the passage that I would like you to think of is that in the 51st chapter of Isaiah—“Look unto the rock from which you were hewn, and to the hole of the pit from which you were dug.” There are many here present who have been cut off from the rock and lifted up out of the horrible pit! And since the early operation of Divine Grace they have been coming and coming till they have reached the Foundation—and are built up as living stones in the temple which is established upon Christ!

But there are others of you who need further excavating. God has begun His work upon you. He has used sharp tools and begun to separate you from the world—it has taken a long time to get you cut away from the rock, even in part. You used to be altogether sinful and earth-bound. You lived in worldliness, just as the stone formed a part of the rock. God has been using His great chisel upon you. He has cut you away and separated you, to a great extent, from your fellow men. But still, at the back, in secret, your heart cleaves to sin! You have not given up the darling lust of your heart and, therefore, you are not quarried yet. And you *cannot* come to Christ, for that is impossible till you are separated from the rock of which you naturally form a part!

Oh, how I wish that almighty Grace would take the saw of the Word of God, tonight, and make clean cuts right across your stony heart until you are sawn right off from the hard rock of sin that you may afterwards be made to come to Christ to be built upon Him as your Foundation! That is how the work of Grace begins—by cutting loose the soul from the evil world of which it has been a component part! This is part of the process by which the living stones are brought to rest on the Foundation, for it is clear that they cannot come to the Foundation till first they are removed from their native bed in the pit of sin. Oh, may God's Grace continue to take out many of this congregation like stones divided from the quarry, that so by Grace they may come to Jesus!

Well, after they had cut out those stones in the quarry, which, with a little imagination, you can see lying there, detached and distinct, the next

operation was to pull them up to the top of Mount Zion. It was a long drag up to the summit of the hill. How Solomon managed to remove such enormous masses we do not know. If he had no machinery or motive force that could supersede manual labor, and the force on which he relied was in the sinews of men, the matter is all the more amazing! They must have pulled away, perhaps, many thousands of them at one single stone, hauling it out of the pit, dragging it up the zigzag roads till, at last, the gigantic mass reached its place.

Now, there is a lifting, a drawing of the soul to Christ after this fashion and I see among you some who have recently been drawn. You have not been dragged by *men*. All the men in the world could not draw a sinner to Christ! No machinery is known or will ever be invented that can ever draw a proud, stubborn will to Christ! We may tug and pull till we break the ropes, but we shall never make a soul stir one inch toward Christ! But there is another power which can accomplish the work impossible to us. "I, if I am lifted up," says Christ, "will draw all men unto Me." He has such attractive power that He draws the stones out of the quarry of nature, right up to the Foundation which His free Grace has laid in Zion and they are built upon Him. This is the second part of the work of Grace in the soul—first it separates us from the rock, and then it draws us up to the Foundation. And in both it is working out our coming to Christ.

Well, we have watched the stone as it has been carried up. What is the next process? Why, the next work is to let it down so that it lies in due order upon the foundation. The foundation of the temple very likely was far below the adjacent soil and so this mass of stone had to be let down to the foundation steadily and wisely, that it might rest in its proper bed. What a task it is sometimes—to let a huge stone down upon the foundation—and to get it to lie square and true so that every bit of it is in its proper position with the rest of the structure!

Picture the process in your mind's eye. We have got the stone upon the base, but half of it projects beyond the foundation and, so far, it has nothing to lean upon. That will never do. It must be moved till it lies plumb with the foundation, exactly square with the other stones—and till every portion of it rests firmly on its proper bed. Oh, dear Hearts, this is one work which the Grace of God has to do with *you*—to bring you to lie upon Christ, to recline upon Christ, and that wholly, rightly, and squarely!

It takes a long time to bring some sinners to this. They want to be propped up with a little bit of self-righteousness! They cannot be induced to lie right square upon Christ—they want to tilt a little, have a little shoring up with their own doings and a little dependence on themselves—but this will never do! "To whom coming," says the text, "coming as to a living stone." Oh, that almighty Grace would constrain you all to be coming till you lie flat and square on Christ! Till you have Christ at one corner and Christ at the other corner—and Christ at all the four corners where your soul lies—till you are resting on the Lord Jesus Christ at all times, in all respects, under all circumstances, for everything! Other Foundation can no man lay! You must be sure that you rest wholly upon Jesus!

“Bless the Lord,” says one, “I know I have come as far as that! Can I get any farther?” Well, look, Brother, as long as ever that huge stone lies on the foundation it is always coming to the foundation! Its own weight is always pressing it down upon the foundation and the heavier it is, the more closely and compactly it lies. I feel myself, now, to be more close to Christ than ever I was! My weight of sin helps to press me down on Him. My weight of trouble, my weight of care, my weight of anxiety about the souls of my hearers and even my weight of joy all help me to press more on my Lord! The way to be coming to Christ, Brothers and Sisters, as long as you live, is to lean more on Christ, press more heavily on Christ, and depend more upon Christ than ever before!

In this way, you know, some stones seem, by long abiding and pressing, to cleave to one another and unite together till they appear to be no longer distinct, but one mass. Have you not often noticed in an old Roman wall that you cannot distinguish the mortar from the stone? You cannot tell where the stones were joined—they have grown to be one piece. And blessed is that Christian who, like a living stone, has continued so to come to the Foundation till Christ and he have become one, as it were! Yes, one in conscious fact, so that nothing can divide them!

Thus we continue to come to Jesus and draw nearer to Him—nearer and yet nearer, still, built up into Him—perfectly joined in one spirit. Then, only then, shall Christian life be perfected! These two figures of the babe and the stone have shown you, I trust, what the text means. I have not gone far afield to find them—they lie, as you have seen, in the immediate context. “To whom coming” is an apt description of the whole of Christian life—mind that you make it the rule of yours.

II. But now, secondly, I have to ANSWER THE QUESTION, what is the best way of coming to Christ at first? There are some poor hearts among you longing to be saved. “Ah,” you say, “I hear that if I come to Christ I shall be saved. But how can I come to Him? What do you mean by coming to Jesus?” Well, our reply is plain and clear—it is to *trust* Christ, to depend upon Him, to believe Him, to rely upon Him. Then they enquire, “But how can I come to Christ? In what way would you recommend me to come?” The answer is, the very best way to come to Christ is to come with all your needs about you. If you could get rid of half your needs apart from Christ, you would not come to Jesus half so well as you can with the whole of them pressing upon you, for your need furnishes you with motives for coming and gives you pleas to urge.

Suppose a physician should come into a town with motives of pure benevolence to exercise the healing art? What he needs is not to make money, but to bless the town. He does not intend to charge any or take any fees, but he lets it be known that he has come into the town to display his skills. He has a love to his fellow men and he wants to cure them and, therefore,, he gives notice that as he only wishes for opportunities of displaying his kindness and skill, the poorest will be welcome and the most diseased will be best received.

Now, then, who is the man that can come to the doctor's door with confidence and give a good rat-tat-tat and feel that he will be welcome? Well, there is a person who has cut his finger—will the doctor rush into the surgery to attend to him? No doubt he will look at the cut, but he will not grow very enthusiastic over it, for doctors do not get much credit out of curing cut fingers! Here is another gratis patient who has a wart on his hand. Well, there is nothing very famous about curing warts and the physician is by no means excited over this work! But here is a poor forlorn body who has been given up by all the other doctors—a patient who is so bad that he lies at Death's door! He has such a complication of diseases that he could hardly tell what diseases he has not suffered from—and certainly his condition is terrible enough to make it appear hopeless.

He seems to be a living wonder of disease. That is the man who may come boldly to the physician and expect his immediate attention and his best consideration! Now, Doctor, if you can cure *this* man, he will be a credit to you! This man exactly answers to your advertisement. You say that you only wish for patients who will give you an opportunity of displaying your skills. Here is a fine object for your pity! He has bad lungs, bad heart, bad feet, bad eyes, bad ears, bad head, bad all over! If you desire an opportunity of showing your skill, here is the man! Jesus, my Lord and Master, is the Great Physician of souls and He heals them on just such terms as I have mentioned. Is there a far gone sinner here tonight? Is there a deeply sin-sick soul anywhere within the range of my voice? Is there man or woman who is altogether bad? Come along, my Friends, you are just in a right condition to come to Jesus Christ! Come just as you are, that is the best style of "coming."

Another illustration may be furnished by the common Scriptural figure of a feast. A king determines to act with generosity and, to show how liberal his disposition is, he desires to make a banquet for those who need it most. He says, "If I make a great feast for my lords and dukes, they will think little of my hospitality, for they fare sumptuously everyday. Therefore I will seek out guests who will be more likely to be grateful. Where shall I find guests who will most enjoy my dainties? Men who will eat with the greatest gusto and drink with the greatest delight?" Having considered the matter, he cries to his heralds, "Go into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in."

From among the tramps by the roadside the heralds soon gather starving wretches who exactly meet the king's wishes. Here is a poor man who has had nothing to eat for the last 48 hours. Look at his eager delight at the sight of the food! If you want somebody to eat largely and joyfully, is not he the man? Look how he takes it in! It is wonderful how the provisions disappear before him! Here, again, is a poor woman who has been picked up by the wayside, faint for lack of bread. She has scarcely any life in her, but look how she begins to open her eyes at the first morsel that is placed before her, and what delight there is in her every expression as she finds herself placed at a table so richly loaded!

Yes, the poorer, the more hungry, the more destitute the guests, the more honor is accorded to the king who feeds such mendicants and receives such vagrants to his table. Hear how they shout the king's praises when they are filled with his meat! They will never have done thanking him! Now, if I address a soul tonight that is very needy, very faint, very desponding, you are a fit guest for my Master because you have such a fine appetite for His generous repast of love! The greatness of your need is your fitness for coming to Christ—and if you want to know how to come—come just as you are! Tarry not to improve yourself one single atom—come as you are, with all your sin and filthiness and need about you—for that is the best way to come!

If you want to know how to come aright the first time, I should answer, come to find everything you need in Christ. Do not come with a load of your own wealth. Remember what Pharaoh said to Joseph—“Also regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours.” Do not bring your old rubbish with you. “I thought I was to bring repentance.” Do not attempt to do so, but look to Jesus for it! COMING TO JESUS—ALWAYS COMING. Christ is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins. Come and receive a heart of flesh, for you cannot make one for yourself!

“Oh, but I thought I was to bring faith.” Faith, also, is the *gift* of Christ. It comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. Draw near, then, to that Word to find faith. Come for everything. “Oh, but I want to feel.” And then, I suppose, after you have found a nice lot of feelings you will come to Christ, and say, “Lord, You are now able to save me, for my feelings are right”? What conceit! Come to Christ for feelings! Come to Christ for everything!

“What?” says one, “Can you mean it, that I, an unfeeling, impenitent wretch, am bid to come at once and believe in Jesus Christ for everlasting life?” I mean just that! I do not mean to send you round to that shop for repentance and to the other shop for feeling—and to a third store for a tender heart—and then direct you to call on Christ, at last, for a few odds and ends. No, no, but come to Christ for everything!—

***“Come, you needy, come and welcome,
God’s free bounty glorify!
True belief and true repentance,
Every Grace that brings you near,
Without money
Come to Jesus Christ and buy.”***

I heard of a shop, some time ago, in a country town where they sold everything, and the man said that he did not believe that there was anything a human being needed but what he could rig him out from top to toe. Well, I do not know whether that promise would have been carried out to the letter if it had been tried, but I know it is so with Jesus Christ! He can supply you with all you need, for, “Christ is All.” There is not a need your soul can possibly have but the Lord Jesus Christ can supply it and the very best way to come, is to come to Him for everything! The best

way to come to Christ is to come meaning to get everything and to obtain all the plenitude of Grace which He has laid up in store—and promised freely to give.

Some poor souls who come to Jesus Christ seem as if they need a little relief from fear, a hope that they may just get saved and a fair chance of going to Heaven when they die. Pray do not come in that way, my dear Friend! Come intending to obtain the *fullness* of love, the *uttermost* of Grace! Some time ago, when there was a dinner given to poor people, they were told to come and they should have all they could eat. Do you know what they did, some of them? There was not to be any dinner till six o'clock. Well, that they might have a noble appetite, they did not eat any breakfast—not they! They meant to get all they could, now they had an opportunity, and so they came as hungry as possible.

Many years ago, I am told, it used to be the custom of the lord of the manor, in certain villages, on Christmas Day to give the poor people a basin of food. The rule was that whatever basin was brought, his lordship always filled it. It was perfectly marvelous how the basins grew, till at last, when some of the women came with their basins, the lord of the manor looked at the huge bowls and wondered how they could dare to bring such huge vessels! But he was a man of a generous heart—all he would say to his steward would be, “These people believe in my generosity. Go and fill their bowls. Fill and fill on till you have filled them all. As long as they bring their bowls none shall say that I denied them.”

And now, when you go to Christ, take a spacious vessel of large prayer and great expectation! Enlarge your desire and make up your mind to this—“I am not going in to be a miserable Christian, with barely enough Grace to keep me from open profanity, to whitewash me with a respectable profession and ensure me against the peril of everlasting perdition. I mean to take a higher aim and to seek a better portion! Gladly would I vie with saints and angels and be the most happy, the most useful, the most joyous, the most holy Christian that ever lived, if God will help me to be so.”

I wish we had some of the old Methodist fire back among us again. Some of those dear old people, if they did not know much, used to enjoy much and when they went to hear a sermon they listened with a zest, for they received the Word of God as a fresh inspiration—it was a lively oracle to them. The Gospel, as it was preached to them, awoke an echo in their hearts! They were all alive to its good cheer and they shouted, “Amen, hallelujah, bless the Lord,” as they heard it, for it went home to their souls!

Nowadays we are very proper and decorous in our behavior, all of us, and we are not a little critical in our tastes. As we pick up a crumb of the Gospel we like to know whether it is the real aerated bread baked in a tin, or whether it is the common household bread of the shops. The preacher is a “little odd” and he does not cut the bread exactly into dice pieces, and so we do not like the manner of service, for we are rather fastidious and we air our own conceits by fault-finding. Because the Lord’s servant does

not very daintily bring us our portion on a silver platter and hold it out to us, we curl our lips and say, “No, thank you.”

Oh, may God deliver us from the fashionable stiffness and artificial nonsense! May He revive in us the reality both of nature and Divine Grace so that we may come to His table of love with a good appetite! Modern Christians remind me of our boyish days, when we went to bathe in the sea and used to dip our toes in the waves instead of taking a plunge head first. I am sure that to plunge right in is the best way with religion! Throw your whole soul into it and allow the glorious waves of everlasting love to go right over your head! And then dive and swim in that sea which is bottomless and rejoice in the Lord with all your heart!

But this mere dabbling about with goody-goody goodliness, instead of the grand old godliness, makes professors all of a shiver and they stand in doubt, as though they hardly liked it, and would rather get back to the world and put on their old clothes again—only they are half afraid to do so. Oh, may the Lord grant us Divine Grace to come with all our needs to Him—to come to Him for everything and to come determined to have everything that is to be had, and to go in for it thoroughly! That is the way to come to Christ!

III. There remains one other question—WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO COME AFTERWARDS? The answer is—Come just as you used to come! Brothers and Sisters, the text does not say that you have come to Christ, though that is true, but that you *are coming*—and you are to be *always coming*. The way to continue coming is to come in the same way as you came at first. I have many things to say about this, but my time has gone and, therefore, I will not enlarge, but I will only put them in brief.

I am persuaded that the only happy—the only safe way for a Christian to live is to live in daily dependence upon the mercy of God in Jesus Christ—just as he did when he was a babe in Grace and a stone newly drawn from the quarry of nature. I know what it is to build up a nice structure of my own experience on the Foundation of Christ and to climb upon it instead of standing on my own foundation. If you were ever on the top of Snowdon, or some other high mountain, you will have noticed that to make the standing a little higher they put up some wooden scaffold or other—some 10 or 12 feet of platform to increase the elevation—and then everybody wants to get up on that platform.

Well, now, I have built my little platform on Christ. My own experience has made a very handsome edifice, I can tell you. I have felt, “Well, I know this and that and the other by experience,” and I have been quite exalted. Sometimes, too, I have built a platform of good works—“I have done something for Christ, after all.” The proud flesh says, “Oh yes, you really have performed something you might talk about if you liked.” Self-confidence has piled my platform up and it has been a very respectable looking concern and I have even asked a few friends up.

But, do you know what has occurred? Why, I have felt my platform shake! It began to tremble! Stress of weather has rotted the beams and the supports have begun to give way. And I have seen all my building

tumble down—and I have gone down with it! And as I have gone down with it, I have thought, “It is all over with me now. I am going to crash down, I do not know how far, but perhaps I shall fall to the bottom of the mountain.” Instead of that I alighted on the *top* of the mountain. I did not fall very far, but came right down where it had been most sensible of me if I had always kept, namely, on terra firma, down on the solid earth!

I have noticed, lately, that a great many have been building some very pretty little wooden structures on the top of Jesus Christ. I think they call them, “the higher life,” if I rightly remember the name. I do not know of any life that is higher than that of simple faith in Jesus Christ! As far as I am concerned, the highest life for me out of Heaven is the life of a poor publican saying, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” My very good friends are not content with this position, though he who keeps it goes to his house justified more than boasters! Some friends built very high a little while ago—I thought they would soon reach the moon! But certain of them went down in a very ugly way, I have heard, and I am afraid some more will go down if they do not mind what they are doing.

Give up building these artificial elevations! Give up resting on them and just stand on the level of Christ’s finished work, the blood of Christ shed for sinners—the righteousness of Christ imputed to sinners! Be yours the humble plea—

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

He that is down there will never fall—and he who stays there is really as high up as the man who thinks he is all aloft! All above living by faith in Christ is mere dream and moonshine! There is nothing higher, after all, than just being nobody, and Christ being everybody, and singing with poor Jack, the huckster—

***“I’m a poor sinner, and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is my All in All.”***

If you grow till you are less than nothing, you are full grown, but few have reached that stage! And if you grow till Christ is everything to you, you are in your prime! But, alas, how far short of this do most men fall! The Lord bring you to that highest of all growths—to be daily coming to Christ—always empty in yourself, but full in Him! Always weak in yourself, but strong in Him! Always nothing in self, but Christ your perpetual All in All! The Lord keep you there, Brothers and Sisters, and He will have praise and glory of you, both now and forever. Amen.

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COMING TO CHRIST

NO. 3509

A SERMON
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“To whom coming.”
1 Peter 2:4.

IN THESE three words you have, first of all, *a blessed Person mentioned* under the pronoun, “whom”—“To whom coming.” In the way of salvation we come alone to Jesus Christ. All coming to Baptism, coming to Confirmation, coming to sacraments are all null and void unless we come to Jesus Christ! That which saves the soul is not coming to a human priest, nor even attending the assemblies of God’s saints—it is coming to Jesus Christ, the great exalted Savior, once slain, but now enthroned in Glory. You must get to Him, or else you have virtually nothing upon which your soul can rely. “To whom coming.” Peter speaks of all the saints as *coming to Jesus*, coming to Him as unto a living stone, and being built upon Him—and no other foundation can any man lay than that which is laid, and if any man says that coming anywhere but to Christ can bring salvation, he has denied the faith and utterly departed from it! The coming mentioned in the text is a word which is sometimes explained in Scripture by *hearing*. At other times by *trusting* or *believing*, and quite as frequently by *looking*. “To whom coming.” Coming to Christ does not mean coming with any natural motion of the body, for He is in Heaven, and we cannot climb up to the place where He is—it is a *mental* coming, a *spiritual* coming—it is, in one word, a trusting in and upon Him. He who believes Jesus Christ to be God, and to be the appointed Atonement for sin, and relies upon Him as such, has come to Him, and it is this coming which saves the soul! Whoever the wide world over has relied upon Jesus Christ and is still relying upon Him for the pardon of his iniquities, and for his complete salvation, is saved!

Notice one thing more in these three words, that *the participle is in the present*. “To whom coming,” not, “Having come to Him,” though I trust many of us *have* come, but the way of salvation is not to come to Christ and then forget it, but to continue coming, to be always coming! It is the very spirit of the Believer to be always relying upon Christ, as much after a life of holiness as when he first commenced that life. As much when he has been blessed with much spiritual nearness of access to God and a

holy, heavenly frame of mind. As much, then, I say, as when a poor trembling penitent, he said, "God, be merciful to me a sinner." To Christ we are to be always coming—upon Him always relying—to His precious blood always looking!

So I shall take the text, then, this evening thus—These three words describe *our first salvation*, describe *the life of the Christian* and then describe *his departure*, for what even is that but to be still coming to Christ—to be in His embrace forever? First, then, these three words describe, and very accurately, too—

I. THE FIRST SALVATION OF THE BELIEVER.

It is coming to Christ. I shall not try to speak the experience of many present. I know if it were necessary, you could rise and give your, "Yes, yes," to it. In describing the work of Grace at the first, I may say that *it was, indeed, a very simple thing for us to come to Christ*, but simple as it was, some of us were very long in finding it out! The simplest thing in all the world is just to look to Jesus and live, to drink of the life-giving stream and find our thirst forever relieved. But though it is so plain that he who runs may read, and a man needs scarcely any wit to comprehend the Gospel, yet we went here and there and searched for years before we discovered the simplicity which is in Christ Jesus! Most of us were like Penelope, who spun by day and then unwound her work at night. It was even so we did. We thought we were getting up a little. We had some evidence. We said, "Yes, we are in a better state and shall yet be saved." But before long the night of sorrow came in. We had a sight of our own sinfulness, and what we had spun by day, I say, we unwound again quite as quickly by night! Well, there are some of you much in the same way now. You are like a foolish builder who builds a wall and then begins to knock down all the stones at once. You build and then pull down! Or, like the gardener who, having put into the ground his seeds and planted his flowers, is not satisfied with them and thinks he will have something else, and so tries again. Ah, the methods and schemes we will try and save ourselves, while, after all, Christ has done it all! We will do anything rather than be saved by Christ's charity! We do not like to bow our necks to take the mercy of God as poor undeserving sinners! Some will attend their church or their chapel with wonderful regularity and think that that will ease their conscience—and when they get no ease of conscience from that, then they will try sacraments, and when no salvation comes from them—then there will be good works, Popish ceremonies and I know not what besides!

All sorts of doings—good, bad, and indifferent—men will take to if they may but have a finger in their own salvation, while all the while the blessed Savior stands by, ready to save them altogether if they will but be quiet and take the salvation He has worked. All attempts to save ourselves by our own works are but a base bargaining with God for eternal

life, but He will never give eternal life at a price, nor sell it, for all that man could bring, though in each hand he should hold a star—He will give it freely to those who want it. He will dispense it without money and without price to all who come and ask for it and, hungering and thirsting, are ready to receive it as His free gift, but—

***“Perish the virtue, as it ought, abhorred,
And the fool with it, who insults his Lord,”***

by bringing in anything that he can do as a round of dependence, and putting that in the place of the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ!

I said, dear Friends, that it was very simple, and indeed it is so—a very simple thing to trust Jesus and be saved—but it cost some of us many a day to find it out. Shall I just mention some of the ways in which persons are, long before they find it out? Some ask, “What is the best way to get faith? What is the best way to get this precious believing that I hear so much spoken of?” Now the question reminds me of a madman who, standing at a table which is well spread, says to a person standing there, “Tell me what is the best way to eat. What is the philosophy of eating?” “Why,” the man replies, “I cannot be long about that! I need not write a long treatise on it—the best way I know of is to just eat.” And when people say, “What is the best way to get faith?” I say, “Believe.” “But what is the best way to believe?” Why, believe! I can tell you nothing else. Some may say to you, “Pray for faith.” Well, but how can you pray *without* faith? Or if they tell you to read, or do, or feel, in order to get faith, that is a roundabout way. I find not such exhortations as these put down as the Gospel, but our Master, when He went to Heaven, bade us go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature—and what was that Gospel to me? His own words are, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved,” and we cannot say anything clearer than that! “Believe”—that is, *trust*—“and be baptized,” and these two things are put before you as Christ’s ordained way of salvation! Now you want to philosophize, do you? Well, but why should a hungry man philosophize about the bread that is before him? Eat, Sir, and philosophize afterwards! Believe in Jesus Christ, and when you get the joy and peace which faith in Him will be sure to bring, then philosophize as you will!

But some are asking the question, “How shall I make myself fit to be saved?” That is similar to a man who, being very black and filthy, coming home from a coal mine or from a forge, says, seeing the bath before him, “How shall I make myself fit to be washed?” You tell him at once that there cannot be any fitness for washing except filthiness, which is the reverse of a fitness! So there can be no fitness for believing in Christ, except sinfulness, which is, indeed, the reverse of fitness! If you are hungry, you are fit to eat. If you are thirsty, you are fit to drink. If you are naked, you are fit to receive the garments which charity is giving to those who need them. If you are a sinner, you are fit for Christ, and Christ for

you! If you are guilty, you are fit to be pardoned. If you are lost, you are fit to be saved. This is all the fitness Christ requires—cast every other thought of fitness far from you! Yes, cast it to the winds! If you are needy, Christ is ready to enrich you. If you will come and confess your offenses before God, the gracious Savior is willing to pardon you just as you are! There is no other fitness needed.

But then, if you have answered that, some will begin to say, “Yes, but the way of salvation is coming to Christ and I am afraid I do not come in the right way.” Dear, dear, how unwise we are in the matter of salvation! We are much more foolish than little children are in common, everyday life. A mother says to her little child, “Come here, my dear, and I will give you this apple.” Now I will tell you what the first thought of the child is about—it is about the apple! And the second thought of the child is about its mother. And the very last thought he has is about the way of coming. His mother told him to come, and he does not say, “Well, but I do not know whether I shall come right.” He totters along as best he can and that does not seem to occupy his thoughts at all! But when you say to a sinner, “Come to Christ, and you shall have eternal life,” he thinks about nothing but his coming! He will not think about eternal life, nor yet about Jesus Christ, to whom he is bid to come, but only about coming, when he need not think of that at all, but just do it—do what Jesus bids him—simply trust Him. “What kind of coming is that,” says John Bunyan, “which saves a soul?” And he answers, “Any coming in all the world if it does but come to Jesus.” Some come running—at the very first sermon they hear, they believe in Him. Some come slowly—it may be many years before they can trust Him. Some come creeping—scarcely able to come, they have to be helped by others, but as long as they do but come, He has said, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” You may have come in the most awkward way in all the world, as that man did who was let down by ropes through the ceiling into the place where Jesus was, but Christ rejects no coming sinner—and so you need not be looking to your coming, but looking to Christ! Look to Him as God—He can save you! As the bleeding, dying Son of Man—He is willing to save you, cast yourself flat before His Cross, with all your guilt upon you, and believe that He will save you! Trust Him to do it, and He must save you, for that is His own word, and from it He cannot depart. Oh, cease, then, that care about the calling and look to the Savior!

We have met with others who have said, “Well, I understand that, that if I trust in Christ, I shall be saved, but—but—but—I do not understand that passage in the Revelation! I cannot make out that great difficulty in Ezekiel! I am a great deal troubled about predestination and free will, and I cannot believe that I shall be saved until I comprehend all this.” Now, my dear Friend, you are altogether on the wrong tack! When I was going from Cook’s Haven to Heligoland to the North of Germany, I noticed

when we were out at sea, far away from the sight of land, innumerable swarms of butterflies. I wondered whatever they could do there and when I was at Heligoland I noticed that almost every wave that came up washed ashore large quantities of poor dead, drowned butterflies. Now do you know those butterflies were just like you? You want to go out on to the great sea of predestination, free will, and I do not know what. Now there is nothing for you there, and you have no more business there than the butterfly has out at sea! It will drown you. How much better for you just to come and fly to this Rose of Sharon—that is the thing for you! This Lily of the Valley—come and light here! There is something here for you, but out in that dread-sounding deep, without a bottom or a shore, you will be lost, seeking after the knowledge of difficulties which God has hidden from man—and trying to pry into the thick darkness where God conceals His Truth which it were better not to reveal. Come to Jesus! If you must have the knots untied, try to untie them after you get saved, but *now* your first business is with Jesus! Your first business is coming unto Him, for if you do not, your ruin is certain and your destruction will be irretrievable! But I must not enlarge. Coming to Christ is very simple, yet how long it takes men to find it out!

Again, we, bear our witness tonight, that nothing but coming to Christ ever did give us any peace. In my own case I was distracted, tossed with tempest and not comforted for some years. And I never could believe my sin forgiven or have any peace by day or night until I simply trusted Jesus—and from that time my peace has been like a river. I have rejoiced in the certainty of pardon, and sung with triumph in the Lord my God—and many of you are constantly doing the same—but until you looked to Christ, you had not any peace. You searched, and searched, and searched, but your search was fruitless until you looked into the five wounds of the expiring Savior, and there you found life from the dead!

And once more, *when we did come to Christ, we came very tremblingly, but He did not cast us out.* We thought He never died for us, that He could not wash our sins away. We conceived that we were not of His elect! We dreamed that our prayers could only echo upon a brazen sky and never bring us an answer. But still we came to Christ because we dared not stay away. We were like a timid dove that is hunted by a hawk and is afraid. We feared we should be destroyed, but He did not say to us, “You came to Me tremblingly, so I will reject you.” No, but into the bosom of His love He received us and blotted out our sins! When we came to Jesus, we did not come bringing anything, but we came to Him for everything! We came strictly empty-handed and we got all we needed in Christ. There is a piece of iron, and if it were to say, “Where am I to get the power from to cling to the loadstone?” the loadstone would say, “Let me get near you and I will supply you with that.” So we sometimes think, “How can I believe? How can I hope? How can I follow Christ?” Yes, but

let Christ get near us and He supplies us with all that! We do not come to Christ to *bring* our repentance, but to *get* repentance! We do not come to Him with a broken heart, but *for* a broken heart. We do not so much even come to Him *with* faith, as come to Him *for* faith—

**“True belief and true repentance,
Every Grace that brings us nigh—
Without money,
Come to Jesus Christ, and buy.”**

This is the first way of salvation—simply trusting and looking up to Christ for everything. But, then, we did trust. There is a difference between knowing about trust and trusting. By God’s Holy Spirit, we were not left merely to talk about faith, nor to think about it, but we did believe! If the Government were to announce that there would be ten thousand acres of land in New Zealand given to a settler, I can imagine two men believing it. One believes it and forgets it—the other believes it and takes his passage to go out and get the land. Now the first kind of faith saves nobody, but the second faith, the practical faith, is that which, for the sake of seeking Christ, gives up the sins of this life, the pleasures of it—I mean the wicked pleasures of it—gives up all confidence in everything else and casts itself into the arms of the Savior! There is the sea of Divine Love—he shall be saved who plunges boldly into it and casts himself upon its waves, hoping to be borne up. Oh, my Hearer, have you done this? If so, you are certainly a saved one! If you have not, oh, may Divine Grace enable you to do it before yet that setting sun has hidden itself beneath the horizon! Have you known this before, that a simple trust in Christ will save you? This is the one message of this Inspired Volume. This is the Gospel according to Paul, the one Gospel which we preach continually. Try it and if it saves you not, we will be bondsmen for God for you. But it will save you, for God is true and cannot fail—and He has declared, “He that believes on Him is not condemned, but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed on the Son of God.”

Thus I have tried to explain as clearly as I can that coming to Jesus is the first business of salvation. Now, secondly, and with brevity. This is—

II. A GOOD DESCRIPTION OF THE ENTIRE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

The Christian is always coming to Christ. He does not look upon faith as a matter of 20 years ago, and done with, but he comes today and he will come tomorrow! He will come to Jesus Christ afresh tonight before he goes to bed. We come to Jesus daily, for Christ is like the well outside the cottager’s house. The man lets down the bucket and gets the cooling draught, but he goes again tomorrow—and he will have to go again at night if he is to leave a fresh supply. He must constantly go to the same place. Fishes do not live in the water they were in yesterday, they must be in it today. Men do not breathe the air which they breathed a week ago—they must have fresh air into the lungs moment by moment. No-

body thinks that he can be fed upon the fact that he had a good meal six weeks ago—he has to continually eat. So “the just shall live by faith.” We come to Jesus just as we came at first, and we say to Him—

**“Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to Your Cross I cling!
Naked come to You for dress,
Helpless, look to You for Grace.
Foul, I to the fountain fly,
Wash me, Savior, or I die!”**

This is the daily and hourly life of the Christian.

But while we thus come daily, *we come more boldly than we used to do*. At first we came like cringing slaves—now we came as emancipated men. At first we came as strangers. Now we come as Brothers and Sisters. We still come to the Cross, but it is not so much to find pardon for past sins, for these are forgiven, as to find fresh comfort from looking up to Him who worked out perfect righteousness for us!

We come, also, to Jesus Christ, *more closely than we used to do*. I hope, Brothers and Sisters, you can say that you are not at such a distance from Christ now as you once were. We ought to be always getting nearer to Him. The old preachers used to illustrate nearness to Christ by the planets. They said there were Jupiter and Saturn far away, with very little light and very little heat from the sun. And they have their satellites, their rings, their moons and their belts to make for that. Just so, they said, with some Christians. They get worldly comforts—their moons and their belts—but they have not got much of their Master. They have got enough to save them, but oh, such little light. But, they said, when you get to Mercury, there is a planet without moons. Why, the sun is its moon and, therefore, what does it need with moons when it has the full blaze of the sun’s light and heat continually pouring upon it? And what a nimble planet it is—how it spins along in its orbit, because it is near the sun! Oh, to be like that—not to be far away from Jesus Christ, even with all the comforts of this life, but to be near Him, filled with life and sacred activity through the abundance of fellowship and communion with Him. It is still coming, but it is coming after a nearer sort.

And I may say, too, that it is *coming of a dearer sort*, for there is more love in our coming, now, than there used to be. We came at first, not so much loving Christ, as venturing to trust Him, thinking He, perhaps, to be a hard Master. But now we know Him to be the best of friends, the dearest of husbands. We come to His bosom and we lean our heads upon it. We come in our private devotion. We tell Him all our troubles. We unburden our hearts and get His love shed abroad in our hearts in return, and we go away with a joy that makes our heart to leap within us and to bound like a young roe over the mountaintops. Oh, happy is that man who gets right into the wounds of Jesus and, with Thomas, cries, “My Lord and my God!” This is no fanaticism, but a thing of sober, sound ex-

perience with some of us. We can rejoice in Him, having no confidence in the flesh. It is still coming but it is coming after a dearer fashion.

Yet, mark you, it is *still coming to the same Person*, coming still as poor humble ones to Christ! I have often told you, my dear Brothers and Sisters, that when you get a little above the ground, if it is only an inch, you get too high. When you begin to think that surely you are a saint, and that you have some good thing to trust to, that rotten stuff must all be pulled to pieces! Believe me, God will not let His people wear a rag of their own spinning—they must be clothed with Christ's Righteousness from head to foot! The old heathen said he wrapped himself up in his integrity, but I should think he did not know what holes there were in it, or else he would have looked for something better! But we wrap ourselves in the Righteousness of Christ and there is not a cherub before the Throne of God that wears a vestment so right royal as the poor sinner does when he wears the Righteousness of Jesus Christ! Oh, child of God, always live upon your Lord! Hang upon Him, as the pitcher hangs upon the nail. Lean on your Beloved! His arm will never weary of you. Stay yourselves upon Him—wash in the precious Fountain always! Wear His Righteousness continually and be glad in the Lord—and your gladness need never fail while you simply and wholly lean upon Him. And now, not to detain you longer, I come to the last point, upon which we will only say a word or two. The text is—

III. A VERY CORRECT DESCRIPTION OF OUR DEPARTURE.

“To whom coming.” We shall soon, very soon, quit this mortal frame. I hope you have learned to think of that without any kind of shudder. Can you not sing—

**“Ah, I shall soon be dying,
Time swiftly glides away,
But on my Lord relying
I hail the happy day!”?**

What is there that we should wait here for? Those who have the most of this world's goods have found it paltry stuff. It perishes in the using. There is a fullness about it—but it cannot satisfy the great heart of an immortal man. It is well for us that there is to be an end of this life, and especially for us to whom that end is glowing with immortality! Well, the hour of death will be to us a coming to Christ, *a coming to sit upon His Throne*. Did you ever think of that? “To him that overcomes will I give to sit upon My Throne.” Lord, Lord, we would be well content to sit at Your *feet*! It were all the Heaven we would ask if we might but creep behind the door, or stand and be manual servants, or sit, like Mordecai, in the king's court. No, but it must not be. We must sit on His Throne and reign with Him forever and ever! This is what death will bring you—a glorious participation in the royalties of your ascended Lord!

What is the next thing? “Father, I will that they also whom You have given Me be with Me where I am, that they may behold My Glory.” So

that we are to be going to Christ *before long to behold His Glory!* And what a sight that will be! Have you ever thought of that? What must it be to behold His Glory? Some of my Brothers think that when they get to Heaven they shall like to behold some of the works of God in Nature and so on. I must confess myself more satisfied with the idea that I shall behold *His Glory*, the Glory of the Crucified, for it seems to me that no kind of Heaven but that comes up to the description of the Apostle when he says, "Eye has not seen, nor has ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God has prepared for them that love Him." But to see the stars has entered into the heart of man! And to behold the works of God in Nature has been conceived of! But the joys we speak of are so spiritual that the Apostle says, "He has revealed them unto us by His Spirit," and this is what He has revealed, "That they may behold My Glory." St. Augustine used to say there were two sights he would like to have seen—Rome in her splendor, and Paul preaching—the last the better sight of the two! But there is a third sight for which one might give up all—give up seeing Naples, or seeing anything—if we might but see the King in His beauty! Why, even the distant glimpse which we catch of Him through a glass or a telescope darkly ravishes the soul! Dr. Hawker was once waited upon by a friend who asked him to go and see a naval review. He said, "No, thank you, I do not want to go." "You are a loyal man, Doctor, and you would like to see the defenses of your country." "Thank you, I do not wish to go." "But I have got a ticket for you, and you *must* go." "No," he said, "thank you," and after he had been pressed hard he said, "You have pressed me till I am ashamed, and now I must tell you—my eyes have seen the King in His beauty, and the land which is very far off, and I have not any taste, now, for all the pomp that this world could possibly show." And if such a distant sight of Jesus can do this, what must it be to behold His Glory with what the old Scotch divines used to call, "a face-to-face view"—when the veil is taken down, when the clouds are blown away, and you see Him face to face? Oh, long-expected day, begin, when we shall be coming to Him to dwell with Him forever!

Once more only. Recollect we shall come to Christ not only to behold His Glory, *but to share in it*. We shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is. Whatever Christ shall be, His people shall be—in happiness, riches, honor—and together they shall take their full share! The Church, His bride, shall sit on the same Throne with Him, and of all the splendors of that eternal triumph she will have her half, for Christ is no niggard to His imperial spouse, but she whom He chose before the world began, bought with His blood, wrapped in His Righteousness and espoused to Himself forever, shall be a full partaker of all the gifts that He possesses world without end! And this shall be, and this shall be, and this shall be forever—forever you shall be with Christ, forever coming to Him! When the

miser's wealth has melted. When the honors of the conqueror have been blown away or consumed like chaff in the furnace. When sun and moon grow dim with age and the hoary pillars of this earth begin to rock and reel with stern decay. When the Angel shall have put one foot on the sea and the other on the land, and shall have sworn by Him that lives that time shall be no more. When the ocean shall be licked up with tongues of fire and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth and all the works that are therein shall be burnt up—then, then shall you be forever with the Lord, eternally resting, eternally feasting, eternally magnifying Him—being filled with all His fullness to the utmost capacity of your enlarged being, world without end!

So God grant it to us, that we may come to Christ, now, that we may continue to come to Christ, that we may come to Christ, then, lest rejecting Him tonight we should be rejecting Him forever! Lest refusing to trust Him, we should be driven from His Presence to abide in misery forever! May we come now, for Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 8.**

Verse 1. *When He was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him.* There was a charm about His preaching, not that He modified His Doctrine, or that He cut down His precepts—He spoke very plainly, very searchingly, and yet the people came to hear Him. There is a something in the conscience of man that makes Him turn away from that which flatters and makes him hear almost against his liking that which searches him!

2. *And, behold*—Never mind about the crowd! Fix your eyes on the one Man! Behold, etc.—here is a mark of attention.

2. *There came a leper and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, if You will, You can make me clean.* He could not live in the city, but he might be found on the mountain, in the outskirts of the crowd, where he would hear that gracious voice. And he came and “worshipped Him, saying, Lord, if You will, You can make me clean,” in which I detect no unbelief, but rather a very strong faith. “If You do but will it, I can be made clean.” And Jesus, seeing the man was willing to dispense with any outward form used one.

3. *And Jesus put forth His hand and touched him.* Not making Himself unclean, as any other man would have done, but making him clean whom He touched!

3. *Saying, I will*—A word of encouragement.

3. *Be you clean*—A word of power.

3. *And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.* Christ's Grace, which usually worked at once, in an instant, worked forever—the man was

cleansed, never to be sick again! Cured perfectly—the leprosy was cleansed.

4. *And Jesus said unto him, See you tell no man.* Do not spread the news, the crowd is already inconvenient. It was not only Christ's modesty, but Christ's wisdom to keep down the throng a little, for they were too many which gathered about Him.

4. *But go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.* While the Ceremonial Law stood, Christ was very careful to pay it honor. He came not to destroy, but He came to build up and to fulfill. He would have this man go and get a certificate from the priest that he was cleansed. Perhaps if he did not go at once, when it was found out that Christ healed him, the certificate might have been denied, and the man might not have been able to mingle with the company, so He sent him away quickly, to go to the priest with his offering to get the assurance he was really cleansed. When Christ's work is certified by Christ's voice, then is it sure, indeed!

5. *And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum.* Which I may call His headquarters, He seems to have taken up His abode here for a time, to have gone to and fro to Capernaum.

5. *There came unto Him a centurion.* An officer over a hundred men, of some importance in those days—a small band of the Roman army placed in Herod's territory, perhaps to keep watch.

5, 6. *Beseeking Him, and saying, Lord, my servant lies at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.* Sir Risdon Bennett tells us that there is a species of palsy which is accompanied with great pain, and we know, even from the Apocrypha, there is a case there of a man grievously tormented with palsy—not exactly the same thing, perhaps, that we call palsy nowadays.

7. *And Jesus said unto him, I will come and heal him.* He did not say, "I will come and see him"—that would have been kind—He did not say what you and I would say, "I will come and pray with him"—that is all *we* can do. But He said, "I will come and *heal him.*" Here is the tenderness of man and the power of God!

8, 9. *The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof; but only speak the word and my servant shall be healed. For I, too, am a man under authority.* Here was a great point—a man commissioned, a man authorized, girt with authority—and he looked upon Christ as in the same condition, sent of God, under Divine Authority, girt about with a heavenly commission.

9. *Having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goes: and to another, Come, and he comes; and to my servant, Do this, and he does it.* He did not further explain. It is a pity, sometimes, when we explain things to God in prayer, as I am afraid we often do—God knows what we mean. And so here he did not explain his meaning—we can see

it clearly enough. “You too, O Christ, are under the authority of God, and sent by Him, and You have the powers of nature under Your control. You have but to say the word, and they go—do this, and they do it.”

10. *When Jesus heard it, He marveled.* He had marveled at men’s unbelief—now He marvels at their faith, so that the things which touch the wonder of God are man’s unbelief and man’s faith!

10. *And said to them that followed, Verily, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.* “This man is not an Israelite—he is a Roman soldier—but I have never found as much faith in those to the manner born as I find in this stranger.”

11. *And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west.* From differing lands and extreme distances.

11. *And shall sit down.* Or recline in ease and rest.

11-12. *With Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of Heaven.* But the children of the Kingdom—Those born in Israel, who belong to the promised seed.

12-13. *Shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* And Jesus said unto the centurion, *Go your way, and as you have believed, so be it done unto you.* And his servant was healed in the very hour. It is greatly important not only that we believe, but that we believe as much as ever we can—that we believe all that Christ has spoken. Some people, when they are converted, believe that they may fall from Grace, and they do—according to their faith, so is it unto them! If they could believe for eternal life and lay hold on everlasting life, they would find it so, for generally it is according to their faith that it is unto them.

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

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

THE TRUE PRIESTHOOD, TEMPLE AND SACRIFICE

NO. 1376

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 30, 1877,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed, indeed, of men, but chosen of God, and precious, you also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”
1 Peter 2:4, 5.

AT the outset I call your special attention to the connection of the two verses. “To whom coming, as unto a living stone...you also, as living stones, are built up.” Or, “To whom coming...are built up...an holy priesthood.” Everywhere throughout Scripture the connection between the saints and their Head is perpetually mentioned. “In Christ” is the very symbol of New Testament writers. Whatever choice and good things are mentioned concerning the saints, their privileges and honors, we are always reminded that they are only enjoyed in connection with the Lord Jesus, according as the Father has blessed us in Him and made us to be accepted in the Beloved.

Coming to Him as a Foundation, we become a temple! Coming to Him as the Holy One of Israel we become an holy priesthood! And resting in His sacrifice we, also, offer spiritual sacrifices. Coming *close* to Him—for such is the force of the word—coming closer and closer, we grow up in all things into Him and become perfect in Christ Jesus. Realizing and consciously enjoying our vital union with Him, we obtain promises, receive blessings, possess privileges and exercise offices which can only be ours in union with our Lord. It is only by coming to our great Covenant Foundation and, only in proportion as we daily come to Him and rest upon Him, that God dwells in us as in a temple.

It is only as we are seen in union with the Apostle and High Priest of our profession that the Father allows us to serve Him as priests and accepts the sacrifices which we present. Let this Truth of God be always in your view because there are many who judge us otherwise. The true judgment of any man is how he stands towards Christ, whether he is in Him and believes in Him or not. If he believes on the Lord Jesus, he is in Him and he is, by coming to Him, built up as a part of the spiritual house. But if he is not in Christ, he may call himself by what name he pleases and may assume this or that lofty pretension, but he boasts himself beyond his line and beyond the truth.

Union to Christ is the test of union with the true Church. If we are members of the most orthodox Church in Christendom it will avail us nothing unless we are spiritually joined to Christ, Himself. Without Christ we can *do* nothing and we *are* nothing. There are some who judge us because we don't follow them. They cry, “The temple of the Lord, the temple

of the Lord are we.” They claim to be “the Church” beyond whose pale there can be no salvation. Brothers and Sisters, regard them not, for if you are in Christ, you are built up as a spiritual house and so are a portion of the true Church. If you have come to Jesus by a living faith and if it is your daily practice to come to your Lord and live *upon* Him and *unto* Him, you are priests unto God and need not mind the censure of those who are ordained of men.

There are others who condemn us because we reject the pomp of their ceremonies, the prestige of their State connection and the venerableness of their antiquity. These have weight with the unlearned and unspiritual, but those who are taught of God discern the vanity of their boasts! Be not moved by their judgment, no, not for an hour, for if you, indeed, come to the Lord Jesus, you are built up by Himself into a spiritual house—and that which He does, does not lack for honor or reverence. It is enough of prestige and of antiquity for us to be accepted by our Lord Jesus! “Unto you that believe, He is honor.”

Whether your critics are so or not, *you* are, beyond question, living stones built up a spiritual house, if, indeed, you are evermore coming to your Lord. There are some who in the serenity of their infallibility, because we cannot endorse their creed or pronounce their shibboleth, straightway cut us off and count us to be mere pretenders. But if we are in our very heart coming to Christ. If He is the end of our conversation. If we make Him Alpha and Omega and if He is to us the beginning and the end of all things, we may make small account of the condemnation or the approval of the best of our brethren, since we are in Christ and so we are a spiritual house built up for the inhabiting of God!

I remember an anecdote of the Jesuit Fathers of the South Seas which illustrates this. When they intruded themselves upon a native population who had been converted to Christ, they began to instruct them in their Popish idolatries by means of pictures and, among the rest, showed them a famous tree. The natives asked, “What is this?” “It sets forth the Church.” “And what is this root?” “O that is Jesus Christ.” “And this trunk, what is that?” “That is the succession of the Popes, who are the vicars of Christ.” “And these great branches, what are these?” “They are the cardinals.” “And these branches, what are they?” “They are the bishops of the Church.” “And what are these small branches and little twigs?” “They are the priests and the faithful.” “And what are these poor twigs which are cut off and are falling into the fire?” “They are the heretics—such as Martin Luther, Calvin, and the like.”

The natives looked at the picture for a while, rubbed their eyes, declared that they did not understand much about it, but with great glee exclaimed—“It is all right with us, for we have the root! We have the root!” So *we* can say if we have come to Jesus Christ our Lord, we are growing out of the root and we need have no doubt as to our being in the right place. The branch which grows out of Him must be a true branch of the vine! The stone which rests upon Him as a foundation must be a true part of the spiritual temple! Our only hope lies in our being of Him and in Him—we know no other.

Whatever the dignity which men ascribe unto themselves apart from Him, verily, I say unto you, we know them not, neither do we give place for subjection to them. They may tell us of what they are, but we only know what Jesus is! It is written, "The sheep hear His voice and a stranger they will not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers." We know not the many strange voices which are in the world, of those who would have us follow them and yield to their authority. But we know the voice of the great King in Zion and we rejoice to feel that if we are found in Him we are accepted in Him! And in Him, *today*, as living stones, we are built up a spiritual house.

I propose, this morning, to show that we who are in Christ have the reality of all that which Ritualism pretends to possess. The votaries of that faith delight in the shadow, but we have the substance! For, first, we are a temple—"built up a spiritual house." Secondly, we are a priesthood—"an holy priesthood." And thirdly, we have our own peculiar sacrifices—"to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

I. First then, all those who are coming to Christ—daily coming nearer and nearer to Him—are, as living stones, built up into A TEMPLE. The saints in their corporate capacity are a holy temple unto the Lord. They are called a *spiritual* house in opposition to the old *material* house in which the emblem of the Divine Presence shone forth in the midst of Israel—that *temple* in which the Jew delighted—counting it to be beautiful for situation and the joy of the whole earth. We have nothing to do with material temples now—we are quite clear of that, for the *typical* has given way to the *real* and *spiritual*.

Solomon's Temple, itself, is always to be spoken of with honor, seeing that God did, for a time, make it the center of His worship, yet it must not be too highly honored, for God never had any great delight in its magnificence and worked but few mighty deeds amid its splendors. You remember that when David proposed to build it, the Lord seemed rather to yield to the weakness of His servant than to rejoice in the proposal, for He said, "For I have not dwelt in an house since the day that I brought up Israel unto this day; but have gone from tent to tent, and from one tabernacle to another. Wherever I have walked with all Israel, spoke I a word to any of the Judges of Israel, whom I commanded to feed My people, saying, Why have you not built Me an house of cedars?"

The Lord sought not for such a palace, nor, when it was built, did He much regard it, for He says by His servant Isaiah, "Thus says the Lord, the Heaven is My Throne and the earth is My footstool; where is the house that you build unto Me? And where is the place of My rest? For all those things has My hand made, and all those things have been, says the Lord; but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of contrite spirit, and trembles at My Word." Stephen in the latter day, when he was rehearsing the history of Israel, alludes to the Temple, but he carefully guards himself from being supposed to attach any great importance to it. He says, "But Solomon built Him a house. However, the Most High dwells not in temples made with hands" and goes on to quote the passage from the Prophet which I have just mentioned.

When the Apostles sat down opposite the Temple which Herod had renovated, they were filled with wonder at the great stones of which it was made. But our Lord did not seem at all to sympathize in their admiration of its glories—rather, He said, “There shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down.” Had God cared for the Temple, He could have preserved it to this day, but lo, like a dream of night it has passed away! And no order has since been given to the servants of the Lord to build temples. We have nobler work to do in building up the *spiritual* house and need not be occupied with gorgeous architecture of buildings made with hands!

I fear that the pretentious architecture which is now so much in vogue for professedly Christian places of worship is only one of those evil signs of the times which indicate a departure from inward and spiritual worship. The Prophet Hosea said of old, “Israel has forgotten his Maker and builds temples.” There is, I fear, too much going back to the beggarly elements of outward and materialistic worship and a receding from pure spiritual adoration. Even the purer sort are hankering after *visible* show and the delights of music and the fine arts as accessories to worship. God, the Everlasting One, has beneath yon blue canopy studded with a thousand stars, a far more glorious temple than all that architects shall plan, or wealth of builders and skill of masons shall ever be able to build!

All man’s architecture is but child’s play compared with the great universe of God which is the temple of the Infinite! And what seems to us the most enchanting music must surely be but discord in His ears. It is significant that of Heaven, where God is best worshipped, John says, “I saw no temple there.” Where every place is holy, what need is there of a temple? And where every being shall be perfect and forever full of adoring love, there shall be no need of any select shrine or settled hour of assembly! When we become holy, as we should be, we shall count *all* places and *all* hours to be the Lord’s! And we shall always dwell in His Temple because God is everywhere.

For one spot to be holy and not another is but to show how much of the earth we resign to the devil! From this dreary superstition, I pray you, shake yourselves loose! We have not so learned Christ as to count one edifice more sacred than another, for we know Him as cleansing all places and things and from now on nothing to us is common or unclean—except only as sin defiles and spreads pollution. We are, then, a spiritual temple in opposition to all material temples, even that of Solomon included among the rest. We are a spiritual temple, but not the less real. That which is spiritual is sometimes supposed to be mythical and imaginary, but indeed, it is not so. The things which are seen are the shadowy and the dreamy—the things which are *not seen* are the substantial and the eternal!

Our Lord Jesus called His body the Temple of God. He said, “Destroy this Temple and I will build it in three days.” As a Temple of God, the body of Christ was most real. There was no fiction about His humanity. The Word was made flesh and tabernacled among us, so that the Apostle John says, “We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of Grace and truth.” His perfect body was a true Temple which God

had pitched and not men—and just as true and real is the spiritual Temple of which the text speaks. With equal truth the Apostle Paul tells us that our bodies are “the temple of the Holy Spirit, which is in us”—and that not by imagination but in reality, as the context of that expression proves, since he, therefore, bids us avoid all fornication (1 Cor. 6:18, 19). He would not use a mere fancy as a practical reason for guarding the purity of our bodies! The force of the argument must lie in its truthfulness and so the bodies of the saints are *really* and, indeed, temples of the Holy Spirit.

Moreover, the whole Church together, the whole body of the elect, the whole company of the redeemed, regenerate and called are, “built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit,” and this, also, is most real. Read verses 16 and 17 in the First of Corinthians and the 3rd chapter. “Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man defiles the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.” Surely this cannot relate to a fiction or a dream—or the punishment for defiling a mere notion would hardly be so terrible. Yet while real, the Temple of God in the saints is *spiritual*. A Church is made up of spiritual men and her temple form is spiritual. Your eyes cannot, as yet, see the Church in which God dwells.

Words have come to be so misused, nowadays that they call a steeple and a building made of stone or brick and mortar a Church—which cannot possibly be correct—for a Church is a company of faithful men. Alas, they have yet further perverted language and make a company of ecclesiastics, whether regenerated or not, to be “the Church.” “Going into the Church” is a current phrase which shows the ignorance of those who use it! Nor is this all—there is no *one* visible Church which can claim to be *the* Church. I tell you the Church of Jesus Christ differs greatly from these associations which are called Churches! The visible Church contains a large part of the true Church of Christ, but it is not identical with it. Like its Lord, the Church is as yet hidden and the creation, itself, waits for the manifestation of the sons of God.

The Lord has a people scattered abroad everywhere, whose lives are hid with Him in God—and these make up the real Temple of God in which the Lord dwells. Men of every name and clime and age are quickened into life, made living stones and then laid upon Christ. These constitute the true Temple which God has built—not man! God dwells not in temples made with hands, that is to say, of man’s building—He dwells in a Temple which He Himself has built for His habitation forever, saying—“This is My rest forever. Here will I dwell, for I have desired it.”

This temple is spiritual and, therefore, it is living. A material temple is dead. A spiritual temple must be alive and so the text tells us, “You, also, as living stones.” I cannot understand why the translators put the word, “lively,” since it is precisely the same word in the original as above where they have translated it, “a living stone.” Those good men wished to infuse a little variety into their version, but this was hardly justifiable in interpreters who ought to have given us the exact meaning. They should have left the sacred style to take care of itself—even its monotony is more re-

freshing than the variety of any other book! True Believers are stones full of life, so joined to Christ as to be part of the live Rock, filled with spiritual vitality!

God has quickened them from the dead! The Holy Spirit has come to take possession of them and whereas they were dead in trespasses, they now live by the living Seed which God has put into them—and the life that they live in the flesh is the life of Christ within them. “I live, yet not I,” said the Apostle, “but Christ lives in me.” Can your eyes of faith see that Temple of God made up of living men and women—not alive through the life of the First Adam—but alive through that Second Adam, of whom it is said, “The Second Adam is made a quickening Spirit”? Put these live people together in an organization which allows free action to the life within and you have before you the Divine Cathedral in which Jehovah dwells forever and ever! We are a spiritual house, my Brothers and Sisters, and, therefore, spiritually built up!

Peter says, “You are built up”—built up by spiritual means. You cannot force men and women under rule and call them a Church—even if they come together willingly—they will not be a temple for the Lord unless the Divine Spirit shall fitly frame them together. God’s Temple does not build itself, neither does man build it, but it is the sole work of God! The Spirit of God quarries out of the pit of nature the stones which are as yet dead, separating them from the mass to which they adhered. He gives them life and then He fashions, squares and polishes them. And then they, without sound of axe or hammer, are brought, each one, to their appointed place and built up into Christ Jesus!

The old heathen fable says the music of Orpheus was so sweet that as he poured forth the mellifluous sounds, the rocks began to dance around him—and as he continued to play, they piled themselves up into a temple at his bidding! This is true of our Lord Jesus—the music of whose Divine Word by the Spirit brings us stones from different parts of the fields in which we lay and fits us together, stone to His stone, till a holy temple in the Lord arises to His praise! May the Holy Spirit work among us in this manner and may we all become indwelt by the ever-blessed Spirit. As you and I, who have long been brought into the Church, think of how we became built upon the Foundation, let us praise the hand which laid us in our places!

And as we cling closer and closer to the great Cornerstone to whom we are always coming, let us bless Him that the same love which, in the beginning, cemented us to the Cornerstone still holds us in our place so firmly that none shall separate us! We are a spiritual house, dear Friends and, therefore, the more fit for the indwelling of God who is a Spirit. It is impossible, if you consider for a moment, to conceive of God dwelling within walls! The roof may be of cedar and the walls of polished marble overlaid with fine gold, but can Omnipresence be enclosed by a wall or surmounted by a roof? The Infinite, who fills all things and who makes all things—who stretches out the heavens like a tent to dwell in, who rides on the wings of the wind—does He dwell within walls of man’s building?

It can only be in some typical sense that He can be said to abide in a temple—but that He should dwell within *spiritual* beings whom He has

created in His own image—that He should dwell in intellect, thought, love, hope and all those high and spiritual powers which adorn the minds of His people is most fitting! A Spirit dwelling in a spiritual house! A Spirit inhabiting other spirits and making them all to be resplendent with His excellence—this is a beautiful conception and, by no means, impossible to realize. Within the assemblies of the saints, God is known, loved, remembered and consulted. In the Church He is heartily worshipped, for all true worship is in the hearts of His people and all else is mockery. Not at your altars, O you that pile up your hewn stones! Not under your groaning arches, O you who seek to show the skill of the stonemason! But in your *hearts*, Believers, where God's skill and power are seen—*there* is God worshipped, whether you are in cathedrals or by the wayside.

Jesus said to the Samaritan woman, “the hour comes when you shall neither in this mountain of Gerizim, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father, but the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeks such to worship Him.” Material temples are abolished and a spiritual temple is instituted! It is in the Church that God reveals Himself. If you would know the Lord's love and power and Grace, you must get among His people, hear their experiences, learn from them how God deals with them and let them tell you, if you have Grace to understand them, the height, depth, length and breadth of the love of Christ which passes knowledge, for He manifests Himself to them as He does not to the world. Has He not said, “I will dwell in them and walk in them”? And it is out of the Church, the *spiritual* palace of God, that His glory shines forth among men!

The promise of the 110th Psalm is, “The Lord shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion; rule You in the midst of Your enemies.” If you desire to see God's spiritual power, you will discern it best by seeing how it is exerted in and through spiritual men and spiritual women, built up together as a spiritual house! The Church of Christ is the camp from which the armies of the Lord go forth to conquer the nations! It is the pavilion in which the Prince of Peace has fixed His headquarters during this last crusade. If you ask for the center of the nations. If you would discover the eye and soul of this poor world. If you would gladly see the glory and excellence of the sons of men, find out the quickened stones that God has built together and you will see the habitation of the great King!

But I must now bring you back to the point from which I started, that all this is in subordination to Christ, “To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed, indeed, of men, but chosen of God and precious, you also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house.” You live because He lives! You are a building because He is the Cornerstone! You are honored because, “to you that believe He is honor.” Of Him and through Him are all things. You are no member of the Church unless you are a member of Christ! You are not a living stone unless you live by the life of Christ. You are not built up unless you are built up on Him.

“What do you think of Christ?” That is the test of your whole state. Is He your Savior, your All in All? If He is, then, by this sign do you know that God has built you up into His Temple. But if not, you are cast forth as a rejected stone. God grant us Grace to realize as a Church that we are

a Temple of God—and realize it best by coming daily to Christ more and more closely—that we may be vitally one with Him.

II. In addition to being a temple, God's people are said to be A PRIESTHOOD. Observe that they are spoken of *together* and not merely us individuals. They make up one indivisible priesthood—each one is a priest, but all standing together they are a *priesthood*, by virtue of their being one with Christ. “For we, being many, are one body in Christ.” Never let us cease to walk in unity and love, for we are all one in Christ Jesus—and what God has joined together let no man put asunder. We are “an holy priesthood.”

This stands in opposition to the nominal and worldly priesthood. I think I see the world's priests, decorated with many different robes and ornaments! A gallant show, indeed, for fools to stare at! I see them with their garments of all colors. I see them with their shaved heads or unshaven, as the case may be. These are the priests of Baal! They are mere mimics, servants of a visible shrine, servitors of idols! These are not the priests of the living God, who is a Spirit and is served by *spiritual* priests! It is of these outward priests that He says, “He that offers an oblation is as if he offered swine's blood and he that burns incense as if he blessed an idol.” There are no priests, now, except those who are in Christ—and this priesthood belongs to all Believers alike!

When a man comes forward and claims that he is a priest, beyond and above the sense in which all Christians are so, we spit upon his lie! We utterly loathe the idea of fellowship with such falsehood and we regard the poor mortal as going back to the elements of old Judaism, if not turning aside altogether unto Antichrist! All men and women who are in Christ, believing in Him, become sanctified by His Spirit, and so they become—not *some* of them but *all* of them—priests and kings unto God through Christ Jesus! This they are, not in *themselves* in any way, nor by any derivation of Grace from men by Apostolic succession and the like, but by the personal and direct union with their great High Priest, in whom, alone, they become an holy priesthood unto God—

***“Blest inhabitants of Zion,
Washed in the Redeemer's blood!
Jesus, whom their souls rely on,
Makes them kings and priests to God.
'Tis His love His people raises
Over self to reign as kings
And as priests.
His solemn praises
Each for a thank-offering brings.”***

This priesthood is most real, although it is not of the outward and visible order, for God's priests become priests after a true and notable fashion. The priests of Aaron's line were priests by birth and so are we—born-again with a high and spiritual birth which brings the priesthood with it! In that day when we were begotten, again, unto a lively hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, we assumed our spiritual priesthood. We are priests by anointing, too, for if the Spirit of God does not dwell in us, neither are we priests of God by whatever names we may aspire to be called. But where the Spirit of God, with His Divine anointing has descended, that man, that woman, has become a priest unto the liv-

ing God, for in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female, but of whatever sex we are, we are, alike, qualified to exercise this priesthood. If we have been anointed of the Holy Spirit, our orders are received from Heaven and none can make them void.

And we have, also, been consecrated. Brothers and Sisters, I shall leave it to yourselves as to the reality of that consecration, but some of us can solemnly declare that if anything was ever true in our lives, it was the giving up of ourselves to God. The priest of old was touched with the blood upon his ear—and is not your ear the Lord's to hear His Word? The blood was, also, smeared upon his thumb—and is not your hand the Lord's, with all its dexterity and force consecrated to Him? He was, also, marked with blood upon his big toe, to show that his feet belonged to the Lord. And is it not so with you? Do you not feel that you would run on His commandments, that you would work in His service and that you would listen to the voice of His Word? You acknowledge that you are His. You confess that you are not your own but bought with a price and, therefore, you present yourselves to Him to be forever His in spirit, soul and body. This consecration is a proof of the actual process by which you are, in very deed, constituted priests unto God.

We are priests, Beloved Friends, in the aspect of priesthood towards God. Priesthood meant in Israel that these men were set apart to speak with God on behalf of the rest of the congregation. They had to offer the daily sacrifices and kindle the fire of the incense. Now, you who believe in Christ are all priests—priests for mankind—to speak for them to God. As man is spokesman for a dumb world, so are you intercessors for a sinful race. Whereas fields and hills and rocks and cattle cannot speak, nor even the surging waves of the sea—*man* is the world's eye and heart and tongue to speak for them all! But, alas, men, themselves, have become as dumb as driven cattle towards God! And as dead as the earth they tread upon.

But you, quickened into life, are to be the priesthood of the universe, the ordained intercessors for the sons of men. You are to speak with God on man's behalf and bring down, each of you, according to the measure of your faith, the blessing upon the sons of men among whom you dwell. You stand before God to speak for your fellow men—take care that you do this with solemn earnestness. And you are priests towards men, also, for the priest was selected from among men to exercise necessary offices for man's good. The priests' lips should keep knowledge and if you are as you should be, you hold fast the faith once delivered to the saints. The priests taught God's Word and so, also, must you publish among the people the Divine message of Divine Grace. As lights, you must shine in the world, holding forth the Word of Life. It is yours to be the nation's teachers! God has consecrated you to the office—do not neglect it, lest the blood of men's souls should lie at your door.

The priest, in addition to being the instructor of the people, was, also, their intercessor. So must you be. Oh, cease not day or night to pray for men till God shall send forth His light into the darkest parts of the earth! You that make mention of the Lord, keep not silent till the time to favor Zion comes. The priests, also, were to awaken the people and, therefore,

they had the keeping of the silver trumpets. It was theirs to blow them on the new moon and to proclaim the Sabbath and the Jubilee. It was theirs to give the alarm of war. It was theirs in the wilderness to summon the tribes together, to bid them march or bid them halt according as the Lord commanded. O, believing men and women, you are to awaken the world! God has quickened you, not for your own sakes, alone, for no man lives unto himself in this priesthood—but that you may have compassion on the ignorant and those that are out of the way—and may seek to awaken the careless and lead them to God.

The priests were to bless the people. It was their prerogative to pronounce God's name upon them. Oh, live a blessed life and, as your Master rose to Heaven, went there with outstretched hands blessing His people, let your course on earth be like that of the Ascended One! Pray it will be a life scattering blessings among the sons of men and let its closing scene be full of love to those you leave below. Thus shall you be practically the holy priesthood which God would have you to be. This is to be your function and ministry always and in every place. You are an holy priesthood not only on the Lord's Day when you come into this house, but at all times! What is this house more than any other? You are a priesthood everywhere at all times, owing nothing to the place you stand in or to the garb you wear!

How this invests the Christian's life with dignity! You are to eat, drink, sleep, wake and all along to abide in your priesthood. For you the chamber, the parlor, the workshop, the open field and the street are to be a place for the exercise of your priestly functions. Do you not see that it must be so, for you carry your temple with you? You, yourselves, make the temple, for you are the Temple of God. You are always in your temple, for your body is your temple. You are always in your temple, for you are built up into it and stones do not move when once built up—so that wherever you dwell, you are in the place of service and worship.

Do you live up to this, my Brothers and Sisters? Do you seek to do so? Do you make your ordinary meals into sacraments? Do you turn the common garments of your toil into vestments? Do you make your speech to be an offering of the sacrifice of thanksgiving? Do you cause your thoughts to be as a sweet perfume of incense unto the Most High? This is why you are called—to be an holy priesthood. Unholiness in you is a slight upon the office with which God has invested you! Unholiness in you is as though the High Priest put off His garments of beauty and glory and robed Himself in the garments of a fool!

Now, Brethren, I call you back to the point from which we started. You are an holy priesthood only as you are in Christ. Christ is the Elect of God and you are elect in Him. He is a King and, therefore, you are a royal priesthood in Him. He is a holy Prince and you become a holy nation in Him. He is God's peculiar treasure and you become a peculiar people in Him. All this is in oneness with Him. If you can be severed from Christ, you have lost your priesthood. Only as we abide in our Lord do we abide in our condition of honor and privilege.

III. We must now consider the SACRIFICES which we offer—"spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." We offer *spiritual* sacrifices

as opposed to the literal. There were sacrifices of bulls and goats under the Law, as you right well know, yet the Lord never cared much for them, for the Holy Spirit, when He spoke by men of old, frequently set these things in the place of small esteem. In an evangelical frame of mind, deeply penitent for sin, the Patriarch David was able to see the inefficiency of the legal offerings and he wrote thus, "You desire not sacrifice, else would I give it. You delight not in burnt offering."

And again he says concerning thanksgiving, "This, also, shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock that has horns and hoofs." To the same effect and even more comprehensive, is that expression in the 40th Psalm, "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire. Burnt offering and sin offering have You not required." And what follows, "Then said I, lo, I come. In the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do Your will, O my God; yes, Your Law is within my heart." Upon which remarkably clear passage Paul remarks, "He takes away the first," the sacrifices, "that He may establish the second," or set up the doing of the Divine will by Christ as the great Sacrifice forever. You and I bring no lambs or bulls, but we present a *real* sacrifice which is far more pleasing in His sight, for it is written, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise."

The text which I have just quoted shows what our sacrifices are, for we imitate our Lord and say, "I delight to do Your will, O God." This is the true sacrifice! Had not the Lord before spoken by Samuel and said, "To *obey* is better than sacrifice and to listen than the fat of rams"? So this day, Beloved, when you do the will of God from your heart—when you studiously strive to find out what God's will is and then conscientiously endeavor to attend to it—you are as priests offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

This sacrificing takes various forms. "I beseech you, Brethren, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice." You are to present yourselves, spirit, soul and body, as a sacrifice unto God. You are, also, to, "do good and to communicate, for with such sacrifices God is well-pleased." To Him, also, you are to, "offer the sacrifice of praise continually, the fruit of your lips giving glory to God." To the Lord, also, you must present the incense of holy prayer. But all these are comprehended, I think, in the expression, "I delight to do Your will, O God." That scribe spoke discreetly who replied to our Lord that to love God with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, with all the strength and to love his neighbor as himself is more than whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. Oh, you saints, live to do Jehovah's will! Lay self aside! Put self-seeking far away! Live wholly to make Jesus great, to make His Gospel known and to perform the will of God which is your sanctification! Live unto God and so offer unceasing sacrifice!

We come back to where we began. The text says, "acceptable to God by Jesus Christ," and so reminds us of our dependence upon our Lord Jesus. You have no sacrifice to bring apart from *His* sacrifice and it is only as you live in the spirit of the self-sacrificing Jesus that you can possibly offer unto God such sacrifice as He will accept. I have done when I have said this much to you. Beloved Believers, you see your honorable office—

rejoice therein! Are you poor? Are you obscure? Have you to work hard for a living? Nevertheless behave not yourselves before the sons of men as though you were of mean degree, for you are priests unto God! I delight to think of God's priests working in our fields and toiling in our shops, as well as gathered here at this time in a holy convocation! God's priests as much in one place as in another!

Such holy priests are all around you. You know them not by their wearing a biretta, or by that hideous long coat and Roman dog collar in which the world's priests drape themselves! No, you know the priests of God by their practical holiness! If you are holy unto God, you have your priestly garments on. And if the world disallows you, as it disallowed its Lord, and rejects you as a stone not to be built into the temple, it does not matter—"The Lord knows them that are His." He has built you into your place in His spiritual Temple and He will dwell with you, yes, *does* dwell with you and will abide with you forever!

See, now, your responsibility and walk circumspectly, because whatever you do will be a part of the acts of "the holy priesthood." The priests of God must be pure! "Be you clean that bear the vessels of the Lord." The Temple of the Lord must not have buyers and sellers and thieves and robbers to defile it. Christ would have it purged. This puts you into such a responsible position that I would earnestly implore you, "Be you perfect, even as your Father in Heaven is perfect." You must set apart, to such an office as this, everything about you to be marked with, "Holiness unto the Lord."

And now, see once more what Divine Grace has been bestowed upon you, that you should become priests, who in times past were enemies to God! You were not a people, but are now *the* people of God! You had not obtained mercy, but have now obtained mercy! You were sometimes in darkness, but now you are light in the Lord! You were once the servants of Satan, but now you are priests unto God! Go, and so live, that men shall say of you, "They are the priests of the Lord." May you show forth the virtues of your God and declare His praises!

You have received the office—honor it, live up to it—pray for Grace to fulfill it. Think how it dignifies you, for the text which I quoted, just now, says, "Unto you that believe He is honor"—that is the Greek word. It is your *honor* to have Christ for your Savior! It is your *honor* to be Christ's servants! It is your *honor* to be like Christ! It is your *honor* to be priests through His Grace and, by-and-by, it will be your *honor* to be with Him, world without end! Amen.

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THE PRIESTHOOD OF BELIEVERS

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“An holy priesthood.”
1 Peter 2:5.

IN this Epistle Peter is speaking of the scattered saints in all parts of the world and, taught by the Holy Spirit, he says of them that they were “an holy priesthood.” He is not talking about ministers! He is not speaking of a certain number of men who have passed through many grades of office and are, thereby, qualified to wear robes of a certain color—he is speaking of every Believer and he calls every saint a member of “an holy priesthood!” Every Mary and every John, every peasant girl and every laborer that puts his hands upon the plow, every servant of God in every capacity is a member of this “holy priesthood”—at least so Peter says, and Peter was not mistaken, for he spoke as he was “moved by the Holy Spirit.”

Let us, for the ten-thousandth time, state our own solemn conviction that it is time for England to wake up and solemnly rebuke the priestcraft that seems rising up in our midst! No man has any right to call himself, in any exclusive sense, a priest. When I take down the Book of Common Prayer and read, “Then shall the priest say”—I shut it up again with detestation! And if it were the best human book ever printed and had no other blunder and error in it, yet if it ventured to call any class of men, priests, I would denounce it as being tainted with Roman Catholicism! Christ is the only Priest who can offer sacrifice for the expiation of sin! He is “the Great Apostle and High Priest of our profession.” But there is another priesthood—one of offering prayers and praises—and this belongs not to me because I am a minister, nor to any number of men who are called “Reverend,” or “Very Reverend,” or “Right Reverend,” but to you as well, and to everyone else who by faith has believed in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord! If truly converted to God, a man though barely able to read his Bible, is a priest unto Him, because he has a new heart and a right spirit! He may never mount a pulpit, nor preside at a Church Meeting, but he may be a priest unto God! His only pulpit may be a cobbler’s stall—his only platform for witnessing to Christ may be behind the counter or in the factory—but he is a priest for all that!

Or if the Lord calls a sister to Himself, she is to be silent in the Church Meeting, but she belongs to the Divine priesthood and her prayers and praises will go up with as much acceptance before God, through Jesus Christ, as if she were an eminent Divine, or the most gifted of the saints! All God's children are priests and this is the song of all in Heaven and all on earth who are truly saved—"He has made us kings and priests unto God, and we shall reign forever and ever."

Now, it is on this theme of priesthood that I desire to speak tonight. And the way in which priests were made under the Law of God is described for us in the 8th Chapter of Leviticus. So I invite you to turn with me and look at the subject as expounded there, for surely the way in which the sons of Aaron were ordained to their earthly and temporal priesthood is richly suggestive and intentionally typical of the manner in which God calls all His people to their holy priesthood! On turning to that Chapter we find that one of the first things with regard to the ordination of Aaron and his sons to their priesthood was that, **THEY WERE CLEANSED**. We read in Leviticus 8:6, "*and Moses brought Aaron and his sons, and washed them with water.*" That was one cleansing. But several times in the Chapter we find that a second cleansing was theirs and that by blood! In verse 2 we find that they brought a bullock for a sin-offering, and two rams, and with the blood of one of the rams, and the blood of the sin-offering they were sprinkled that they might be clean before God. This powerfully teaches that every one of us aspiring to be a priest for God must first be cleansed, and that with a double purifying—

***“Let the water and the blood,
From His riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse us from its guilt and power.”***

If we look closer into this cleaning by blood we see that Aaron and his sons put their hands upon the ram, confessing their sins. Then the ram was slain, the blood sprinkled upon the altar and the laver, and upon all the vessels of the sanctuary—and then upon Aaron and his sons. What deep instruction is here! If we are God's priests, we lay our hand upon Christ, accept Him as our Substitute, trusting in that blood shed for the remission of sins! He will have no priests in His sanctuary who have not been cleansed with the blood of Christ! All service until this is experienced, is a vain oblation which He cannot accept. Go to the altar, confess your sin and lay it upon the Lamb of God—and then, but not until then—can you be a holy priest.

Moreover, the priests were afterward also washed in water. On this first occasion they were cleansed from head to foot, but on later occasions when going into the Tabernacle, they needed only to wash their hands and feet. So is it with our Christian life. By the Holy Spirit's application of our Lord's merits, Believers are completely cleansed and there remains neither spot nor wrinkle on their acceptance with Him. But though a man is perfectly clean who leaves his bath, yet his feet may be

soiled as he goes to his room and he needs to wash them again. So you and I need to pray, “Forgive us our sins,” though they have all been forgiven! We are washed, but daily defiling calls for constant cleansing. Though every true Christian has been cleansed, as was Peter, he must not say, “You shall never wash my feet.” When Jesus comes by His cleansing Word and Spirit, and girt with the towel and carrying the basin, we must be willing to let Him cleanse us—no, *beg* Him to wash our feet—that we may be clean, every whit. We need to pray, “Forgive us our sins.” It is not in the least in conflict with the Doctrine of a complete Sanctification, or complete Justification.

The priests, every one of them, were washed. They had a clear right to go into the sanctuary, yet none the less, they had to wash their hands and feet each time they entered.

So we are clean. God accepts us. We are His children and yet, day by day, we must go with the prayer to Him, “Lord cleanse me again in the Redeemer’s Blood: make me pure by the washing of water by the Word!” So when defiling comes, His cleansing power may be proved again and again.

Well, Beloved, have we ever attempted to serve God without this cleansing? If so, may we repent of our imagined righteousness as much as of our sins, for even our righteousnesses are nothing but sins until we have been washed! Do we long for this perfect cleansing? The fountain is full—the blood, the water, have the same efficacy as they ever had. “Though *your* sins are as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Step down into this heavenly bath! Trust Christ to save you and, being cleansed by Him, you shall be forever a member of this “holy priesthood.”

Referring again to Leviticus 8, we see that the second thing in the ordaining of the priesthood was **THEY WERE DIVINELY CLOTHED**. However clean they were, they must be suitably arrayed, or they cannot appear before the Lord. We have given to us a list of the garments and find that Aaron, as High Priest, was sumptuously clothed, but not so his sons. In the 13th verse we are told that they had coats, and belts and bonnets. Let us glance at each of these for they are packed with spiritual significance. The “Coat” is a priestly robe. Everyone who ministered at the altar put on an ephod, a coat hanging from the shoulder, generally in one piece and woven from the top throughout, like that which the Lord Jesus wore. So every Believer is to put on the imputed righteousness of Jesus given to us at our conversion!

He officiates as High Priest before the Throne of God clothed in white linen, and so do all the saints—“white linen which is the righteousness of the saints,” says John in the Revelation. Now we have no righteousness of our own, but the voice from Heaven speaks, “I counsel you, buy of Me white raiment that you may be clothed.” We come to Christ just as we are and He clothes us with His righteousness, active and passive, and

this is the ephod in which we minister unto God. With our Lord's righteousness clothing us, we can stand without fear before the awful searching eyes of God now and hereafter, and not fear—

***“Bold shall I stand at that Great Day
For who anything to my charge shall lay,
While through Your blood absolved I am
From sin's tremendous curse and shame?”***

Are you, Beloved, robed in the righteousness of your Savior? Then come forward and officiate as His priest!

Next to the ephod, came *the belt*. In the case of Aaron we are told it was a “curious” belt. Ah, how curious, how matchless, how marvelous is the belt which encircles the loins of Christ! He is girt about the waist with a golden belt. His faithfulness, His truth, His love, His every attribute of excellency combined, make up this curious belt comprising the ephod. But every other true priest has his belt. You and I, if called to this holy office, are to have our loins girt about, standing always ready, instant to obey God's command and revel in His service. Orientals wore flowing garments and when these were loose, they could not hasten in their activities. So they used the belt to brace themselves, gathering up their robes for special labor, or conflict, or flight. So every priest of Christ must wear his belt of faithfulness. There is a wicked world always on the watch. Be careful! Be vigilant! You may be tripped up by the sin that does so easily beset us. See to it that you are well braced, so that if the enemy came suddenly you may meet him with courage, or if a message came from your Master you may run upon it with diligence.

Yet another part of the priest's clothing is called “the bonnet”—literally, “the turban.” This, so we are told, “was for glory and for beauty.” Truly our Lord has put upon His people His own Glory and beauty. We are not merely acceptable, but beloved. Not passable, but admirable. Not merely not to be condemned, but full of imparted loveliness. Jesus says to every saved soul, “You have ravished My heart, My sister, My spouse—with one look of your eyes, with one chain of your neck.” Jesus so falls in love with His own image in each saved soul, that His heart is captured. Here is “the Glory and beauty” with which He has invested us. Every Believer is looked upon by God as if he were Christ. Christ took your place and was cursed for you—you take Christ's place and, notwithstanding all the blemishes, all the backslidings, all the hardness you may feel within—if you are truly in Christ, you are so clothed that Glory Divine and beauty is yours! The priests were not only washed but clothed. My Soul, what joy is this! Ponder it until it masters and enthralls you!

After the cleansing and clothing, came this to the priests, THEY WERE ANOINTED. This is mentioned more than once. Aaron had the holy oil poured upon his head until it ran down to the skirt of his garment. So Jesus was anointed of the Holy Spirit without measure. The other priests were also touched with the oil—sprinkled with it.

And you and I, if we have been both washed and clothed, must yet be anointed. Child of God, do you distinctly and intensely recognize your need of this anointing? If I have preached without the Holy Spirit I have preached in vain. If I have gone to my prayer chamber, no matter how earnest I desired to be, I have prayed in vain unless the Spirit of God has been upon me. This anointing is the Christian's supreme need! Dear Joseph Irons very often used to say as he went into the pulpit, "Oh, for an unction from on high!" Sunday school teacher, you are a priest and this is your great need—anointing! You who preach in the streets. You who are intercessors in private for Christ. You who seek to show God in your daily life—you all need the anointing! What can we not do when the Spirit is in us? What can we do if He is withholding His Presence and power? As God's priests we may—we must have a daily unction—anointing—from the Holy One!

After this, THEY WERE CONSECRATED. Here I must enlarge more than upon the last point. This setting apart to priestly function and work was very remarkable. We find that blood was taken and that Moses touched the priests with it (according to the 24th verse) first, "upon the tip of the right ear, then upon the thumbs of their right hand and then upon the great toes of their right feet. And Moses sprinkled the blood upon the altar round about." This description is very full and suggestive. Every Christian is to be consecrated to God by blood as to his ear. That is, we are to be eager to hear God's voice, whether in His Word printed or preached. "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound!" They only recognize it because the blood is on the ear. We are to hear God's voice in Providence. When there is a sound of going in the tops of the mulberry trees, like David, we are to be bestir ourselves! We are to be willing to hear even the rod and Him that has appointed it. There are many voices that the sanctified ear detects that the carnal ear has never listened to. The godly man has monitions from the Most High when the natural man catches no whisper. To always hear the "still, small voice," is the listening we should desire. So too, with regard to man, we should hear his misery and feel for it—hear his sin and pray to God for its full forgiveness as Jesus did. Yet on the other hand, there are some sounds that the ear so consecrated must not hear. We are deaf to the insinuations of suspicion, the slander of calumny, yes, to many an intended insult that otherwise might have provoked and angered us! May we always feel that as there was blood on the priest's ear, so all our reception powers are to be consecrated to God! If so, I shall feel that there are some books I cannot read, for I have blood on my ear—some songs I dare not listen to—some talk I dare not share in, for I have a consecrated ear. I am to use *that* for Him, for I am His priest.

Next in order was *the thumb*. This consecrated the hand. And as the ear stands for our receptive faculties, so the hand represents our active powers. There are some things we must not touch nor handle—some

things we cannot do, in which we can have no hand, no, cannot finger. Since our hand is sanctified by the blood, all it does must be pleasing to God. I know that a common mistake is to think that you cannot serve God unless you get into a pulpit, or attend a Prayer Meeting. Nonsense! You can truly serve God behind the counter, in the work-room! You can serve God by digging a ditch, or clipping a hedge. I believe that God is often served by the tailor or shoemaker who is conscientious in his calling, quite as well as by bishops and archbishops, or by men of any Church in the world! At any rate if you cannot serve God in all that you do, you have need to ask to be taught the secret of the Christian life, for that secret is the consecration of everything to Jesus Christ!

You are to make your garments, vestments, your meals, sacraments, your everyday a holy day, your every hour a consecrated season unto God! Our hands, with all their manifold activities, are to be consecrated—blood-marked—to Him!

After this, came *the feet*. The blood was put on the great toe of the right foot, so the feet were set apart for God. Ah, these legs of ours used to carry us to theaters! We could run fast enough the downward road with them! I recollect a man who would stand in the aisle for a long time—he said he would “serve his legs out”—they had served the devil so long, that they should bear a little hardship for his new Lord and Master, Jesus Christ! I know some of you who used to walk many miles to come to the House of God—six miles. I used to say to you that it was too far. It was not too far for you, then, but lately it has become much too far. The road has not grown longer, but you have gone backward as to your zeal! And when the zeal declines, the miles get dolefully long. But I have marked that when men and women are in a right state of mind and soul, it does not matter how far they walk, nor what they have to do for Christ—the consecrated feet can do it joyfully. If I have consecrated feet, I must not let them take me into bad company. If anybody says to you, “Can you come with me to such-and-such a place?” You must answer, “No! I cannot. I have feet that won’t go and I cannot go without them!” And if any should say, “What is the matter with your feet?” say, “I have a foot that has blood upon it!” They will say, “Strange!” They will not understand you, but if you attempt to explain to them that the blood of your Lord Jesus Christ bought you and so, your feet—then they will understand that it cannot go anywhere except where Christ would have you go. It may mean that you will have to change your position in life—you have to move and have a choice as to where you shall go. Make that choice on the principle of having consecrated feet! Do not go where you cannot hear the pure Word of God. A Jew heard of a good business where there was much money but no synagogue—and of another where there was a synagogue though but little trade. And being a pious Jew, he chose the place with the synagogue. I am afraid that there are but few Jews who would do that today—and quite as few Christians who think first of God’s house and the hearing of the Gospel! Better to have a din-

ner of herbs and the Gospel with it, than a stalled ox and not to listen to the Truth of our Lord Jesus Christ! In choosing your home—in fact in everything that concerns your progress in life—act as if you had and knew you had consecrated feet!

Gathering up all, it surely teaches that a Christian is always, and everywhere, and altogether not his own, but consecrated to Christ! Not merely to be baptized, to come once a month to the Lord's Table, to take a pew and sit and look so heavenly-minded. Any hypocrite can do that! But it is the mark of a Christian to be so honest, upright, charitable, kind, Christlike, holy, that all who see may be compelled to say, "That man differs from other men." The secret, though they may not discover it, is that while other men are but common men, where father Adam left them in the Fall, this man has been found and made anew in Jesus Christ! Ear, thumb and foot all consecrated to Christ's service!

Hastily running through the rest of this chapter (Leviticus 8) we observe that *the consecration was very thorough*. There is mention made of unleavened bread. This teaches that a Christian is not to follow religion for the sake of honor, gain, or fame. None of the leaven of hypocrisy, or mere formalism is to be tolerated. We are to serve Christ for Christ's sake, and follow God because our heart is right with Him.

Again, the consecration is set forth—though I have little time to notice it—by the different parts of the victim being offered to God. You will observe that the deepest feelings of the Christian are to be with God—that the inwards and the fat of the kidneys were to be burnt upon the altar. Thus the richest and fullest emotions of the Christian's mind and heart are to belong to God, for the fat and marrow were to be burned as well. And the Christian's greatest strength is to be the Lord's, for the right shoulder was to be offered as a wave offering, and then to be consumed with fire. We are to give God our inmost thoughts, our deeper passions, our greatest strength. "Blessed is the man whose strength is in You!" Some people can call loud enough to wake up a town when they are in their business, but when they come to pray you can scarcely hear them. But I would have a Christian never so much, or so fine a man as when he is serving God. Give the world, if you will, the ends of your mind, soul and strength—but give God your whole man, your inward and your outward life, every part and power and passion, strung to its greatest height and all devoted to Him!

But to conclude once more, the *Christian's consecration is to be constant*. This remarkable Chapter has greatly interested me in observing that these priests were to be for one whole week associating in the Tabernacle. They were not either by day or night to leave their holy work. How they found strength enough, or whether this really included absolutely necessary seasons of rest, I cannot tell. But it says that for seven days they were to serve without intermission both by day and night. So the Christian priesthood is to be perpetual! We are never to cease to

serve God. You have heard of one that was so in love that he did eat, drink and sleep for such an one! So the Christian is to “do all to the Glory of God.” Says one, “Can this be done? Are we to follow Romish monks and get into a monastery?” No! I have no doubt they are right in shaving their heads—there is probably a great necessity for it. But unless we become demented, there is no need for us to imitate their example! The Christian is not to shut himself up and become a hermit, and think that thereby he can cultivate holiness! That is unholiness! Christian holiness is social—the light of the world, the salt of the earth. We are to be in the world, though not of it—our priesthood exercised is in the street, the shop, the family and at the fireside—by day and night, to offer up prayers and praises and thanksgivings unto God—and so be perpetually a priest.

But what am I talking about? There are some, here, that have never yet been priests to God. What have they been doing today? Why even on God’s holy day they do not serve Him but themselves! Why, Sir, God has never reaped a solitary ear of grain from your field. Take care lest having lived to yourself, you die to yourself—having lived without God, you die without God and find it a tremendous thing to stand and be judged without a Savior to be your helper, or interceding priest! I say nothing to you about being a priest to God. You need a priest for yourself, first. Do not go to any man. No man has power to help your soul except to pray and plead for you. The saving, pardoning power lies only with Jesus Christ. Look away to Him! He died—trust in His Sacrifice! He rose, He ascended—He is standing at God’s right hand. There is life for a look at Him. Look! Trust! And you shall then be cleansed, clothed, anointed, consecrated and so serve God. But your first business is to go to Christ. Oh, may Christ come to you and save you now—and He shall have Glory out of us, world without end! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 JOHN 2.**

Verse 1. *My little children, these things write I unto you, that you sin not.* For this we ought to watch and strive, that we sin not.

1. *And if any man sins*—What then? Is it a hopeless case? Oh, no, far from it! It is a sad case, but there is a remedy for it! “And if any man sins”—

1, 2. *We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous: and He is the Propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.* Come you, then, to Christ for pardon, whether you are Jews or Gentiles, whether you are saints or sinners, whether you are old or young, whether you are moral or immoral, for God is both able and willing to forgive all manner of sin because of the Propitiation offered by His well-beloved Son “Jesus Christ the Righteous.”

3. *And hereby we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.* Obedience is the test of discipleship. Mere head knowledge is all in vain, and all in vain our fears unless we render a practical obedience to the commandments of Christ. We shall not only savingly know Him, but we shall “know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.”

4. *He that says, I know Him, and keeps not His commandments, is a liar and the truth is not in him.* This is a terrible condition for anyone to be in—to say that he knows Christ, and yet to have the Holy Spirit calling him a liar because he is not keeping Christ’s commandments! Again I remind you that obedience is essential to Christian discipleship. If we refuse to obey Christ’s commandments, it is clear that we do not really know the Savior at all—we are not even beginners in the school of Christ.

5. *But whoever keeps His Word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him.* When every word of His is precious to us and when we strive to live according to His precepts, then we know that “we are in Him.” This is even more than knowing that we know Him, for it is the assurance that we are united to Him by a living connection which can never be broken.

6. *He that says he abides in Him ought himself also so to walk even as He walked.* [See Sermon #1732, Volume 29—IN HIM—LIKE HE IS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] What a walk would that be! How holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners is the man who tries to walk even as Christ walked—

**“Lord, I desire to live as one
Who bears a blood-bought name,
As one who fears but grieving You,
And knows no other shame.
As one by whom Your walk below
Should never be forgot
As one who gladly would keep apart
From all You love not.”**

7-9. *Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you have heard from the beginning. Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in Him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now yours. He that says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness even until now.* Love is the true test of light—that light which leads us to love God, to love Christ, to love the Truth of God, to love God’s people, yes, and to love the whole world of men for their good—this is the love that attests the light we have to be the very Light of God!

10. *He that loves his brother abides in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.* A loving spirit, kind, generous, forgiving, unselfish, seeking the good of others—this is one of the best proofs that our natural darkness has gone and that true spiritual Light of God is within us. Some persons think very much of the Doctrine of Christ, but very lit-

tle of the Spirit of Christ. Let such remember that it is written, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." If we do not know what it is to love, then we do not, in the Scriptural sense, know what it is to live! We are dead! Hatred is the cerement in which the dead soul is wound up, the grave clothes in which it is put away in the tomb. But love is the garment of life in which a truly quickened spirit arrays itself. The one who is full of hatred dwells in darkness, but he that loves, abides in the light. Note how love and life and light are most blessedly linked to one another.

11-13. *But he that hates his brother is in darkness, and walks in darkness, and knows not where he goes, because that darkness has blinded his eyes. I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you, for His name's sake. I write unto you, fathers, because you have known Him that is from the beginning.* "You are old men, and you like to think of old things. The everlasting love of God, the Covenant made with Christ before the worlds were formed—these are things that are very dear to you—and you prize beyond all other, 'Him that is from the beginning.'"

13. *I write unto you, young men, because you have overcome the Wicked One.* "In the days of your strength, you have won the victory which no human power can ever win unaided. You have overcome that Wicked One who would easily have overcome you if you had been left to fight him by yourselves."

13. *I write unto you, little children, because you have known the Father.* That is all that little children need to know at first. They may not know the great mysteries that the fathers have fathomed, they may not well know some things that the young men know, but even babes in Christ know the Father and rejoice in His love!

14. *I have written unto you, fathers, because you have known Him that is from the beginning.* Twice, you see, John says the same thing about the fathers and he says nothing more concerning them. But truly, to "have known Him that is from the beginning is practically to know all that even the fathers need to know or can know, for this knowledge includes all other that is worth knowing!

14. *I have written unto you, young men, because you are strong, and the Word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the Wicked One.* Here again John repeats his former statement concerning the young men, but he adds to it "because you are strong and the Word of God abides in you." There is a purpose in the repetition of each case—it is to emphasize the importance of the Apostolic declarations.

15. *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.* "Your affections are meant for something better than these transient and defiled things, so let not your heart's love flow out to things so soiled and base. 'Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.'"

15. *If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* These two things are such deadly opposites that they cannot live together! Where the love of the Father is, there cannot be the love of the world!

There is no room in us for two loves. The love of the world is essentially idolatry and God will not be worshipped side by side with idols. “If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” Does not that text draw a very sharp distinction between those who love the Lord and those who love Him not? Remember, children of God, that this is the language of John, the Apostle of Love—and true love is honest, outspoken, heart-searching, heart-trying! Do not imagine that there is any love to your souls in the heart of the preacher who preaches smooth things and who flatters you with his, “Peace, peace,” when there is no peace! No, the highest, deepest, most Heaven-inspired love is that which searches and tries the heart lest there should be any deception there.

16. *For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.* That devil’s trinity—“the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life”—“is not of the Father, but is of the world.”

17. *And the world passes away, and the lust thereof.* It is only a puff, a phantom, a bubble, a mirage which will melt away as you try to approach it! There is nothing substantial in it.

17. *But he that does the will of God abides forever.* Not, “he that does some great thing to be seen of men.” Not, “he that builds a row of almshouses, or leaves a great mass of money to charity when he dies because he could not possibly carry it away with him.” Not, “he that sounds a trumpet before him to let everybody know what a good man he is.” Not, “he that must outdistance everybody else.” But, “he that does the will of God abides forever.” Obedience to the will of God is the pathway to perpetual honor and everlasting joy!

18. *Little children, it is the last time: and as you have heard that anti-christ shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.* And now, I think, even more than when John wrote, is this the fact, for antichrists are multiplying on all sides and there are even worse evils to come than we have seen as yet! And it, therefore, behooves Christians to be upon the watch and to let this Truth comfort them, that, “it is the last time.” Once get through this dispensation, and the battle is ended even though the dispensation should be protracted beyond our hope and [See Sermons #811, Volume 14—UNTO YOU YOUNG MEN and #1715, Volume 29—A DESCRIPTION OF YOUNG MEN IN CHRIST—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>] desire, yet, still, once get through it and it is over! This is to be the last charge of our great adversary and all his hosts. Stand fast, therefore, you soldiers of the Cross, stand like rocks amidst the onslaught of the waves, and the victory shall yet be yours!

19. *They went out from us, but they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.* The worst of men go out from among the best of men. The antichrists go out from the Church of Christ. The raw material for a devil was an angel. To make a

Judas, you must make him out of an Apostle! May God purify His professing Church since even in her own loins she breeds adversaries of the faith.

20. *But you have an unction from the Holy One, and you know all things.* The Spirit of God will teach you as you need to know. He will so instruct you that you shall know all that is for your soul's good and for His Glory.

21. *I have not written unto you because you know not the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth.* That which is of man's making is false, "but the Word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you."

22, 23. *Who is a liar but he that denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son, the same has not the Father: [but] he that acknowledges the Son, has the Father also.* Some pretend to honor the Father while they dishonor the Son, but this can never really be done. Jesus truly said, "I and My Father are One," so that he that denies the Son, also denies the Father.

24. *Let that therefore abide in you, which you have heard from the beginning. If that which you have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, you also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.* As it was the Truth of God that was revealed to them at the first, there was no need of a later Revelation to correct the mistakes of the first, as some foolishly and falsely teach nowadays.

25. *And this is the promise that He has promised us, even eternal life.* Let those that want them have these novelties, these constant changes. We who believe in Jesus have something far better, even the promise of eternal life!

26. *These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you.* They would lead you astray if they could, so beware of them. "Forewarned is forearmed."

27, 28. *But the anointing which you have received of Him abides in you, and you need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teaches you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it has taught you, you shall abide in Him.* And now, little children, abide in Him—How John continues to urge us to stand fast in Christ! As the Holy Spirit has taught us to trust Christ, so would He have us "abide in Him." And this is one great reason why we are to abide in Him—

28, 29. *That, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone that does righteousness is born of Him.*

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

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FAITH'S SURE FOUNDATION

NO. 1429

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 18, 1878,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He that believes on Him shall not be confounded."
1 Peter 2:6.

MY sermon last Sabbath morning [#1428, *The True Position of the Witness Within*] was upon the true position of the witness within and I then tried to show that the guarantee and ground of our believing in Christ unto eternal life is the witness which God Himself has borne concerning His Son. Not our feelings, or experiences, but the testimony of God is to stand to us as the reason for our believing. I tried to set forth that doctrine very clearly and I have been greatly delighted to find that the blessing of God rendered it effectual. I have met with five young men who have each one said, "If this believing in Christ because God has set Him forth and borne witness to Him, is really the way of salvation, then we are saved and we come forward to declare that we are on the Lord's side."

When a fisher fills his basket in one place, he is glad to fish there again and, therefore, close to the former spot. Upon a subject near akin to it, I cast in my lines a second time! I do so the more readily in the hope that those who have been brought to Christ may be established in the present faith and may see yet more clearly what is the basis of their salvation. As I tried on last Sabbath morning to show *why* they should believe, it shall now be my business to explain *what* they should believe. We will think not so much of the *reason* for believing as of the Object of our faith, the facts which are to be received and the Person who is to be trusted. We saw the Lord God laying the foundation upon which faith is to rest—we shall now consider the Foundation itself.

The passage before us is a very favorite quotation with the Apostles. If you turn to the Epistle to the Romans you will find Paul quoting it again and again in rapid succession. The last verse of the ninth chapter is, "Whoever believes on Him shall not be ashamed." And in the 11th verse of the 10th chapter he repeats the quotation. It is a quotation from Isaiah 28:16 where we find it written—"Therefore thus says the Lord God, behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation. He that believes shall not make haste," which Paul interprets, "shall not be ashamed" and Peter renders, "shall not be confounded." From the variation of the translations we obtain two or three different shades of meaning but all amounting to the same thing.

That must be a very important part of God's Word which even the Holy Spirit Himself has quoted so frequently! He is prolific of thought and is always able to create new ideas. He abounds in language and cannot be straitened for expression and yet He quotes Himself in these three instances which I have given you—therefore we may be quite sure it is because no other expression would be more suitable! This sentence seemed,

to the Divine Author, to be so full, so complete and so forcible that He repeated it often! The harp is a choice one—let us play upon it and let our ears drink in the melody—“He that believes on Him shall not be confounded.”

I. I shall first of all, this morning, consider THE FOUNDATION OF THE BELIEVER'S FAITH, this being the main subject of our discourse, “He that believes on *Him*.” The foundation of the Believer's faith is Christ Jesus Himself. The Believer receives doctrine because Christ has taught it, but still it is not a *doctrine* which is the foundation of his confidence—it is a Person—“He that believes on *Him*.” The Lord Jesus Himself, as the Son of God, is the Object of our faith—it is upon *Him* that we lean. The Apostle does not say in the Epistle to Timothy, “I know *what* I have believed,” though that would be true, but, “I know *whom* I have believed and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him.” The faith which saves the soul is confidence in a Person, reliance upon One who will certainly effect the salvation of those who trust Him.

But in what sense am I to believe in Jesus Christ? Under what aspects does the Believer rest in Christ? I reply, first, as God's appointed Savior of men. Mark how the text runs in Isaiah. The Lord says, “Behold I lay in Zion a sure foundation.” We trust in Christ Jesus because God has set Him forth to be the Propitiation for sin. When sin first came into the world, God, in tender mercy gave our parents the first promise concerning the Seed of the woman who should bruise the serpent's head—we believe Jesus of Nazareth to be that Seed of the woman and we trust in Him to bruise the serpent's head on our behalf. Promises were multiplied as the ages went on and Jesus was set forth under various types and figures, but always as the Messiah—one whom God would *send*, who would undo the mischief of the Fall, remove the guilt of sin, deliver ruined souls—and give them to partake of the mercy of God.

Now, all those promises and prophecies are fulfilled in Jesus Christ the Son of God and, therefore, we rest in Him. Since God appoints Him as a Savior, we accept Him as a Savior! Since He comes authorized and empowered from the court of Heaven to be the Ambassador of Peace, we joyfully receive Him and find peace with God! We are glad to see the marks and seals upon Him by which God the Father has certified Him to be His beloved Son in whom He is well-pleased. We believe the Apostolic witness by the mouth of John, “We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.” This is the great stronghold of our confidence!

We also believe in the Lord Jesus because of the excellency of His Person. I began by saying that our faith was in a Person and so it is. We trust Christ to save us because we perceive Him in every way to be adapted by the Nature and constitution of His Person to be the Savior of mankind. It was necessary that the Savior of men should be a man. A man had broken the Law and a Man must keep it, for only the obedience of man could answer the requirements of the Law. By the sin of a man we became subject to punishment and only by the penal sufferings of a Man could the Law be vindicated. It is with gladness that we perceive that the Son of God became a partaker of flesh and blood and came under the Law. Born of a

virgin, He was wrapped in swaddling clothes like any other child—He grew in stature as other children do and lived with His parents till the time of His showing to the world.

“The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His Glory.” He labored, He suffered, He died among us. He was really a man, but all the while a *perfect* Man without trace of fault. And thus He was able to fulfill the perfect Law of God on our behalf! We rejoice as we see that Jesus is our next of kin to whom the right of redemption belongs, the perfect Man, the second Adam of our race. But yet more confident are we because we see that His Manhood is in union with Deity! We subscribe to that ancient confession, “He is very God of very God.” In no diminished sense, but with the strongest emphasis which can be laid upon words, we believe Him to be “God over all, blessed forever!” He is “Immanuel, God With Us,” and we each one salute Him as, “My Lord and my God.”

We perceive that His Deity must have put an infinite merit into the sufferings of His humanity. We believe that because He was God, He was able to undertake the stupendous labor of our redemption and that His holy life and suffering death are, because of His godhead, fully equal to the redemption of the vast multitudes who by Him do believe in God who raised Him from the dead. My Brothers and Sisters, there is something here to rest upon! Surely we can trust Him who is “the true God and Eternal Life.” We see Jesus to be completely equipped for His work. He is divinely strong yet humanly compassionate. He is eternally existing as God and yet capable of death because He was encompassed with a human body. O glorious One, whose name is fitly called Wonderful, my soul cannot imagine a Savior in whom she could confide with so much ease!

Jesus is worthy of all confidence! It seems, now, but natural to us who are Believers, to rest in such a Person as He—who can with one hand touch the Godhead and yet with the other hand embrace our nature—who is the Son of the Highest and yet the Son of Mary! He is “The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father” and yet a Child born unto us the Son of Man! We trust Jesus because we see Him to be first, ordained of God and then to be, in Himself, fitly constituted to achieve our redemption. Nor is this all. Another ground of our reliance upon Christ is that He has actually finished the work of our redemption. There were two things to be done. The first was the keeping of the Law on our behalf—that He has performed to the uttermost, even as He said to His Father, “I have glorified You on the earth, I have finished the work which You gave Me to do.”

The very best “Life of Christ” is the four Gospels. We read them with delight and we perceive the exceeding beauties of His matchless Character and are fully agreed that He is “fairer than the children of men.” Righteousness was the belt of His loins, and He was clad with zeal as with a cloak. For innocence, He is spotless as the lily! For zeal He is red as the rose! There is no fault in our Beloved—in His Character there is no redundancy and no deficiency! He is a Lamb without blemish and without spot. His Character is rounded with perfection. He fulfils both tables of the Law and presents unto God a perfect righteousness on our behalf. When the Lord presents that righteousness to us that it may be set to our

account, we feel the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord imputes righteousness without works and we are exceedingly glad.

We also see our Lord doing the other part of His work, namely, suffering in consequence of our sins and our faith becomes fully established. I do not know a more delightful exercise—I hope you are familiar with its delights—than to accompany our blessed Lord to the garden of Gethsemane. There, every drop of blood pleads with us that we should trust Him! There His sighs, cries and throes of anguish while He wrestles with His God all plead with us that we should rely upon Him! Remember who and what He was. Regarding Him as the Son of the Highest we see an overwhelming argument for faith, for who can doubt the merit of that work which begins with the holy Son of God lying prostrate in Gethsemane, exceedingly sorrowful even unto death? We can surely trust our souls with a Divine Savior who suffered as this!

Then, rising from the ground, we trace Him as He is seized by His captors and hurried to the High Priest, to Herod and to Pilate. How they pour contempt upon Him! How the smiters scourge Him! How the soldiers mock Him! Now, indeed, He seems to be “a worm, and no man; a reproach of men and despised of the people.” His lowest shame, His worst desertion, His most bitter griefs, His dying pangs all say to us—“Cannot you trust Him? When you see the Lord of angels derided and His glorious name made into a by-word and a proverb, can you not trust in the merits of His substitutionary woes?”

Then comes the death scene! With tears in our eyes we stand at the Cross and see those blessed hands and feet nailed to the tree that He might be made a curse for us! Can unbelief live after this? Before His heart is opened by the spear-thrust we see it bleeding in every part of His body and soul, for He is a mass of anguish! Of His sufferings we do not dare to speak, for they are of a depth which no plumb line can ever fathom! O Son of God, if ever it were treason to doubt Your power to save, it must be so when we see You hanging upon the Cross! You have triumphed over our unbelief upon the bloody tree! Now You lead our captivity captive and we bow before You, fully assured that You are mighty to save! We feel compelled to cry, “I *must* believe! Those nails have crucified my unbelief! That spear has slain my doubts! I trust You, O everlasting Son of God, when thus I see You made a curse for me.” It is upon the sufferings of our Lord Jesus that we rely for our cleansing—“The chastisement of our peace was upon Him and with His stripes we are healed.”

One other Truth of God must be mentioned, seeing that our Lord is now no longer dead we feel it more easy to place our confidence in Him because He always lives to see to the completion of our salvation. A living faith delights in a living Savior! This is the seal of all that went before. He must have finished the transgression, made an end of sin and brought in everlasting righteousness, or else He would not be sitting at the right hand of the Father, crowned with Glory and honor! Beloved, that one Sacrifice which our High Priest offered upon Calvary has put away, forever, all the sins of His people! There is, therefore, no need of a repetition of it. It is blasphemous to talk of the “unbloody sacrifice of the mass” as a continuation of the one Sacrifice, for it is finished! There is no continuation

needed, for, "This Man, after He had offered one Sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God."

The righteousness with which we are clothed is completely woven! The fountain in which we are washed is completely filled! And now none can condemn those for whom Jesus died and neither shall any soul be charged with sin whose sin He bore upon the accursed tree—for, "it is finished"—has ended every accusation. He lives to take possession of Heaven for His people and He has entered it as our Forerunner. He is our Representative by whom we are, today, in actual possession of Heaven! As a man holds a farm or other land by his agent who is upon it to keep possession for him, so all the Lord's people have possession of Heaven right now by their Representative! Being there, in our name, our Lord is preparing everything for us so that when the time shall come for us to climb to our thrones, nothing may be lacking to complete our joys.

Meanwhile He is pleading the merit of His blood on behalf of all those who trust Him—and He is also working, by His unseen Spirit—to preserve His own in every day of temptation and to keep and perfect them—that they may be presented faultless at the last before His Presence with exceedingly great joy. "Why also He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them." So then, our faith rests on this—God has set forth Christ to save us—Christ is, in His constitution and Person, such a One as we can trust to do the deed. He has already virtually accomplished it by His life and death and He lives to secure unto Himself the result of what He has done. For these most sufficient reasons we trust ourselves with the Redeemer, that He may save us from our sins. Into His hands we commit our spirits as unto a faithful Creator. This we do with all sincerity and deliberation, believing that these reasons will bear examination and are such as none need to be ashamed of.

II. Secondly, let us consider THE MANNER OF THIS BELIEVING. How do we believe in Jesus Christ? Now, we have not to go a single inch to find an instructive illustration of what faith in Jesus is! The verse before us is connected with building. "Wherefore also it is contained in the Scriptures, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious: and he that believes on Him shall not be confounded." Now, if we were to carry out the figure it would run thus—"He that is built upon Him shall not be removed." So I take it that we can most naturally understand the laying of a stone upon the foundation to be suggested as a description of faith.

If, then, you want to know what it is to believe on Jesus, it is to lie upon Him as a stone lies upon a foundation when the mason puts it there. There is the foundation, firm and strong, a precious cornerstone, tried and sure. Here is a smaller stone, quarried from the pit and the builder places it upon the foundation. Its lying on the foundation represents faith. Our souls' eternal interests are laid on Christ! The foundation bears up the stone and holds it in its place—so Christ bears up our souls and holds them in their position so that they do not fall to the ground. The stone presses with all its weight upon the foundation and that is what the Believer does with His Lord—he casts all his cares upon Him. Faith is

leaning, depending, relying! As the key hangs on the nail, so we hang on Jesus.

Faith is the giving up of self-reliance and self-dependence—and resting of the soul upon Him whom God has laid in Zion for a Foundation! A stone thrown about from hand to hand is self-contained and independent, but when the mason puts it on the foundation it is dependent, it leans on the cornerstone upon which it is placed. Poor tempted Soul, that is just what you have to do! You must not be a loose stone resting on yourself and tossed here and there upon the earth, but you must lie still upon Christ and let Him bear your whole weight upon Himself! A stone rests wholly on the foundation. If a wall is well-built it is not shored up with timber so that the stones have two supports, but the whole structure rests on a common basis. *There* is a good foundation and each stone lies upon it.

It can do no more, for it could not keep its place for an instant if the foundation were removed. If the foundation fails, the stone falls, but while the foundation stands, the stone remains secure. That is faith—resting wholly upon Christ and looking entirely to Him for everything that has to do with our salvation. Genuine faith in Christ does not trust Him to pardon sin and then trust itself to overcome sin. No, it trusts Christ for *both* the conquest of evil and for the forgiveness of it! Some of our friends make a great muddle here. They say they believe that the Lord Jesus will keep them as long as *they* are faithful to Him. That is true—but where do you rely for your being faithful to Him? Do you depend upon *yourself* for faithfulness?

If so, there is a very weak spot in your confidence. That stone is not lying square upon the foundation—push it more home—it must not stand out of the line or it will be over directly. Personally I depend as much upon my Lord to keep me to the end as to pardon the past! And I feel that I need Him as much for tomorrow as for today. I could not rejoice in Him as a Savior if He would only promise to keep me as long as I kept myself—for I need a Keeper to keep me that I may keep myself! If His promise was that He would keep me, “if”—alas—that, “if,” would spoil it all! There must be no reliance upon anybody but Christ for anything that has to do with your salvation, or you are not laid square on the Foundation. Whether it is to your regeneration by which you enter into life, or your ultimate perfection by which that life shall come to its complete maturity, there must be no reliance for you but upon Christ!

Dear Friends, see to it that for *everything*—for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption—you lie plumb and straight with Christ! Depend on no man, but only Jesus. You are complete in Him—you cannot add to perfection! It is the not getting down to the foundation and resting nakedly upon Christ which makes the most of our soul-trouble. There used to be on the top of Snowdon a raised platform for certain people to stand upon who wanted to see a little further than others. Now, if you got upon that platform, it might shake and tremble, but the *mountain* never did. I have known Brethren build up a pretty little wooden platform of their own experience—some of them have built it so high that they talk about being *perfect*—or very near it!

These wooden affairs shake with a little extra weight and make people tremble. Get down upon the Rock! Stand on terra firma! Rest on the everlasting love of Jesus and you will be safe! Take care to lie flat on the promise—get as low as you can and grasp the Rock. Lie flat on Christ as a stone lies on the foundation, for that is the proper and natural position of all the living stones that are built up in Him. The stone laid on the foundation comes closer to that foundation every day. “To whom coming,” says Peter, “as unto a living stone.” When a house is finished there still goes on a measure of settlement and you are glad if it settles all in one piece! Every day the stone is brought, by its own weight, a little closer to the foundation—may every day’s pressure bring you and me closer to Christ! Oh, that the pressure of our joys and griefs may press us nearer to our Lord!

A well-built stone gets to be one with the foundation. In the old Roman walls the mortar seems to be as hard as the stones and the whole is like one piece! You must blow it to atoms before you can get the wall away. So is it with the true Believer—he rests upon his Lord till he grows up *into* Him—till he is one with Jesus by a living union, so that you scarcely know where the foundation ends and where the building begins! The Believer becomes all in Christ, even as Christ is All in All to him. I hardly know any illustration that would better explain faith. It is none of mine, you see—it is taken from the text itself. The Lord help you to lie upon Christ for all that concerns your eternal interests!

“But,” says one, “I thought I had to *do* something for my own salvation!” Does the stone do anything to maintain its position beyond lying in its place? Your strength is to sit still! Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him, for your expectation is from Him. There is plenty for you to do for your Lord to show your love to Him and to glorify His name. But you cannot add to the Foundation of your confidence, nor should you dream of doing so. How could you improve what your Lord declares to be finished? Is not His work all-sufficient? Do you want to move the Foundation? Does it not stand fast forever? Lean on it steadily and let this be your chief concern.

O poor fainting Believer, the more you can lean upon Jesus the better He will be pleased. “Lean hard,” He cries, “and prove your love to Me!” Trust Jesus for everything and trust Him at all times! Trust Him in life, in death and to eternity—and you shall not be ashamed or confounded, world without end!

III. We have, thirdly, to consider THE EVIL WHICH WILL NEVER COME UPON THE MAN WHO BELIEVES ON JESUS. The text says, “He shall not be confounded,” and the meaning of it is, first, that he shall never be disappointed. All that Christ has promised to be, He will be to those who trust Him. If the Father set forth Christ to save the believing sinner, depend upon it—He will be as good as His Father’s word! He does not begin to build and then leave off from lack of means. He will keep the Believer. He will support the Believer. He will perfect the Believer! You shall never have to say of Christ, “Well, there is much good in Him, but not so much as I expected.” You will never have to lament, “Alas, I placed too implicit a reliance upon the Christ of God and I was deceived.”

No, never! But, on the contrary, you will exclaim with the Queen of Sheba, "The half has not been told me." Even Inspiration itself could not tell us, so that we could fully understand it, how sweet, how excellent, how sure, how full our Lord is! We know His love, but yet it "passes knowledge." When you know more of your Lord you will say, "I wish I had never doubted Him, for I never had a cause. Oh that I had trusted Him more fully, for He has never disappointed me, but far exceeded my largest hopes." In consequence of our not being disappointed in our hope we shall never be ashamed of having indulged it.

Alas, some Christians are, at times, ashamed to acknowledge their Master, but that is not what is meant in the text. What is intended here is the grand Truth of God that they shall never have any cause to be ashamed of Jesus upon whom they believe! They shall never be driven to confess that they made a mistake in trusting Him and are, therefore, ashamed at having been so miserably duped. No Believer will ever say, "I came with a childlike reliance and did cast myself upon Him because He promised so fairly, but I was taken in a snare. I ought to have known better and I am quite ashamed of my credulity." No, no! The most childlike confidence in God in Christ Jesus is nothing more than He deserves! Credulity towards Jesus is the purest reason.

You are always most prudent when you cast away all caution and throw yourself upon Jesus, sink or swim! It can never be prudent to doubt Him who is "the Truth," but it is always the highest wisdom to place all in His hands and leave it there for time and for eternity. To risk all with Jesus is to end all risk. Our hymn says—

***"Venture on Him, venture wholly;
Let no other trust intrude."***

But, indeed, there is no *venturing* in it—it is safe as the Throne of the Eternal! May the Holy Spirit lead you to make a speedy trial of it!

And then comes the next rendering—you shall never be confounded or confused. When a man gets to be ashamed of his hope because he is disappointed in it, he casts about for another anchorage and, not knowing where to look, he is in a troubled state and greatly perplexed. If the Lord Jesus Christ were to fall through, my Brothers and Sisters, what should we do? It is a supposition which we need not indulge, but if He is not true, there remains no other person in whom we may confide. There are many religions on the face of the earth, but not one of them bears as much comparison with our holy faith as a candle to the sun! They are all hollow mockeries, offering nothing which can satisfy a hungry heart. Lord, to whom should we go if we should turn from You? Where could we fly? If wisdom is not in You, where shall we search for it? "The depth says, It is not in me: and the sea says, It is not with me."

There remains no hiding place for man if this cleft of the Rock is closed! There is no ransom from wrath if this redemption price is null and void! No, Jesus, we shall not be confounded, for we shall never be disappointed in You, nor made ashamed of our hope! According to Isaiah's version we shall not be obliged to make haste—we shall not be driven to our wit's end and hurried to and fro. We shall not hurry and worry, fret and fume, trying this and trying that, running from pillar to post to seek a hope! But

rather, he that believes shall be quiet, calm, collected, assured, confident. He awaits the future with equanimity as he endures the present with patience. Beloved, see what a blessed promise this is to those of you who are believing on Jesus!

Now, the times of our special danger of being confounded are many, but in none of these shall we be confounded. Let us just turn them over in our minds. There are times when a man's sins all come up before him like exceedingly great armies. It is a mighty easy thing to think that you are believing in Christ when you are not conscious of any great sin—but true faith is not confused even when it groans under a grievous sense of sin, conscious that it is the chief of sinners! No, though sin rolled over the Believer's head, he would still believe—as David did when he cried, “My iniquities are gone over my head!”

Have you never had times in which all the ghosts of your dead and buried sins rise up and come marching upon you, armed to the teeth? If you have never experienced such a visitation, I hope you may, for it is good for us to be driven to our Lord Jesus by distress of soul! All your thoughts, words and deeds—your bad tempers and rebellions against God—suppose they were all to rise at once, what would become of you? Why, even then, my Brothers and Sisters, “He that believes on Him shall not be confounded”—not even by a sense of horrible sin, for after he has seen the whole horde of his sins march by, he cries, “they are all gone into the tomb where Jesus slept! The blood of Jesus has cleansed me from them! The depths have covered them—there is not one of them left! They sank like lead in the mighty waters, for God has cast them all unto the depths of the sea!” He that believes on the pardoning Savior shall not be confused, though all his sins should accuse him at once!

The unbelieving world outside labors to create confusion. The gentlemen of the higher criticism, the scientific discoverers, the possessors of boastful culture and all the other braggers of this marvelously enlightened 19th century are up in arms against the believers in Jesus. When I think of how this century has been befooled by its statesmen and philosophers, I, for one, feel small reverence for it! Perhaps it has the most light, but it has not the best eyes! Well, let all this wisdom of the world assail us! Let proud pretenders point their fingers at us and say, “You trust in Christ. You rely upon Jesus of Nazareth alone for your salvation. You are old-fashioned and as much out of place as the extinct animals would be if they could come back again!”

I say that if all the sages of the world were to utter one thundering sarcasm—if they concentrated all their scorn into one universal sneer of contempt—I do not think it would affect me the turn of a hair, so sure am I that my Lord will justify my confidence! “I know whom I have believed” and I know, also, that my Lord Jesus Christ “sits above the floods! The Lord sits King forever!” “Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing?” He can save me and I trust Him to perform all that which concerns me. Faith in Jesus can be justified before a synagogue of Satans! Faith in Jesus deserves the respect of a parliament of philosophers! To trust the Incarnate Son of God, whose advent into this world is a fact better proved by history than any other that was ever on record—to trust

oneself upon His atoning Sacrifice is the most reasonable thing that a man can do!

There is nothing illogical about it—nothing which demands apology! We fling back in the teeth of the scoffers the charge of unreasoning dogmatism—ours is the most reasonable of all beliefs. O you mighty thinkers and skeptics, you are more credulous than we are! We may seem fools to you, but we are not judged of your judgment. You shall see your own folly when He comes, whose name is Faithful and True—when He comes to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords! He that believes on Him shall not be confounded by human wisdom, for God has long ago confounded it and turned it into foolishness!

But the world has done more than sneer—it has imitated Cain and sought to slay the faithful. The enemies of the Gospel have raged fiercely against the Church of God. What opportunities has God given to them to conquer if they could! Christ has seemed to say, “Come on, world! Here are My poor disciples whom you despise! Come and see if you can conquer them! I give you a fair opportunity. There is the Coliseum—heap up tier upon tier of men and women with your cruel eyes and savage hearts! Bring out the saints. Cry, ‘Christians to the lions!’” There they stand. The lions are loose upon them. Do they cry for mercy and treacherously deny Christ? They are feeble men and women—do they recant and leave their Master? Not they! They die as bravely as ever a soldier fell in battle!

The enemy resolves to try them with torture, with rack, rod and fire—let us see what will come of it. Blandina shall be tossed upon the horns of bulls and then shall be placed in a hot iron chair! Does her womanly nature flinch? Ah, no, she is more than a conqueror! They try every kind of torment with the saints, but they fail in every case. Remember Marcus Arethusa, smeared with honey and a hive of bees put upon him? Yet never for a single moment did he relent! Every form of possible cruelty has in later persecutions been tried by Rome’s infernal Inquisition, but Believers have not been confused!

Fiends in human form have glutted themselves with blood till they have turned away from Christian destruction as from a hopeless task—they saw that they could not overcome the true people of God, for, “He that believes on Him shall not be confounded.” They tried persecution in this land in the days of Queen Mary, but their defeat was self-evident. Weavers and farmers defied bishops and cardinals and held their own. Even women laughed to scorn the wretched sophistries of their tormentors! Tompkins trusted in God and stood firm when Bonner held his hand in the candle flame and equally well did he play the man at the stake! What notable stories Foxe has preserved for us of how the saints of the Lord clapped their burning hands and cried, “None but Christ!” while the flames were devouring them! The enemy could not confound them. If persecution should revive, we shall again conquer, for, “He that believes on Him shall not be confounded.”

We cannot strike our adversaries—but by bearing their blows we shall, like the anvil, break the hammers! As it has been until now, so shall it be unto the end—we shall not be ashamed of our hope. Well, but there will come other troubles to Christians besides these and even in them they

shall not be confounded. They will be tried by the flesh—natural desires will break forth into vehement lusts and corruptions will seek to cast them down. Will Believers then perish? No! He that believes in Christ shall conquer himself and overcome his easily besetting sins. There will come losses and crosses, business trials and domestic bereavements. What then? He shall not be confounded! His Lord will sustain him under every tribulation! At last death will come to us. They will wipe the cold sweat from our brows and we shall gasp for breath—but even then we shall not be confounded!

We may not be able to shout, “victory!” We may be too weak for triumphant hymns—but with our last breath we will lisp the precious name! They that watch us shall know by our serenity that a Christian does not die, but only melts away into everlasting life! O Beloved, we shall *never* be confounded, even amid the grandeurs of eternity! We shall pass into the next state and after a while the trumpet shall sound and these bodies shall rise—and we shall stand amidst the countless throng on that august Day for which all other days were made! While other men who have other foundations to rest upon shall cry to the rocks to hide them, we shall stand calmly and quietly, adoring our Lord, the Judge!

It will be a solemn day, even for us! We shall not be able to see the rocks splitting and stars falling and creation, itself, passing away without deep solemnity—yet assuredly the words of our hymn are true—

***“Bold shall I stand in that great Day,
For who anything to my charge shall lay?
While through His blood absolved I am
From sin’s tremendous curse and shame?”***

We will tell the Father in that Day that we have rested on the salvation which He appointed! That we have confided in His own dear Son and that we believed that the blood of Jesus did make atonement for our sin. We shall not find that He disowns His promise! Oh, if that Foundation could fail us, how ashamed and confounded should we be! I do not know, but I sometimes seem to think that if the Gospel could possibly be a mistake, we should have the consolation of being able to say, “Great God, it was through love of You and trust in You that we fell into this error”—and we should at least have as good a plea as the self-righteous can offer! But it shall not be so! Our Foundation cannot fail us! We shall not be confounded! The two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie are our strong consolation!

Now I close by saying that the reason of our knowing that we can never be confounded is just this—because the testimony we have received is true. It is *God’s* testimony—there cannot be a lie in that. Next, the Person on whom we lean is true—there can be no falsehood in Christ Jesus, nor failure in Him. The Savior in whom we trust is almighty! He cannot possibly be defeated, or too heavily loaded. The declarations of the Word of God in which we trust are Infallible and Immutable—they cannot be altered one jot or tittle. The Father of Lights is without variableness and Jesus Christ is “the same yesterday, today, and forever.”

No Believer in Christ can ever be confounded—mark this word—till the Godhead itself shall be defiled! I put it strongly. Until God the Father can

break His word, He cannot destroy a soul that believes in His Son! And if He were to break His Word, (the mere *supposition* borders on blasphemy), then He would no longer be God, since truth is essential to Deity. Until Christ Himself shall fail, He cannot refuse to save one that trusts in Him! And if He were to fail it would prove that He was not Omnipotent and could not, therefore, be God! And if the Spirit of God, which has worked us to the same thing, even to this day, were, after all, to deny His own witness and suffer the new life which is in us to die out, then He is not the Almighty, indwelling Quickener and Comforter of former days!

No, Beloved, *everything* hangs upon the Divine fidelity! If Believers are lost, God loses more than they do, for He loses His honor! He loses His Character for truthfulness and the Glory of His name is tarnished! If I am a sheep and I am lost, I am certainly a great loser—but then I am not my own, but belong to the Great Shepherd—and He has lost me and so is also a loser. If I am a member of Christ's body and I am lost, I am certainly a great loser, but my Head is a loser, too, for henceforth His body is incomplete. The Church is the fullness of Christ, "the fullness of Him that fills all in all" and, I venture to say it, Jesus Christ were not a perfect Christ if He lost the very least and meanest of those who put their trust in Him! It would be Hell's boast against Him to all eternity that He could not keep His own!

If the devil could get a Believer in Hell, what a noise he would make about him! "Jesus of Nazareth! Here is one of Your own! One who trusted in You and yet he is in Hell! You kept the strong because they kept themselves, but You could not keep the weak and, therefore, here is one lost—lost forever." How would hellish malice exult if such an occasion for scorn were given! But it shall never be! Because Jesus lives, we also shall live and shall not be confounded! Let us rest in our Lord's faithfulness and accept the pledges of His eternal affection—

***"His honor is engaged to save
The meanest of His sheep!
All that His heavenly Father gave,
His hands securely keep.
Nor death nor Hell shall ever remove
His favorites from His breast—
In the dear bosom of His love
They must forever rest."***

Amen and amen!

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

CHRIST PRECIOUS TO BELIEVERS

NO. 2137

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 30, 1890,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Unto you therefore which believe He is precious.”
1 Peter 2:7.

HERE we have no far-fetched statement—it belongs to everyday life. Those now present who believe can verify it on the spot! As Believers they can tell us whether the Lord Jesus is precious to them or not. We are not now about to consider an abstruse doctrine or lose ourselves in a profound mystery of the faith. We have before us an assertion which even a babe in Christ may put to the test. Yes, you who but last week confessed your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ can tell in your own souls whether He is precious to you or not! If you can personally verify this sentence it says a great deal for yourself. You need never raise the question as to whether you have the faith of God's elect and are true Believers in Jesus—if Christ is precious to you that question is answered once and for all by this statement which covers the whole ground—“Unto you therefore which believe He is precious.”

The converse of the statement is equally true—you who find Christ precious have true faith in Him. It is important, while looking at these words of the Apostle Peter, that we should lay our hands upon our hearts and ask—“Do I know what this means? Is Jesus more to me than gold or any other thing that can be desired? Can I truly say—

*‘Yes, You are precious to my soul,
My transport and my trust:
Jewels to You are gaudy toys,
And gold is sordid dust?’”*

If you can testify this, then you have proved your own possession of saving faith. Dear Friends, if we can verify this statement it is not only satisfactory to ourselves but it is glorifying to our Lord!

Certain men are best respected where they are least known. Many a character needs distance to lend enchantment to the view, but our Lord is most precious to those who are best acquainted with Him. Those who are actually trusting Him and thus putting Him to the test are those who have the highest opinion of Him. If you would have the best estimate of the Lord Jesus, we refer you to those who have had transactions with Him on the largest scale—to those who cast all their care upon Him for time and eternity. Their proof of Him is so satisfactory that He is more and more esteemed every day. He is far more precious to them than when they first heard of Him and every thought of Him makes Him dearer to their hearts. What a glorious Friend is He who is most precious to those who receive most from Him! Usually men feel sadness at an increase of obligation, but in this case the more we are His debtors the more we rejoice to be so.

Thousands here, this morning, can say, "I believe in Him and He is precious to me beyond all compare."

O my unbelieving Hearer, is there no weight in this testimony? If those that believe in Christ uniformly declare that He becomes more and more delightful to them, should it not persuade you to trust Him? If large numbers of Christians were met with who turned round, after a few years, and confessed that they had been deceived and that, when the novelty was worn off there was really nothing precious about the Lord Jesus, then unbelievers would be justified in their unbelief! But if it is not so—if it is the very reverse—what shall I say to you who will not consider the claims of Jesus? Why do you continue to refuse a Savior to whom so many bear witness?

I can truly say our witness is not forced—it is joyfully spontaneous and we are glad to bear it on all occasions and in any company. If we do so unanimously—and I am sure we do—you ought to be convinced of the truth of our statement! And if your judgment were not perverted by sin you *would* be convinced so that you would resolve to believe in Jesus even as we believe. Do you despise our testimony—the testimony, in many instances, of your own father and mother and friends? Surely, you are not so ungenerous as to call us all liars or fools! I pray you, therefore, give practical weight to the evidence by believing in Jesus and He will be to you as precious as He is to us! This is but common sense! May God give you Grace enough to follow the dictates of ordinary prudence, for these would certainly lead you to do what others have found to be so great a blessing to them.

Coming at once to the text, we shall consider what *Christ is to His people*. According to our text He is "precious." Secondly, consider what *it is in them which makes them so greatly value their Lord*—"Unto you therefore which *believe* He is precious." It is their *faith* which apprehends the preciousness of Christ—and without it Jesus would never be precious in their eyes. Thirdly, consider what *they receive from Him*. This thought arises out of another translation of the text, more strictly accurate than the one we use—"Unto you therefore which believe He is honor." The Lord Jesus sheds honor and glory upon those who believe in Him. May that honor be ours! Oh, for the aid of the Holy Spirit in this promising meditation!

I. First, consider WHAT CHRIST IS TO HIS PEOPLE. We read in our own version, "Unto you therefore which believe He is precious," yet the word is not an adjective, but a *noun*. Hence the Revised Version translates the text, "For you therefore which believe is the preciousness." His very Self is preciousness itself! He is the *essence*, the substance, the *sum* of all preciousness! Every Believer will subscribe to this. Many things are more or less precious, but the Lord Jesus is preciousness itself, outsoaring all degrees of comparison!

How do Believers show that Christ is thus precious to them? They do so by trusting everything to Him. Every Believer places his hope solely upon the work of Jesus. With regard to the past, the present and the future, he finds rest in Christ. The Lord Jesus is the case into which we have put all

our treasures and we prize Him accordingly. All our affection flows toward Him as all our hope flows from Him. Within His sacred name and Person all our expectation is contained. He is all our salvation and all our desire. Despite the homely proverb, we have put all our eggs into this one basket—all our supplies are in this one ship. We have no reserve—we have deposited with our Lord everything which concerns us and we have no secondary trust wherewith to supplement His power or love. We have committed to Him our all and we know that He is able to keep that which we have committed to Him till that day.

As the Advocate who alone pleads the causes of our soul before the living God, our Lord is most precious to us. Our implicit faith in Him proves our high estimate of Him. To Believers the Lord Jesus is evidently very precious because they would give up all that they have sooner than lose Him. Martyrs and confessors have actually given up all for Jesus times without number—history bears this witness abundantly. Tens of thousands have renounced property, liberty and *life* sooner than deny Christ! To this day we have among us those who dare to go forth into the fever country for His name's sake—not counting their lives dear unto them that they might spread abroad His Gospel!

I hope that *we*, also, could part with everything sooner than separate from our Lord. We would, like the holy children, if the choice lay between apostasy and the fiery furnace, reply, "We are not careful to answer you in this matter." Let all things go, but we must hold fast our Lord. Brothers and Sisters, could you give up your Savior? Very dear to you are your children, your spouse and your friends—but if it really came to the point to give these up or the Lord Jesus—I am sure you would not hesitate. It is a desirable thing to be esteemed and respected by one's fellows—but when it comes to this—that for the Truth of God's sake one must be an outcast and become the butt of enmity, there must be no question. Popularity and friendship must at once be sacrificed. Believer, you would far sooner take up your cross and go with Jesus than take up your crown and go away from Him. Is it not so?

We must not speak too confidently and declare that we would never deny Him, but yet He knows all things and He knows that we love Him so truly that for His sake we would suffer the loss of all things and count them but dung, that we might win Christ and be found in Him. This proves that our Lord is precious, since all else may go to the bottom so long as we can keep our hold on our Well-Beloved. Saints also find their all in Him. He is not *one* delight, but all manner of delights to them! All that they can need, or wish, or conceive, they find in Him. To the Believer, "Christ is All." Our desires go not beyond the landmarks of His all-sufficiency. When saints have outward goods they enjoy Jesus in them—and when outward goods are gone—they find them in Him. That which to a man is all things, is, in the most emphatic sense, "precious"—and Christ is that to every believing soul.

So precious is Jesus to Believers that they cannot speak well enough of Him. Could you, at your very best, exalt the Lord Jesus so gloriously as to satisfy yourself? I make free confession that I never preached a sermon

about my Lord which came anywhere near my ideal of His merits. I am always dissatisfied when I have done my very best. I have often wished that I could rush back to the pulpit and try to preach Him better, but I am kept back from such an attempt by the fear that probably I might fail even more conspicuously. He is so glorious as to be Glory itself! Who can describe the sun? He is so sweet in our apprehension that we cannot convey that apprehension to another by such feeble expressions as words. Our thoughts of the Lord Jesus Christ are far, far below His worth—but even those thoughts we cannot communicate to another—for they break the backs of words.

Language staggers under the weight of holy emotion which comes upon us in connection with the Lord Jesus! We can never say enough of God's unspeakable Gift! On any other subject there is danger of exaggeration, but it is impossible here. If you find honey, it is well to eat cautiously of it, for it may pall upon you. But when you find Christ, take all in you can and pray for an enlarged capacity, for He will never grow too sweet. When you begin to talk of what you have tasted and handled concerning Jesus, speak with an open mouth and give your tongue unbounded liberty. You need now no bridle for your lips! Rather let a live coal from off the altar burn every bond and set you free to speak at large of Him who is still as far beyond you as the heavens are above the earth!

Saints show that in their estimation Christ is precious for they can never *do* enough for Him. It is not all talk—they are glad, also, to labor for Him who died for them. Though they grow weary *in* His work, they never grow weary *of* it. Have we not heard them sigh for a thousand tongues that they might sing the dear Redeemer's praises as they should be sung? Do they not often wish that they had 10,000 hands, yes, 10,000 bodies, that they might be in a thousand places at once seeking to glorify their Well-Beloved? If they could have their utmost wish as to His Glory and lay down all at His feet, even then they would be dissatisfied and feel themselves to be infinite debtors to their loving Lord! Oh, that we could crown Him with infinite glory! Oh, that we could set Him on a gloriously high throne among men, where every soul could see Him, love Him and adore Him!

What great things saints have tried to do for Christ! Yet never one of them has expressed any satisfaction with what he has done—all have mourned over their shortcomings and wished that they could devise a tribute more equal to His worth. Saints show how precious Christ is to them in that He is their Heaven. Have you ever heard them, when dying, talk about their joy in the prospect of being with Christ? They have not so much rejoiced because they were escaping the woes of this mortal life, nor even because they would rest from their toils, but because they would behold the Lord! Often have we seen the eyes sparkle as the dying Believer said, "I shall see the King in His beauty before many hours have passed."

When saints quit the world their last thought is that they shall be with their Redeemer—and when they enter Heaven, their first thought is to behold His Glory! To Believers Jesus *is* Heaven. The Lamb is the light, the life, the substance of heavenly bliss—

***“Not all the harps above
Could make a heavenly place,
If God His residence remove,
Or but conceal His face.”***

We long to be with Christ! Many of us could say with David, “Although my house is not so with God; yet He has made with me an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire.” Christ is to us the Covenant and in Him we find the foundation of our first hope and the top stone of our highest joy. Is He not, indeed, precious to us?

If you are not satisfied with these proofs that Christ is precious to Believers, I would invite my dear Brothers and Sisters to add another themselves. Let every one of us do something fresh by which to prove the Believer’s love to Christ! Let us not be satisfied with proof already given. Let us invent a new love-token! Let us sing unto the Lord a new song! Let not this cold world *dare* to doubt that unto Believers Christ is precious! Let us force the scoffers to believe that we are in earnest!

In thinking Christ to be precious, the saints are forming a just estimate of Him. “He is precious.” For a thing to be rightly called, “precious,” it should have three qualities—it should be rare; it should have an intrinsic value of its own and it should possess useful and important properties. All those three things meet in our adorable Lord and make Him precious to discerning minds. As for rarity—talk not of the rarity of gold or of gems—He is the *only* one! He is absolutely unique. Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid. He is the one Sacrifice for sin. Not the infinite God nor all the wealth of Heaven could supply another like He. As God and Man, He alone combines the two natures in one Person. “There is one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.” If we can never find another like He, after searching all the ages through, we may well call Him precious!

It is also most clear that He is intrinsically valuable—who shall estimate His worth? I should darken counsel by words without knowledge if I were to attempt in detail to tell you what He is. Only dwell on the simple fact that while He is God over all and has thus the fullness of the Godhead, He is also Man, true Man of the substance of His mother, and so has all the adaptation of *perfect* manhood. “Consider how great this Man was.” Not even Heaven itself can be compared with Christ Jesus! He is incomparably, immeasurably, inconceivably precious! As for useful qualities, where else shall we find such a variety of uses in one place? He is eyes to the blind, ears to the deaf, feet to the lame, healing to the sick, freedom to the slave, joy to the mourner and life to the dead!

Think of His life and how it gives life to the Believer! Think of His death and how it redeems from Hell all those who trust in Him! Think of His resurrection and how it justifies Believers—and of His second coming—and how it delights our hearts! Think of our Lord in all His offices, as Prophet, Priest and King! Think of Him in all His relationships as Husband, Brother, Friend! Think of Him under all the types and figures with which Scripture delights to set Him forth! Think of Him in all positions and conditions!

Think of Him as you will and as you can—in every one of these He has a blessed use for the supply of some terrible need which afflicts His redeemed! He is set for the removal of your condemnation, the pardon of your sin, the justification of your person, the changing of your nature, the presentation of your offerings, the preservation of your graces, the perfecting of your holiness and for all other good and necessary purposes. All good things meet in Him and meet in Him in profusion, even to superabundance! Why, He is precious, indeed!

The saints form their estimate of Him upon Scriptural principles. They are not so fanatical as to be carried away by mere passion. They can be brought to the Bible and they can give a reason for their estimate. The text puts it, “Unto you *therefore* which believe He is precious.” We have a, “therefore,” for our valuation of Christ—we have reckoned and calculated and have reason on our side! Though we count him to be the chief among 10,000 and altogether lovely, we can justify our highest estimate of our dear Lord and Savior.

Observe the run of the context. Our Lord Jesus is very precious to us as “a living Stone.” As a Foundation He is firm as a stone. But, in addition, He has life and this life He communicates so that we also become living stones and are joined to Him in living, loving, lasting union. A Stone alive and imparting life to other stones which are built upon it, is, indeed, a precious thing in a spiritual house which is to be inhabited of God! This gives a character to the whole structure. Our Lord is, in fact, the Source of all the life which fits the Church to be a temple for the living God. We see that Christ in the Church is the center and crown of it—He is as precious to it as the head is to the body. Without Christ we are useless stones over which men stumble and dead stones without feeling or power. But in Him, being quickened with a heavenly life, we are built together into a habitation of God through the Spirit. Solomon’s temple was a mere thing of earth as compared with the spiritual house which God constructs out of those who are made alive by contact with the living Stone.

I may add that our Lord is all the more precious to us because He was “disallowed, indeed, of men.” Never is Christ dearer to the Believer than when he sees Him to be despised and rejected of men. We do not follow the fashion. We know not the broad road and its crowds and hence the Lord Jesus is immeasurably glorious to us when we see that the world knew Him not. Did they call the Master of the house, Beelzebub? Then the more heartily we salute Him as Lord and God! Did they charge Him with drunkenness, madness and with being a friend of publicans and sinners? We bow at His feet with all the lowlier reverence and love! Did they spit upon Him? Did they scourge Him? Did they blindfold Him and then mock Him? Ah, then He is to our souls all the worthier of adoration! Crown the Crucified! As the sun at noonday is He when nailed to the Cross and reviled by the ribald crowd!

Now is He glorious in our eyes, while scribes and Pharisees make jests around Him and He dies in agony. Worship Him, all you glorified ones! We feel as if worship fit for Him upon the Throne did not reach the height He deserved when we see Him on the accursed tree. Here would our rever-

ence sink lower than ever and our praise would rise above angelic adoration! Precious is our Lord Christ as we see Him going up to the Cross bearing our sins in His own body! Precious is He when forsaken of God and discharging all our debt by His dread sacrifice! Unto you that believe He is all the more precious because He is still disallowed of men.

He becomes inconceivably precious to us when we read the next words and view Him as “chosen of God.” God has chosen the Man Christ Jesus to be our Savior. Upon whom else could the Divine election have fallen? But He says, “I have laid help upon One that is mighty; I have exalted One chosen out of the people.” The choice of Jehovah must be Divinely wise. Infinitely prudent is the choice of Him whom He has exalted to be a Prince and a Savior. O glorious Christ, chosen of God—well may You be chosen of us! If Your Father’s heart is set on You, well may ours be! To us You are precious!

Note well that the Apostle calls Him, “precious,” that is, precious to God. We feel abundantly justified in our high esteem of our Lord since He is so dear to the Father. He never looks with such delight on any as He does upon His own Son. Three times He spoke it out in words: “This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” The Father finds full rest in His Only-Begotten. God finds in Him union and communion, as in “One brought up with Him” who was “daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him.” “The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hands.” The Father finds infinite delight in His Well-Beloved Son and shall not we be directed by His wisdom to do the same? Since God accounts Him elect and precious, we, too, will choose Him and reckon Him to be most precious to our hearts.

Moreover, we prize our Lord Jesus as our Foundation. Jehovah says, “Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone.” This Foundation is not of our inventing, but of God’s laying. What a privilege to have a Foundation of the Lord’s own laying! It is and must be the best, the surest, the most abiding, the most precious Foundation! We value, in a building, a sound basis and therefore we count our Lord most precious because nothing that rests upon Him can fail or fall.

Thus have I shown you that we run on good lines when Christ is precious to us. We are not here acting upon our own independent judgment, nor following a freak of fancy. If Christ is precious to us, we have God Himself at the back of our judgment and we are sure we do not err. Besides, we have this witness of the Spirit, that since we are pleased with Jesus, the Father is pleased with us! The Father is not only well pleased with Christ, but well pleased in Christ, and therefore He is well pleased with all who are in Him. He is so sweet that He sweetens all who come to God by Him. Precious Christ! Precious Christ!

II. Secondly, consider WHAT IT IS IN THE SAINTS WHICH MAKES THEM PRIZE CHRIST AT THIS RATE. It is their faith. “Unto you therefore *which believe* He is precious.” To carnal sense and reason Jesus is far from precious. To human wisdom Christ is not precious—see how men tug and labor to get rid of His Deity and to trample on His precious blood! What labored learning is brought forth to drain Inspiration out of His Bi-

ble and steal satisfaction out of His blood! But “Unto you therefore which believe He is precious.” Faith calls Him precious when others esteem him “a root out of a dry ground.”

Note well that to *faith the promises concerning Christ are made*. If you will read Psalm 118, to which Peter refers, you will find that the Psalmist who rejoiced to see Him made the headstone of the corner was a Believer, for he says, “I will praise You, for You have heard me and have become my salvation.” The whole Psalm runs in that way. As for the passage quoted from Isaiah 28:16, it finishes thus, “He that believes shall not make haste” or, “shall not be confounded.” In both cases the preciousness of Christ is connected in the Scriptures with a *believing* people. The Bible never expects that without faith men will glorify Christ. For, dear Brothers and Sisters, *it is by faith that the value of Christ is perceived*.

You cannot see Christ by mere reason, for the natural man is blind to the things of the Spirit. You may study the evangelists, themselves, but you will never get to see the real Christ who is precious to Believers except by a personal act of faith in Him. The Holy Spirit has removed the scales from the eyes of the man who believes. If you trust the Savior as a sinner must trust Him, you know more of Him by that act of faith than all the schools could have taught you. An ounce of faith is better than a ton of learning! Better be Christ’s patient than a Doctor of Divinity—for His cure will teach you more than all your studies. More is to be learned in the closet by penitent faith than in the university by persevering research. If we look to Him whom God has lifted up, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, we shall know more of Him than if we closed our eyes and spent a century in meditation.

By faith, again, the Lord Jesus is appropriated. In possession lies much of preciousness. Is the KohiNoor a precious thing to me? Well, it is precious in itself, but I cannot say that it is precious to *me* for I do not even know where it is, nor do I give it more thought than if it were a bit of glass. When a thing belongs to you, it has a value to you and you make a full estimate of it. Now no man possesses Christ unless he believes in Him. O Unbeliever, you have nothing to do with Jesus if you will not trust in Him! Though He is a priceless gift, He is nothing to you if you do not rest in Him! What have you to do to speak about Him? You are without Christ if you are without faith. Faith is the hand that grasps Him, the mouth that feeds upon Him and therefore by faith He is precious.

By faith the Lord Jesus is more and more tasted and proved and become more and more precious. In proportion as we taste our Lord, He will rise in our esteem. If you have tasted that the Lord is gracious, He is precious to you. And if you have more than tasted and have gone on to feed upon Him, you have found Him to be marrow and fatness to your soul—and He is more precious than ever to you. The more afflictions a Believer endures, the more does he discover the sustaining power of Christ and therefore the more precious Christ becomes to him. You that have been caught in a storm at sea and have seen Him come to you walking on the water and have heard Him rebuke the winds and the waves—you prize Him beyond all price! In the great deeps of tribulation we find many a pearl of the

knowledge of Christ. To us our Lord is as gold tried in the fire. Our knowledge is neither theoretical nor traditional—we have seen Him ourselves and He is precious to us.

Our sense of Christ's preciousness, as I have said before, is a proof of our possessing the faith of God's elect—and this ought to be a great comfort to any of you who are in the habit of looking within. If you enquire within yourselves, “Is my faith worked in my soul by the Holy Spirit?” you may have a sure test. Does it magnify Christ? If it makes Christ inexpressibly dear to you it is the faith of God's elect. May God grant you to have more of it! *Christ becomes growingly precious to us as our faith grows.* If you have faith in Christ but do not exercise it everyday He will not be very precious to you. But if your faith keeps her eyes fixed on Him, she will more and more clearly perceive His beauties. If your soul is driven to Jesus again and again—if your faith anchors in Him continually—then He will be, indeed, more and more precious to you.

Everything depends upon faith. If you doubt Christ, He has gone down fifty per cent in your esteem. Every doubt is a Christ crucifier. Every time you give way to skepticism and critical questioning you lose a sip of sweetness. The dog that barks loses the bone and the Christian that disputes loses spiritual food. In proportion as you believe with a faith which is childlike, clear, simple, strong, unbroken—in that proportion will Christ be dearer and dearer to you! I recommend you keep the door of your mind on the chain in these days—for those tramps and vagrants called doubts are prowling about in every quarter—and they may knock at your door with vile intent. The first thing they say, when they are at a good man's door, is, “I am an *honest* doubt.” That which so loudly calls itself honest has good need to fabricate for itself a character.

The most honest doubt is a great thief—the most of doubts are as dishonest as common housebreakers. Keep Doubt out of the soul or you will make small progress in the discovery of the preciousness of Christ. Never entertain a thought that is derogatory to Christ's Person, or to His atoning sacrifice. Reckon that opinion to be your enemy which is the enemy of the Cross of Christ. Do not suffer your faith to diminish even in the least degree. Believe in Christ heartily and unsuspectingly! If you have a doubt as to whether you are a saint—you can have no question that you are a sinner—come to Christ as a *sinner* and put your trust in Him as your Savior! It is wonderful how a renewed confidence in Christ's saving Grace will bring back all your joy and delight in Him, and sometimes do it at once.

“Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadab.” When I was dull and dead, all of a sudden I touched His garment by faith and my life was renewed in me, even to leaping and rejoicing! God grant you, dear Brothers and Sisters, by faith, to know the preciousness of Christ—for only to you that believe is He precious! To you that doubt, to you that mistrust, to you that suspect, to you that live in the land of hesitation He is without form or comeliness—but to you that believe without doubt He is precious beyond all price.

III. Now I come to the last point. Briefly consider WHAT BELIEVERS RECEIVE FROM HIM. Take the exact translation—“Unto you that believe

He is honor.” Honor? Can honor ever belong to a sinner like I? Worthless, base, only fit to be cast away—can I have honor? Listen! “Since You were precious in My sight, You have been honorable and I have loved You: therefore will I give men for You and people for Your life.”

A woman had been a harlot, but she believed in Jesus and she was so honorable that she was allowed to wash His feet with tears and wipe them with the hairs of her head! Thus was she a handmaid in the courts of our God. A man had been a thief—but he believed while dying and lo, he was the *first* person that Jesus received when He came into His kingdom—he was so honorable! The Lord changes the rank when He forgives the sin. You are dishonorable no longer if you believe in Jesus! You are *honorable* before God now that He has become your salvation! Yesterday you fed the swine—today you are joyfully welcomed to your Father’s house! Listen to that music and dancing—it is all for you! See the fatted calf killed and roasting at the fire—it is for you! For you the shoes upon your feet and the ring that decks your finger. Your Father gives Himself to you by those fond kisses which He lavishes upon you. Oh yes, Christ is *honor* to His people—His redemption makes that precious which seemed to have no value before.

Further, let me notice that *it is a high honor to be associated with the Lord Jesus*. When a valiant man has achieved a great victory everybody likes to claim some connection with him. The few persons still alive who were at the battle of Waterloo are proud of the fact. And no wonder! Though only a drummer boy at the time, the old man is proud to tell that he was there when his countrymen broke the tyrant’s power. Men even carry to the extreme of folly any slight connection with the great—like the man who boasted that the king had spoken to him, when it turned out that all His Majesty said was, “Get out of the way!”

We have *real* honor in being associated with our Lord Christ in *any* capacity. It is an honor to have washed the feet of His servants, or to have given a cup of cold water to one of His disciples. Simple trust and grateful service make a link more precious than gold. Did men laugh at you for Christ’s sake? That honors you with Him! Did you suffer reproach for Christ’s Truth? It is well—thus are you bound up in the bundle of life with Him whom you love! The day shall come when it shall be thought to be the highest honor that ever was, to have been denounced us a bigot and cast out as a troublemaker for the sake of Christ and His Gospel. How pleased was John the Baptist to be connected with Jesus though he said of Him, “the lace of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose”!

How glad was Paul to be subservient to His Lord! He calls Himself Christ’s bond-servant. We read it “servant” in our softened version, but Paul was charmed to feel that he had been *bought* with Christ’s blood and was therefore as much His *property* as a man thought a slave to be when he had paid his price. Oh to be as the dust of our Lord’s feet! Even this were honor! To be His menial servant is better than to rule all of Russia! Some of us bless the Lord that we are associated with His old-fashioned Cross, His time-worn Truth, His despised Atonement, His antiquated Bi-

ble. I proclaim I bind this as a chaplet about my brow! Jesus, the Substitute, is my honor and the Doctrines of Grace are my glory!

Again, *it is a great honor to be built on Him as a sure foundation.* If you read the passage in Isaiah 28 you will see that those who made lies their refuge were trod down, but not those who rested on the sure Foundation—for of them it is written, “He that believes shall not make haste.” Because he had built upon Christ, the builder enjoyed an honorable rest. I do not know how I should feel if I had had to think of a way of salvation for myself—but I find it happy work to accept what God has clearly revealed in His Word.

A minister once said to me, “It must be very easy for you to preach.” I said, “Do you think so? I do not look at it as a light affair.” “Yes,” he said, “it is easy, because you hold a fixed and definite set of Truths upon which you dwell from year to year.” I did not see how this made it easy to preach, but I did see how it made my heart easy and I said, “Yes, that is true. I keep to one fixed line of Truth.” “That is not my case,” said he—“I revise my creed from week to week. It is with me constant change and progress.” I did not say much but I thought the more. If the foundation is constantly being altered, the building will be rather shaky. Surely, if the basis is not settled, we shall, in our work, show a good deal of jerry-building!

It is a precious thing to my heart to feel sure about the Truths of God—the surely-revealed facts of Scripture. Having once made Christ my Foundation, I shall take a leaf out of the book of the Puritans of Massachusetts. I have heard that in their early days their counselors agreed “that the State of Massachusetts should be governed by the Laws of God, till they had time to make better ones.” So will I rest on Christ alone till I can find a better resting place! When we find that God has laid another Foundation, we will look at it. When we discover a Foundation more suitable for sinners than the sinner’s Savior, we will consider it—but not till then.

Beloved, *it is an honor to believe the doctrines taught by Christ and His Apostles.* It is an honor to be on the same lines of Truth as the Holy Spirit. It is an honor to believe what the lips of Jesus taught. I had sooner be a fool with Christ than a wise man with the philosophers. The day shall come when he that cleaves most to the Gospel of God shall be the most honored man. *It is an honor to do as Christ bade us in His precepts.* Holiness is the truest royalty. It is never a disgrace to any man to be baptized into His name or to come to His Table and break bread in remembrance of Him. The Virgin’s advice is sound—“Whatever He says to you, do it.” *Obedience* to Jesus is no discredit to any man. It is an honor to “follow the Lamb where ever He goes.” Take this as a sure word—sin is disgrace, but *holiness* is honor!

It will be our great honor to see our Lord glorified. That 118th Psalm depicts the exultation of the saints in the day when Christ shall appear in His Glory. See how it runs. “I will praise You: for You have heard me and have become my salvation. The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes! This is the day which the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.” It is a very jubilant Psalm. All the adversaries of the Believer

have been destroyed like swarms of bees and burned up like heaps of thorns—but the Believer is safe and more—he is glorified as he sees his despised and rejected Lord made Head over all things to His Church!

What an honor to have been with Him in His humiliation! How glorious to rehearse the story! The Lord laid Christ as the Foundation though the heathen raged. The walls have risen despite the foe. The corner stone is in its place, though the builders refused it. Glory! Glory! He whom we love has come to His own although the kings stood up and the rulers took counsel together against Him! Now, it is no more, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” but, “Crown Him! Crown Him!” Now He is no more the servant of servants, but King of kings and Lord of lords. Hallelujah! Like bursts of great artillery the praises of men and angels break forth again and again for Him!

Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! He must reign! He must reign! The Father wills it and reign He shall—all enemies being put under His feet. In that day, to you who believe, He will be an honor! You shall be His honored attendants when He mounts the Throne! Surely the angels will set great store by every one of you that believed in Christ in the day of His scorning—they will carry you as trophies through the golden streets! Here is a man that believed in Jesus when the world despised Him! Though he was poor and obscure, he dared to own his Lord and stand up for His Truth. Happy man to have been able to give such a proof of loyalty!

He was a common soldier in the barracks and he was the butt of many a coarse joke—but he believed in Jesus! Honor to him! She was a humble workwoman and all the girls in the warehouse ridiculed her for being a Christian. Honor to her! Honor to all who bore dishonor for Christ! Before you go away I would beg you to consider how you stand in this matter. Do you believe in Jesus? If you do believe, be afraid of nothing! Come forward and confess that sacred name! Proclaim that you are a follower of the Lamb and then, in the day when He distributes crowns and thrones, He will have a crown and a throne for you! You, at the Resurrection, shall wake up in Him to glory and immortality!

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 Peter 2.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—786, 817, 819.**

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CHRIST PRECIOUS TO BELIEVERS

NO. 242

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MARCH 13, 1859,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“Unto you therefore which believe He is precious.”
1 Peter 2:7.***

THIS text calls to my remembrance the opening of my ministry. It is about eight years since as a lad of sixteen, I stood up for the first time in my life to preach the Gospel in a cottage to a handful of poor people who had come together for worship. I felt my own inability to preach, but I ventured to take this text, “Unto you therefore which believe He is precious.” I do not think I could have said anything upon any other text, but Christ was precious to my soul and I was in the flush of my youthful love and I could not be silent when a precious Jesus was the subject. I had but just escaped from the bondage of Egypt, I had not forgotten the broken fetter. Still did I remember those flames which seemed to burn about my path and that devouring gulf which opened its mouth as if ready to devour me.

With all these things fresh in my youthful heart, I could speak of His preciousness who had been my Savior and had plucked me as a brand from the burning and set me upon a rock and put a new song in my mouth and established my goings. And now, at this time what shall I say? “What has God worked?” How has the little one become a thousand and the small one a great people? And what shall I say concerning this text, but that if the Lord Jesus was precious then, He is as precious now? And if I could declare then, that Jesus was the object of my soul’s desire, that for Him I hoped to live and for Him I would be prepared to die, can I not say, God being my witness, that he is more precious to me this day than ever He was? In the remembrance of His unparalleled mercy towards the chief of sinners, I must anew devote myself to Him and afresh surrender my heart to Him who is Lord and King.

This remark is uttered by way of introduction, it may seem egotistical, but that I cannot help. I must give glory to God in the midst of the great congregation and pay my vows to the Lord now in the midst of all His saints, in the midst of you, O Jerusalem.

My text states a positive fact, namely, that Christ is precious to Believers. This shall be the first part of our discourse. Then in the second we will try to answer the question, why is Jesus Christ so precious to His believing people? And we will conclude by declaring the test whereby you may try yourselves whether you are Believers or not. For if you are Believers in Christ, then Christ is precious to you and if you think little of Him, then rest assured you have not a true and saving faith in Him.

I. First, this is a positive fact, that UNTO BELIEVERS JESUS CHRIST IS PRECIOUS. In Himself He is of inestimable preciousness, for He is very God of very God. He is moreover, perfect Man without sin. The precious gopher wood of His humanity is overlaid with the pure gold of His Divinity. He is a mine of jewels and a mountain of gems. He is altogether lovely, but, alas, this blind world sees not His beauty. The painted harlotries of that witch, Madam Bubble, the world can see and all men wonder after her. This life, its joy, its lust, its gains, its honors—these have beauty in the eyes of the unregenerate man, but in Christ he sees nothing which he can admire. He hears His name as a common word and looks upon His Cross as a thing in which he has no interest, neglects His Gospel, despises His Word and, perhaps, vents fierce spite upon His people.

But not so the Believer. The man who has been brought to know that Christ is the only foundation upon which the soul can build its eternal home—he who has been taught that Jesus Christ is the First and the Last, the Alpha and the Omega, the Author and the Finisher of faith—thinks not lightly of Christ. He calls Him all his salvation and all his desire. The only glorious and lovely One. Now, this is a fact which has been proved in all ages of the world. Look at the beginning of Christ's appearance upon earth. No, we might go farther back and mark how Christ was precious in prospect to those who lived before His incarnation. But, I say, since He has come into the world, what abundant proofs have we that He is precious to His people! There were men found who were not unwilling to part with houses and lands and wife and children and country and reputation and honor and wealth, no, with life itself, for Christ's sake. Such was the charm that Christ had for ancient Christians, that if they must renounce their patrimony and their earthly wealth for His sake, they did it cheerfully and without a murmur. No, they could say, that what things were gain they counted but loss for Christ's sake and did esteem them but as dross and dung if they could win Christ and be found in Him.

We talk lightly of these things, but these were no mean sacrifices. For a man to leave the partner of his bosom, to be despised by her who ought to honor him, to be spit upon by his own children, to be driven out by his countrymen and have his name mentioned as a hissing and a reproach and a byword—this is no easy matter to bear. And yet the Christians in the first ages took up this Cross and not only carried it patiently, but carried it joyfully—rejoicing in tribulations, if those tribulations fell upon them for Christ's sake and the Gospel. No, more than this—Satan has been permitted to put forth his hand and touch Christ's people, not only in their goods and in their families, but in their bone and in their flesh.

And mark how Christ's disciples have reckoned nothing to be a loss, so that they might win Christ. Stretched upon the rack, their strained nerves have only made them sing the louder, as though they were harp strings, only put in tune when they were drawn out to their extreme length. They have been tortured with hot irons and with the pincers. Their backs have been plowed with scourges, but when have you found any of the true followers of Christ flinch in the hour of pain? They have borne all this and

challenged their persecutors to do more and invent fresh arts and devices, fresh cruelties and try them. Christ was so precious that all the pain of the body could not make them deny Him and when at last they have been taken forth to a shameful death—let the axe and the block, let the cross of crucifixion, let the spear, let the fire and the stake, let the wild horse and the desert testify that the Believer has always been a man who would suffer all this and vastly more—but who would never renounce his confidence in Christ.

Look at Polycarp before the lions, when he is brought into the midst of the assembly and it is demanded of him that he will deny his God. Thousands of savage eyes look down upon him and there he stands, a feeble man, alone in the arena, but he tells them that “he has known his Lord these many years and He never did him a displeasure and he will not deny Him at the last.” “To the lions!” they cry, “To the lions!” and the lions rush upon him and he is speedily devoured. But all this he would have borne at the mouths of a thousand lions, if he had a thousand lives, rather than he would have thought anything amiss against the Majesty of Jesus of Nazareth. The whole history of the ancient Church of Christ proves that Jesus has been an object of His peoples’ highest veneration. That they set nothing in rivalry with Him, but cheerfully and readily, without a murmur, or a thought, gave up all for Jesus Christ and rejoiced to do so.

And this is just as true today as it was then. If tomorrow the stake could be set in Smithfield, Christian people are prepared to be fuel for the flame. If once more the block were fixed on Tower Hill and the axe were brought forth from its hiding place, the heads of Christ’s people would be cheerfully given, if they might but crown the head of Jesus and vindicate His cause. Those who declare that the ancient valour of the Church is departed know not what they say. The professing Church may have lost its masculine vigor. The professors of this day may be but effeminate dwarfs, the offspring of glorious fathers—but the true Church, the elect out of the professing Church, the remnant whom God has chosen—are as much in love with Jesus as His saints of yore and are as ready to suffer and to die.

We challenge Hell and its incarnate representative, old Rome herself. Let her build her dungeons, let her revive her inquisitions, let her once more get power in the State to cut and mangle and burn. We are still able to possess our souls in patience. We sometimes feel it were a good thing if persecuting days should come again, to try the Church once more and drive away her chaff and make her like a goodly heap of wheat, all pure and clean. The rotten branches of the forest may tremble at the hurricane, for they shall be swept away, but those that have sap within them tremble not. Our roots are intertwined with the Rock of Ages and the sap of Christ flows within us and we are branches of the Living Vine and nothing shall sever us from Him. We know that persecution, nor famine, nor nakedness, nor peril, nor sword, shall divide us from the love of Christ for in all these things, by God’s grace, we shall be as the Church has been, more than conquerors through Him that loved us.

Does anyone think that I exaggerate? Mark, then—if what I have said is not true, then Christ has no Church at all for the Church that is not prepared to suffer and bleed and die for Christ, is not Christ's Church. For what does He say? "He that loves father and mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he that takes not his cross and follows after Me, is not worthy of Me" (Matt. 5:37-38). Albeit that Christ may not put us fully to the test, yet, if we are true, we must be ready for the ordeal. And if we are sincere, though we may tremble at the thought of it, we shall not tremble in the endurance of it. Many a man who says in his heart, "I have not a martyr's faith," has really that noble virtue. And let him but once come to the push and the world shall see the grace that has been hidden, rising like a giant from his slumbers. The faith which endures the relaxing of the world's sunshine, would endure the cutting frost of the world's persecution. We need not fear, if we are true today, we shall be true always.

This is not mere fiction. Many are the proofs that Christ is still precious. Shall I tell you of the silent sufferers for Christ, who at this day suffer a martyrdom of which we hear not, but which is true and real? How many a young girl there is who follows Christ in the midst of an ungodly family—her father upbraids her, laughs at her, makes a scoff of her holiness and pierces her through the heart with his sarcasm! Her brothers and her sisters call her "Puritan," "Methodist," and the like, and she is annoyed day by day with what the Apostle calls, "Trial of cruel mockings." But she bears all this and though the tear is sometimes forced by it from her eye, yet though she should weep blood she would "resist unto blood, striving against sin."

These sufferers are unrecorded, they are not put into a Book of Martyrs. We have no Fox to write their martyrologies, they have not the flesh-contenting knowledge that they shall be publicly honored—they suffer alone and unheard of, still praying for those who laugh at them—bowing themselves before God on their knees in agony, not on account of the persecution, but in agony of soul for the persecutors themselves, that they may be saved. How many there are of such young men in workshops, employed in large establishments, who bend their knee at night by the bedside, in a large room where there are many scoffers. Some of us have known this in our youthful days and have had to endure it. But Christ is precious to the silent sufferings of His people. These unhonored martyrdoms prove that His Church has not ceased to love Him, nor to esteem Him precious.

How many there are, too—how many thousands of unseen and unknown laborers for Christ, whose names cannot be here declared. They toil from morning till night all through the week and the Sabbath Day should be a day of rest to them. But they work more on the Sabbath-Day than on any other day. They are visiting the beds of the sick. Their feet are weary and nature says rest, but they go into the lowest dens and haunts of the city to speak to the ignorant and endeavor to spread the name and honor of Jesus where it has not been known. There are many such who are working hard for Christ, though the Church scarcely knows of it. And

how many, too, there are who prove that they love Christ by the continual liberality of their offerings. Many are the poor people I have discovered, who have denied themselves of this and that, because they would serve Christ's cause. And many there are, too—every now and then we find them out—in the middle ranks of society, who give a hundred times as much to the cause of Christ as many of the rich and wealthy.

And if you knew to what little trials they are put, to what shifts they are driven in order to serve Christ, you would say, "The man that can, proves clearly that Christ is precious to him." And mark this, the reason why the Church is not more laborious, not more generous in its gifts to the offer-tory of the Savior, is just this—because the Church of the day is not the Church of Christ in its mass and bulk. There is a Church of Christ within it, but the visible Church, as it stands before you, is not to be considered the Church of Christ. We must pass it through the fire and bring the third part through the flame. For this is the day when the dross is mingled with gold. How has the much fine gold become dim. How has the glory departed. Zion is under a cloud. But mark, though you see it not, there is a Church, a hidden Church—an unmoving center amidst the growing of profession—there is a life within this outward fungus of a growing Christianity. There is a life that is within and to that hidden host, that chosen company, Christ is precious—they are proving it every day by their patient sufferings, by their laborious efforts, by their constant offerings to the Church of Christ. "Unto you therefore which believe He is precious."

I will tell you one thing that proves—proves without a doubt, that Christ is still precious to His people and it is this—send one of Christ's people to hear the most noted preacher of the age, whoever that may be. He preaches a very learned sermon, very fine and magnificent, but there is not a word about Christ in that sermon. Suppose that to be the case and the Christian man will go out and say, "I did not care a farthing for that man's discourse." Why? "Because they have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid Him. I heard nothing about Christ." Send that man on the Sabbath morning to hear some hedge and ditch preacher—someone who cuts the king's English about ever so badly, but who preaches Jesus Christ—you will see the tears rolling down that man's face and when he comes out he will say, "I do not like that man's bad grammar. I do not like the many mistakes he has made, but oh, it has done my heart good, for he spoke about Christ."

That, after all, is the main thing for the Christian. He wants to hear about his Lord and if he hears Him magnified he will overlook a hundred faults. In fact, you will find that Christians are all agreed, that the best sermon is that which is fullest of Christ. They never like to hear a sermon unless there are something of Christ in it. A Welsh minister who was preaching last Sabbath at the Chapel of my dear Brother, Jonathan George, was saying that Christ was the sum and substance of the Gospel and he broke out into this story—A young man had been preaching in the presence of a venerable Divine and after he had done he went to the old minister and said, "What do you think of my sermon?" "A very poor ser-

mon indeed,” said he. “A poor sermon?” said the young man, “it took me a long time to study it.” “Yes, no doubt of it.” “Why, did you not think my explanation of the text a very good one?” “Oh yes,” said the old preacher, “very good indeed.” “Well, then, why do you say it is a poor sermon? Didn’t you think the metaphors were appropriate and the arguments conclusive?” “Yes, they were very good as far as that goes, but still it was a very poor sermon.” “Will you tell me why you think it a poor sermon?” “Because,” said he, “there was no Christ in it.” “Well,” said the young man, “Christ was not in the text. We are not to be preaching Christ always, we must preach what is in the text.”

So the old man said, “Don’t you know, young Man, that from every town and every village and every little hamlet in England, wherever it may be, there is a road to London?” “Yes,” said the young man. “Ah,” said the old Divine “and so from every text in Scripture, there is a road to the metropolis of the Scriptures, that is Christ. And, my dear Brother, your business is when you get to a text, to say, ‘Now what is the road to Christ?’ and then preach a sermon running along the road towards the great metropolis—Christ. And,” said he “I have never yet found a text that had not got a road to Christ in it and if I ever do find one that has not a road to Christ in it, I will make one. I will go over hedge and ditch but I would get at my Master, for the sermon cannot do any good unless there is a savor of Christ in it.” Now since you say amen to that and declare that what you want to hear is Jesus Christ, the text is proved—“Unto you therefore which believe He is precious.”

But if you want to try this again and prove it, go and see some of our sick and dying friends. Go and talk to them about the Reform Bill and they will look you in the face and say, “Oh, I am going from this time state. It is a very small matter to me whether the Reform Bill will be carried or not.” You will not find them much interested in that matter. Well, then, sit down and talk to them about the weather and how the crops are getting on—“Well, it is a good prospect for wheat this year.” They will say, “Ah, my harvest is ripening in Glory.” Introduce the most interesting topic you can and a Believer, who is lying on the verge of eternity, will find nothing precious in it.

But sit down by the bedside of this man and he may be very near gone, almost unconscious and begin to talk about Jesus—mention that precious soul-reviving, soul-strengthening name, Jesus, and you will see his eye glisten and the blanched cheek will be flushed once more—“Ah,” he will say, “Precious Jesus, that is the name which calms my fears and bids my sorrows cease.” You will see that you have given the man a strong tonic and that his whole frame is braced up for the moment. Even when he dies, the thought of Jesus Christ and the prospect of seeing Him shall make him living in the midst of death, strong in the midst of weakness and fearless in the midst of trembling. And this proves, by the experience of God’s people, that with those who believe in Him, Christ is and ever must be a precious Christ.

II. The second thing is, WHY IS CHRIST PRECIOUS TO THE BELIEVER? I observe—and I shall run over those particulars very briefly, though they would be worthy of a long, long sermon—Jesus Christ is precious to the Believer because He is intrinsically precious. But here let me take you through an exercise in grammar—here is an adjective, let us go through it. He is precious positively. He is more precious than anything comparatively. He is most precious of all things and most precious even if all things were rolled into one and put into competition with Him. He is thus precious superlatively. Now, there are few things you can thus deal with. You say a man is a good man, he is good positively and you say he is a great deal better than many other people. He is good comparatively—but you can never truly say to any man that he is good superlatively, because there he would still be found short of perfection. But Christ is good positively, comparatively and superlatively.

Is he not good positively? Election is a good thing. To be chosen of God and precious. But we are elect in Christ Jesus. Adoption is a good thing—to be adopted into the family of God is a good thing—ah, but we are adopted in Christ Jesus and made joint-heirs with Him. Pardon is a good thing—who will not say so?—yes, but we are pardoned through the precious blood of Jesus. Justification—is not that a noble thing, to be robed about with a perfect righteousness?—yes, but we are justified in Jesus. To be preserved—is not that a precious thing?—yes. But we are preserved in Christ Jesus and kept by His power even to the end.

Perfection—who shall say that this is not precious? Well, but we are perfect in Christ Jesus. Resurrection, is not that glorious? We are risen with Him. To ascend up on high, is not that precious? But he has raised us up and made us sit together with Him in heavenly places in Jesus Christ—so that Christ must be good positively, for He is all the best things in one. And if all these are good, surely He must be good in whom and by whom and to whom and through whom are all these precious things.

But Christ is good comparatively. Bring anything here and compare with Him. One of the brightest jewels we can have is liberty. If I am not free, let me die. Put the halter to my neck but put not the fetter to my wrist—a free man I must be while I live. Will not the patriot say that he would give his blood to buy liberty and think it a cheap price? Yes, but put liberty side by side with Christ and I would wear the fetter for Christ and rejoice in the chain. The Apostle Paul himself could say, “I would that you were altogether such I am,”—and he might add, “except these bonds,” but though he excepted bonds for others, he did not except them for himself for he rejoiced in the chain and counted it a mark of honor.

Besides liberty, what a precious thing is life! “Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has will he give for his life.” But let a Christian—a true Christian, once have the choice between life and Christ—“No,” says he, “I can die, but I cannot deny. I can burn, but I cannot turn. I confess Christ and perish in the flame. But I cannot deny Christ, even though you exalt me to a throne.” There would be no choice between the two. And then whatever earthly good there may be in comparison with Christ, the Believer’s testi-

mony goes to prove that Christ is precious comparatively, for there is nothing that can be matched with Christ.

And then to go higher still—Christ is good superlatively. The superlative of all things is Heaven and if it could be possible to put Christ in competition with Heaven, the Christian would not stop a moment in his choice. He would sooner be on earth with Christ than be in Heaven without Him. No, I do not know whether he would not go almost as far as Rutherford, who said, “Lord, I would sooner be in Hell with You than in Heaven without You. For if I were in Heaven without You it would be a Hell to me. And if I were in Hell with You it would be a Heaven to me.” We may put it so and every Christian will subscribe to it. Now, come you messengers of the world and take on your shoulders all its treasures. Caesar, pour out your gold in one glittering pile. Caesar, lay down your honors here in one gaudy heap. Here, Tiberius, bring all the joys of Capri’s lust and vice.

Solomon, bring here all the treasures of wisdom. Alexander, bring all your triumphs. Napoleon, bring your wide-spread empire and your fame, put them all here, all that earth calls good. And now come, You bleeding Lamb of God, You marred and matchless Savior, come here and tread these beneath Your feet, for what are all these compared with You? I pour contempt on them all. Now am I dead to all the world and all the world is dead to me. The whole realm of nature is small in comparison with You, as a drop in the bucket when compared with a boundless ocean. Jesus Christ, then, is precious superlatively.

2. What more can we say? Still to answer this question again—why is Christ precious to the Believer more than to any other man? What is it the Believers want that makes Christ precious to him? That is one answer. We have been having a small shower of rain lately and I dare say there are very few of you who felt grateful for it—since it gave you a little wetting coming here. But suppose that shower of rain could have fallen on the desert of Arabia, what a precious thing it would have been. Yes, every rain-drop would have been worth a pearl. And as for the shower, though it had rained gold dust, the rich deposit would not have been comparable to the flood when it descended from on high. But what is the reason that water is so precious there? Simply because it is so rare.

Suppose I am in England—there is abundance of water and I cannot sell it—water is so common and therefore so cheap. But put a man in the desert and let the water-skin be dried up, let him come to the well wherein he expected to find water and it has failed him—can you not conceive that that small drop of water might be worth a king’s ransom? No—that a man might hoard it up and conceal it from all his comrades, because on that small drop of water depended his life? The way to prize water is to value it with a tongue like a firebrand and with a mouth like an oven. Then can I estimate its value when I know its want.

So with Christ. The worldling does not care for Christ because he has never hungered and thirsted after Him. But the Christian is athirst for Christ. He is in a dry and thirsty land where no water is and his heart and his flesh pant after God, yes, for the living God. And as the thirsty soul

dying, cries out, water, water, water, so the Christian cries out Christ, Christ, Christ! This is the one thing needful for me and if I have it not, this thirst must destroy me.

Hark, too, that the Believer may be found in many aspects and you will always find that his needs will endear Christ to him. Here is a man about to be tried for his life. Before he had committed the wrong, he used to say, "Lawyers, attorneys, pleaders, away with them, what is the good of them?" Now he has got into prison he thinks very differently. He says, "I wish I could get a good special pleader to plead my cause." And he runs over the roll to see the best man to plead for him. At last he says, "Here is a man, if he could plead my cause I might hope to escape, but I have no money with which to engage him." And he says to his wife—"Wife, we must sell our house." Or, "We must get money somehow, for I am on trial for my life and I must have an advocate."

And what will not a woman do to get an advocate for her husband? Why, she will pledge the last rag she has to get one. Now, does not the Believer feel himself to be in just such a position? He is a poor sinner on trial for his life and he wants an Advocate. And every time he looks on Christ pleading his cause before the Father's Throne, he says, "O what a precious Christ He is to a poor sin-destroyed sinner, for He pleads his cause before the Throne."

But suppose another case. That of a man drawn for a soldier. In such times men always look out for substitutes. I remember when the ballot was coming for the militia, how every man joined a substitute club in order that if he were drawn he might not go himself. Now suppose a man had been drawn, how valuable would a substitute have been? No man in his senses likes to be food for powder—he would rather a man without brains go and do such work as that, but as for him he estimates himself at too high a price. But suppose he is not only drawn for a soldier, but condemned to die. See yon poor wretch coming up the gallows stairs, someone whispers to him, "What would you give for a substitute now? What would you give for someone to come and bear this punishment?" See his eyes roll madness at the thought. "A substitute," says he, "I could not buy one for the whole world. Who would be a substitute for me, to swing into eternity amidst the yelling of a crowd?"

But suppose—and we are only supposing what has actually occurred—suppose this man saw not only the gallows and the drop, but Hell fire before him and it were said to him, "You must burn in that forever unless you find a Substitute"—would not that be a precious one? Now, mark—that is just our position. The Christian feels that Hell is before him if it were not that he has a glorious Substitute. Jesus came forward and said, "I will bear that punishment, pour Hell on Me, My Father let Me drink damnation dry." And He did it. He endured all those pains, or an equivalent for them. He suffered in the rebel's place. And now, through Him, the Substitute, we are absolved and free. Oh, must not He be a precious Christ?

But think of Christ again and then think of the Believer's wants. I will try and run over a number of them. The Believer is a silly sheep. What a precious thing is a shepherd and how precious are green pastures and still waters. The Believer is like a desolate woman. What a precious thing is a husband who shall provide for her and shall console and cherish her. The Believer is a pilgrim and the hot sun beats on him. What a precious thing is the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. The Believer is a bond-slave by nature. What a precious thing is the trump of jubilee and the ransom price that sets him free. The Believer, by nature, is a sinking, drowning man. How precious to him is that plank of Free Grace, the Cross of Christ, on which he puts his poor trembling hand and secures glory. But what more shall I say? Time would fail me to tell of all the wants of the Believer and of the all-abounding and ever-flowing streams of love that flow from Christ, the fountain that fills the Believer to the brim. O say, you children of God, is He not while you are in these lowlands of want and suffering, inconceivably, unutterably, superlatively precious to you?

3. But once more. Look at the Believer not only in his wants, but in his highest earthly state. The Believer is a man that was once blind and now sees. And what a precious thing is light to a man that sees. If I, as a Believer, have an eye, how much I need the sun to shine. If I have no light my eye becomes a torture and I might as well have been blind. And when Christ gives sight to the blind He makes His people a seeing people. It is then that they find what a precious thing is the sight and how pleasant a thing it is for a man to behold the sun. The Believer is a man that is quickened. A dead corpse wants no clothing, for it feels no cold. Let a man once be quickened and he finds himself naked and wants clothing. From the very fact that the Christian is a quickened man, he values the robe of righteousness that is put about him. Christ touches His people's ears and opens them. But it were better for man to be deaf than to hear forever doleful groans and hissings. But such must he have been, ever hearing it if it were not for Christ playing sweet music to him every day and pouring streams of melody into his ears through His promises. Yes, I say, the very newborn powers of the Christian would be very channels for misery if it were not for Christ. Even in his highest estate the Christian must feel that Christ is necessary unto him and then he must conclude that Christ is precious to him.

But Believer, how precious is Christ to you in the hour of conviction of sin, when He says, "Your sins which are many, are all forgiven you"? How precious to you in the hour of sickness, when He comes to you and says, "I will make all your bed in your sickness"? How precious to you in the day of trial, when He says, "All things work together for your good"? How precious when friends are buried for He says, "I am the resurrection and the life"? How precious in your gray old age, "even in old age I am with you and to hoary hairs will I carry you"? How precious in the lone chamber of death, for "I will fear no evil, You are with me, Your rod and Your staff comfort me" ?

And last of all, how precious will Christ be when we see Him as He is? All we know of Christ here is as nothing compared with what we shall know hereafter. Believer, when you see Christ's face, now, you only see it through a veil—Christ is so glorious, that like Moses, He is compelled to put a veil upon His face for His poor people while they are here are so feeble that they could not behold Him face to face. And if He is lovely here, when He is marred and spit upon, how lovely must He be when He is adored and worshipped? If He is precious on His Cross, how much more precious when He sits on His Throne! If I can weep before Him and love Him and live to Him, when I see Him as the despised Man of Nazareth, oh, how shall my spirit be knit to Him, how shall my heart be absorbed with love to Him when I see His face and behold His crown of glory, when I mark the harpings of the never-ceasing harpers who harp His praise?

Wait awhile, Christian. If He is precious to the Believer now, when faith is turned to sight He will be more precious still. Go out of this hall and cry, "O Lord Jesus, I must love You, I must serve You better, I must live for You! I must be ready to die for You—

***'You are precious to my soul,
My transport and my trust.'*** ”

This brings me to conclude—and here I want your solemn and earnest attention while each one for himself shall answer this question—my Hearer, is Christ precious to *you*? My young Brothers and Sisters, you of the same age as myself, is Jesus precious to you in your youth? How shall a young person cleanse his way? On His footsteps. You men and women of middle age, is Christ precious to *you*? Remember that this world is but a dream and if you have not something more satisfactory than that, you will die disappointed even though you succeed beyond your highest wishes. And you gray-headed men who are going tottering to your graves—whose life is like a candle-snuff, almost expiring, like a lamp whose oil is spent—is Christ precious to *you*, you with the bald head and with the hoary lock, is Jesus precious to your soul? Remember, on your answer to this question depends your condition. You believe, if He is precious to you, but if He is not precious, then you are not Believers and you are condemned already because you believe not on the Son of God.

Now, which is it? Oh, methinks some of you feel as if you could spring from your seats and say, "Yes, He is precious to me, I cannot deny it." Once there was a good minister who was catechizing his class and he said to the young people, "The question which I am about to ask is such that I want none of you to answer but those who can answer from your heart." The congregation was gathered together and he put this question to them concerning Christ—"Suppose Christ was here and should say, 'Do you love Me?' what would be your reply?" He looked around and glanced upon all the young men and the young women and said, "Jesus speaks to you the first time and says, 'Do you love Me?' He speaks a second time and he says, 'Do you love Me?'"

There was a solemn pause and no one answered. And the congregation looked at the class and at last the minister said once more, "Jesus speaks

by me a third time and says, 'Do you love Me?' ” Up rose a young woman, who could keep her seat no longer and, bursting into tears, said, “Yes, Lord, You know all things, You know that I love you!” Now, how many are there here who could say that? Could not you now, if this were the time—although you might be bashful in the midst of so many—could you not, if Christ asked you the question—could you not boldly say, though in the midst of enemies—“Yes, Lord, You know all things, You know that I love you”?

Well, if you can give such an answer as that, go home and pray that others may be brought to love Him, for you yourselves are saved. But if you are compelled to be silent to such a question as that, O may God lead you to seek Christ—may you, too, be driven to the Cross—may you there see His dear bleeding wounds, may you behold His open side—and falling at His feet, may you say, “I trust You, I rely upon You, I depend upon You,” and He will say, “I have saved You.” And then will you spring to your feet and say, “Lord I love You, because You have first loved me.” May such be the end of this sermon and to God be all the glory.

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A SERMON FROM A SICK PREACHER NO. 3014

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 1906.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, IN THE YEAR 1869.**

***“Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious.”
1 Peter 2:7.***

[Not only was this the first text from which Mr. Spurgeon preached, but it was his theme on many subsequent occasions. Two of these discourses bear the same title—CHRIST PRECIOUS TO BELIEVERS although one of them is No. 242, Volume 5 in the New Park Street Pulpit and the other is No. 2137, Volume 36 in the Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

MY Brothers and Sisters, I am quite out of order for addressing you tonight. I feel extremely unwell, excessively heavy and exceedingly depressed, and yet I could not deny myself the pleasure of trying to say a few words to you. I have taken a text upon which I think I could preach in my sleep and I believe that if I were dying, and were graciously led into the old track, I could, with my last expiring breath, pour out a heartfelt utterance upon the delightful verse which I have selected. It happens to be the passage from which I first essayed to speak in public when I was but a boy of sixteen years of age and I am sure it contains the marrow of what I have always taught in the pulpit from that day until now. The words are in the Second Chapter of the First Epistle of Peter, and the seventh verse—*“Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious.”*

We might find “ample room and verge enough” if we were to enlarge upon the preciousness of Christ in His Person as God and perfect Man, His preciousness to His Father, His preciousness to the Holy Spirit, His preciousness to angels and glorified men. We might next speak of Him in the preciousness of His work, showing His preciousness as the Mediator of the New Covenant and at the Incarnate Messenger of that Covenant on earth, His preciousness as working out a perfect righteousness and as rendering a complete expiation. We might dwell upon His preciousness in all His offices, whether as Prophet, Priest, or King, and in all His relationships as Friend, Brother, as Bridegroom. Indeed, we have before us a subject as inexhaustible as the river of God, and as bright as the sapphire Throne! If we should endeavor to show how precious the Well-Beloved is in all respects, we would need eternity in which to complete the task—

***“Precious is the name of Jesus,
Who can half its worth unfold?
Far beyond angelic praises
Sweetly sung to harps of gold.
Precious when to Calvary groaning,
He sustained the cursed tree.***

***Precious when His death atoning
 Made an end of sin for me.
 Precious when the bloody scourges
 Caused the sacred drops to roll.
 Precious when of wrath the surges
 Overwhelmed His holy soul!
 Precious in His death victorious,
 He the host of Hell overthrows,
 In His Resurrection glorious,
 Victor crowned over all His foes.
 Precious, Lord! Beyond expressing,
 Are Your beauties all Divine!
 Glory, honor, power and blessing
 Be henceforth forever Thine.”***

The wording of the text binds our thoughts to one point. “*Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious.*” It is not so much how precious He is, as how precious He is to you! If you are a Believer, the text affirms that Jesus Christ is, without any adverb to limit the extent of the descriptive word, precious to you!

I. We shall, first, talk awhile upon the Truth of God that JESUS CHRIST IS NOW PRECIOUS TO BELIEVERS.

Notice, attentively, *how personally precious Jesus is*. There are two persons in the text. “*Therefore, to you who believe, HE is precious.*” “*You*” and “*He.*” You are a real person and you feel that you are such. To yourself, you must always be the most real of existences. You do not think of yourself as a person of whom you have read in history, or heard of in discourse, or seen from a window years ago. You have, (to use an ugly word, since I do not know any substitute for it), realized yourself—you are quite clear about your own existence. Now, in the same way, I pray you strive to realize the other Person! “*Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious.*” Jesus exists just as really as you do and you must not regard Him as a personage who was here 1,869 years ago, or one of whom you have heard, and whom you like to think of as a poetical conception—but there is a real Christ now existing in spirit, existing here—in real flesh and blood now standing at the right hand of the Father! And between Him and you, if you are a Believer, there exists a bond of unity which, though invisible, is nevertheless most matter-of-fact and positive. You believe in Him. He loves you. You love Him in return and He sheds abroad in your heart a sense of His love. You two are bound together tightly and firmly. There is neither myth, nor dream either in Him or in your union to Him. He is and you are—and He is in very deed most precious to you.

Notice, too, that while the text gleams with this vividness of Personality to which the most of professors are blind, it is weighted *with a most solid positiveness*—“*Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious.*” It does not speak as though He might be or might not be, but “*He is precious.*” There are some things about myself as a Christian which are frequently matters of question. I may gravely question whether I am growing in Grace and under such a doubt I may search my heart to see whether I love my Lord better, or whether I have more fully conquered my

sins. But one thing I do not question, namely, that being a Believer in Him, Jesus Christ is unutterably precious to my soul! If you doubt your faith, you may doubt whether Christ is precious to you, but if your faith is certain, the preciousness of Christ to your heart is quite as certain. "He is precious." If the new life is in you, you are as sure to love the Savior as fish love the stream, or the birds the air, or as brave men love liberty, or as all men love their lives! Tolerate no questions here! Allow no debate upon this vital point of your religion! Jesus must be precious to you. Cleanse your eyes if any dust has dimmed your sight of Jesus' preciousness and be not satisfied till, in the language of the spouse, you can say, "My Beloved is the chief among ten thousand." "Yes, He is altogether lovely."

Mark, further, *the absoluteness of the text*—"Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious." It is not written how precious He is. The text does not attempt, by any form of computation, to measure the price which the regenerate soul sets upon her bosom's Lord. There is no hint that He is moderately precious. It does not even say positively or comparatively precious. I infer, therefore, that I may, if I choose, insert the word, "superlatively." And, certainly, if I did so, there would be no exaggeration, for more dear than light to the eyes, or life to the body, is Jesus to the sanctified heart! Each saint can truthfully sing—

**"Yes, You are precious to my soul,
My transport and my trust!
Jewels to You are gaudy toys
And gold is sordid dust."**

Since no sparkling gems or precious metals, no royal regalia, or caskets of rare jewels can ever equal the value of Jesus, the comparison is vain. We therefore place Him by Himself, alone, and say that He is absolutely precious to Believers. Gold is precious, but the diamond is more so and, in comparison with the diamond, the gold is of small account. The diamond is precious, but give a man a bagful of diamonds of the first water and put him down in a desert, or let him be out on the wild waste of ocean—he would give all his diamonds for a draught of pure water to drink, or a crust of bread to eat—so that, in certain cases, even the excellent crystal would lose its value. In fact, mineral substances are merely arbitrary signs of value, they have but little worth in themselves. Gold in itself is less useful than iron and a diamond of little more account than a piece of glass. They have no absolute intrinsic value which would remain the same under all contingencies. But Christ is absolutely precious! That is to say, nothing can ever match Him, much less excel Him, and He is precious under all circumstances! There never can arrive a time when we shall be compelled to confess His lack of value, or lower our estimate of Him. He is infinitely precious! O my Soul, do you esteem Him so? My Heart, are you sure of this, that unto you He is precious beyond compare? Positively precious? Comparatively precious, though Heaven itself were compared? Superlatively precious beyond all things that can be dreamed of, or imagined? Is He to you essential preciousness, the very standard of all value? Thus it should be,

for the text means no less—"Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious."

The thought which I desire to bring out into fullest relief is this, that *Jesus Christ is, today, continually precious to His people*. The moment a soul believes in Jesus, his sins are forgiven. Well, then, the precious blood that washes all sin away, is not that done with? Oh, no! Unto you that believe, though you have believed to the saving of your soul, He is still precious, for your guilt will return to your conscience and you will yet sin, being still in the body, but there is a fountain still filled with blood and thus unto you, experimentally, the cleansing Atonement is as precious as when you first relied upon its expiating power! No, Jesus is more precious to you, now, than when first you were washed in His blood and were made white as snow, for you know your own needs more fully, have proved more often the adaptation of His saving Grace and have received a thousand more gifts at His blessed hands! I fear that some Christians imagine that after believing, all is done, but my Lord Jesus Christ is no old Almanac, used up and of no further service! He is not like the medicine which I took months ago, which then healed me of my disease, so that now I can afford to put the rest of it on the shelf and laugh at it—oh, no! He is still my Divine Medicine! I still need Him and I still have Him. If I believe in Him, I feel I need Him more than I ever did and He is dearer to me than ever He was. If I needed Him before, as a poor guilty sinner, I need Him just as much as a poor needy saint, hanging upon His daily bounty, deriving life perpetually from His life, peace from the virtue of His precious blood and joy from the flowing out of His love to me! Instead of Christ's losing value to the Believer, the pith of the text is this—that you, Believer, when you get Christ and get what Christ brings to you, instead of esteeming Him as though He were an empty vessel out of which you had drained the last drop, prize Him more highly than you ever did before! He is not a gold mine worked out and exhausted, a field reaped of its harvest, or a vineyard where the grape gleaning is done—He still has the dew of His youth, the fullness of His strength, the infinity of His wealth, the perfection of His power!

II. Now, Beloved, just for a minute or two, let us think how CHRIST IS PRECIOUS TO YOU TODAY.

He is precious to you today *because His blood, even now, this day, is the only thing which keeps you from being a condemned sinner, exposed to the wrath of God*. There has been enough sin upon your soul, my Brother, my Sister, this very day, to cast you into Hell if your Surety had not stood between you and God's Justice. You have been into no sinful company today. You have been in your Sunday school class and I have been in the pulpit, but ah, my pulpit sins would have damned me, today, if it had not been for that precious blood! And your Sunday school sins would have shut you up in Hell if that dear Mediator had not stood between you and God! So, you see, it is not merely the first day in which you believe in which He is precious to you, but right on, still, as long as you are a sinner, the Intercessor stands and pleads for you, evermore putting your sin away, being yesterday, today and forever, your Savior,

your Shield, and your Defense and, therefore, evermore supremely precious!

Remember, too, He is precious *because the only righteousness you have is still His perfect righteousness*. That which pleads with God for you is not what you are, but what HE is! You are accepted at this moment, but you are only “accepted in the Beloved.” You are not justified because you feel in a sweet frame of mind, or because your heart rejoices in the name of God. Oh, no! Your acceptance is all in your great Surety and if it could be possible that He and the entire system of His Grace could be withdrawn and Covenant engagements abrogated, you would be as unacceptable as even lost spirits are and, like they, forever driven from the face and favor of God! Is He not, then, as your accepted Substitute, at this hour most precious to you?

Moreover, Beloved, Jesus Christ is precious to you at this moment as much as ever He was, because from henceforth it is His example which you strive to imitate. So far as He is an example to His people, His Character has always been most admirable in your esteem—and this day you delight to know that in His life, God’s Law appears—

“Drawn out in living characters.”

You aspire to be like Him now—you expect to be perfectly like Him in the day of His appearing. Now, because He shows you what you shall be and because in Him lies the power to make you what you shall be, is He not, therefore, daily precious to you? In proportion as you fight with sin. In proportion as you seek for holiness with inward longing and sublime partings—in that proportion will Jesus Christ, the Paragon of all perfection, be precious in your esteem! Beloved, you are to be crucified with Him! Your flesh, with its corruptions and lusts, must die upon His Cross as He died. Is He not precious when you believe that it will be by virtue of His death that sin will die in you? You are to rise in Him! No, I trust you have already risen in Him into newness of life. I hope you are panting more and more after the resurrection life, that you may no longer regard the dead things of this world, but live for eternal things, as those whose “life is hid with Christ in God.” If so, I know you will prize a risen Savior and your appreciation of Him will increase as you drink more deeply into the fellowship of the risen life. Forget not, Beloved, that our Redeemer has ascended, and in that ascension every saint has his share. I do not say that you all enjoy your share yet, but, in proportion as you do so, you will reckon Christ to be precious, for He “has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places.” “Our conversation is in Heaven from where we also look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,” whose Second Advent is to be the perfection of our spiritual life, the unveiling of the hidden beauties and manifestations of the sons of God! Just in proportion as you enter into your royal heritage and live in it, and believe in it—in this proportion Jesus Christ will be precious to you.

Beloved, let me tell you a secret. To many of you there is as much in Christ undiscovered as you have already enjoyed. Your faith has only yet grasped Christ as saving you from going down to the Pit—Christ is

precious to you so far—but if your faith could even now comprehend the fact that you are one with Christ, members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones—that you are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, ah, then, how doubly precious would Jesus be! As surely as your faith grasps more, becomes more capacious and appropriating, Christ will grow in preciousness to you! I am persuaded that there is a meaning in these words which none of God’s saints have yet been able to discover, a deep mysterious preciousness of Jesus only to be known by a close and intimate acquaintance with Him such as falls to the lot of few. “Therefore, to you who believe”—just in proportion as you believe—the larger, the stronger, the deeper, the purer, the more sublime, the more full-grown your faith, the more Jesus Christ is precious to you. Ask, then, for more faith, that Jesus may be more precious to you! And God grant it to you, for His name’s sake!

III. Thus much on that point. Now a few words on another. BECAUSE JESUS IS PRECIOUS TO BELIEVERS, HE EFFICACIOUSLY OPERATES UPON THEM. The preciousness of Christ is, as it were, the leverage of Christ in lifting up His saints to holiness and righteousness!

Let me show you this. *The man who trusts Christ values Christ.* That which I value, I hold fast. Hence our valuing Christ helps us to abide steadfast in times of temptation. The world says to a Christian, “Follow me and I will enrich you.” “No,” says the Christian, “You cannot enrich me. I have Christ and I am rich enough.” “Follow me,” says the world, “and I will bless you. I will give you the delights of the flesh.” “No,” says the heart, “you cannot bless me, for these things are accursed and would bring me sorrow, not pleasure. Jesus Christ is my pleasure and to love Him and to do His will is my joy.” Do you not see that the greater your value of Christ, the greater your strength against temptation? Although the devil may tempt you with this and that, yet Jesus Christ, being more precious than all else, you say, “Get you behind me, Satan. You cannot tempt me while Christ is dear to my spirit.” Oh, may you set a very high value upon Christ, that thus you may be kept firm in the day of temptation!

Notice further *this valuing of Christ helps the Believer to make sacrifices.* Sacrifice-making contributes a large part of any high character. He who never makes a sacrifice in his religion may shrewdly suspect that it is not worth more than his own practical valuation of it. When a man has a very important document about him, on which depends his title to his estates, if a thief should try to take it from him, he will allow the thief to tear away his garments, to rob him of anything he has except his treasure! That he takes care to hold fast as long as he can. Indian messengers, men entrusted with jewels, have been known to swallow them to preserve them from robbers—and to allow themselves to be stripped naked of every rag they wore—but they would not lose the jewel with which their prince had entrusted them. So the Christian will say to the world, “Take away my fortune. Take away my livelihood. take away my good name, if you will, O lying world! But, despite all, I will retain my Savior, for He is precious!” Skin for skin, yes, all that a man

has will he give for Christ—and he never will or can give Christ up if Christ is precious to him.

See, then, that believing in Jesus makes Him precious and His being precious helps us to make sacrifices most cheerfully for His dear sake.

Moreover, Brothers and Sisters, *this valuing of Christ makes us jealous against sin*. What, I say, does Jesus Christ deign to live under my roof? Then, while He lives in my heart, I will give no roosting place to any foul bird of sin that might begin hooting in His ear! No, you enemies of Christ, begone, begone, begone! My Beloved shall have the best chamber of my spirit undefiled by your filthy feet. We are afraid lest we should do anything to grieve the heavenly Lover of our souls. This makes us keep our garments white and pick our steps through this miry world. Hence, a right valuing of Christ promotes directly the highest degree of sanctification. He who loves the Redeemer best, purifies himself most, even as His Lord is pure.

Besides, Beloved, *high valuing of Christ helps the Christian in the selection of his associates in life*. If I hold my Divine Lord to be precious, how can I have fellowship with those who do not esteem Him? You will not find a man of refined habits and cultured spirit happy among the lowest and most illiterate. “Birds of a feather flock together.” Workers and traders unite in companies according to their occupations. Lovers of Christ rejoice in lovers of Christ and they delight to meet together, for they can talk to each other of things in which they are agreed. I would recommend you to choose the church of which you would be a member and the pastor whom you would hear by this one thing—by how much of Christ there is in that church and how much of the savor of Christ there is in that ministry! It is an evil thing for a child of God to be enchanted by mere rhetoric. As well might you choose a table to feast at merely on account of the knives and forks, or the polish of its mahogany! You require food for the soul and there is nothing that will long feed a true heart but Jesus Christ who is the meat and the drink of His people. Love to Christ soon makes a Christian discontented with mere oratory. He cannot be satisfied even with the best doctrine apart from Jesus. “They have taken away my Lord,” he says, “and I know not where they have laid Him.” I must hear about Jesus and if that silver bell does not ring, then all the rest may chime as they may, but my ear is at unrest until I hear that celestial sound!

Thus, a lofty estimate of Christ will be seen, if I had time to track it, to operate through the entire history of a Christian!

Little need is there more fully to particularize, but we must not fail to remark that *a sense of the Redeemer’s preciousness makes the Christian useful*, for that which is much on the heart will soon creep up to the tongue—and the testimony of the heart is a notable method of spreading the Gospel. If you love Christ much, you will speak about Him. Your restrained speech will almost choke you. Your soul will be hot within you while you are silent, till, at last, like a fire in your bones which cannot be concealed any longer, it will break out and you will say to others, “My Beloved is the fairest and noblest of all beloveds! Oh, that you all knew

Him and loved Him as I do! If you see Him, His face is brighter than the sun in its strength! If you hear Him, His voice is sweeter than the chorus of Heaven! If you draw near to Him, His garments smell of myrrh, aloes and cassia! And if you trust Him, you will find Him to be faithfulness and truth itself." The words may be broken, the sentences may not flow with rhythmical harmony, but he who really loves Christ must speak it out somehow or other! Thus, proclaiming with a burning heart the things which he has made touching the King, others will hear the good news and they will ask, "Who is this Precious One?" And they will, by God's good Spirit, be led to seek Him and find Him! So the Christian valuing Christ will come to be useful to the souls of men! Indeed, as I have said before, it will exercise an operating power on the entire Christian and render it holiness unto the Lord!

IV. Christ being thus precious, HIS PRECIOUSNESS BECOMES THE TEST OF OUR CHRISTIANITY.

I shall not prolong this humble talk, but shall, in conclusion, put a question to you. Beloved Brother or Sister, you know very well that I would be the last person in the world to speak lightly of the value of sound doctrine. I wish we were all far more acquainted with the Scriptures than we are and that the Doctrines of Grace were more clear to our understandings and more imprinted upon our hearts. But there are some people who love a certain set of doctrines so much, that if you differ a hair's breadth, they will denounce you as rotten to the core! They will not associate with any who do say, "Shibboleth," and sound the "sh" very harshly, too! They will cut off and condemn all God's people who do not precisely agree with them. Now, mark you, it is not written, "Unto you that believe a code of doctrines will be precious." That is true, but it is not written so in the text. The text is, "Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious." It is better to count Christ precious than it is to count orthodoxy precious! It is not loving a creed, but it is loving Jesus that proves you a Christian! You may become such a bigot that it may be only the laws of the land which keep you from burning those who differ from you, and yet you may have none of the Grace of God in your heart! I love Protestantism, but if there is anything in this world that I have a horror of, it is that *political* Protestantism which does nothing but sneer and snarl at its fellow citizens—but which is as ignorant as a cow about what Protestantism truly is. The great truths of Protestantism—not merely Protestant ascendancy—and the great secret power of those truths, far more than the mere letter of them, is the thing to be prized. You may get it into your head that you are a member of the one only true church. You may wrap yourself about with any quantity of self-conceit, but that does not at all prove you to be a possessor of Grace. It is love to Christ that is the root of the matter. I am very sorry, my dear Brother, if you should hold unsound views on some points, but I love you with all my heart if Jesus is precious to you! I cannot give up Believers' Baptism. It is no invention of mine and, therefore, I cannot give up my Master's ordinance. I am sure that it is Scriptural. I cannot give up the Doctrine of Election—it seems to me so plainly taught in the Word. But over the head of all

doctrines and ordinances, and over everything, my Brother and Sister, I embrace you in my heart if you believe in Jesus and if He is precious to you, for that is the vital point! These are the matters of heart-work that mark a Christian—nothing else is so true a test. If you cannot say, “Jesus is precious to me,” I do not care to what church you belong, or what creed you are ready to die for, you do not know the Truth of God unless the Person of Christ is dear to you!

This may serve as a test for each one here. My Brother, my Sister, do you believe in Him who is the Son of God and yet was born of the Virgin here on earth? Do you rely alone on Him who, on the Cross, poured out His heart’s blood to redeem sinners? Do you depend on Him who now stands with His priestly garments on before the Throne of the Infinite Majesty, pleading for the unjust that they may live through Him? If you do, then answer this question—Do you love Jesus now? Do you love Him with your heart and soul? Would you serve Him? Do you serve Him? Will you serve Him? Will you subscribe your hand to be His servant from this day forth? Do you declare now, if not with lips, yet honestly with your soul, “He is precious to me, and I would give up all else sooner than give up Him”? Then it is well with you! Be happy and rejoice! Come to His Table and feast with Him at the banquet of love!

If not, you have not built on the Rock. If you are not loving Christ, I pray you examine yourself and see where you are, for there is but a step between you and Hell. Repent! May God convert you and give you now to put your confidence in Jesus and now to be saved, that He may be glorified in you, for hitherto He has had no glory from you! Unto you that do not believe, Christ is not precious, and you will go your way and despise Him. Oh, that you were made wise by the Holy Spirit and taught to consider things rightly! Then Christ would, indeed, be precious to you. He is the only way for your escape from the wrath to come. He is the only hope for you of ever entering the gates of Heaven. He must be your only Shelter when the world will be all ablaze, as soon it shall—when the stars shall fall, like withered leaves from the trees, when all creation shall rock and reel—and His voice shall resound in earth, and Heaven, and Hell, “Awake, you dead, and come to judgment!” The only hope of a Savior, in that last tremendous day, must be found in Jesus. Oh, seek Him now while He may be found! Call upon Him now while He is near! Turn not your heels away Him now, lest you turn once and for all to Hell! Come to Him now! Believe in Him now! And He shall have the glory! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 PETER 2.**

Verse 1. *Therefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies and envies, and all evil speaking.* Putting these evil things right away from you, having nothing further to do with any of them. Notice the repetition of the word “all.” “All malice and all guile”—everything in the shape of deceit—“and all evil speaking.” All these are to

be put away by all Believers, as rags are put away in the rag-bucket, or refuse on the dunghill!

2. *As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby.* Be glad to get simple Truths of God—the “milk of the Word.” Even if you can digest the strong meat of the Word, never grow weary of the milk, for it is always good diet even for a full-grown Christian. Do not crave milk and water, but, “desire the unadulterated milk of the Word that you may grow thereby.” It is not enough for you to be spiritually alive—you must grow! And especially while you are babes in Grace, your great desire should be that you may grow.

3. *If indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.* You begin with tasting that the Lord is gracious. You go on to desire the unadulterated milk of the Word and so you grow more and more in Grace.

4. *Coming to Him, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious.* No one figure is sufficient to set forth Christ as He really is. A stone is a Scriptural simile and symbol of Christ, but we have to make the metaphor somewhat incongruous by comparing Him to “a living stone.”

5. *You also, as living stones.* It is not “lively” stones. It is the same word in the original, in both cases—“a living stone” and, “living stones.” The translators of our Authorized Version have often rendered the same Hebrew or Greek word in a different way, which is a pity, as it is in this instance. “You also, as living stones.”

5. *Are built up a spiritual house.* A house that is a living structure from the foundation to the topstone.

5. *An holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.* He is a living stone, and you, as living stones, are built upon Him—and He and you together make up a living spiritual house. And in order that the house may have suitable tenants and be properly furnished, you also become priests and, as priests, you “offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”

6. *Therefore also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious: and he that believes on Him shall not be confounded.* Thus the Apostle quotes from the Prophet Isaiah the ancient prophecy concerning Christ.

7. *Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious: but unto them which are disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner.* Here Peter quotes from Psalm 118:22. What reverence these Inspired men had for the Inspired Book! The Spirit of God could have spoken fresh words if He had pleased, but, as if He meant to honor above everything else the Book which He had, Himself, Inspired, He “moved” Peter to quote the ancient Prophet and Psalmist in confirmation of what He was writing.

8. *And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.* These are terrible words, but they are true. I cannot fully explain them. As Archbishop Leighton says, “It is easier to get into a depth over this awful Truth of God than it is to get out again.” O God,

grant that none of us may stumble at Christ! If we do, Christ will not move because we kick at Him, or fall over Him.

9. *But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people.* These are wonderful epithets that are here heaped upon Believers. May we have the Grace to be able to appropriate them and to expound them in our lives!

9. *That you should show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.* See where you once were, and also see to what you have been called by God's Grace—"out of darkness into light." That is not all—into *His* light. Even *that* is not all—"into *His marvelous* light." The light of the Gospel is full of wonders. As common light is made up of many colors, so the light of God's Grace is made up of many marvelous colors—the colors of all the attributes of God!

10. *Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.* What a great change, conversion is! And how great a change conversion works! How wonderful is the effect of regeneration! We had not obtained mercy, but now we have obtained mercy! We were not a people, but now we are the people of God!

11. *Dearly Beloved, I beseech you.* Peter puts his hands together and pleads with intense earnestness.

11. *As strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.* Those fleshly lusts belong to this present evil world, but you do not belong to it—you are "strangers and pilgrims" here—therefore feel an absolute alienation towards such things, an utter abhorrence of them! Do not even think of them, much less practice them. "Abstain from fleshly lusts," for, while they injure the body, that is not the worst thing that they do, for they "war against the soul."

12, 13. *Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake.* You are not to be disturbers of the peace. You Christian people are to cultivate the spirit of conciliation wherever you dwell, submitting yourselves, "for the Lord's sake," even to some things which you do not like.

13. *Whether it be to the king, as supreme.* In Peter's day, the king was a poor creature and something worse than that. Indeed, I might say of the bulk of the Emperors of Rome, who were the chief "kings" of that day, that they were monsters of iniquity! Yet the office was to be respected even when the man who occupied it could not be. Much more should it be respected when the occupant is what a true "king" should be.

14-16. *Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free.* Free in yourselves, free in your conscience, free in your mind and heart.

16. *And not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.* You possess a freedom which others claim, but do not

know. You feel that you are no man's slave, yet you do not use your liberty for evil, or to the injury of others.

17-19. *Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king. Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endures grief, suffering wrongfully. There is no credit in suffering rightfully—the credit is in patiently enduring suffering which you do not deserve.*

20-21. *For what glory is it, if, when you are buffeted for your faults, you take it patiently? But if, when you do well, and suffer for it, you take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were you called. It is part of a true Christian's calling to bear what is put upon him wrongfully.*

21-23. *Because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: who when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not: but committed Himself to Him that judges righteously. This leads Peter to make the following glorious declaration concerning the atoning Sacrifice of Christ.*

24. *Who His own Self bore our sins in His own body on the tree. There was a transference of sin from sinners to Christ. This is no fiction. He, "His own Self," bore that sin "in His own body on the tree."*

24. *That we, being dead to sins. Because He died for us and we died in Him.*

24. *Should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes you were healed. By His sufferings, you were cured of sin! His death not only removed from you the penalty of sin, but what is far better, it also removed from you the dread disease itself!*

25. *For you were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls. God grant that this may be true concerning everyone of us, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.*

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
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A SERMON AND A REMINISCENCE

NO. 3112

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 1, 1908.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
EARLY IN THE YEAR 1873.**

***“Unto you therefore who believe, He is precious.”
1 Peter 2:7.***

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon this passage, are as follows Sermons #242, Volume 5—CHRIST PRECIOUS TO BELIEVERS; #2137, Volume 36—(same title as #242) and #3014, Volume 52—A SERMON FROM A SICK PREACHER—
Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

WHEN one has a head cold, it is a very effectual hindrance to thought. You may do what you will and select what subject you may, but somehow or other the mind has lost its elasticity. I frankly confess that for this reason I selected this text for my discourse. I thought that, perhaps, if the head would not work, the heart might, and that if the thoughts came not, yet the emotions might. Emotions may well be stirred in the preacher, if not in the hearer, by the memories awakened by this passage. For I remember well that, more than 22 years ago, the first sermon that I ever attempted to make was from this text. I had been asked to walk out to the little village of Teversham, some little distance from the town of Cambridge, in which I lived, to accompany a young man whom I supposed to be the preacher for the evening, and on the way I said to him that I trusted God would bless him in his labors. “Oh, dear!” he said, “I never preached in my life. I never thought of doing such a thing! I was asked to walk with you and I sincerely hope that God would bless *you* in *your* preaching.” “No,” I said, “but I never preached and I don’t know that I could do anything of the sort.” We walked together till we came to the place, my inmost soul being all in a tremble as to what would happen. When we found the congregation assembled, and no one else there to speak of Jesus, though I was only 16 years of age, as I found that I was expected to preach, I did preach, and this was the text.

If a raw recruit could speak upon anything, surely this theme would suit him. If one were dying, this would be the text. If one were distracted with a thousand cares, this would be the text because its teaching is experimental—its meaning wells up from the inner consciousness and needs neither a clear brain nor an eloquent tongue. To the Believer, it is not a thing which somebody else has taught him—it is a matter of fact which he knows within his own soul, that Christ is precious to *him* and he can bear testimony concerning it although not always such bold testimony as he could wish! I intend to let my heart run over like water from a full cup—just as the thought comes to my heart, it shall be

poured out. Let us go, then, at once to our text and speak a little, first, *about Believers*. Then *about their appreciation of Christ*. And then *about how they show it*.

I. ABOUT BELIEVERS—“Unto you who believe.”

Believers are getting to be rather scarce nowadays. Doubters have the sway—they are the men who claim to possess all the wisdom of the period. There is scarcely a single historical fact but what is now doubted. I fancy that the very existence of the human race must be a matter of question with some persons. I believe some imagine that not even they, themselves, are actually existent—certain ideas of themselves exist, but not themselves! We know not how far the human mind will go in this direction, but surely there must be a limit to doubting. Wonderful is the capacity of faith, but a hundred times more wonderful is the capacity of unbelief. The most credulous persons in the world are unbelievers. He who refuses to swallow the gnat of Scriptural difficulty, usually swallows camels in large quantities of other difficulties of all sorts! The text speaks of Believers and, for my part, I am happy to know that a man is reckoned among Believers of any sort rather than with doubters.

But the Believers mentioned here are not mere Believers, they are *spiritual* Believers, Christian Believers—they *believe in Christ Jesus*. It is only to such that Christ is precious. In the Word of God there are many expressions with regard to believing in Christ. We read of believing *in* Him, believing *upon* Him and believing Him. Now, if I understand the Word aright, *believing in Him* means this—believing that He is what He claims to be. As, for instance, that He is the Sent One of God, the Messiah—that He is King in Israel, that He is the Son of God, that He is the Word that was God and Was in the beginning with God—that He is the Great High Priest making Atonement for our sins, that He is the Head of the Church and so on. That is to believe *in* Him, to accept Him as being what God’s Word says He is, to believe God’s testimony concerning His Son.

But *believing upon Him* goes further than that, for when a man believes upon Jesus, or on Jesus, he trusts Him, he rests himself upon Him for the pardon of his sin. He relies upon the Savior’s atoning Sacrifice for eternal life. He rests upon the Savior’s immortality for his resurrection. He looks to the Savior’s power for everything. He looks to his Redeemer. He leans upon Him, he believes on Him. And this, mark you, is essential to salvation, for we may believe Christ to be God and yet perish! We may believe Christ to be the Great High Priest putting away sin by His atoning Sacrifice and yet perish! The faith that saves is a *trusting* faith, a *reliant* faith, a *sacred recumbency*, confidence and leaning upon the Lord Jesus Christ! Dear Hearer, do you possess it? Has the Holy Spirit given to you to cast yourself once and for all upon Him whom God has set forth to be a propitiation for sin?

If you have, surely you will, through Grace, proceed to the third form of faith, *you will believe Him*—His Person as well as His words. You will believe Him whatever He may say. You will believe Him whatever He may do. You will be persuaded that He is, Himself, the essential Truth of God,

according to His own declaration, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." And then you will know what Paul meant when he said, "I know whom I have believed"—not "*in* whom"—but "whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him." If you could have asked a true Believer, in Christ's day, "What is your creed?" He would have pointed to His Master. He would not have repeated certain articles of faith, but He would have said, "I believe that glorious Man. My trust is in Him! I believe Him!" We have seen many books labeled upon their backs, "Body of Divinity," but of a truth, Jesus is the only real "Body of Divinity." If you want theology, He is the true Theologos, the essential Word of God! It is a grand thing when a man believes Jesus to be what Jesus is—a Savior from sin—and then believes the Christ to be what Christ is—the Anointed of the Lord and so makes Him to be his Alpha and Omega—all his salvation and all his desire!

Divide yourselves upon this question as to how far you are Believers, for we cannot assert that Christ is precious to you if you are not Believers. We know He will not be your heart's Monarch if you have no faith. He will be the very reverse! But if you are Believers in and upon Him, He will be precious to you beyond all comparison!

II. Now let us consider THE BELIEVER'S APPRECIATION OF HIS MASTER and observe, first, that *every Believer appreciates Christ Himself*—His very Person—"Unto you therefore who believe, *He* is precious." Some think the ordinances, which they call the "sacraments," very precious. So they are, but only *for His sake*. Others reckon the Doctrines to be very precious and always thrust Doctrine into the forefront. We will not deny that every Doctrine is precious, but it owes its value to the fact that Christ is in it. Dry doctrine is nothing better than a sepulcher for a dead Christ to be buried in—but the Doctrine preached in relation to His Person becomes a Throne on which He is exalted! It is a great pity when any of you Christians forget that you have a Savior who is alive and overlook the *personality* of Christ. Remember that He is a real Man and as a real Man on Calvary He died for you. And as a real Man He is gone into Heaven. He is no ideal personage but an *actual* Person and the very marrow of Christian experience lies in the realization of the personality of the Savior—"Unto you who believe, *He* is precious." If you make Doctrine the main thing, you are very likely to grow narrow-minded. If you make your own experience the main thing, you will become gloomy and censorious of others. If you make ordinances the main thing, you will be apt to grow merely formal. You can never make too much of the living Christ Jesus! Remember that all other things are for His sake. Doctrines and ordinances are the planets, but Christ is the Sun! The stars of Doctrine revolve around Him as their great primal light. Get to love *Him* best of all. Yes, I know you do if you are truly believing in Him. You love the Doctrines and would not like to give one of them up, but still, the Incarnate God is the sum and substance of your confidence! Christ Jesus, Himself, is precious to you.

Now, as this appreciation concerns Christ, it may here be remembered that *it is, in the case of every Believer, a personal appreciation*. As we

appreciate Christ's Person, so we each in person appreciate Him. We do not pretend to appreciate Christ because others say that they do so. Nor do we run with the multitude, but we judge for ourselves. Unto those that believe in Him, Christ is precious on His own account, from their own personal knowledge of Him. They have not borrowed it. They do not cry, "Yes, He is precious," because their dear mother, who has gone to Heaven, used to say so. Her memory helps them, but they have a better reason than that. He is precious to *them*. Beloved, there is nothing like personal religion. The religion which you inherit, if at the same time it is not yours, personally, is not worth one single penny. You will not be saved by hereditary godliness. If any man should say, "My ancestors believed such-and-such, and therefore I do," that would be a reason why we should be Druids, for our ancestors were such. If our religion has come to us as an heirloom, like the family pew, or the family plate—and we have merely taken it at secondhand, [See Sermon #2624, Volume 45—SECONDHAND—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] it is of little or no account. You must value Christ because you have tried Him and know Him for yourself—for nothing short of a personal appreciation and a personal appropriation of the Lord Jesus, by faith, to your own case, and in your own heart—will ever bring you to Heaven! Everything short of personal godliness falls short of eternal life. Remember that nobody can be born-again for you. You yourselves must be regenerated. Nobody can renounce "the pomp and vanities of the world" for you. Sponsorship in religion is the most transparent of frauds. Nobody can love Christ for you—your own heart must beat high with affection towards His dear name! It must be a personal religion if it is to be of any value to you.

As there must be an appreciation of the Person of the Lord Jesus by our own selves, so, let me add, our experience must be the basis of that estimate. Christ is precious to us, this day, because we have proved Him to be precious. What has He done for us? He has delivered us, first, from all the guilt of our past sins. You have not forgotten the day when—

"Laden with guilt, and full of fears"—

you crept to the foot of the Cross and looked up and saw Him suffering there for you. And when you believed in Him, the burden fell off your shoulders and you received a liberty unknown before! Christ is very precious to the man who has once felt the Word of the Law on his conscience. I wish that some people who slight Him, had been cast where some of us once lay—in spiritual wretchedness and deep depression of spirit. Oh, the misery of a tortured conscience! We trembled in anticipation of the flames of Hell when our sins stared us in the face—but in an instant, by virtue of the application of the precious blood—fear was gone, guilt disappeared and we were reconciled to God by Christ Jesus! Is He not precious if this has been the case?

Beside this, He has emancipated us from the chains of sin. Before, passions mastered us—the flesh stood at the helm and steered the vessel which way it would. Sometimes a fierce self-will, at another time the baser passions of the flesh ruled us. We could not overcome ourselves! Satan and the flesh were tyrants over us! But now the vices once so dear

have become detestable, the chains of sin are broken and we are the Lord's free men—and though sin strives to get the mastery over us and we have much to mourn over—yet that same sword which has slain some sins is close at the throat of others and, by Divine Grace, we know that we shall slay them all before long! There is such a change in the character of some in this place, to my knowledge, that Christ, the Great Transformer, must be very precious to them! Once at the ale-house where sinners congregate. Once frequenting nameless haunts of vice. Once a swearer, once passionate, once dishonest, once a liar, once everything that is evil! But now washed and sanctified, you cannot but prize your Deliverer! Oh, when I meet the reformed drunk and when I gaze into the face of the Magdalene who now rejoices to wash the Savior's feet with her tears, I know that to such He is precious! A renewed character going with pardoned sin, as it always does, endears the Savior to the soul.

And, O Beloved, beside that, He is precious to us because He has changed the whole bent and current of our thoughts. We were once selfish and cared for nobody else. But since the Lord Jesus Christ has saved us, we serve not self, but Christ. We do not now live to hoard money, or to get ourselves honor, or even to save our own souls, for that is completed—we now rise above the groveling love of self and our whole being is devoted to Jesus! He is precious beyond all price, for He has taught us to live for God's Glory and for the welfare of our fellow men.

He is precious to us by experience because He has helped us in many a dark hour of trial. I shall not tell you tonight how often He has cheered me. If any spirit here is more than ordinarily inclined to despondency, perhaps it is mine, but, ah, the sustaining influences of the Presence of Christ! I can rise even to the seventh Heaven of ecstasy when I do but fully come back to a simple faith in His precious name! Some of us could not live without Jesus Christ. It has come to this—it is Hell here if we do not have Christ with us. I remember slipping the cable of my belief once and being driven out to sea before a furious wind of doubt. At first I reveled in that speedy sailing across a sea of fierce unbelief, but, ah, when I began to see where I was going—and when I stood at the prow of the vessel and marked the dreary cloud-land that lay before me—and knew not what rocks might be ahead, I felt a horror of great darkness and cried for deliverance right loudly! And I was glad when the anchor held fast, again, and my dreadful cruise was over. On Christ my soul has a hold as tight as the drowning man's death-grip and I cling with all my might to His everlasting love, His personal love to my poor soul and to the merit of His substitutionary Sacrifice on my behalf! Believe me, He is precious to all whose whole mental thought has come to an anchorage in Him, whose faculties feel that their utmost reach and stretch cannot go beyond being for He is All in All. Yes, the text says, "Unto you therefore who believe, He is precious."

Perhaps you imagine that I speak only of the past, as though Jesus *had been* precious. I meant that, but *He is precious now*—"Unto you therefore who believe, He is precious." When one of those saintly martyrs

had been tormented by persecutors, they said to him, "What can Christ do for you now?" And he replied, "He can help me to bear with patience that which you inflict upon me." When the murdered Covenanter's head was carried by the dragoon to the poor bereaved wife and he asked her what she thought of her husband's face, now, she said that he never looked bonnier when he lived than he did now that he had given up his life for Christ. Verily, we can say, today, that Christ never looked bonnier than He does tonight, when we think of Him as slain for us! We gladly sing that hymn—

"If ever I loved You, my Jesus, 'tis now."

Some people grow less lovely upon close acquaintance, but all lovers of Christ testify that His beauties bear the closest inspection. Those who lie in His bosom the longest love Him best—and those who have served Him 70 years are the most fluent and also the most sincere in singing His praises! Oh, He is a most precious Savior! Young man, do you trust Christ tonight? If you do, He is precious to you—but if He is not precious to you, then you have not believed in Him! May you be led to do so by the power of His Spirit and then Christ will be precious to you indeed!

But I must add that although Christ is precious to us now on account of past experience and present enjoyment, *He is precious to us with a dash of expectation*. We expect to soon enter the cold shades of death and it will be precious to have the Savior with us then. The question will sometimes come over every thoughtful mind, "Shall we, after all, die when we die? Are we like so many mites in a cheese and shall we soon be crushed out of being and cease to be?" Oh, dark and dreary thought! But, then, we remember that Jesus Christ arose from the dead and if any historical fact is certain, that is! There may be doubts about whether Caesar was slain by Brutus, or whether Alfred was ever king in England, for there are no evidences one half so positive on those points as those which prove the Resurrection of the Savior! I know not that anybody died as a witness for Caesar's death, but many shed their blood joyfully rather than deny that the Christ who was hanged upon the Cross actually rose again from the tomb! In that fact lies our hope of resurrection! A Man—a real Man who died on a tree—has risen from the dead! And we are one with that glorious Man who was also God—and because He lives, we shall also live! He is precious to us when we think of dying, and that should not be seldom. We shall soon come to it. Those who are strongest and most hale are nearing their last hour, and those who are sickly are nearer still, it may be. Oh, it is sweet to have Christ to live with, for then, let death come when it may, it will be a joyful thing for us—and once reconciled to our Maker through His Son, what have we to fear?

III. Lastly, we are to think of HOW BELIEVERS SHOW THEIR APPRECIATION OF CHRIST.

Some Christians seldom acknowledge that they are such. It is a beggarly business to love Christ in a corner and to be ashamed to acknowledge Him. He was never ashamed to confess Himself the sinners' Friend, yet there are sinners who profess to be saved by Him who are ashamed to be known as His followers. "Oh," says one, "if I were to say that I am a follower of the Crucified and join His Church and people, I

would expect to be laughed at.” And are you afraid of a fool’s laughter? Was Christ ashamed to be laughed at for you? Oh, coward, to be ashamed to be ridiculed for Him! “Oh, but my friends would make such a hubbub at home.” And did not His friends, who should have helped Him, cast Him out and reject Him? Yet He bore it for your sake. O craven spirits who will not take sides with Jesus, take heed as to what will happen to you when He comes, for those who deny Him before men shall be themselves denied before God and the holy angels! This day the royal standard floats in the breeze—let all who are on Christ’s side rally to it, for the hosts on the other side are many and bold. The foes of Jesus insult Him to His face. Some deny His Deity and others thrust a human “priest” into His place—

***“You that are men now serve Him
Against unnumbered foes!
Your courage rises with danger
And strength to strength oppose.”***

If He is precious to you, you will never blush to be called a fool for His sake!

Those who really judge Jesus to be precious rejoice in possessing Him. I cannot understand those Christians who say, “Christ is ours,” and yet go fretting and worrying through life. Dear Brother, if Christ is yours, you have no cause for fretting. “What, none?” asks one—“I am very poor.” You are not poor! He who can call Christ his own cannot be poor! “But I am comfortless.” How can that be when the Lord Jesus has given you a Comforter? “But I am bereaved.” Truly so, but you have not lost your Lord! Come, dear Brother, if a man were to go through the streets of London with twenty thousand pounds in his pocket and when he reached the bank, found that a thief had stolen his cotton pocket handkerchief, I think the reflection that would rise in his mind would be, “Thank God I have not lost my money.” And the very loss of his handkerchief would only make him the more grateful that he had not lost his treasure. Look on all things you have here as nothing compared with Jesus, and say—

***“How can I bereaved be
Since I cannot part with Thee?”***

If you esteem Christ as you should, *you will refuse to give Him up at any cost*—and under any circumstances you will hold to what you believe. You will have to suffer loss, it may be, in social position or in business. Very well, do it gladly and only wish you could suffer more for His dear sake! One might almost envy the martyrs, that they could earn that ruby crown which is not now within our reach. Let us, at any rate, be willing to take such little rebukes and rebuffs as may be given us for Christ’s sake. If you love Jesus Christ, my Brothers and Sisters, you will be willing to make sacrifices for His cause. I wish this spirit were abroad throughout all the Church, that Christ was really so precious to saints that they consecrated themselves and their substance to Him. We need personal consecration! I have heard that word pronounced “*purse-and-all consecration*,” certainly a most excellent pronounciation! He who loves

Jesus consecrates to Him all that he has and feels it a delight that he may lay anything at the feet of Him who laid down His life for us!

Once more, *he who really has this high estimate of Jesus will think much of Him.* And as the thoughts are sure to run over at the mouth, *he will talk much of Him.* Do we talk so? If Jesus is precious to you, you will not be able to keep your good news to yourself—you will be whispering it into your child's ear, you will be telling it to your husband, you will be earnestly imparting it to your friends! Without the charms of eloquence, you will be more than eloquent—your heart will speak and your eyes will flail as you talk of His sweet love! Every Christian here is either a missionary or an impostor—remember that you are either trying to spread abroad the Kingdom of Christ, or else you do not love Him at all! It cannot be that there is a high appreciation of Jesus and a totally silent tongue about Him! Of course I do not mean by that, that those who use the pen for Christ are silent—they are not. And those who help others to use the tongue, or spread that which others have written, are doing their part well. But I mean this—that man who says, “I believe in Jesus,” but does not think enough of Jesus to ever tell another about Him, by mouth, or pen, or tract is an impostor! You are either doing good, or you are not yourself good. If you know Christ, you are as one who has found honey and you will call others to taste it. You are like the lepers who found the food which the Syrians had cast away—and you will go into Samaria and tell the hungry crowd that you have found Jesus—and are anxious that they should find Him too! Be wise in your generation and speak of Him in fitting ways and at fitting times—and so in every place proclaim the fact that Jesus is most precious to your soul!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 PETER 2.**

Verse 1. *Therefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speaking.* This is what we are to lay aside, to put away from us, to banish altogether. These are the old garments of the flesh which we are to give up to the moths that they may devour them and leave not a fragment of the old rags for us to wear. “Laying aside all malice.” Has anybody injured you? Are you angry with him because of what he has done to you? Freely forgive the injury and wholly forget it. “And all guile.” That is everything that is of the nature of craftiness and deception. Be honest, simple, straightforward, transparent—this is a trait of character which well becomes all Christians. “And hypocrisies” of all sorts. Let us not profess to be what we are not, nor pretend to know what we do not know, or talk of experiences which we have never felt. In fact, let us never be hypocrites in any respect whatever. The God of Truth loves His children to be the embodiments of truth. Hypocrisy He hates with a perfect hatred. “And envies.” We must lay them all aside—all envies of men because they are richer, or more gifted, or more highly esteemed than we are. Let us not envy anybody, for envy eats a man's own heart out and slays him, as

Eliphaz said to Job, “Envy slays the silly one.” “And all evil speaking.” We are not to be the repeaters of stories to the discredit of others, or to make up or to exaggerate any evil reports concerning anything in their lives. Let us have nothing to do with “evil speaking” of any kind. Lay all these rags aside. Is any one of them still clinging to you? Let it be laid aside this very hour!

2. *As newborn babies, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby.* The unadulterated “milk of the Word” is the best food for those who are, spiritually, “newborn babies.” Desire this unadulterated milk of the Word not out of an idle curiosity—but that you may grow thereby, that you may grow wiser, holier, more earnest, more like your Savior—that you may grow up into the likeness of Him whose you are, and whom you serve.

3. *If you have so tasted that the Lord is gracious.* [See Sermons #459, Volume 8—A SERMON FOR MEN OF TASTE and #2168, Volume 36—THE TEST OF TASTE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] If you have spiritually tasted this great Truth of God, you have the flavor of it upon your palate so that it makes you long for more of it.

4. *To whom coming.* [See Sermon #1334, Volume 23—COMING—ALWAYS COMING—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] That is, unto the Lord. And that name Peter evidently gives to Jesus Christ and, therefore, we worship Him and call Him, each one for himself or herself, even as Thomas did, “My Lord and my God.” “To whom coming.”

5. *As unto a living stone, disallowed instead of men, but chosen of God, and precious.* “Chosen of God.” The whole spiritual building is the result of the election, the choice of God. Jesus Christ, the great Foundation and the chief Cornerstone, is chosen of God—and all the living stones that are built upon Him are also chosen of God. The whole fabric is like the foundation upon which it is laid—“Chosen of God, and precious”—precious to God and precious to us!

5. *You also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.* We hear of certain persons being “ordained” first deacons and then priests, but all who are truly in Christ—whether they are men, or women, or children—are priests. We are “a holy priesthood” if we are in Christ. [See Sermon #1376, Volume 23—THE TRUE PRIESTHOOD, TEMPLE AND SACRIFICE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] All the sacrifices that can now be offered are spiritual sacrifices which are to be offered, not by a few special persons set apart for that work, but by the whole company of God’s chosen people—and so they are “acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”

6. *Therefore also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious: and he that believes on Him shall not be confounded.* [See Sermon #1429, Volume 24—FAITH’S SURE FOUNDATION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Those who believe on Him are built upon Him. They rest upon Him, they are cemented to Him and, being living stones, they grow into Him and He grows into them—they participate in His life and so the living Temple becomes one—the chosen

men and women who are the spiritual Temple in which God dwells upon earth. We need not wonder if, like the chief Cornerstone, we are disallowed of men, but we may rejoice that, like our Lord and Savior, we are “chosen of God, and precious.”

7. *Unto you therefore who believe, He is precious.* He is preciousness, He is an honor, He is everything that is glorious to you. You can never think highly enough of Him, or speak well enough concerning Him. All the world beside may disallow Him, but unto you He is precious!

7, 8. *But unto those who are disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to those who stumble at the Word, being disobedient whereunto also they were appointed.* The ungodly reject Him and regard Him as of no account, but God has made Him “the head of the corner.” And He has done more than that, He has made Him “a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense” to them, “even to those who stumble at the Word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.” That is a terrible Truth upon which I am not going to speak just now, but I want you especially to note what an awful thing it is for men to “stumble at the Word”—to hang themselves upon Christ’s Cross—to turn the heavenly medicine into poison—to make Christ, Himself, who is to others, “the Savior of life unto life,” to be to them, “the Savior of death unto death.” “Being disobedient.” The fault lies with themselves, they willfully disobey the command to believe on Christ. “Whereunto also they were appointed.” So the Divine Purpose is accomplished, although the guilt and punishment of their disobedience rest upon themselves alone.

9. *But you are a chosen generation.* There is the contrast between the disobedient and all true Believers. “You” have the chosen Savior to be the chief Cornerstone upon whom “you” who are living stones are to be built up into “a spiritual house,” which is to be the abiding place of the Most High God.

9. *A royal priesthood.* “You” are to be like Melchisedec, in whom the two offices of priest and king were combined in one person. More than that, “you” are to be like your Lord in respect to His royal priesthood. That He should have “loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God and His Father,” seems to be an honor which is far too high for us. It appears to bring us almost too near our Lord, yet it is not so, for Peter wrote under Divine Inspiration, “You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood.”

9. *An holy nation, a peculiar people, that you should show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.* God’s Grace has been bestowed upon you in order that you may show forth His praises. Or, as the marginal reading puts it, His “virtues.” Note what the Lord has done for you—He has called you “out of darkness” into light, into His light, “into His marvelous light.” There are three thoughts there that are beautifully blended into one. What marvelous light that is into which God calls us! Try to measure it by the darkness in which you were! Try to measure it by the deeper darkness

into which you were going! Try to measure it by the eternal darkness which would have fallen upon you if you had died in the dark. God has graciously brought you into His marvelous light! [See Sermon #2765, Volume 48—MARVELOUS LIGHT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

10. *Who in times past were not a people, but are now the people of God: who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.* How the Apostle delights to set forth these contrasts between the past and the present of the Lord's chosen people! By remembering what we were, we are made to appreciate and enjoy more what we now are. We may well praise Him who has worked this wondrous change in us. We were not His people, we were sinners of the Gentiles, not the chosen Hebrew race. In times past, we were not worthy to be called a people, but we are now the people of God. We had not obtained mercy, we had not even asked for it—some of us were so blinded by our self-righteousness that we did not know that we needed God's mercy, or did not want it! But now we have obtained mercy.

11. *Dearly Beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.* Fleshly lusts always hurt the soul. They do serious injury to the body, for they are contrary to the laws of health. But the main point for you to consider is that they “war against the soul.” No men or women can ever commit an act of uncleanness of the body without grievously injuring the soul. It leaves a weakness, a defilement, a wound, a scar upon the soul—so may God graciously keep us from it altogether!

12. *Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that whereas they speak against you as evildoers.* This they are sure to do and the more holy your life is, the more they will probably speak against you. Even if you could live like an angel, some would call you a devil! But you are not to be judged by men's judgment, thank God for that, and so live, “that whereas they speak against you as evildoers.”

12, 13. *They may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. Submit yourselves to every ordinances of man for the Lord's sake.* We are to obey kings, and governors, and magistrates, even when they may not be all that we wish them to be—“Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake.”

13-15. *Whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by Him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.* Ignorance, you see, is a noisy thing. An empty drum makes a loud noise when it is beaten. And empty men, like empty vessels, often make the most sound. How, then, are we to silence this noisy ignorance? By argument? No, for it is not amenable to argument. Ignorance is to be silenced “by well doing.” Holy living is the best reply to infidel talking!

16. *As free.* For there are no others under Heaven so free as God's servants are! “As free”—

16. *And not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.* Not talking about liberty in order to stab at order. Not prating about liberty with the design of enriching yourself by robbing someone else. That is not God's will, but "using your liberty...as the servants of God" should use it.

17. *Honor all men.* Whoever they may be, be courteous, respectful, kind to all men because they are men. Whatever their circumstances, they are men. Therefore "honor all men."

17-19. *Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king. Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endures grief, suffering wrongfully.* Not always "sticking up for his rights," as an ungodly man says, but feeling that the greatest right in the world is the right to do without your rights! To suffer wrongfully will often glorify God much better than to stand up for what you have a right to be or to have.

20. *For what glory is it, if, when you are buffeted for your faults, you shall take it patiently? But if, when you do well, and suffer for it, you take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.* It may be hard to bear, but in that very hardness lies much of the fragrance of it towards God. As spices must be bruised, so must you be pressed and crushed to bring out your sweetness. If you want to be where there is nothing to suffer and no wrong to be endured, you are in the wrong world for that as yet—that will be in the world to come!

21. *For even hereunto were you called.* Called to do right and to suffer for it! Ah me, what a call is that!

21-23. *Because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps; who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; and when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judges righteously: who in His own Self bore our sins* [See Sermons #2790, Volume 48—OUR LORD'S SUBSTITUTION, #2887, Volume 50—A DIRE DISEASE STRANGELY CURED and #1143, Volume 19—DEATH FOR SIN AND DEATH TO SIN—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] *in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes you were healed. For you were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.*

—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.**

THREE PRECIOUS THINGS

NO. 931

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 8, 1870,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“He is precious.”
1 Peter 2:7.

“Precious promises.”
2 Peter 1:4.

“Precious faith.”
2 Peter 1:1.

THESE three precious things, when put together, present to us a treasure of priceless things, altogether without parallel. When Moses was about to die he pronounced a blessing upon all the tribes, but the benediction which he allotted to the tribe of Joseph was remarkable for containing in it an extraordinary collection of precious things.

In the thirteenth verse of the thirty-third chapter of Deuteronomy, we read, “And of Joseph he said, Blessed of the Lord be his land, for the precious things of Heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that couches beneath, and for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moon, and for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills, and for the precious things of the earth and fullness thereof, and for the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush.”

That blessing, large as it is, would, were it not for its last term, fall far short of the three texts which we are about to consider. The blessings here called by Moses “precious,” were, after all, but temporal mercies. The dews exhale—even the deep that lies under will one day be dried up. The precious fruits brought forth by the sun will wither. The precious fruit ripened by the moon will rot. There are no chief metals in the ancient mountains, whether they are silver or gold, that are eternal, or that can make a spiritual being rich. There are no precious things of the lasting hills, though they are copper and iron.

And these things are precious in the arts and sciences and employments of men, but will perish in the using. As for the precious things of the earth, are they not earthy? And the fullness thereof, is it not vanity? Were it not that the blessing of the great Lawgiver closed with “the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush,” it would not have contained a word large enough to satisfy an immortal spirit, or give bliss to the heart of man.

Before you, however, my Brethren, I spread a far choicer store of precious things than Moses strung together in the golden chain of his benediction. We have here three precious things which will outlast sun and moon. Precious things which are all heavenly, spiritual, soul-filling, and

satisfactory. Precious things which, if a man has them, they shall make him rich and bring him no sorrow. Precious things that shall adorn and enrich their owners when all the peculiar treasure of kings shall be dissolved by the last fire.

The three precious things of my text bear a certain relation to one another, which will aid your memories. "He is precious," that is, Jesus Christ is precious—here is the priceless gem. "Exceeding great and precious promises"—here is the worthy case which holds the gem. "Like precious faith," as Paul calls it, "like precious faith" with the Apostles—here is the blessed hand by which we grasp the case and the gem, too. Mark well, I pray you, the precious pearl, the precious case to hold it, and the precious title-deed that secures it to us, or as I said before, the precious hand which enables us to grasp the unrivalled jewel, and to call it all our own.

I. To begin then with THE PRICELESS GEM, the first, the highest of all precious things. Jesus Christ our Lord is in Himself to Believers most precious. O that I had power to speak of His preciousness as it ought to be spoken of! He is worthy of an angelic speaker to tell out all His worth. He is, first of all, essentially precious. He possesses an intrinsic worth. We worship Him as God. We believe Him to be "very God of very God," and though most assuredly Man, and in this respect, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, He is our Brother born for adversities, yet is He co-equal and co-eternal with the Father.

And therefore we can never too reverentially speak of Him, nor set too high a value upon Him. He must be precious who is infinite God. Being, however, God and Man, He becomes remarkably precious to us in His complex Nature. His Manhood was without taint of sin. He came into this world with no corruption. He lived in this world with no transgression. His was immaculate Manhood. What a wonder that God should be willing to veil Himself in human flesh!

What a miracle of miracles that the Infinite should deign to take upon Himself the form of a servant, and be found in fashion as a Man! Viewing our Lord Jesus as God, we should have adored Him at a distance—as perfect Man we should have revered His Character—but when we see Him as God *and* Man together, we mark that He is the connecting link between our groveling condition and the loftiness of the Most High. And we prize beyond measure the Incarnate God. When we see how by God's coming down to man, man goes up to God, Immanuel, God with us becomes our peace, and brings us near to God, though before we were afar off.

Brethren, if we consider our Lord in the Character which is peculiar to Himself, and which He prizes most, and to which, indeed, He owes the name Jesus Christ, we shall see Him as the anointed Savior. To every sinner who feels his sin, Christ is precious. To every child of God who is saved, the Savior must forever be fairest among the fair. To every heir of Heaven who has experienced the sweetness of His saving Grace, Christ must appear to be "the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely." A world destroyed I see if it had not been for a Savior born. A world forever cast into Hell I see if it had not been for a Savior dying on

the Cross. As a Savior, O earth, you as yet know not His preciousness. As a Savior, O Heaven, you cannot reach the full merit of His praise. He is precious, then, if you think of Him as He is, as God and Man, and as a Savior, in which office the two Natures are combined in one.

Brethren, Christ is so precious that He cannot be bought. If a man should give all the substance of his house to purchase an interest in Christ, it would be utterly condemned. Rich men might gather together all their goodly things, yes, India might be exhausted of its wealth, Peru drained of its silver, and California of its gold—but no part nor lot in Christ could be bought—even with sapphires and diamonds. He gives Himself away right freely, according to the riches of His Grace! But He cannot be purchased, for He is so precious that He cannot even be *priced*.

A whole world can never weigh against Him any more than a single grain of dust would weigh against the universe. There is no measuring line with which to form a unit for calculation, with which to measure Him. He is infinite, and finite judgments will never be able to comprehend His unutterable value. He is God's unspeakable gift. Heaven itself is nothing as compared with Him, and if a man had to wade breast-deep through a thousand Hells to come to Christ, it were well worth the venture, if at the last he might but say, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His."

Jesus is so precious that He cannot be matched. There is none like He is. The fairest of the fair are uncomely and deformed when compared with Him. As Rutherford would say, "Black sun, black moon, black stars, but, O bright, infinitely bright Lord Jesus." "He is the express image of His Father's Person, and the brightness of His Father's Glory." You shall find none that can be likened unto Him if you ransack time and space. Miss Him as your Savior, and you have lost the only salvation possible. Gain Him, and you will want no other, for He is made of God unto you "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption," and all your souls can want.

Yes, He Himself is all. If Heaven and earth were sold, you could not match Christ in any market if you gave the price of Heaven and earth for His like. If you search eternity, and ransack immensity, there shall never be found one fit to be second to Him, He is so precious. Precious, Brethren, He is to us, because He cannot be lost. All the precious things in this world can be lost. Our jewels may be stolen, our house may be broken into by a thief, and the safe may be taken away. But Christ is such a jewel that even Satan himself can never rob the soul of him when once it has Him.

My heart evermore rejoices in that precious Truth of God. Let Jesus Christ be once mine as the gift of God—I am safe, for—"the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." The Lord never repents of what He has done. He never plays fast and loose, or takes back a benefit which He has once bestowed. Is not Jesus a priceless, precious jewel, since He cannot be lost?!

And what is equally as delightful to remember, He cannot be destroyed. Even the diamond can be dissolved, bring but sufficient heat to bear upon it. Focus upon it the full rays of the sun, and the sparkling crystal dissolves into a little gas. But though men have tried to focus all the heat of

persecution upon the Christian, they have never been able to separate him from the love of Christ. And though earth and Hell have stirred up their malice, and the furnace has been heated seven times hotter. Though the child of God has been tossed into it, and apparently deserted to the fury of his enemies—yet never in a single case has the precious gem of Christ Jesus in the heart been destroyed—nor the Believer's interest in it.

Jesus and His servants have lived together, according to the glorious promise, "Because I live, you shall live also." See the preciousness, then, of Christ, the intrinsic preciousness, the essential preciousness of Christ, because He cannot be bought, He cannot be priced, He cannot be matched, He cannot be lost, He cannot be destroyed. Happy and rich beyond expression are they who can truly say, "Unto us Christ is precious."

This, however, does but touch a very small corner of the field, for our Lord is precious from the service which He renders to us. Who shall tell all the benefit which Jesus confers on a Believer? As we cannot comprehend so wide a subject in a single discourse, I will give you but a bare outline. There are four precious things which Jesus is to a Believer—life, light, love, liberty. I will defy all mankind to find four more precious things than these—but they are all in Christ.

First, life. "In him was life, and the life was the light of men." "As the Father raises up the dead, and quickens them, even so the Son quickens whom He will." What a precious thing is life! The poor mariner's wife rushes down to the beach in the storm, and see, the waves at last have washed up her lost beloved, the father of the babe which is hanging at her breast. He is dead. The ungenerous sea has made a wife a widow. Oh, what would she not give, if she had it, to restore life once more to that well-beloved form!

But life is a benefit her prayers and tears cannot obtain. Herein is Jesus glorified, for He gives life to those who are spiritually dead, and if any of you are weeping today over an unconverted husband, a child who is dead in trespasses and sins, a sister or a brother unsaved, Jesus can come to you and give life to your dear ones in answer to your prayers. He is Himself the Resurrection and the Life. Moreover, He is the sole nutriment of all spiritual life.

Yonder shipwrecked man has constructed a raft, and far out on the wild expanse of pitiless waters he has floated wearily day after day sighing for a friendly sail or for sight of land. What would he not give for a little water, for water has become the essential of his life. His tongue is like a firebrand, and his mouth is as an oven. He himself all dried and parched, sighs and cries to Heaven, hoping that perhaps a merciful shower may drop refreshment upon him.

Now, Jesus Christ is the Water of Life and the Bread of Life to such as live unto God. It is absolutely necessary for the continuance of their spiritual life that they should live upon Him. And as they do live upon Him, their thirst is quenched, their hunger is removed, and their spirit rejoices with a "joy unspeakable and full of glory." Life and the food that sustains life are among the most precious things man can possess, and these are

for your souls stored up in Jesus, "For the bread of God is He which comes down from Heaven, and gives life unto the world."

Next to life in preciousness is light. What would not they have given in Egypt during those three days when the thick darkness was over all the land, even darkness that might be felt, if they could but have had light back again? It must have been a sad plight for Paul, and for his fellows at sea, when, for three days and nights neither sun, nor moon, nor stars appeared. They could not tell whether there might not be a rock ahead, or a quicksand upon which the vessel would be broken. Oh, for light! How glad they must have been, at last when the black tempest passed away, and once again they could look round on the horizon and know their whereabouts.

Light! Oh, how precious would it be to you, if you were confined in one of those prisons which we have seen at Venice below the water's level—deep down, with winding passages, where even a refracted ray of light could never reach the prisoner—where he sat alone and felt for the wall, but could see nothing. "Truly" as Solomon says, "the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun." Now, the soul has no light, no true light, no heavenly light but what Jesus brings. When a spirit is once made to feel its guilt, it is shut up in prison until Christ brings it light in the darkness of its dismay.

There is no hope to a convicted spirit till Jesus shows His atoning blood. There is no clear knowledge of the way of salvation till Christ brings the Light of the knowledge of the Glory of God in His own face. You who love Him know what brightness He has given to you—what light has irradiated your once dark spirit since you have known Him, and how your heart has laughed for very joy because He has turned again your captivity, and given you to rejoice in the light of His countenance. Yes, He is precious because He raises us from the dead and gives us light.

I said that another precious thing which Jesus brings is love. There are hard hearts that think nothing of love—but methinks those who are as they should be, count love to be the dearest of treasures. I had infinitely rather be beloved of my fellow men than own a pyramid of treasure! He is a rich man who has a tender wife and dear affectionate children—and is surrounded by a select circle of true and faithful friends. Men die full often for want of love. It is wretched work to isolate ourselves and float like icebergs all alone, melting amid a desolate sea. A man will love a dog, or a bird sooner than be loveless. Captives have been known to fall in love with rats, and even spiders on the wall have been the objects of their affection—a little flower that could not speak, has been the prisoner's well-beloved friend.

We must have something to love. Oh, and what wealth of love Jesus brings into the heart when He enters it! You feel, then, that you have One to love whom you can love as much as ever you will, and yet it will not be idolatry. You have One to love who never can betray you, One whom you may trust, and yet never be unwise for having told to Him the secrets of your soul. You have in Jesus Christ One whom you may admire as you love, who will still be above you though you seek to rise to Him, and yet

not proudly above you, for He will stoop down to all your lowliness and be as your own brother and your own friend. Oh, the joy of having Christ to go to!

All other friends will sometimes be unfriendly, and the best of them must part with you at your decease, or you with them when they depart out of this world unto the Father. But your Lord will never, never leave you. He will abide with you, and death shall only draw Him nearer—for then you shall see His face, and His name shall be in your forehead. And you shall be with Him where He is, to behold His Glory forever and ever. If you want love, you large-hearted ones, Christ is just the gem for such a case as your heart is! If you want a channel adown which the mighty streams of your pent-up affections may safely rush with vehemence in impetuous torrents, Christ shall be the fittest riverbed for your soul, and you shall find it joy and blessedness to love Him with all your might!

But I added that there was a fourth preciousness in Christ—giving life, light, love—He gave also liberty. Oh, that magic word *liberty*! It makes men start to their feet. It is the word that made William Tell a hero, and the Bruce of Bannockburn more than a king. The thought of liberty makes men count jeopardy of life a small hazard if their country may be rid of a tyrant. May God be praised that great strides have been made and grand advances within these last few years, until even once priest-burdened Spain bears across her Sierras the trumpet notes of liberty, and her sons are free!

The highest liberty is that which emancipates the soul from sin. The grandest liberty is that which sets free the heart from fear, which leaves the soul without a dread, and enables the spirit to walk even in God's Presence without alarm—the liberty which delivers us from the felon's dread, and bids us demand who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect. It is God that justifies, who is he that condemns, since Christ has died and risen again? What room is there for fear for the man who has been set free by the precious blood of Jesus? The liberty of the children of God—the liberty to pray, the liberty to talk with God as a man talks with his friend, the liberty to grasp the promises—the liberty to lay hold of God Himself, and say that the Divine attributes are all our own. This is what Christ has given us, and is He not therefore precious, most precious?

One word more before we leave our meditation on the precious gem. We have said that Christ is precious for His intrinsic work, precious for the service He renders. And we must now add, He is assuredly precious, actually so, from the place which He holds and ever must hold in Believers' hearts. Go and stand at St. Bartholomew's Hospital at Smithfield and you will see in the wall the tablet which is erected to the memory of heroic men whose ashes there testified years ago that they loved Christ better than property, better than children, better than life itself, and accounted it their joy to die that they might hold unsullied their testimony to the Divinity, to the Sovereignty, to the Truthfulness, to the Salvation of Jesus Christ!

Ah, there were brave days in those black periods! Brave days when great hearts proclaimed by dying how dear Christ was to them. When a

certain martyr was led out to die, they made his wife kneel down by the way. With a long line of his own dear children, eleven of them, like a descending set of steps, they were compelled, by his enemies, to pray their father and husband, by the love he bare to them not to die. He looked on them with tears, and said, "I love you as a man, and God knows I would do anything to live, and succor you, and enjoy your sweet society, my Dear Ones. But I cannot give up Christ," and he turned away to die.

It is so still, my Brethren, for if we are not called to die for Christ, yet I hope we could if we were called to do so. For at this moment nothing thrills us like Christ's name, nothing makes us so happy as to see His cause prosper. I have often asked, when I have looked upon you before me by the thousands year after year, and know that my speech has nothing in it remarkable, why it is that you gather so continually? Many others have asked the secret why this house is always thronged. The true answer is that I preach Jesus Christ to you, and it is written, "I, if I am lifted up, will draw all men unto Me."

I have no other theme, and I thank God I want no other. It is not worn out, and never will be. Though I should stand here by the space of the next six thousand years, I believe the house would still be filled if the testimony were the same. Despite London's sin, nothing strikes London's heart like the name of Jesus Christ. You may preach what you will of your learning and your philosophy. And you may talk pretty things concerning God out of Christ, but you will never stir the souls of men as the preaching of the Son of God has done and will do. "In the Cross of Christ I glory, towering over the wrecks of time," and as long as we can make it still prominent in our ministry, we are sure that an enthusiastic response will be given in regenerate hearts, for unto those who believe He is precious still. So I must leave that point. There is the gem—happy are they that see it, happier they that have it.

II. The second head is "PRECIOUS PROMISES," or, THE CASE IN WHICH THE JEWEL IS CONTAINED. "Exceeding great and precious promises." All that the early saints had before Christ's coming was the promise of His appearing, and the mere promise of His coming was very precious to them. We are favored both with Christ and the promises, which are yes and amen in Him. They had the case, but it was locked up and they could not plainly perceive the jewel—we have the opened case and the jewel in all its glory.

The utmost wealth of Heaven now lies at our feet. The fullness of the Lord is ours. Why are the promises precious? For the same three reasons that Christ was precious. Precious for their intrinsic worth, for they are Divine, the sacred utterances of God Himself. These are not the Words of man, but of God. I would burn my Bible tomorrow if I thought so meanly of it as some do. For they doubt its Inspiration, or fritter down its Inspiration till it means little or nothing. To me every Word here written is the Infallible deliverance of the Most High God, not to be questioned but believed.

Not because of its reasonableness, but because it has the stamp of Divine authority. Every promise of this Sacred Book is God's own promise

spoken through His Prophets and Apostles, but yet spoken by Himself. The signet of Heaven seals every promise. You will never know the sweetness of a promise till it is God's promise to you. They are precious promises because they are Divine. If they were the poetic effusions of elevated genius, where great men of old spoke but their own minds in happy hopefulness, they would be to us but as brass and iron.

But inasmuch as these reveal to us the mind of God, they are more precious than all the treasures of the mine. No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls, for their price is above rubies. The least promise of God is too rich to be valued with the gold of Ophir, the precious onyx or the sapphire. Being Divine, the promises are innumerable. No promise of God ever changes. "Forever, O Lord, Your Word is settled in Heaven," "His Truth endures to all generations." Has He said, and shall He not do it? Has He commanded, and shall it not stand fast?

The Lord has not spoken in secret in the dark places of the earth, He has not said to the seed of Jacob, Seek you My face in vain. The Lord has never called back a promise yet, but He has said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My Word shall never pass away." His promises are precious because they tell of exceeding great and precious things. We have promises in the Bible which time would fail us to repeat, which for breadth and length are immeasurable. They deal with every great thing which the soul can want—promises of pardoned sin, promises of sanctification, of teaching, of guidance, of upholding, of ennobling, of progress, of consolation, of perfection.

In this blessed Book you have promises of the daily bread of earth, and of the Bread of Life from Heaven. Promises for time, promises for eternity—promises for yourselves, and promises for your children. All these are like the leaves of the tree, and Jesus is the goodly cluster. Or, if you will, the apple of gold hidden among the foliage of promise. You have so many promises that all the conditions and positions of the Believer are met. I sometimes liken the promises to the smith's great bunch of keys which he brings when you have lost the key of your chest, and cannot unlock it. He feels pretty sure that out of all the keys upon the ring someone or other will fit, and he tries them with patient industry.

At last—yes—that is it, he has loosed the bolt, and you can get at your treasures. There is always a promise in the volume of Inspiration suitable to your present case. Make the Lord's Testimonies your delight and your counselors, and they will befriend you at every turn. Search the Scriptures and you shall meet with a passage which will be so applicable to you as to appear even to have been written after your trouble had occurred! So exactly will it apply that you will be compelled to marvel at the wonderful tenderness and suitability of it. As if the armor maker had measured you from head to foot, so exactly shall the armor of the promise befit you!

The promises are precious in themselves, from their suitability to us, from their coming from God, from their being Immutable, from their being sure of performance, and from their containing wrapped up within themselves all that the children of God can ever need. The promises are precious, in the second place, because of their service to us. What will not

the promises do for us? They will comfort us in distress. Give a child of God a Divine promise, let him be able to appropriate it to himself, and you cannot make his house dark, or his heart dark!

A promise believed in is a sun in the soul, and a song in the heart, marrow to the bones, and rejoicing to the spirit. He that has the promises, has Heaven and earth as his heritage. He shall ride on the high places of the earth. He shall suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock. The eternal God is his refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. He shall dwell in safety alone, his fountain shall be upon a land of corn and wine—also his heavens shall drop down dew.

The promises of God not only comfort the Believer in adversity, but they strengthen him in service. Let the worker who is serving God, but desponds under a sense of personal weakness, receive such a cheering word as this, “Certainly I will be with you”—why, he flees from no labor, the promise makes him daring. “Fear you not, for I am with you; be not dismayed; for I am your God: I will strengthen you; yes, I will help you; yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness.” Who will be afraid after that? Difficulties vanish, impossibilities do not exist when the Lord is enlisted on our side.

The promises serve us in another admirable respect, for they elevate the soul. The man who has none of God’s promises to enrich him may accumulate gold and silver, but he is earth-bound with his possessions. His soul tries to content herself with corn, and wine, and oil. But these things are only satisfying to our animal nature. Too often men grovel and hoard all the more as they increase in wealth. But he who grasps a promise is uplifted—his mind rises to the Hand from which every good and perfect gift is poured—and walking by faith in the promise of an unseen God, he is elevated in judgment and in taste, and becomes a better and a nobler man.

The promises, let me say, while they elevate the life, greatly cheer and gild with glory the deathbed. Ah, how delightful it is to die with a promise on the lips, feeling it in the heart! It may be in a very lonely cottage, and the stars may come and look through the tiles. And the hangings of the bed may be very ragged. And all the surroundings may be poverty stricken—but he who can lie there and say, “I know that my Redeemer lives, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God”—he that can rejoice in the promise of the Resurrection, and of the life to come, dies grandly!

His bed is changed into a throne! His little room, despite its poverty, becomes a palace chamber, and the child of God, who seemed so poor before, is perceived to be a peer of Heaven’s own blood royal, who is soon about to take possession of his heritage, appointed from before the foundation of the world. Yes, the promises have been very precious to us in their influence upon our minds. And I am sure I can say they are precious because of their dearness to our souls at this very day. There are passages of Scripture which are carved on our hearts. You all possess some little

secret treasures of some kind or other at home, treasures which bring before your minds heart-moving memories.

I have seen a mother go to the secret drawer to look at a certain little pair of wool shoes—with these in her hands, she would sit down and weep for the hours together. Ah, there were little feet that wore those shoes once, and they are laid all stiff and motionless in the lap of earth. I have seen a certain friend look at a ring—a little plain gold ring which he wears on his finger—and as he looked at it he has wept. There was a dear hand once upon which that ring was fondly placed in happier days.

Yes, and just in that way some of the promises of God have been so rich to us, and so connected with family memories and with personal trials and personal mercies, that they are unutterably precious. A poor old Christian woman was accustomed to make marginal notes in her Bible, and she placed against one text a “T” and a “P.” The minister asked her what that meant, and she said, “It meant Tried and Proved, for I tried that promise on such-and-such an occasion, and found it true.” “But, my dear Sister,” said he, “I see up and down these pages, whenever there is a choice verse a great ‘P’ put against it. What does it mean? “That means *precious*, Sir, for I have found it precious, and have therefore set my seal to it.”

We, too, have our Bible spiritually, if not literally marked after the same fashion, and often does the letter “P” appear against “exceeding great and precious promises” of God which have been sweet in our experience. We hope to die with a promise on our lips, and enter into Heaven to enjoy their full fruition.

I have now shown you that the jewel is of the first water, without a flaw, with none to match it, and that the case is of superior workmanship, worthy of the gem it holds. We must now turn to the third thing.

III. Faith IS THE PRECIOUS HAND which grasps the case and holds the gem. As time has gone, I shall not enlarge upon this third head, but shall briefly observe that faith is a most precious Grace because it opens and reveals the treasure hid in the promises. Until a man has faith he does not see the value of the promises. “Tush,” says he, “the Bible is a dry book.” Till a man has the faith of God’s elect, he thinks very little of Christ. He may confess that he is a good example and a wise teacher, but, he does not say with Thomas, “My Lord and my God.”

Faith is to our souls what our eyes are to our bodies. Without eyes light would not be valued—without faith Christ is not dear. Without a mouth food would not nourish—faith is our mouth, and without faith Christ does not nourish us. A man might have a plank close to him when sinking but it would be of no service to him until he could lay hold of it—faith is the hand that lays hold, and thus it becomes precious. Faith first reveals to us what there is in Christ and in the Word, and then it appropriates the whole. A soldier might be in the midst of a city where there was much spoil, but if his hands were cut off, how could he take to himself the booty?

Faith puts out its hands, and says, “This is mine, and that is mine.” And what is more, faith carries *right* with it as well as *might*. Faith not

only says, "I will take it," but faith says, "I have a *right* to take it," for God has made over to faith by a covenant deed, Christ and all the Inspired promises, too. If you have faith, your faith is the guarantee that the gem and the case are both rightfully yours. A mere piece of parchment, whatever is written on it, cannot be of any very great value in itself. And yet there are persons who would give large sums of money to recover lost documents, because upon the possession of those documents rests their claim to great estates.

Now, faith in itself is like a title-deed, signed, and sealed, and ratified, and on the possession of faith hangs your evidence of right to Christ and to the Covenant of Grace. Therefore faith becomes a very precious Grace. It sees Christ. It grasps Christ. It claims Christ by right, and by faith it holds to what it claims. Faith says of the Well-Beloved, "I hold Him, and I will not let Him go." It gets such a grip of Christ, that neither life nor death can unhand it.

Faith is precious, let me say, because it is rare. Notional faith is common, but the faith of God's elect is the work of the Holy Spirit, and is not vouchsafed to all. They are favored men, indeed, who exercise real faith. But, alas, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, and few there are that find it." Wherever it is possessed, it is most enriching. True faith is like Midas, of whom it was fabled that his touch turned everything to gold. But faith has a safer joy than he, for his privilege became a punishment—for when he touched his meat it turned to gold, and he could not eat. And when he put the cup to his lips, the fable says the wine itself turned into gold, and so he must needs die.

But faith has the power to enrich us, and add no sorrow. Faith touches trials and they become mercies. Faith touches affliction and she glories in them. Faith touches losses and they turn to gains. There is nothing that faith deals with but what is transmuted into good. Who would not wish to have this precious faith? Best of all, wherever faith is, it saves the soul. There never was a soul that believed in Christ Jesus—that rested on the merit of His precious blood—that was, or could be, cast into Hell. Sooner might the eternal pillars of Divine Truth begin to quiver, and the Throne of the Infinite Sovereignty be shaken from its place, than that Believers in Jesus be cast away. Has he not said it—"I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand"? Do you believe in Christ? Then you are saved.

I have spoken so far of these three precious things. Just these few words by way of closing. Precious as these things are, they are yours, Christian. You have the precious faith. Then the precious promises are all yours, and our precious Christ is yours. How do you mean to live? With these precious things about you, do you intend to live like a beggar? I mean will you be sinful, low, groveling, worldly? Oh, rise to your rank, and as you are so ennobled, walk as becomes saints! Is Jesus Christ precious to you? Then serve Him with your best, give Him *your* precious things, give Him your lives, give Him your substance, give Him all that you have—do not give the Redeemer your odds and ends, such as you can afford to

give without knowing it. Say, “He died to give me Himself. I will give Him myself in return—

***‘And if I might make some reserve,
And duty did not call,
I love my God with zeal so great,
That I must give Him all.’ ”***

Go and live like those who are rich to all the intents of bliss, and let your cheerful, your godly, your self-denying example be a protest to the unbelieving sons of men that you know the preciousness of Christ. Alas, for you who are unconverted. What shall I say to you? I am afraid I may preach up Christ a long time before you will believe me. It needs that the arm of God be revealed, before you will see these mysteries. The most of men remind us of the old story in Strabo, of the musician who thought himself very wonderfully gifted with power to create melody.

Before his audience he was pouring forth his notes, and as he thought—holding them all spell bound. But just then the market bell, with its vile tinkle was heard, and all his admirers except one person left him—for they could not afford to lose the chance of the market. The musician turned to his solitary listener, and complimented him upon having a soul above mere merchandise, and an ear which could appreciate music, so that he was not drawn away by the tinkling of a market bell. “Master,” said the man, “I am hard of hearing, did you say the market bell had rung?” “Yes.” “Then I must be off, or I shall be too late.” And away went the last man, unrestrained by the bonds of harmony.

So when we preach up Jesus Christ, there will be some who will listen to us, and we perhaps think, “Now we shall surely win them,” but ah, tomorrow’s market bell—I will not say market bell—tomorrow’s bell of sin, and bell of iniquity! The bell that rings to frivolities, and rings to transgressions—they will go after that. Anything that pleases the flesh will secure them. It may be there is one who has heard with unusual attention, and we begin to say, “This man has a nobler spirit.” But then, perhaps, he has not yet felt the force of temptation, and when he feels it he will go, too.

What urgent need there is for the Spirit of God to illuminate the dark judgments of the sons of men. May He do so. May He begin with you, dear Hearer, if up to now you have been blind. May He give you faith, and the promises, and Christ Jesus. It is my heart’s deepest wish. The Lord grant it to you all, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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JESUS, THE STUMBLING STONE OF UNBELIEVERS

NO. 1224

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

“Unto you therefore which believe He is precious: but unto them which are disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient.”
1 Peter 2:7, 8.

So it always is where Jesus comes—He divides the company into Believers and unbelievers—the obedient and the disobedient. But why are unbelievers, here, called disobedient? Is faith a matter of law and because a man does not believe, does he therefore disobey? How can it be otherwise? Is it not a natural duty for every man to believe that which is true? Let the very least among us judge in so simple a matter! It so happens that in the very form and sound of the words in the original tongue, to believe and to obey are much the same and, certainly, to disbelieve and to disobey are things of very near relationship. To disbelieve is in its very essence disobeying, for he who disbelieves the Word of the King is disloyal at heart.

If I doubt the veracity of God I have assailed His authority and if, when He sets forth His Son to be a Propitiation for sin, I refuse to accept Him, disobedience is included in that rejection. As it were difficult to tell by which form of sin our father, Adam, fell, for all sins were wrapped up in the taking of the forbidden fruit, so unbelief contains within itself the eggs of all sins possible to men. Moreover, unbelief of God’s Word is the root of all other sin. A man who does not believe his God is a man who casts off the Law of God. He has already rejected God’s Gospel—why should he respect the Law?

If the silken cords of love are broken asunder, how much less is the man likely to bear the bonds of law? Now, inasmuch as it is painfully certain that a very large proportion of these who hear the Gospel are unbelieving and disobedient, it becomes important to consider, What is the result of this disobedience? This disobedience leads them into violent opposition. What effect does their opposition produce? The text tells us *the result of human opposition upon Christ Himself*, and, secondly *upon the persons who offer it*.

I. Let us consider, in the first place, then, THE RESULT OF THE UNBELIEF AND THE OPPOSITION OF MEN AGAINST THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. We are told that, as far as He is concerned, “the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner”—in one word, it has not affected Him at all! The opposition of mankind has, by no means, and in no degree, lessened the Glory which God has put upon His

dear Son. The builders rejected the stone with disdain—"It shall not be built," they said, "in the temple of our hope."

But, God has said, "It shall be the top stone," and the top stone it is, and shall be, despite all the opposition of earth or Hell. The rage of puny man shall no more defeat the Lord than the anger of a gnat can affect the sun! Human opposition shall no more thwart the Divine will than a sere leaf cast into Niagara can block the water flow. He that stumbles upon this stone shall be broken, but the stone itself will not be injured. Observe how the Lord Jesus has been rejected of man and yet His cause has stood against all opposition.

First came *the Jew*. He had the pride of race to maintain. Were not the Jews the chosen people of God? Was not Israel set apart by the Most High? Jesus comes preaching the Gospel to every creature. He sends His disciples even to the Gentiles and, therefore, the Jews will not have Him. They have been looking for a temporal prince. Jesus does not come with the magnificence they expected—He is a root out of a dry ground, without form or comeliness—they see nothing of Solomon's splendor in the poor scion of the dried-up stock of David. Therefore, "Away with Him! Let Him be crucified!"

But the opposition of His countrymen did not defeat the cause of Christ. If rejected in Palestine, His Word was received in Greece. It triumphed in Rome, it passed onward to Spain, it found a dwelling place in Britain and at this day it lights up the face of the earth! The persecution of the Apostles at Jerusalem hastened the spread of the Gospel, for they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word, so that Jewish enmity was overruled for good and the foolish builders were made subservient to the uplifting of the rejected headstone!

Next arose *the philosopher* to be the Gospel's foe. Different schools of thought held sway over the more cultivated minds of the period and no sooner did Paul begin to preach where these philosophies were known than they called him a babbler. They heard what he had to say and condemned him as a fool. This resurrection from the dead, this doctrine of an Incarnate God who suffered for human sin—it was too simple for them, too plain to fit in with their subtle philosophies. But though philosophy made terrible inroads, for a while, on the Church of God in the form of the Gnostic heresy, did it really impede the chariot wheels of Christ? Did it conquer the faith?

Oh no, my Brethren, for at this day where are these philosophies? Who now believes in the Stoics? Who would care to be called an Epicurean? These philosophies have passed away—the stone cut out of the mountain without hands has broken them in pieces! The stone from the sling of Christ has struck the heathen philosophy in the forehead. We see its corpse lying headless in many an ancient book, while the Son of David goes forth conquering and to conquer. After those days there came against the Church of God the determined opposition of *the secular power*. The imperial authorities saw danger in Christianity. These peasants and boors and mechanics set up a new religion, a religion which spoke of another king, one Jesus.

They met together on the first day of the week and sang hymns in His honor as to God. Moreover, they refused to keep the holy days of the gods, nor would they worship the images of the emperors, either departed or living. Everybody else paid homage to these imperial demons except these Christian people, so the secular power said, "We will put them down. Let them be dragged before the judgement seat. Let them be imprisoned, let them be stripped of their goods and if that does not drive them out of this new doctrine, let us try the rack and such like tortures—and if that does not end them let them die! Why cannot men worship the gods of their fathers?"

Thus they tried to stamp out the faith of Jesus, crowding their prisons, flooding their theatres with blood and wearying the executioners. All that cruelty could do was done! But, my Brothers and Sisters, what was the result? The more the Christians were oppressed, the more they multiplied! The scattering of the coals increased the conflagration. The tribunals of judgement became pulpits from which Christianity was preached and men who stood burning at the stake commanded mighty audiences, among which they proclaimed Jesus Christ as king! The martyr's courage made men enquire, "Is there not something here, the like of which we have never seen before?" And it was not long before imperial legions bowed before the Cross of Christ and the Galilean had won the day.

Since that period the Church has been attacked in various modes. The Arian *heresy* assaulted the Deity of Christ, but the Church of God delivered herself from the accursed thing, as Paul shook the viper into the fire. Then came popery, the antichrist, and counterfeit of His Sacrifice. Now they set up the cross of ivory, hung round with gems, to mimic the King of kings on His Cross of shame. They thrust before us the crucifix of man's making instead of Jesus, Himself, upon the tree. Now we are asked to worship saints and relics and images, and I know not what else, and a *man* is lifted into the throne of the Infallible God!

Some timid minds fear that Jesus Christ, as a stone rejected, will be cast out of sight, while high over all, the "Vicar of Christ at Rome" shall be made the head of the corner, but the Lord will not allow it. Brethren, have faith in God and think not so! The differing modes of Popery, Roman and Anglican, shall pass away as all things else have done that withstood the Cross and cause of Jesus Christ! Even as a moment's foam dissolves into the wave that bears it and is gone forever, so shall all these disappear! Jesus Christ's holy Gospel and Himself, the Savior, shall yet be set on high as a rock defying the billows!

What a day that was when Luther's rough protest broke the silence of the dark ages! When the clear teaching of Calvin followed and the bold notes of Zwingle were heard and a thousand voices shouted in chorus! What a day was that when the nations awoke from their long sleep to lie no longer under priestly domination, resolute to be free! Cannot God, who sent one Reformation, send another? Be of good courage, for brighter days are on the way! There shall come yet greater awakenings! The Lord, the avenger of His Church, shall yet arise and the stone which the builders disallowed, the same shall be the head stone of the corner!

By prophetic vision I see gathering another opposition which will be as difficult to cope with as any that has gone before. I see mustering within the ranks of the Church of God men who say they hate all creeds, meaning that they despise all Truth. They are they who would gladly be ministers among us and yet tread under foot all that we hold sacred, not teaching, at first, the fullness of their infidelity, but little by little gathering courage to vent their unbelief and heresies! Credophobia is maddening many! They appear to fear lest they should believe *anything* and to hope that there is something good to be found in atheism, or devil worship—indeed, in all religions except the only true one.

We lift our earnest protest, but if it should be lost amidst the general popular clamor, and if the nations should be drunk, again, with the wine of this fornication and turn aside to error, what matters it to the ultimate success of the eternal cause? Yet has Jehovah set His king upon His holy hill of Zion and yet shall the ancient decree be fulfilled! The Throne of Christ shall stand and the Covenant sealed with blood shall be sure to all the chosen seed! Let us have comfort, for despite all that can be done by men or devils, not one elect soul shall be lost, not one soul redeemed by blood shall be snatched out of the Redeemer's hand!

Christ shall not lose so much as a grain of glory neither in earth nor in Heaven. His people's earnest contention for the faith shall honor Him. Their patient suffering shall give Him praise—Heaven shall be the sweeter rest to them and the brighter place of Glory to them when He shall return with them from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, travailing in the greatness of His strength, having trod the winepress and overcome His foes. Then shall His rest be glorious and His joy complete! Thus much, then, upon the effect of human opposition. "The stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner."

II. A far more painful subject must now occupy our attention, namely, THE CONSEQUENCE OF THIS OPPOSITION TO THE OPPOSERS. Let us dwell with great solemnity upon one or two points. When men stumble at the plan of salvation by Christ's sacrificial work, *what is it that they stumble at?* The reply must be a somewhat wide one, but it cannot possibly comprehend all the reasons for man's wicked opposition to his best Friend. *Some stumble at the Person of Christ.* Jesus, they will admit, was a good Man, but they cannot accept Him as co-equal and co-eternal with the Father.

Oh, my Hearer, if you would be saved, stumble not at this, for who but a God could save you? And how could the Justice of God have been satisfied unless One of Infinite Nature had become the Propitiation for sin? My soul falls gratefully back upon the doctrine of the Deity of Christ for her deepest comfort, and I pray that none of you may reject it, for be assured that apart from it there is no true ground of peace for the conscience. *Some stumble at His work.* Many cannot see how Jesus Christ is become the Propitiation for human guilt and, we fear, the reason why they cannot see must lie in that Word of our Lord, "You believe not because you are not of My sheep."

We fell, my Brothers and Sisters, not personally, but in *another*. It was our first father, Adam, who first ruined us, not we, ourselves. Perhaps it

was because we so fell that it was possible for us to be restored. As we fell in another, there was a loophole for mercy, for the Lord, having dealt with us under one federal head, could justly deal with us under another federal head! And thus fallen in another, we now rise in Another! As by the offense of one, the condemnation came upon all men, so by the righteousness of One does the forgiveness come to as many as believe in Him.

The Doctrine of Substitution or representation begins at the fountain of human history and runs through its whole course. I beseech you, do not quibble with it! It is rich balm and comfort to us who have received it. It has turned our Hell to Heaven. The Spirit, by its means, has renewed our nature and has made us other than we were—and today we have no hope apart from the vicarious Sacrifice of Emmanuel. Oh that you who are objectors would accept that which today you stumble at! *Some stumble at Christ's teaching* and what is it they stumble at in that? Sometimes it is because it is too holy—"Christ is too Puritanical—He cuts off our pleasures." But it is not so. He denies us no pleasure which is not sinful. He multiplies our joys! The things which He denies to us are only joyous in appearance, while His commands are real bliss.

"Still," say some, "His teachings are too severe." Yet from others I hear the opposite accusation, for when we preach Free Grace, objectors cry, "You encourage men in sin!" There is little chance of pleasing the sons of men, for what gratifies some, offends others. But truly, there is no just reason on either ground to stumble at the Gospel, for though it does place good works where they should be placed, as *gifts* of the Spirit and not as things of merit, yet it is a Gospel according to *holiness*, as those know who have proved its power. We have found some object to the teachings of Christ because they are too humbling. He destroys self-confidence and He presents salvation to none but those who are lost. "This lays us too low," says one.

Yet I have heard from the opposite corner of the house an objection to the Gospel because it makes men proud, for some say, "How dare you speak of being certain that you are saved? That is a boastful speech and ill befits a lowly sinner." Friend, do not stumble at the blessed Truth of God, for Believers are certainly saved and may know it—and yet be all the humbler for the knowledge. You are humbled, it is true, by Christ, and laid low—but He exalts you in due time—and when He exalts you, by His Grace, there is no fear of boasting, for boasting is excluded by Grace.

Still, I have known others object that the Gospel is too mysterious—they cannot understand it, they say. While again, from the other corner of the compass, I have heard the objection that it is too plain! This being saved by simply believing in Christ is too plain for many and too hard for others. Beloved, do not quibble at it for either reason. What if there are mysteries in it? Can you expect to comprehend all that *God* knows? Be teachable as a child and the Gospel will be sweet to you. *We have known some who have stumbled at Christ on account of His people* and, truly, they have some excuse.

They have said, "Look at Christ's followers, see their imperfections and hypocrisies!" But why judge the *Master* by His *servants*? I could weep while I confess how much there is of truth in your accusations, but let me

beseech you—lay the fault at *our* door, not at our Master's—for there is nothing in His teaching that encourages our sinning, and none can be more severe towards hypocrisy than is Christ Jesus our Lord! This stumbling at His people is, however, frequently founded on another reason. The lovers of the Gospel, it is said, are generally very poor and unfashionable. To unite with them is to lose caste.

Now that is true and it always has been so. From the first day until now, the Gospel has flourished most where there has been least care for fashion and honor among men. But, I know, if you are men, this will be a small concern with you. Only those who are not men, but mimics of men, care for these small matters. You, if your manhood is as it should be, will feel that to follow the Truth of God barefooted through the mire is better than to ride with the lie in all her pomp. Besides, taking the great ones of the earth as a class, is their society so specially desirable? Are the rich so very virtuous? Are the great so peculiarly good? I think not.

We have noble exceptions. There are a few who wear the coronet and yet will wear a crown in Heaven, but taking them as a *class*, the honorable among men are no better than they should be. No order of men have more to answer for, than kings and princes. At their will human blood has flowed like water and nations have been consumed by famine and pestilence as the result of their wars. Why, then, account *their* favor to be so precious a thing? We can turn the tables upon those who sneer at Christ's servants for their lowness of rank, for before the eyes of God, the great ones are the most evil of all when they become leaders in iniquity. Now, if these are your objections, I pray God to give you Grace to play the man and bear joyfully the reproach of Christ.

What does this stumbling at Christ cost the ungodly? I answer, it costs them a great deal. Those who make Him a rock of stumbling are great losers by it *in this life*. Opposition to Jesus is, to many men, a kicking against the pricks. When the Eastern farmer drives his bullock and it moves amiss, he goads it. And if the bullock is not broken in, it kicks against the goad as soon as it is pricked—and the consequence is, it drives the goad into itself more deeply—and if it then kicks violently, the goad pierces and wounds it still more. It is so with rebellious men. Their persecutions hurt themselves—they cannot really injure our Lord.

The hammer said, "I will break the anvil," and the anvil did not answer, but stayed in its place, while the hammer smote it day after day. Month after month, year after year, the anvil patiently received the blows, but after awhile the hammer broke, and though it did not say so, for it was too quiet to speak, the anvil might have said, "I have broken hundreds of hammers before, and I shall break hundreds more by patient endurance." It is so with Christ and His Church, and His Gospel—the persecutor may smite, and smite, and smite—the true Christian makes no reply, but patiently bears, and in the long run that patient endurance will break the persecutor down.

What anger it costs ungodly men to oppose Christ! Some of them cannot let Him alone! They will rage and fume. Concerning Jesus it is true that you must either love or hate Him—He cannot long be indifferent to you—and therefore inward conflicts come to opposers. I remember an un-

godly man who was a raving hater of Christ. A Bible was brought into his house, he seized it and destroyed it in his wrath. He did not know that when his daughter went to bed her eyes were wet with tears at what her father had done and that the next night there was a New Testament under her head. When by-and-by he found out that she attended the House of God, there were great threats and I do not know what, of blustering.

But it was done, all the same for that, and his anger was patiently borne. "Well," he thought, "she is a foolish girl, it will end there," but very soon another daughter became pious and then he was furious. He took his wife into his counsels, to help him, but by her quivering manner she betrayed that she did not like his proceedings. And after awhile he found out that she, when he was away, had snuck into the little Meeting House, too, and that she was feeling with her daughters the value of eternal things. Well, at least he had a boy left! The women were always fools, he said, but his boy, he hoped, would show more sense, and not be deluded. Like his father, he would never fall into superstition, would he?

He would see about it and question him. What was his surprise to find the boy speak up like a man, and say, "Yes, Father, I believe as my sisters do, and I go to the House of God whenever I can, and I mean to do so." To his surprise, he found all his house inclined to hear the Gospel and most of them believers in it! It did him no good to be in a passion about it, but he used to rave horribly, and I fear he thereby shortened his days. But the thing went on in spite of all he did—the servants of the house also joined the people at the meeting, and his laborers went in the same way. God intended to bless the family and the enemy was powerless to prevent it, though it cost him much anger and wrath.

Ah, what it costs some men *when they come to die!* In the days when persecution was more public than it is now, many persons were guilty of being informers against the Puritans, or the Quakers. These traitors' deaths were, in many cases, appalling, not because of any peculiar pains they endured, but because how their persecuting innocent neighbors came up to their memory in their last moments. And some of them could not rest for crying out and making acknowledgment of the injustice that they had done to good men in hunting them into prisons for worshipping God.

If any of you do not believe in Jesus and will not be saved by Him yourselves, I would recommend you to let Him and His people alone, for if you oppose Him, you will be the losers, He will not. Your opposition is utterly futile! Like a snake biting a file you will only break your own teeth. You cannot hurt the Church, nor hurt the Word of God. Perhaps your very opposition is one cog in the wheel to urge it on. If the things are of God, it is in vain that you fight against them. Be as wise as Haman's wife when she warned her husband that if Mordecai was of the seed of the Jews, before whom he had begun to fall, it was no use to take up the cudgels against him. This warning was proven to be true when Haman was hung upon the gallows fifty cubits high! To oppose the royal Seed of Heaven is of no use whatever, but assures ruin to those who engage in it.

Now, suppose a man says, "I am not going to believe that Jesus Christ came into this world and died for the guilty, neither will I have Him for my

Savior! I will run the risks.” Well, remember, if you do it, it is at your own cost. Do it if you dare. Many years ago a captain was sent out in one of the Government ships, the *Thetis*, to discover a shoal, a rock, or some other obstruction said to exist in the Mediterranean Sea. The captain was an old salt who knew little about navigation as a science, and cared less for rules, books, theories and so on. He always sneered at scientific works. Though he sailed near the spot, he did not discover the rock and came back.

But one of his officers was persuaded that, nevertheless, there was something in the report. So, sometime after, when he had become, himself, a first officer in another vessel, he sailed near the spot and discovered it. It was marked on the charts of the Admiralty and he received a considerable reward for having made the discovery. The old captain cursed and swore at these newfangled fellows who could find what he could not! He would not believe the shoal was there—one thing he would do—they might call him a liar if he did not drive the *Thetis* right over the spot where the rock was marked and so prove it to be all nonsense.

He had an opportunity, sometime later, when he was out upon a cruise. He sailed close to the spot marked on the chart, and thinking he had passed over it, he cried out to those who were standing round, with many expressions of blasphemy, that he had proved these whippersnappers to be fools and liars! Just as he uttered his boast there came a crash, the ship was on the rock, and in a few minutes she was sinking. By the good Providence of God all on board escaped except the captain. He was in such a desperate state of mind that when last he was seen he was on deck in his shirt sleeves rushing about as if he had gone mad! You see, his firm belief that there was no rock there did not alter the case—he was wrecked for his obstinacy.

There are a great many who say, “Oh, I do not believe it, I shall not bother my head about it.” Well, you are warned! You are warned, remember that! There is a way of salvation by Jesus Christ, the Incarnate God, and we implore you to accept it. If you do not, this rock of unbelief will be your eternal shipwreck. I pray God that every one of us may bow before Christ and accept Him as our King. He will shortly come to be our Judge! Oh, let us worship Him as our Mediator! Look to Him! Look to Him on His Cross, for you must soon look to Him on His Throne. Look to His wounds! Behold the atoning blood! Look to Him and find salvation!

Whether you look to Him now, or not, you will have to look to Him in that day when Heaven and earth shall rock and reel, the trumpet shall sound, the dead shall rise and *you* among them! Then the books shall be opened and the sentence of eternal wrath shall be uttered against the disobedient and unbelieving! God save us all for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 Peter 2.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—118, 2, 961.**

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STUMBLING AT THE WORD

NO. 3258

A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON.
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“And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the Word, being disobedient.”
1 Peter 2:8.

YONDER is a wreck after a terrible tempest. That is all that remains of a once fine vessel and on the wreck, lashed to the mast, I see a number of mariners clinging, almost frost-bitten with the cold and drenched through and through with brine. But there goes the lifeboat, so I trust they will soon all be rescued from their perilous position. I am absolutely certain of one thing with regard to all those who are clinging to that poor wreck of a ship—that there is not a man among them who will raise any objection to being saved! No, whatever may have been their previous position in life, or their habits, or tastes, or anything else—they will all be equally glad to welcome the friendly lifeboat and to be taken on board the vessel of mercy. Yet is it not a strange thing, dear Friends, that when poor humanity has become a total wreck and poor souls are clinging to the sinking ship with hopes that must certainly be disappointed—and when Jesus Christ appears within hail, willing and able to save unto the uttermost—there are multitudes who raise all sorts of objections to being saved by Him? He is not the sort of Savior they would like to have, or His way of saving sinners is not the one that they approve! And there are all manner of difficulties which they invent, which they imagine to be evidences of their wisdom, but which are really only proofs of their folly and vanity. They prefer to be lost rather than to be saved by such a Savior in such a way as He has ordained!

Men in a dungeon do not take exception to the man who breaks open their prison and sets them free! Men who are dying do not generally object to the physician who is seeking to save their lives. A man who is condemned to death does not quarrel with the king who gives him a free pardon! There is nothing which shows the strange infatuation of sin more than this—that a man quarrels with his best Friend, puts away from him the plan of salvation which God has made with Infinite Wisdom and will not come to Christ that he may have life! I want, as the Holy Spirit shall help me, to plead with all those in this assembly to whom Christ,

Himself, has hitherto been “a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense”—those who still “stumble at the Word, being disobedient.”

I shall try, first, *to plead with you against your objections*. Then I will endeavor *to plead with you for Christ*. And after that *I will plead with God’s people for you and ask them to plead with God on your behalf*.

I. First, then, let me PLEAD WITH YOU AGAINST YOUR OBJECTIONS.

What is it that makes you think so little of Christ, or that makes you think so badly of Christ? Shall I take the words out of your mouth? It may be that one reason of your quarrel is that *Christ’s commands seem to you to be so strict*. He will have you pluck out your right eye and cut off your right arm if they would prevent you from entering into life. He lays the axe to the root of the tree and not only condemns your overt acts of sin, but tells you that a look or a word is sufficient to condemn you! He would have you turn at once from all those pleasant but seductive things which will ruin your soul unless you forsake them. You do not like such strictness as this—if you could be permitted to keep some of your sins—if now and then you might be allowed some sinful indulgence and yet be saved, you would be quite content. But to give up all—to be separated at once from the world and from mammon is more than you can endure!

But my dear Hearer, is this objection of yours founded upon the belief that Christ denies you anything that is really good and pleasant? Is it a good thing for a man to even occasionally do that which his Maker condemns? Does not God desire your happiness and would He deny you anything which would be for your highest enjoyment? No, Sirs, He is too good to do that! His very name is LOVE! Why, if sin were for your eternal welfare, He would not only permit you to indulge in it, but He would command you to commit it! But knowing it to be a deadly poison, He forbids you to touch it. More fatal than an adder’s sting is sin! More terrible than the conflagration which first devours the peasant’s cottage and then wraps a whole city in its fiery embrace! And God, in commanding you to forsake it, and Christ, in entreating you too leave it, do but consult your real welfare and lasting happiness!

After all, what is the gratification which you derive from sin that it should make you quarrel with Christ for taking it from you? How much sorrow does it bring you afterwards? What pleasant fruit have you had from sin up till now? Are you a happy man or a happy woman? If you have so long sought the pleasures of sin and have been in no wise the better for them, why do you still pursue such a profitless counsel? Can it be worthwhile to sin yourselves into Hell? Can there be any supposable pleasure that can ever compensate you for everlasting pain? If so, then choose the pleasures of sin for a season, but rest assured that for all these things, God will bring you into judgment! But if, on the other hand, it is a wise decision to think more of eternity than you do of time, I pray you not be angry with my Master because He is willing to cure you of your fatal diseases, to pluck from your hands the poisoned cup and to

kill the venomous reptiles that would destroy you! Surely you can see abundant reason why you should drop your objection that Christ's commands are too strict—may the Holy Spirit enable you to drop it forever!

Perhaps, however, you say that you do not so much object to the strictness of Christ's commands as to *the severity of His threats*. Well, I freely admit that my loving Master did say some of the sternest things that ever fell from mortal lips! None of His servants have ever uttered more terrible warnings than He did concerning the worm that never dies and the fire that cannot be quenched. But why are you angry with Him for speaking thus? Is it not the duty of an honest and sincere friend to give warning of impending danger? Are you such fools as to wish to be flattered with lies concerning your immortal souls and their eternal interests? Do you want men to come to you in soft raiment and to use dulcet notes to charm you to the Pit? Your own hearts will flatter you quite enough without my Master doing it! It is His great love that moves Him to speak what you call harsh words—He foresees the ruin that awaits you if you continue in your present course of sin—so be not angry with Him because of His faithfulness! It pained Him more to say those words than it can ever pain you to hear them. He never uttered a threat without first feeling its force in His own heart. If you could have looked into His tearful eyes. If you could have gazed upon His sympathetic Countenance as He pleaded with men, you would have seen and heard ineffable love speaking in every word that He uttered! O Sinners, quarrel not with Christ for warning you of a Hell from which He would gladly preserve you! Be angry with yourselves, rather, for choosing the path to destruction! Be vexed and wrathful with your own sins for dragging you down to ruin! But oh, be not angry with the loving Savior for telling you, once and for all, that you cannot escape if you neglect this great salvation! Let your objection to the severity of His threats drop forever—that very severity ought to make you fly to Him—not drive you from Him!

Possibly there is one here who says, "*I do not like the spirituality of Christ's teaching*. If He would tell me to take the sacrament, if He would bid me go to such-and-such a church so many times a day, I would do it. But He tells me that all these things count for nothing unless I worship God in spirit and in truth. He tells me that I must be born-again and that the Holy Spirit must dwell within me or else I am none of His. Now Sir, all this kind of teaching is too difficult for me to grasp—it is a sort of invisible, impalpable thing that I can neither see with my eyes nor touch with my hands—and this causes me to stumble at the Word." But Sinner, such talk as that is utterly unreasonable! If you will but think seriously for even a minute or two, you must see that no drops of water, no priestly incantations, no cups of wine, no loaves of bread, not even your own prayers can take away your sin!—

***"No outward forms can make you clean,
The leprosy lies deep within."***

You know that it is a spiritual disease from which you are suffering, so why should you be angry because the Great Physician prescribes a spiritual remedy for you? Suppose that in Christ's teaching there "are some things hard to be understood"? They are well worth understanding and it is quite possible for you to understand all that is necessary to make you wise unto salvation! Some very simple-minded persons have comprehended the meaning of the Gospel message and have been saved! Many a man who never went to school has gone to Heaven! And he who is willing to understand the Gospel can understand it. Besides, the Holy Spirit is waiting and willing to instruct all who desire to be taught. It was He who inspired the Apostle James to write, "If any of you lack wisdom, let Him ask of God, that gives to all men liberally and upbraids not. And it shall be given him." And the Lord Jesus Christ said to His disciples, "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?" It is your own fault if you remain in the darkness of ignorance when the Spirit is ready to illuminate you and to guide you into all the Truth of God! May He graciously shine into your hearts, now, and then you will welcome the spirituality of Christ's teaching instead of stumbling at it!

I hardly imagine that there is one here who will raise the objection that *the Gospel is too simple*. Yet we do sometimes get people here who seem to think themselves much too important or too learned to listen to our simple story of the crucified Christ of Calvary! They want something more philosophical, something that ordinary people cannot comprehend, something that they can monopolize and keep to themselves. The Gospel is too simple for such as these who regard themselves as the elite of society and, sometimes, those who have neither rank nor education get similar whims into their heads! They do not like to be told that they must come to Christ as guilty sinners needing to be washed in His blood and as helpless sinners needing to receive everything from Him. No, many of you want to *do* something, or to *be* something—you want to learn something mysterious—and that simple message, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved"—that plain, understandable Gospel, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved," is too easy, too ABC-like, too childish for you! Now, Sirs, why do you talk thus foolishly? Suppose the Gospel had been of such a philosophical character that it could only have been understood by those who had high intellectual powers—what would have been the use of it to nine persons out of ten? Suppose it had consisted of some very inexplicable Revelation—how would any of the poor and the simple-minded have been saved? We thank God that the way of salvation is so plain that "the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." The Gospel is so simple that many who have had but feeble intellects, have been able to understand it, and have been saved by it. I bless God that the Gospel we have to preach is the Gospel for the illi-

terate, the Gospel for the poor—and that we can still say, as our Master did—“the poor have the Gospel preached to them.” And that many of them have, through that Gospel, become “rich in faith, and heirs of the Kingdom which God has promised to them that love Him.” Do not quarrel with my Master because of the simplicity of the Gospel, lest your pride should hang you on a gallows as high as Haman’s.

A more common objection, however, which is raised against Christ is on account of *the Doctrine that He teaches*. Some do not like the Doctrine of Election, others do not like the Doctrine of Final Perseverance. Some kick at one thing and some at another, but one Doctrine at which many stumble is the Doctrine of the Substitutionary Sacrifice of Christ. They cannot see how it is possible for Christ to be a Substitute for sinners. They cannot understand how God can punish Christ in the place of men and that men shall be saved because Christ died in their place. Well now, suppose I was in a burning building and a man brought to the house, a fire-escape of a very unusual shape, but one that he assured me had been the means of saving thousands of lives? Do you think that I would object to trust myself to it because it was such a peculiar shape? Of course I would not be so foolish! Then why are sinners so foolish as to object to the shape of the fire-escape which God has designed to rescue them from everlasting burning? What could be better than the Divine plan of Substitution? God must punish sin—He could not be God unless He did—it is a necessity of His Nature that He should hate sin with an infinite hatred and He must punish it! Yet, as He had loved His people with an everlasting love, how could He better show His love to them and His hatred of sin than by giving up His well-beloved Son to die instead of them—making Him who knew no sin, to be sin for them, that they might be made the righteousness of God in Him? This seems to me to be the most beautiful thing I ever heard of and it delights my soul to preach it! There is something so fresh about the Gospel that if I were to preach it every day in the week, I do not think I would grow weary of telling it over and over again! See what wisdom and love are here combined so that we have a just God and yet a Savior—sin punished and yet love magnified! Mercy free to go about her gracious errands—and yet the faithfulness of God glorified to the highest degree! To my mind, the most glorious work that God ever performed was when God Incarnate died that sinners might live! You surely cannot object to that Doctrine of Substitution! If you do and if you persist in that objection, let me tell you that you will perish—for he who rejects the Savior who died upon the Cross brings eternal ruin to his soul.

There are many who raise objections to Christ because of *the character of His people*. They say that there are so few of them—and that they are such a poor lot—and they are not, all of them, what they should be. So, Sirs, you object to go to Heaven because you think there are so few going there? But if you go to Hell, it will be no relief to you to know that many

are sharing the agony with you! It seems to me to be wisdom to be saved even if I were the only one—and eternal folly to be damned even though everyone else should be lost with me! So do not raise any objection because of the number of the saved. And as to their being poor, what of that? Would it not be better to go to Heaven side by side with a poor old almshouse woman, or a chimney-sweep, or a pauper from the workhouse, than to go to Hell with a lord, a duke, or a millionaire? I can always find the best of company among the Lord's poor people. I am glad to be associated with all of you in your various works of faith and labors of love—and I have often learned more about Christ from the poor than from the rich. Besides, if Jesus Christ was willing to be reckoned among the poor, there is no man who needs to be ashamed of his poverty unless it is brought on by his own sin! I will not say more upon that point, for I can scarcely imagine that I have any simpletons in this congregation who are foolish enough to raise such an objection as this.

Some, however, object to Christ because *if they take up with Him, they will have to break off their friendship with others*. One of them says, "If I become a Christian, everybody will laugh at me!" Well, who minds being laughed at when he is in the right? "But all my old companions will forsake me." It will be a good thing for you if they do unless they also will join you in following Christ! "But when I go to the workshop or the market, they will point me out as a Christian." I hope they will, or I hope you will be such an out-and-out Christian that they will not need to point you out! I trust that your life will be of such a character that wherever you go, men will be compelled to say, "Yes, that man is a Christian." Why should you need, as it were, to sneak into Heaven by some back way where nobody could see you? There is nothing in Christ of which you have any need to be ashamed! So I hope you will have the Grace to say, "I will take my stand with Christ. If He is despised, I will be despised. If He is spit upon, I will be spit upon. If He bears the Cross, I will bear a cross. I am not ashamed of Him and I pray that He may not have reason to be ashamed of me."

Now, though I hope some of your objections have been removed, I feel that the great objection with which we began, still remains—that is, *you stumble at Christ's Word because He bids you repent and turn from your sins*. There are some of you of whom I almost begin to despair—you continue to come where the Gospel is preached, but sometimes you sing the song of the drunk, or you join the ranks of the profane, or indulge in other sins that I need not name! Yet you would not like to give up the hope that you still cherish that someday you will be converted. O Sirs, I implore you to delay no longer! Christ and your sins will never agree, so come to Christ and leave your sins! However stern may be the conflict, draw the sword and fling away the scabbard—let it be war to the death with sin for Christ's sake and your soul's sake! May the Spirit of God,

who alone can separate you from your sin, proclaim the divorce this very hour—that you may be saved now and saved forever!

II. Having pleaded with you against your objections, I pray now for power from on high that I may PLEAD WITH YOU FOR CHRIST.

I have tried to show you that you have no reason to object to Christ. I want, now, just for a minute or two, to remind you that you have many reasons for yielding to Him. First of all, let me ask, *How is it that you are still alive?* If stern justice had dealt with you without the interposition of *mercy*, you would not now have been living upon the earth. You remember that long and serious illness from which you scarcely expected to recover? Yet here you are in robust health and strength—why were you so wonderfully restored? You recollect that time when you were in the river and you gave up all hope of being rescued? Yet you were saved as if by a miracle—why was that? You have had many marvelous escapes from accidents in which others have been killed—why were you spared? It may be, Soldier, that the bullets whistled close by your ear, yet you came back from the war unscathed. It may be, Sailor, that your ship was almost gone, or possibly she was a total wreck—and only you escaped to tell the tale—why was that? Well, let this great mercy that you are still alive move you to repent of your sins and trust in Christ as your Savior! As He has been your Preserver, may He also be your Redeemer, your Lord, your All-in-All!

Then let me further ask, *How is it that you are in a place where the Gospel is being preached?* Suppose that tonight, instead of a preacher of the Gospel being on this platform, there had come here some stern Prophet, like Moses or Elijah, and that he had turned to you who are out of Christ and had said to you, “The day of mercy is over, justice now reigns supreme. Hear, you despisers, and wonder and perish, for God will tear you in pieces and there shall be none to deliver you!” What could you have said to delay judgment? But this has not been the case! I have not pronounced a curse upon you! I have not spoken a hard word to you, but I have pleaded with you—oh, that the Lord would teach me how to plead with you more earnestly and more effectually to turn to Him, and live! “Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” The fact that there is a proclamation of mercy still made to you ought to cause you to weep tears of penitence for your sin and to move you to turn believingly unto Him who died upon the Cross, “the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.”

Then, again, should you not run to Jesus when you remember that *He tells you that He will hear your prayers?* What? Will He hear your prayers and yet will you refuse to pray to Him? He says to you, “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men”—so will you not

believe that your sin and your blasphemy shall be forgiven for His sake? Oh, that you really knew Him! But you do not know how full of love and Grace He is. I wish that you could hear His voice saying to you, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Whenever I repeat my Master's words, I feel vexed with myself because I cannot utter them as they ought to be uttered. I know that He must have spoken them with a majesty of tone and with a melting melody of earnestness that must have put more force in them than I can ever hope to do! He lived for sinners, He died for sinners, He rose again for sinners, He pleads in Heaven for sinners! Ah, how can you refuse to trust Him and love Him and serve Him forever?

III. Now I close by PLEADING WITH THE PEOPLE OF GOD FOR SINNERS.

I know that there are in this assembly, not merely hundreds, but thousands who love the Lord Jesus Christ! And it is with them that I am now going to plead. Brothers and Sisters in Christ, while I have been talking to those who stumble at the Word, have you not been reminded of what you used to do? I have been thinking of my own experience, for I, also, stumbled at the Word, being disobedient. And I feel some comfort in preaching to those to whom Christ is "a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense," by reflecting that He who could save *me* can also save them! And as Christ has quickened you "who were dead in trespasses and sins," you cannot doubt His power to quicken others!

Probably most of you remember that *when you were dead in sin, there were some who prayed for you*. My mother and father and many others prayed for me, and I feel that this is one of the many reasons why I should pray for others. Most of you had someone who thus cared for you, so ought you not to care for others in a similar fashion? I feel sure that you do care for others—there is in your heart an earnest longing to see them brought to the Savior. May I, therefore, urge you to be more earnest than ever in prayer for the salvation of sinners? I rejoice that we are a praying Church, but I am always jealous lest we should lose the spirit of prayer which the Lord has so graciously poured out upon us. Some of us recollect times when we have gripped the Angel of the Covenant and we would not let Him go until He blessed us. Many of you were given to us in answer to these effectual fervent prayers—and this makes me the more urgent in pleading with you to pray for others.

Nor must you be content with praying for them, for *others very earnestly sought to bring you to the Savior*. And this encourages me in pleading with you to grow more completely devoted to the blessed work of winning souls for Christ. We must all be up and doing for our glorious Lord and Master. Members of this Church, you will be ungrateful for all that the Lord has done for us in the past if you slacken your efforts in the future! In your homes, in your workshops, in your mission-rooms, in your street preaching, in your tract-distribution, in your Bible classes, in

your Sunday schools—wherever you are—anywhere and everywhere seek after souls as diligently as the hunter seeks his prey! There are many reasons why you should be earnest in bringing sinners to the Savior. The terrible doom of the lost is reason enough by itself, but you can find abundant reasons in the back streets and alleys of this great city and in the sin that abounds in the splendor of the West End as much as in the squalor at the East End.

Do you need arguments for soul-winning? Look up to Heaven and ask yourself how sinners can ever reach those harps of gold and learn that everlasting song unless they have someone to tell them of Jesus who is “mighty to save.” But the best argument of all is to be found in the wounds of Jesus! You want to honor Him. You desire to put “many crowns” upon His head and this you can best do by winning souls for Him! These are the spoils that He covets. These are the trophies for which He fights. These are the Jewels that shall be His best adornment. O Christian men and women, if any of you have been negligent of late in your Master’s service, may the Holy Spirit make you more diligent! I would like to make a personal appeal to each one of you to consecrate yourselves and your substance more and more to the advancement of the cause and Kingdom of Jesus Christ, your Lord, so that you shall live wholly for Him! To be a true Christian is something higher and nobler than simply sitting in our pews twice on Sunday, or even teaching in a Sunday school or giving away tracts. It is the laying of one’s whole self upon the altar—offering your body, soul and spirit as a living sacrifice unto God, which is our reasonable service, so that whether we live or whether we die, we shall be the Lord’s, and live or die for Him! I plead with you, Christians—and I wish I had more power to do it effectually—for the sake of sinners, to stir yourselves up to pray for them and to labor for them that through the mighty working of the Spirit of God, they may no longer stumble at the Word, but may yield themselves to Christ and be saved!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 PETER 1:17-25; 2:1-12.**

1 Peter 1:17. *And if you call on the Father, who without respect of persons judges according to every man’s work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear. Not in unbelieving fear, but in that holy carefulness which watches against sin of every kind lest in any way you should spoil your holy work for God.*

18, 19. *Forasmuch as you know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ [See Sermon #621, Volume 11—“THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST”—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] as of a lamb without blemish and without*

spot. As your redemption cost so much, prize it highly and do not go back to the sin from which you have been so dearly redeemed! Fear lest you should do so. Remember that heredity has a great power over you—the traditions of your fathers will imperceptibly draw you back unless you watch against them. But you have been so gloriously redeemed with the very blood of Christ's heart that you must not draw back.

20, 21. *Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by Him do believe in God, that raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him Glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.* Whenever you think of the Glory of your risen Lord, remember what your redemption cost Him and quit all dead works—lay aside the grave clothes of care and anxiety and live in newness of life as those who have been redeemed by the risen Savior!

22, 23. *Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that you love one another with a pure heart fervently: being born-again*—[See Sermon #398, Volume 7—THE NEW NATURE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] See how this love of the brethren is linked on to regeneration. The first time we are born, we are born in sin, and that tends to hate. But when we are born-again, born unto God, our life tends to love. “Being born-again”—

23. *Not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which lives and abides forever.* Peter reminds us, in the 18th verse, that we were not redeemed with corruptible things, but with incorruptible. And he here reminds us that we are “born-again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible.” Everything about a Christian means his deliverance from corruption and the bringing of him into a state of immortality and incorruption!

24, 25. *For all flesh is as grass and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower thereof falls away: but the Word of the Lord endures forever.* Everything earthly is corruptible. That which is merely natural has its season of decay, but the children of God have the Word of the Lord abiding in them—and that never dies—it has no autumn or winter.

20. *And this is the word by which the Gospel is preached unto you.*

1 Peter 2:1. *Therefore, laying aside all malice.* This is one of the old corruptible things, so put it away from you—

1. *And all guile.* All crafty tricks, all lies, exaggeration, double meanings to your words, and the like—

1. *And hypocrisies, and envies.* All hatred of those who are either better or better off than you are—

1. *And all evil speaking.* Thus the tongue expresses what the heart feels. Laying all these evil things aside, you will prove that you have been born-again—born of the incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever.

2. *As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby.* You are in the family of God, but you are only babes in it. You have to grow to the stature of men and women in Christ Jesus, so “desire the sincere (unadulterated) milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby.” There is no other way of growing.

3, 4. *If so you have tasted that the Lord is gracious. Coming to Him, as unto a living stone*—So that “the Lord” here meant is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is truly “a living stone”—

4. *Disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious*—When men disallow Christ, it is a matter of small account to us. As for what they have to say, it is less than nothing and vanity. Like the wild bluster of the winds, let it bluster until it has blown itself out. Christ is “disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious”—

5. *You also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.* [See Sermon #1376, Volume 23—THE TRUE PRIESTHOOD, TEMPLE AND SACRIFICE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] See what Jesus Christ has made of you who believe in Him! By the incorruptible blood and the incorruptible seed, He has brought you into a heavenly priesthood and you are, today, to stand at the spiritual altar and “to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” Will you not pray, will you not praise, will you not love? These are sacrifices with which God is well pleased!

6, 7. *Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious: and he that believes on Him shall not be confounded. Unto you, therefore, who believe, He is precious.* [See Sermons #242, Volume 5—CHRIST PRECIOUS TO BELIEVERS and #2137, Volume 37, a Sermon with the same title—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Is He not? Then enjoy His preciousness, all of you who truly believe in Him! Precious Christ, precious to all His people, precious to me!

7, 8. *But unto them which are disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the Word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.* When Peter wrote these verses, he must have thought of his own name. He was called a stone or a rock—and once he was to his Master “a rock of offense” when he stumbled at Christ’s Word, and began even to rebuke his Lord! But he was forgiven and saved, so now he gives a warning to others lest they should still more grievously sin by making Christ, Himself, to be to them “a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.”

9. *But you are a chosen generation*—Hear this, you Believers! Drink in this precious Truth of God! See God’s election, making you to be a people born of the Holy Spirit—“a chosen generation”—

9. *A royal priesthood*—This is a wonderful combination! Kings and priests at the same time! All honors meet on you through Divine Grace! “A royal priesthood”—

9. *An holy nation, a peculiar people*—You have national privileges. God reckons you not as a mob or a herd of men, but as a nation, and a nation with this peculiar hallmark upon you, that you are “a holy nation.” This is the true token of your nationality that you are “holiness unto the Lord.” “A peculiar people” belonging to God alone, marked off from the rest of mankind as peculiarly His! You are not and you are not to be as other men are—you are “a peculiar people.” Your road is not the broad one where the many go—it is the narrow one which the few find. Your happiness is not worldly pleasure, but pleasures at the right hand of God which are forevermore. You are “a peculiar people”—

9. *That you should show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light*—[See Sermon #2765, Volume 48—MARVELOUS LIGHT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] You are to be advertisers of the praises or virtues of Christ, not only to know them and to be glad to know them, but to make them known to others. Beloved, how far are you doing this? I put the question personally to each one of you, for you were chosen by God on purpose that you “should show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light”—

10. *Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God*—In time long past, who ever heard of the Britons, or of the Anglo-Saxons? We were not a people, but we “are now the people of God”—

10. *Which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.* We may well leap for joy, we who once had not obtained mercy! We sinned against the Lord, but He was long-suffering, and now we have obtained mercy.

11. *Dearly Beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims*—For you belong not to the corruptible world, you are of an incorruptible race—“I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims”—

11, 12. *Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul: having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers*—Which they are sure to do. The better you are, the more will they censure you. This is the only homage that evil can pay to good, to fall foul of it and misrepresent it—“that whereas they speak against you as evildoers”—

12. *They may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.* God bless to us the reading of His Word.

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

MARVELOUS LIGHT

NO. 2765

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 9, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 26, 1879.

“His marvelous Light.”
1 Peter 2:9.

EVERYTHING about a true Christian is marvelous. He is a marvel to himself and a marvel to all who are around him. Mere professors—man-made Christians—people who have made themselves Christians by their own free will apart from the Spirit of God, have nothing marvelous about them. You can make professors of that sort by the score and you can see them dissolve by the score, for what man made, man can unmake! And what is merely natural has its season, like the leaves on the trees and, by-and-by, it withers away because its time to fade has come. But a true Christian is a God-made man, a twice-born man and he is a partaker of the Divine Nature. He is a mass of marvels, for he is dead and yet he is alive! He is one who lives here and yet his life has gone away up yonder. He is one who is a citizen of earth and yet his citizenship is in Heaven. He is a true man, but he is more than a man, for God has lifted him up above the level of other men, given him a life which other men do not possess, revealed to him secrets which others do not know and prepared for him a place into which the ungodly can never enter.

The longer he looks at himself, the more he wonders at God's Grace and at what God's Grace has done, is doing and will yet do for him. He is a riddle to himself—an enigma made up of a thousand enigmas. He probably does not fully understand all that has happened in any single day of his life—and there are certain days in which God's dealings with him quite stagger him. And though faith sees all things to be plain, yet to mere human reason, things often appear to be in a snarl, and twisted together and he does not know what to make of them.

Everything about a true Christian is marvelous, as angels know, who often desire to look into the things which concern them, and as He knows, who is our Leader and Commander—who was a Man wondered at and whose faithful followers are all wondered at still, He, Himself is the greatest marvel of all! And among the many marvels that surround us is the marvelous Light of God in which we dwell. Those of us who are now in Christ, lived at one time in the gross darkness of ignorance. I mean even those of us who were brought up in Christian families and knew the letter of the Gospel well. We did not know its inner meaning and we nev-

er felt its power. We were in darkness, though, indeed, there was a certain measure of Light which had come to us, which made us responsible for our wrong-doing. Still, our heart remained in gross darkness.

And, by-and-by, this darkness was attended with much misery. There came to us a little Light—just enough to make our darkness visible. And so we perceived the darkness in which we dwelt and we began to sigh and cry, like prisoners shut up in an underground dungeon, to whom light and fresh air cannot come. Then everything about us seemed to blacken and the gloom around us deepened. We were in the dark as to our apprehensions of the future. We knew that we must die, yet we feared to die. We clung to life, yet, sometimes, we did not desire even life, itself, but said, with Job, “My soul chooses strangling and death rather than my life.” The prospect of annihilation would have seemed almost like Heaven to us if we could, thereby, have gotten rid of our sinful, sorrowful being, clouded with apprehensions of the wrath of God and of judgments yet to come upon us. I know that I am talking about something which many of you understand! It was a thick Egyptian night in which you were then enveloped—a darkness that might be felt—and you tried your utmost to escape from it, but you could not, for it was *in* you. Your soul was in darkness, the Light within your spirit was quenched and all around you seemed to darken, and darken, and darken, as though an eternal midnight were surely descending upon you!

Well, at that time, it happened to me, and I know that it also happened to some of you as it did to Peter, that the angel of the Lord suddenly smote us on our side and a Light shone into our prison and we arose, scarcely knowing what we were doing. But we girded our garments about us and followed our angelic leader, while the prison gates, which had formerly shut us in, opened before us of their own accord and we found ourselves to be free and in broad daylight, too, although, for a time, we could scarcely realize those blessed facts! We saw what we had never seen before. We enjoyed what we had never even hoped to enjoy! Yes, as in an instant we possessed what we thought must forever be denied to us! We scarcely knew how to contain our joy, but we made our way, as fast as we could, to the house of Christ’s disciples who had prayed for us. And how we gladdened them as we told them the story of God’s delivering and enlightening Grace, and so showed forth the praises of Him who had called us out of darkness into His marvelous Light! Truly, it was marvelous Light to us at that time. Many day have passed since then with some of us, but it is still marvelous Light and, as we look upon it now, it is not any less marvelous than it was at the very first!

It is of that marvelous Light of God that I am going to speak—and as I tell of my own experience of it, I pray God to grant that some of you who have never known its power in your own souls, may be made to rejoice in it.

I. I have already touched upon the first point, of which I want now to speak somewhat more fully—that is, THIS LIGHT APPEARS MARVELOUS BECAUSE OF OUR FORMER DARKNESS.

Out of darkness, light comes not. Out of our dark nature no marvelous light ever shone. This Light came from above and how marvelous it was! Imagine, if you can, the condition of a man who has lived all his lifetime in a coal mine. Suppose he never had a brighter light than his flickering candle and then, after a while, to be brought up the shaft, and to see the brightness of the sun at mid-day. I can scarcely picture his amazement—you may fancy what it would be like, but you can hardly realize it. Or suppose a still worse case, that of one born blind who had heard of a thing called light, but who could never imagine what it was like till a skillful oculist took away the film that was blinding him and his eyes were opened so that he could perceive the light. It would be very difficult to describe all the emotions of one who had never enjoyed the light before, but, certainly, such a person would be full of wonder and amazement! It would be, indeed, marvelous light to him.

You who have never been converted, who never were regenerated, do not know any more about the Light of God than the man in the coal mine knows about the sun, or that man born blind knows about the light of day! Perhaps you talk a good deal about it and, possibly, you write about it and you form judgments about it. And they are just as wise, and just as accurate as the verdict of blind men would be concerning colors of which they have no conception! You say, sometimes, concerning the Gospel, “It is all nonsense! There is no such thing as the Light of the Truth of God”—just because you never saw any, which is a very poor method of argument! I once heard a man say, “I have lived in the world 60 years and I never had the apprehension of anything spiritual.” When I looked at his face, and especially at his red nose, I thought that what he said was very likely to be true, but I did not, therefore, conclude that there was nothing spiritual because he had not seen it! Any blind man might say, “I have lived so many years, and I have never seen the sun, so there is not any,” but you would not accept negative evidence of that sort.

So, my dear Friend, whenever you are going to speak about something which you do not know anything about, just keep silent and let somebody else talk who does know. If you never knew what it was to be converted—if you never felt the Divine Life go coursing through your soul—if you never had the Divine Light flashing in the midst of the darkness of your spirit, pray speak with bated breath if you speak at all! And when you are going to write one of those famous articles of yours, just say to yourself, “Perhaps I had better take some subject that I understand, for this I do not know, as I never had the Light.” If you ever had received it, then you might comprehend something of the wondrous change which conversion makes in a man and you would agree with us that the Light of the Gospel is, indeed, marvelous Light!

II. Secondly, we perceive that it is marvelous Light WHEN WE CONSIDER ITS ORIGIN.

Our text tells us that it is God’s Light—“who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous Light.” What is God’s Light? Can you imagine how that Light existed before He made the sun or the moon? Light

shone on this world before the sun and the moon were created, for light comes not from them except as God has stored it up in them, or continually supplies it to them. But there is always Light in God. He is the great Light-Creator, yet I never read that the light which God created in the world was called His marvelous light. God made the light, but it was not His Light, even then. There is another Light which is natural to Him—a Light of brightness and knowledge, clear and heavenly—a Light such as mortal man attains not unto except as the supreme gift of the Grace of God shall visit him. It is this Light which rests upon the people of God. There is a light which lights every man that comes into the world, but God's marvelous Light comes only to His chosen and gladdens only those whose eyes have learned to look to Jesus and who find their soul's confidence and salvation in Him who is the very Light of God.

“Oh,” asks someone, “can a man have this Light? I do not believe it.” Again I tell you, my Friend, that I did not expect you would believe it! He who has never had any experience of it may well doubt its existence. But he who has ever had the Light of God shining into his soul, is as conscious of becoming a new man—as conscious of seeing after another fashion than he ever saw before—as a blind man would be if his eyes were suddenly opened! I know that this world is not to me, now, the world that it once was. All things were then seen, if seen at all, as in a mist so thick that I took the transient to be the eternal and I highly prized trifles while I despised that which was most precious! I put light for darkness and darkness for light—bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter—for my foolish heart was darkened, but I knew it not. But, now, such a change has come to me that all things have become new and, in speaking of my own experience, I am also telling of the experience, not merely of some of you, but of hundreds of you upon whose hearts the Divine Light has come, changing all things around you! They are not what they seem to others, to be, for they are all now seen in the clear white Light of God, Himself, and you know even as you are known.

III. Thirdly, this is marvelous Light BECAUSE OF ITS EXCELLENCE OVER ALL OTHER LIGHT.

This Light, which God gives to His people, is far superior to the light which comes of education, or of meditation, or which can be produced by any human effort. When you have gone through a street lighted with electric light, I have no doubt you have smiled to see, side by side with it, the gas lamp with its little yellow attempt at showing that it could not shine. But how bright was the electric light at the side of it! Yet, if it is left to burn at mid-day, how dim it seems compared with the sun! And how the sun must smile at all our attempts to light up this world without him! Well, now, the best light that a man ever gets by his own unaided effort is no better than that of a candle, or, if you will, than flickering gaslight. But the Light of God—the marvelous Light of God, is the illumination caused by the Holy Spirit shining into the inmost recesses of the soul in full meridian splendor! It is the Light of God, and there is no other light that is like that! He who has but a spark of that Light may not know so much about some things as the worldly-wise man knows, but he

is well acquainted with many things to which the other man is an utter stranger!

Cowper said, as some of you may remember, when contrasting the infidel Voltaire with the poor, godly lace-maker, she—

***“Just knows, and knows no more, her Bible true,
A truth the brilliant Frenchman never knew.”***

Perhaps you smile and think within yourself—“That is not knowing much.” Ah, but to know the Bible to be true, to live in that Bible Truth and to have it all round about you, filling the air, filling your own soul, filling earth and Heaven with wondrous things that the spirit’s eye can see—this is truly marvelous! He who sees even the most of this world has but the same sort of eyes that birds and beasts have—but he who knows his Bible to be true and who realizes the truth of it in his soul—has another set of eyes that can peer into another realm altogether. He sees spiritual things and around him there shines a Light which is, indeed, marvelous!

IV. Fourthly, this is marvelous Light BECAUSE OF WHAT IT REVEALS, for that man who has the Light of God shining in his soul sees that which is invisible.

“O utterer of paradoxes!” cries someone. Yes, but I cannot otherwise express the Truth. This illuminated man sees God, whom ordinary human eyes can never see. He looks back into the ages past and gone and he sees God making all the worlds that ever existed, while those who are reckoned as wise men, but who are without that Light of God, spin ingenious but worthless theories about how those worlds grew! These men have such wonderful theories that it really seems surprising that they do not, themselves, make a few worlds, since they profess to have found out so many ways of making them! But the opened eyes see “that the worlds were framed by the word of God,” and it sees God’s hand in all the histories of all the centuries—and it even sees God’s hand in the things recorded in the newspaper that most startle us! The man who has his eyes opened sees Heaven and Hell, eternity and everlasting life. He sees them—not with dull optics, like these eyes of ours which, after all, do not really see, for it is the soul behind the eyes that really looks out through that window and perceives what is to be seen. But, in this marvelous Light of God, the soul sees without any optics and without any glass—it has flung away its telescope, for it has come so near the object upon which it is gazing that there is no need of any intervening medium! It walks and talks with the angels and, what is far better, it speaks with God Himself! This is indeed marvelous Light which has made us to see things that to ordinary mortal eyes are invisible!

And it is such marvelous Light because it enables us to see them so clearly. To the man who has this Light, God does not appear to be sitting like the heathen Jove is represented, upon a distant Olympus and sleeping while the world is troubled. He who lives in this marvelous Light sees God here, there, everywhere—within him, and about him, he feels the Presence of God! He has an immediate consciousness that God is with him. And, better still, such a man as that sees God to be reconciled by

the death of His Son. He sees God to be his Father, for he is made a partaker of the Divine Nature, "having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." It is, indeed, marvelous Light to see God that enables us thus!

A further characteristic of this Light is that it enables us to see right into the heart of things. By this world's light, you only see that such-and-such a thing *is*, you see the appearance it presents. But this Light lets you see into the innermost heart of truth and, what is still better, it brings the Truth of God right into your soul. By this Light, you not only see the Doctrine of Election, but you also know yourself to be elect! You see the great Truth of Redemption and you know yourself to be redeemed! By this Light, you see Regeneration and you feel the pulsing of the Life of God within your spirit and, though mortal eyes have not seen Heaven, neither have the ears of man heard its rapturous harmonies, nor has the true conception of Heaven entered into the heart of man, yet the Spirit of God brings Heaven down to us and raises us up to Heaven so that we sit among the heavenly in Christ Jesus and, "our conversation is in Heaven, from where we also look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." All this proves that it is a glorious Light of God, does it not?

The man who has not this Light, may believe there is a God. Yes, and he believes that there is a Cham of Tartary, but he does not care about him. He believes that there is a Heaven, but it never enters as a factor into his life to operate upon him. He believes that there is such a thing as sin and he says, "Oh, yes, yes, yes! We are all sinners, no doubt." But he who has this marvelous Light sees sin so as to tremble at it and to hate it. It is a present thing with him which he abhors! He also sees the atoning blood of Jesus and knows that by it he is cleansed from sin and he rejoices in this as a blessed matter of fact.

"Oh," says someone, "that is all fancy!" Of course it is only a matter of fancy to you! Did I not tell you so when I began my discourse? To a blind man, a picture by Kaphael or Titian is all fancy. You say to him, "How splendidly the colors are laid on there! Do you see that wonderful effect of light and shade?" But your wise blind man says, "I do not believe a word of it." Of course he does not! We cannot hope that he will do so all the while that he is blind and, in like manner, he who knows nothing of God's marvelous Light, will ask, "Who is he that bears witness concerning this strange thing?" "Well, Sir, he is one among a great number who have as much right to be believed as you have, for he is as honest a man as you are." Hundreds of us—thousands of us can bear witness concerning the phenomena of Divine Grace—the mysteries of the new creation—the putting into a man of a new life! And we have as much right to be believed as gentlemen who bear witness about the backbone of a fish and who would feel insulted if we said that they told us lies. We have never examined their fish, but we believe their testimony because we know they have studied the question of which they speak.

They have never looked into our inner life, but they have as good reason to believe our testimony as we have to believe theirs! And this is our witness—that there is such a thing as God's marvelous Light, that the

Light of Divine Grace has broken in upon our soul and brought us to see a new Heaven and a new earth, and to live in a new creation altogether, waiting for the time when Christ shall come to take our body, as He has already taken our soul, into that new world and make us perfect with Himself forever!

V. Fifthly, this Light is marvelous BECAUSE OF WHAT IT PRODUCES.

I have already shown you its marvelous character in that it reveals a new world to a man, a world he once despised—and it makes him value it and live worthy of it. Thus it produces a great change in that man, for it makes him love the things he once hated and hate the things he once loved. I heard someone say, “Take care of Number One, is a capital rule. Self-love is the first law of nature.” But, when this marvelous Light breaks in upon a man, that law of nature ceases to operate and he says, “No, the first law of my new nature is that I should honor my God, that I should do that which is right, that which is just, that which is true, that which is loving, that which will be like the life of Jesus Christ my Lord.” If you carefully watch that man, you will see him beginning to give up many of the pursuits that once delighted him. Perhaps you will say, “Poor man, he is denying himself,” but he will answer, “No, I am not. I could not enjoy those things now. In fact, I hate them. They were very pleasurable to me once but, then, I was a blind man. Now that I can see, they give me no pleasure.” Such a man, before his conversion, may have enjoyed a spicy song which had just a little touch of what should not have been in it. But, now, if he hears the sound of it in the street, he is ready to cover his ears, for he cannot bear it. “Sing us one of the songs of Zion,” he says now—the very songs that he used to call “Methodist cant, Presbyterian hypocrisy,” and all sorts of evil names! Now that he has the new life within him, there are new tastes developed.

If this were the proper time, I could tell some remarkable stories of marvelous changes that have been worked in some people whom I know. I am sure they would not recognize themselves if they were to meet their old selves as they were five years ago, or, if they did, they would cross the road and get on the other side of the street, so as not to come into contact with their old selves. They would say, “Thank you, no. I would rather not walk with you. You are not good company for me. I hoped you were dead and buried, and I never wanted to see you again. I am dead with Christ, I have been buried with Christ, I have risen from the dead in Him and I am a new creature in Him,” This marvelous Light makes a wonderful change in a man’s character! That is to say, if it really comes to him because, you know, there are some who go into the Enquiry Room and kneel down and cry a good deal—and all the good *that* can possibly do is to take away some of the superfluous fluid from the brain, for there is no heart in their repentance—it is mere excitement and nothing more.

But it is a very different thing to have the Light of God—to have the Holy Spirit really shed abroad in the heart. Do not any of you be satisfied with saying, “I am converted. Happy day!” Mind that you *are* converted. Be sure that it is heart-work, soul-work and that the Spirit of God has worked it—not the preacher—not an excited evangelist—not a book you

read—but that God Himself has come to you and made you a new creature in Christ Jesus, for, unless this is the case, I shall not be able to speak of the change as I have spoken, and which, to my intense joy, I have seen in hundreds, and in thousands who have passed from darkness to Light, and from the power of Satan into the Kingdom of Christ.

One change that always takes place as the result of receiving this Light is great joy. The joy is not always as great in all to whom the Light comes but, still, it does bring great joy wherever it shines. Talk of true happiness—it is nowhere to be discovered till the eternal Light breaks in upon the mind and heart! And then, Heaven has begun below! Some of us have our full share of pain of body and depression of spirit, yet, in our worst moments, we would not change places with the happiest worldling that lives! Not even when most depressed and weary would we exchange our position, even for a minute, for that of the greatest emperor in the world who does not know that Inner Light. I can truly say, and so can many of you—

***“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.”***

VI. Lastly, it is marvelous Light BECAUSE IT WILL NEVER GO OUT.

As it is the Light of God, the devil cannot blow it out. If all the devils in Hell were to try to blow out one single spark that is in a true Believer’s heart, they might puff till they died of puffing, but they would never put that spark out! God has lit it and they cannot quench it. Our Lord Jesus Christ said, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.” “Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” If you do not keep this everlasting life, it is quite clear that you never had it. If you really have eternal life—it must be eternal life—and it shall abide with you forever.

But, what is better, not only shall you never lose it, but it will continually increase! If you have God’s marvelous Light, though it seems only like starlight now, it will soon be like moonlight. Then it will be daylight and soon it will be noontide, for, to whomever God has given a little of this Divine Light, more is sure to follow, for the Light of God, which is given to us by the Holy Spirit, is the very Light of Heaven—it has only to be fully developed! You have all the elements of eternal happiness within your own spirit if the Holy Spirit has truly enlightened you and made your character like that of the Lord Jesus Christ. As to death—well, at the moment of death, you will leave your body behind and you will leave with it all tendency to sin! The root of eternal blessedness is in you, now, if the Lord has really looked upon you in love and you have looked to Christ by faith. You have the plant of Grace springing up! Some of you have leaves and buds, so all that will happen to you in Heaven is that the buds will open and the flower will be perfected—but it is all there right now. Christ said, “I give”—not, “I *will* give”—but, “I give unto My sheep

eternal life.” You have eternal life if you believe in Him—the same life that will develop in Glory is in you now!

“I did not know that,” says someone. Well, did you think that you were going to be born-again a second time? That can never be! To be born-again is mentioned in Scripture, but to be born-again, and again—I never read of that in the Word of God though I have heard certain people talk about falling from Grace and being restored—as if they could be born-again, and again, and again, and again, no end of times! But there is nothing like that in the Bible. The great change takes place once and that change is final. If you are born-again, you receive the life that you will live in Heaven. Just think of this! Christ has gone to Heaven to prepare a place for you, but He has left within your bosoms, now, the life that is to be in Heaven! Pray God to develop that life—entreat the Lord to increase it. Think a great deal of it. Value it highly. Suffer not your body, which is its temple, to be dishonored by sin. God dwells in you—the Divine Life is within you—so, I beseech you, live as those should live who are not only heirs of Heaven, but who have the life of Heaven already abiding in their hearts! Come, my Brothers and Sisters, let us rejoice and be glad as we thus think of this marvelous Light which is to be our Light forever and ever, for, up there, the Lord God gives them Light and He gives Light to us even now! And it is His Light and there cannot be any Light better than His! So, in it let us rejoice and magnify His name.

I wish that some here who have not this Light, could be set a-longing for it. Mr. Bunyan says that even if we do not invite the sinner to come to Christ, if we spread a good table before him, it makes his mouth water—and that is the next best thing to an invitation! Does any poor soul begin to say, “I do not know anything about that Light. I am not going to deny that it may exist, but I would be a fool if I were to go upon negative evidence. I wish I did know”? Well, you may know! Do your soul this piece of justice—go and pray to God to make you know it. Go and bow before Him and say, “Lord, if You do, indeed, reveal Yourself to men by your Spirit in Christ Jesus, reveal Yourself to me.” He will hear you, I am sure of that. Even if He did not, there would be this reflection on your mind, that, having listened to the testimony of one who has no motive for deceiving you, you have at least given enough credence to it to try it and test it. And you will feel all the easier in your mind even if the experiment should fail.

But it will not fail, for never did a soul, in honest, guileless heartiness, seek the Light and love of God, and seek in vain! And nor will you! Go, then, to God through Jesus Christ, and this marvelous Light shall break in upon you. God grant it, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 PETER 2.**

Verses 1-3. *Therefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speaking, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby: if indeed you have*

tasted that the Lord is gracious. When the Apostle describes us under the character of “newborn babes,” he would have us lay aside all that is inconsistent with that character. Newborn children have no malice. They have no guile or craftiness; they have no hypocrisies, nor envies, nor evil-speaking. They are clear from all these evils. Would God we were as clear as they are! It would be better to be infants, not speaking at all, than to be among those who speak evil. It would be better to begin life over again than to live long enough to have gained a treasure of malice and a hoard of cunning—and to have learned the tricks of hypocrisy. Let us be as simple as little children, as guileless, as harmless, as free from anything like unkindness as newborn babes are. And inasmuch as we are to follow them in what they have not, let us also imitate them in what they have. Let us desire ardently, as for our very life, the unadulterated milk of the Word. Let us cultivate that combination of hunger and thirst which is found in a little child, that we may hunger and thirst thus after God’s Word. We have done more than taste the Word—we have tasted that the Lord Himself is gracious. Let us long to feast more and more upon this Divine food, that we may grow thereby.

4. *To whom coming.* That is, to the Lord. We are always to be coming unto Him. We began our spiritual life by coming to Jesus, and we are to continue coming to Him. “To whom coming.”

4. *As unto a living stone.* We are to settle down on Him as the stones of a building settle down upon the foundation. “To whom coming, as unto a living stone.”

4. *Disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious.* Christ always was disallowed of men and He always will be, until the great consummation of all things. Some disown Him in one way, some in another. Some boldly blaspheme Him with something like honesty. Others pretend to be His ministers, yet all the while are undermining the Gospel which He lived and died to preach. It matters little that Christ is “disallowed, indeed, of men,” for He is “chosen of God, and precious.”

6. *You also, as lively stones.* Or, *living stones.*

6. *Are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.* You must have noticed, in reading the New Testament, that you never find the officers of a Church called priests. Whenever that term is used by way of illustration, it is applied to all the people of God. They are all priests but, under the Christian dispensation, there is no set of men who have any right to take that title above their fellow Believers. All those who believe in Jesus Christ are priests, everyone of them as much as all the others and the assumption of priesthood under the Christian dispensation is most truly the repetition of the sin of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, though the men who commit it usually try to lay the guilt of that sin at the doors of other people.

We ministers are no more priests than all of you who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ are. We shake our skirts at the very thought of such wickedness and cry, “God forbid that we should, with unhallowed hands, try to steal away from God’s people what is the right and prerogative of them all!” “You also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, an

holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”

6. *Therefore also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious: and he that believes on Him shall not be confounded.* Put all your trust in Jesus, for you will never have cause to regret doing so! The text in the Old Testament, from which Peter quoted, says, “He that believes shall not make haste.” He shall not need to be in a hurry, he shall enjoy the holy leisure which springs from a quiet confidence where confidence ought to be placed. O Beloved, stay yourselves on Christ! Rest your whole weight on Him, for then, “you shall not be confounded.”

7. *Unto you therefore who believe He is precious.* “He is an honor—He is your honor, your glory, your boast.” It is an honorable thing to be a Believer in a Lord so glorious as He is—in a Gospel so reasonable as His Gospel is, in promises so certain of fulfillment as His promises are—in an Atonement so effectual as His Atonement is, and in a Master so Omnipotent as He is! “Unto you therefore who believe He is an honor.”

7, 8. *But unto them which are disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.* This is the distinguishing mark between God’s chosen people and the rest of mankind. His elect receive Christ and rejoice in Him—but as for the ungodly, they willfully reject the Savior and so He becomes to them “a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.” Christ is the great Touchstone of humanity—by contact with Him, the precious are discovered and the vile are discerned,

9, 10. *But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that you should show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous Light: who in time past were not a people.* Who were you and what were your ancestors when the Apostle wrote these words? Our forefathers were, in Peter’s day, uncivilized and barbarous tribes at the utmost end of Rome’s dominions. We “were not a people.”

10, 11. *But are now the people of God: who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.* Dearly Beloved, I beseech you us strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul! If you are priests—as you are if you are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ—take care that you are clean before God! Let no impurity stain your body, for sin committed by the body grievously fouls the spirit and defiles the heart! “Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.”

12. *Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, when they speak against you as evildoers.* As they are sure to do, for none are so certain to be slandered as the pure. And the more clean you are in God’s sight, the more will you excite the animosity of ungodly men—and they will show it by slandering you—“that, when they speak against you as evildoers.”

12-14. *They may, by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man*

for the Lord's sake: whether it is to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. True Christians give no trouble in the State. They are not law-breakers, but they strive to do that which is honest and upright. Where the laws are not righteous, they may cause trouble to bad law-givers and lawmakers, but when rulers ordain that which is just and righteous, they find that Christians are their best subjects.

15, 16. *For so is the will of God, that with well doing you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free—*What a grand word that is, “as free”! Byron wrote—

***“He is the free man whom the truth makes free,
And all are slaves besides.”***

But we may alter that, and say, “He is the true free man whom His Lord makes free.” “As free”—

16, 17. *And not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honor all men. Love the brotherhood: Fear God. Honor the king.* A great deal of stress is sometimes laid upon that last precept, and I would lay just as much emphasis upon it as the Scripture does! But also recollect the earlier command—“Honor all men”—

“A man's a man for all that.”

Whatever his condition may be, honor the manhood that is in him. Do not despise him because he is poor, or because his coat is not so fashionably cut as yours is, for, perhaps, he may be a better man than you are. “Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.”

18-26. *Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle but also to the harsh. For this is commendable, if a man for conscience toward God, endures grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if when you are buffeted for your faults, you shall take it patiently? But if, when you do well, and suffer for it, you take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For to this you were called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judges righteously: who His own Self bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes you were healed. For you were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.*

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—170, 465, 257.

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
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DEATH FOR SIN AND DEATH TO SIN

NO. 1143

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 16, 1873,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Who His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes you were healed.”
1 Peter 2:24.

PETER, in this chapter, exhorted Christians to holiness and dwelt upon that branch of holiness which consists in the patient endurance of wrong. He could find no better argument with which to plead with the saints than the life and example of their Lord, and, indeed, who could find a better? Since the Lord Jesus is all our salvation, He is also all our desire. And to be like He is, is the highest object of our ambition. If, therefore, we find Him patient under wrong, it is to us a conclusive argument that we should be patient, too. I admire the Apostle Peter, because in using so good an argument he selected from the life of his Lord that particular portion of it which must have been most vividly written upon his own soul.

Judge you, my Brothers and Sisters, if I am not correct in this. Which hour do you think, of the sufferings of the Lord, from Gethsemane to Golgotha, would be most deeply engraved upon the memory of Peter? Surely it would be that space of time in which He was mocked and buffeted in the hall of the High Priest, when Peter sat and warmed his hands at the fire—when he saw his Lord abused and he was afraid to admit that he was His disciple, and by-and-by became so terrified that, with profane language, he declared “I know not the Man.”

So long as life lingered, the Apostle would remember the meek and quiet bearing of his suffering Lord. He alluded to it in the 23rd verse, “When He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judges righteously.” Many a tear had Peter to brush out of his eyes as he wrote that verse. He remembered having seen the Lord with his own eyes and so he mentioned, as an argument with others, that which was the most forcible upon his own mind—in the hope that whenever they were misjudged, or falsely accused—they might remember their Lord, and like He, be dumb as a sheep before her shearers, and silent as a lamb led to the slaughter.

Lest, however, we should think that the patience of our Lord was intended to be our example and nothing more, the Apostle goes on to speak expressly of the expiatory nature of the sufferings alluded to. He has held up the Savior in all His woes as our *example*, but knowing the evil tendency of skeptical minds, by any means, to becloud the Cross, he now puts aside the example, for a moment, and speaks of the Redeemer as the

great Sacrifice for sin. The sacred writers are always very clear and distinct upon this Truth of God and so must we be. There is no preaching the Gospel if the Atonement is left out. No matter how well we speak of Jesus as a *pattern*, we have done nothing unless we point Him out as the Substitute and Sin-Bearer. We must, in fact, continually imitate the Apostle and speak plainly of Him, "Who His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree."

It is to Christ, then, this morning, the Sin-Bearer, that I am about to direct your attention. It may not be many times longer that I may have the opportunity to preach the Gospel, for bodily pain reminds me of my mortality. How soon are the hale and the strong, as well as the sickly, carried off! So many, during the last few days, whom we knew, have been borne from among us to the silent tomb! We are reminded how feeble our life is—how short our time for service. Let us, then, Brothers and Sisters, deal always with the best things and attend to the most necessary works while yet our little oil suffices to feed the lamp of life.

Rising newly from the sick bed, I have felt that if any theme in the Scriptures has an importance far above all the rest, it is the subject of the atoning blood. And I have resolved to repeat that old, old story again and again. Though I may be guilty of needless repetition, I shall keep on sounding this silver trumpet, or ringing this golden bell again, and again, and again! And so, when I am dead and gone the way of all flesh, you will, perhaps, say, "His fault was that he dwelt too much on his favorite subject, the Substitution of Christ." Ah, may I have no other fault to account for, for that shall be accounted to be one of my highest virtues!

I would know nothing among men save Jesus Christ and Him Crucified! At the same time, we shall try to make our subject practical, because the second half of our text suggests the way by which the great Sacrifice for sin leads us to make a slaughter of sin and tells us that when Christ puts sin away *for* us, *we* are moved to put away sin *from* us. Two things this morning, then—first, Christ's death for sin. Secondly, our death to sin.

I. First, then, we will consider OUR LORD'S DEATH FOR SIN. May the Holy Spirit help us to behold that wondrous sight of the Redeemer dying in our place, a Sacrifice for our sins. And here, before we approach to behold the great sight, let us take our shoes from off our feet and bow down in lowest reverence of repenting grief, for, remember, if Jesus had not died for sins, we must have died, and died eternally, too. The pangs of the Savior on the Cross surpassed all estimate. But, such as they were, they would have tormented us if they had not put Him to anguish.

That cup which made Him sweat in the garden was bitter beyond imagination, but to your lips and to mine it must have been placed and unable as we would have been to drain it dry, we would have continued to drink thereof forever and forever! "In the day you eat thereof you shall surely die" is the great sentence against sin and for a soul to die is a terrible doom, indeed. Our great father, Adam, felt the first drops of the dreadful shower of death in the moment that he ate of the forbidden fruit. He

died to God, holiness, virtue and true happiness in that same hour—and stood aghast before his God—before that very God whom at other times he had met with rapture, and adored with delight.

We, his children, share in his spiritual death in our depraved natures. And we would soon have passed away from the present death of this time state to that corruption which naturally follows upon death in the world to come when restraining and preserving influences are removed and the worm begins its work—“where their worm dies not, and their fire is not quenched.” Yes, were it not for Him “who His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree,” we should not have been here to speak to one another, or look each other in the face.

Or if the forbearance of God had allowed us a brief existence on earth, I might have stood here compelled to tell you that there remained nothing for any of us but to die and to endure the wrath of God in body and soul, world without end! Oh, the bitterness of our souls had we been in such a state! With my hands upon my loins this morning, in anguish of spirit, I might have been compelled to utter more woes than ever fell from the lips of Jeremiah, from whom all joy was gone, while I declared to you, and to your children, that there was no hope here or hereafter—that we had offended God and He had given us over to utter destruction! Blessed be His name, we have another message to deliver! We may rather imitate Isaiah, today, than Jeremiah, and tell of redeeming Grace and dying love instead of having to sound the dreadful knell of every hope and to proclaim the birth of legions of sorrows.

With this fact upon our minds, let us come lovingly to the blessed place of Calvary, once cursed on our account. Jesus died for me, that is the uppermost feeling of each one. There was a Substitution for our sins and by that Substitution Believers are saved. There was a Substitution! “He His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree.” A Substitute intervened—the sins which would have crushed us were borne by Another—actually and literally borne by Another! “He His own self bore our sins.” The sentence means that He bore the *punishment* which was due to our sins—we are sure it means that.

But surely it means more! I cannot divest myself of the conviction that it means more, for it does not say, “He bore the punishment of our sins,” which would be the most natural expression if that were the meaning intended, but, “He bore our sins.” In that wonderful Gospel chapter of Isaiah we are told, “The Lord has made to meet on Him the iniquity of us all.” And again, “He bore the sin of many.” It does seem as if the bearing of the punishment, great as that is, would not exhaust the meaning of such phrases. The expression is so compact, so concise, so definite—it must mean what it says.

At any rate, I am content to believe that God knows how to speak and to express His own meaning and that the less we twist the Scriptures, or get away from the simple sense which they would suggest to a child, the more likely we are to understand them. “He His own self bore our sins.” In some wondrous sense He bore the sin, as well as the punishment. I know

not how. This I know—He was never a sinner, for, “in Him was no sin.” This I know—He never was defiled. It could not be—reject the blasphemy with indignation! He, the Son of God, the Immaculate Man, stained with sin? Never! We abhor the thought! And yet, “He bore our sins” is still a Truth of God and we must not flinch from it.

Does it not mean that He was a representative Person? He was the Second Adam and therefore He stood for His people. And therefore the Lord dealt with Him as if the sins of all He represented had been His own sins. He was the Shepherd and the Lord bade Him give an account for the flock—and all the wanderings of all the sheep and all their transgressions. Divine Justice visited upon the Shepherd’s head, because He was, by office and by Nature, the Representative of all those for whom He died, and so could justly be called to account for all that they had done. Sin was laid upon the Lord Jesus, for He was forsaken of His God.

The Lord did not merely chasten Him and scourge Him, and put Him to grief by the use of agencies which were suitable for such a purpose in an innocent Person. He went further and hid His face from Him, which was a sorrow fitting only for One upon whom sin was laid. Why should God forsake Him, unless He had first laid sin upon Him? When Jesus asked, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” there was no answer to that inquiry except this one, (at least I cannot imagine another), “I have laid sin upon You, and therefore I must forsake You.” If He were merely suffering *for* others in the sense of doing others good by His sufferings, the Father might surely have looked upon Him with complacency, and even, if possible, with increased delight and have encouraged Him in the benevolent disinterestedness which made Him stoop to such sufferings.

But inasmuch as He was not only enduring for others, but enduring *in the place* of others and bearing their sins, it became necessary that, despite the love of the Father and the admiration which glowed in His bosom towards His dear Son who was, then, above all things magnifying the Nature of God, the Father, regarding Him as bearing sin—I say the Father must hide His face from Him, and smite Him with the blows of a cruel one till He cried out, “Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabachthani.” Yes, there was a Substitution, and that Substitution went mysteriously far! It was not merely a transfer of punishment from one to Another, but there was a transfer of *sin* in some deep sense, or else the Scripture speaks not what it means—“He bore our sins in His own body on the tree.”

Now, I want you to pause a minute, again, having noted the fact of Substitution, to consider the Substitute. “He His own self bore our sins.” And who was “He”? Beloved, I want you to feel a personal love to our dear Lord and Master. I want your souls, at this moment, to realize the actual Character of His existence and His true Personality. He is not here, this morning, in Person, to show Himself to you, else might I very well withhold my words, for His Presence would have an infinitely superior power over you. But remember that He lives and is as real as you are—and at this moment bears in His body the scars of His sufferings for you. Think,

then, who He was, and let your spirits kiss His feet in humble contrite love.

He who bore our sins in His own body on the tree was God over all, blessed forever, of whom and through whom and by whom are all things! Without whom was not anything made that was made. Less than God could not have borne your sins so as to put them away. But the infinitely glorious Son of God did actually stoop to become a Sin-Bearer! I wonder how I can talk of it as I do. It is a Truth of God scarcely to be declared in words. It needs flame and blood and tears with which to tell this story of an offended God—the Heaven-Maker and the Earth-Creator—stooping from His Glory that He might save the reptiles which had dared to insult His honor and to rebel against His Glory! And, becoming one of them, to suffer for them, that without violation of His Law He might have pity upon the offending things—things so inconsiderable that if He had stamped them all out, as men burn a nest of wasps, there had been no loss to the universe!

But He had pity on them and became one of them, and bore their sins. Oh, love Him! Adore Him! Let your souls climb up to the right hand of the Majesty above, this morning, and there bow down in lowest reverence and adoring affection, that He, the God over all, whom you had offended, should, His own self, bear our sins! Though God over all, He became a Man like unto ourselves! A body was prepared for Him and that body, mark you, not prepared, alone, and made *like* man but *of* man. No, He was not otherwise fashioned than ourselves. He came into the world as we come—born of a woman, a Child of a mother—to hang upon a woman's breast! Not merely *like* man, but *Man*, born in the pedigree of manhood, and so bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, yet without a taint of sin.

And He, in that double Nature but united Person, was Jesus, Son of God and Son of the Virgin. He it was who “bore our sins in His own body on the tree.” Here we call to your remembrance the fact stated in the text so positively—that the Substitution of Christ was carried out by Him, Personally—not by proxy. “He His own self bore our sins in His own body.” The priest of old brought a substitution, but it was a lamb. He struck the knife and the warm blood flowed down it. But our Lord Jesus Christ had no substitute for Himself! He, “His own self bore our sins in His own body.”

O Priest of God! The pangs are to be Your own pangs! The knife must reach Your own heart! No lamb for You, You are, Yourself, the Lamb! The blood which streams at Your feet must be Your own blood. There must be wounds, but they must be wounds in Your own flesh. Oh, turn your loving eyes to your Lord, and remember that everything He did for you He did Himself! You sometimes say that another voice may speak for Jesus—you are often willing to serve God through the energy of another—and I will not chide you. But oh, remember His personal sacrifice for you! Remember the griefs which Jesus bore put His own soul into a tempest of grief—and made His own heart to boil like a cauldron within Him. The heart which was broken for our sins was His own heart! And the life given up

was His own life! Not by another, though he were an angel, could Christ have redeemed mankind, but He, “His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree.”

Notice, also, that the Substitution of Christ is described in our text in a way which suggests consciousness, willingness and great pain. “He His own self bore our sins.” They were upon Him. They pressed Him. The Greek word for “bore” suggests the idea of a great weight, “He bore our sins”—stooped under them, as it were—they were a load to Him. There are men in the world who may be bearing in their bodies the result of the sin of their parents, but they are not aware of it. And even if they were, they are voluntary bearers, just the same. But our Lord assumed our sins as one takes a weight upon his shoulders—and when the sins were there He knew that He was carrying our burdens—and still consented to do so.

There was not a moment in Christ’s life in which the pressure of our sin was unfelt. Though the wrath of God, on account of sin, was more especially felt by Him at Gethsemane, and up to the tree, yet at all times He was stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. What a weight was this! The solid earth cannot bear the weight of sin! It groans and travails in pain together, even now, like a creaking chariot whose axles are unable to bear up under the stupendous weight. Yet on Jesus was the burden laid—a far weightier one than the fabled Atlas bore—and He sustained it *to* the tree. The text, in our English version, might seem to teach that our Lord bore our sins only *on* the tree—and that erroneous dogma has been drawn from it.

No inference could have been more feebly sustained, for the original does not necessarily set forth anything of the kind. The word translated “on” is precisely the same word which in the next verse is translated “to,” or, “unto”—“We are now returned ‘unto’ ”—and might have been just as correctly read, “unto,” in this case. I have not the slightest doubt that the meaning of the text is, “He His own self bore our sins in His own body *to* the tree,” so that when He reached the tree He left our sins there, condemned and crucified forever and ever. Instead of the doctrine being deduced that Christ was a Substitute only *on* the tree, the fact is He always was a Substitute up to the tree, and then and there that Substitution culminated in His dying as a Sin-Offering. Let us, this morning, know that consciously, from the time He was a babe in Bethlehem till the moment when He bowed His head and gave up the ghost, “He His own self bore our sins in His own body” *to* the tree.

And, Brothers and Sisters, He bore those sins manifestly. I think that is the mind of the Spirit—when He says, “in His own body,” He means to give vividness to the thought. We are so constituted that we do not think so forcibly of mental and spiritual things as we do of *bodily* things. But our Lord bore our sins “in His own body.” If you had looked at Him, had you been instructed by the Spirit, you would have seen in His body that He was a Sin-Bearer. Listen to this verse—“As many were astonished at you, so His visage was more marked than that of any man, and His form

more than the sons of men.” Remember another text—“Yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God.”

Think of that! Those who looked into the Savior’s face thought Him “smitten of God.” First they thought Him stricken or demented, like one who has passed through such an awful sorrow that the mind has quailed beneath it. And then they looked at Him as smitten of God! Even the Jews judged Him to be near to 50 when He was scarcely 30 years of age, so worn and haggard did He look, that “Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief.” He smiled and He cheered others. He wore a cheerful countenance among the sons of men that He might not make those who saw Him, sorrowful, and deep down in His heart there glowed a secret fire—a wondrous joy that He was redeeming His own chosen—but still imponderable, incomprehensible infinite griefs perpetually rolled over Him, so that all His lifetime He might have said, “All Your waves and Your billows have gone over Me.”

“Who His own self bore our sins in His own body,” so that His visage seemed to tell of it. And when He came to the tree, oh, how His body bore our sins, then, in communion with His sinless soul! I do not care who it is that speaks against descriptions of the Crucifixion, or who would have us keep in the background the bodily sufferings of Jesus—I am persuaded that the highest, most intense and forceful piety that ever existed among men has arisen out of contemplations of the agony of Gethsemane and the death throes of Calvary.

The Romish Church, with all her errors, and they are countless, has always had in her midst a band of loving, adoring spirits who have entered into the Redeemer’s passion and whose meat and drink have been the flesh and blood of Christ in their silent contemplations. And if Protestant Christians ever fall into the idea that we must not think too much of the blood and wounds of Jesus, they will lose the richest spiritual sustenance and we shall cease to have eminent saints among us. I shall not be ashamed at any time to talk to you of the bodily griefs of Jesus, when I remember that Peter, or rather the Holy Spirit by Peter, puts it so in the text—“Who His own self bore our sins in His own body to the tree.”

There is the Cross and there is the body—there are the visible things, as well as the spiritual and the unseen. We will not forget the second, but we will, by no means ever despise the first! We will speak lovingly and tenderly of the Body and of the bodily sufferings of the Lord. Oh, see, then, the Lord of Life and Glory taken outside the city gate of old Jerusalem and there, amidst a ribald throng, treated as a common criminal! It was the Tyburn, the Old Bailey of the city, where felons were usually executed—and they took our Master, malefactors being with Him, and treated Him as a felon! They nailed His hands! Look! The cruel iron is driven through His feet!

They lift Him up, a spectacle of shame! They have stripped Him! They have gambled over the few garments which He had—and there He hangs. They gather round Him and they mock Him, as if the Cross were a pillory as well as a gallows! They insult Him with studied sarcasm and He has no

reply to make except to bless them with His prayers and to appeal to His God! All His friends have fled and when they timidly return they can only share His sorrow, but they cannot alleviate it. He must die—die in extreme pain of body—and die with unknown inward agonies, the veil of which we will not attempt to lift. “He His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree.” Blessed are You, O Savior, and blessed are the eyes that have seen You and have looked to You by faith.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, let it be remembered, never ceased to bear our sins till He had taken them right up to the tree. And when He had taken them to the tree, there He hung them forever as a spectacle of eternal scorn. He, Himself, dying while He made our sins die. Himself crucified while He crucified our sins once and for all. O you who use a cross as an ornament, why do you do it? It is a gallows whereon our sins were hung up in shame! Will you wear a gallows around your neck? Will you make an adornment of that which was your Master’s death! I had as soon wear about my neck a butcher’s knife which had killed my mother, as a cross on which my Savior was murdered!

It looks as if you had sided with His murderers and gloried in the instrument of His torture! It was a shameful thing to die the death of the cross—and the Lord knew it to be so—and yet He “His own self bore our sins in His own body to the tree.” Mark the tree of the Cross for a moment with much attention. It was the place of pain. No death could be more full of agony than that of crucifixion. When the headsman’s axe falls on the neck the head is severed and the pain is over—even to stand burning at the stake is a shorter, if at the time a sharper, way to Heaven. But the pains of crucifixion may last for days!

Cases have been known in which men have actually lived after a three days’ nailing to a cross. The pain, itself, is inconceivably great. The most tender parts of the hands and feet, where they are most liable to bring on lockjaw, being torn by the nails—and the strain of the body continued tearing at the wounds. Yet our Savior bore that pain. Ah, it is not till you suffer pain that you begin to know the love of Christ to the fullest. You may thank Him, you sons of sorrow and daughters of suffering, for all your pangs, for now you have fellowship with Him. Blessed be Your love, O Jesus, that You could bear pain and death for us!

But the cross was not the place of pain merely, it was the place of scorn. To be fastened to the cross! Why they would not put the meanest Roman there though he committed murder—it was a death for slaves and menials. When scorn mingles with pain you know what a compound of grief it makes. To be laughed at when you suffer is to suffer seven-fold. But more, it was the place of the *curse*, for, “cursed is everyone that hangs on the tree,” and the Word of God has told us, “He was made a curse for us.” Last of all, it was the place of death, for Jesus must not merely bleed, but bleed to death. He must not only suffer, but suffer till life, itself, was gone. O dying Savior, Your love to me was wonderful, for death, itself, could not turn it aside, and therefore blessed, forever blessed, be Your name!

Before we leave the Cross, let the Believer sit down and see on the Cross his sins hanging up as dead. Christ carried them up to the Cross and slew them. The Law comes to me and says, "I arrest you for sin," but I reply, "I have no sin. What would you do with my sins if I had any?" "I would put them to a shameful death." "Lo, they are yonder, executed upon the accursed tree by Jesus Christ." Look, then, at your sins hanged up on the gallows—abhor and loathe them—but rejoice that, loathsome as they are, they are dead! The Lord put them all to death and put sin away forever by His death upon the tree. The death of Jesus is the death of our sins.

I fear I am addressing some who never knew what it was to have sin pardoned. Dear Hearer, all your hope of pardon lies in what I have been telling you this morning. You cannot make recompense to God for your sin either by repentance or by future reformation. Your only hope is to look to Jesus Christ, who bore the sins of His people in His own body on the tree. And if you will come and put your trust in Jesus, your sin shall be put away from you and you shall be accepted. Oh, I pray that at this hour you may be enabled to believe in Jesus and find peace through the Cross, and to Him shall be all the Glory!

II. And, now I hope I shall not strain your attention while I bid you consider the second part of the text—OUR DEATH TO SIN. "Who His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes you were healed." Now, observe right well that we are dead to the condemning power of sin. No sin can condemn a Believer in Jesus Christ. For what reason? Because Christ has suffered what we ought to have suffered on account of sin—He has rendered a full recompense to Divine Justice.

You bring me a large file full of bills and you say to me, "Are not these bills against you?" I answer, "No doubt they are all correct in every item, and they might take me many a month to examine." You ask me, "Can you pay them?" "No, and I do not need to try." "But do they not trouble you?" "No. I can make a pillow of them if that is all, and sleep, notwithstanding their number and greatness." You are wonder-struck to think that I should have such a mass of bills and take the matter so coolly. I ask you to take off these bills from the file one by one, and as you do so you see that they are all paid for—there is a red mark at the bottom of every one. Who troubles himself about a bill when it is paid?

"But did you pay those debts?" "No, not I. I have not paid a penny." "Did you not pay part of them?" "Not I. I never contributed a rusty farthing towards them." "Did you not offer a composition?" "No, not a farthing in the pound." "Yet you are perfectly easy?" "Yes, because He who bore my sins in His own body on the tree, took all my debts and paid them for me, and now I am dead to those debts—they have no power over me. I am dead to my sins. Christ suffered instead of me. I have nothing to do with them. They are gone as much as if they had never been committed—

***"Now freed from sin, I walk at large;
My Savior's blood's my full discharge."***

From now on I have nothing to do but to live as a righteous man, accepted in the Beloved—to live by His righteousness and rejoice in it—blessing and magnifying His holy name!

Beloved, hear the text again! As many of you as have looked to Jesus Christ bearing your sins in His own body on the tree, you are dead to sin as to its reigning power! Dead, first, because we have seen its detestable nature. The sin which was so base that it required the Son of God, Himself, to die before it could be pardoned, is too awful and desperate an evil for us to dally with any more. It had its charms, but now we have perceived its hypocrisies. The false Prophet Mokanna, who wore the silver veil upon his brow, deceived many, for he said that should that veil be lifted, the light which would gleam from under it would strike men blind, the glory was so great.

But when one had once perceived that the man was leprous and that on his brow, instead of brightness, there were the white scales of a leper, nobody would become his disciple. And so, O Sin, at the Cross I see your silver veil removed and I mark the desperate leprosy that is on you! I am dead to you! Begone, you foul blood-stained traitor! I cannot harbor you in my heart. The death of Christ, then, is, to us, the death of sin. We are dead to sin, again, because another passion has absorbed all the forces of our life. Have you ever seen men dead to other things because some one passion has eaten them up? Look at the miser—ask him why he does not eat a full meal. He is dead to appetite. Tempt him with rich wines. Bring before him the dainties of the season.

They will cost him money and he wants them not. He tells you he has no taste nor love for such things. But you tell him that there is sweet music to be heard and there are pleasures to be enjoyed. Yes, but there must be money doled out for them and therefore he has no ear and no eye. His own dear gold is everything! He is dead to all else. But there is rent due from a poor widow with many children and he will pounce upon her and turn her out upon the cold stones of the street. Tell him of the widow and her tears, of the orphans and their woes—what does he care? He asks you whether you ever had any house property and assures you that if you had, you would soon have as hard a heart as he has. But has the man no heart at all? No, Sir, he has no *life* except that which pulsates to the chink of his money bags. The zeal of his gold has eaten him up!

Now, it is just so with us as to Christ. We have no eyes or ears for anything but for our dear Lord who bled and died, and who is gone up into His Glory. Now sin may charm, but we have the adder's ear. Sin may put on all its allurements, but we are blind as bats to its beauty and wish to be. We are *dead* to sin—so says the text. Another passion has sucked up our life—and our life for sin is all dried up. And yet again, sin appears to us now to be too mean and trivial a thing for us to care about. Picture Paul going along the Appian way towards Rome. He is met by some of the Christians far away at Puteoli, and afterwards by others at the Three Taverns.

Can you imagine what was their conversation as Paul walked chained along the highway? Why, they would commune concerning *Jesus* and the *Resurrection* and the *Spirit*—and saints converted, and souls in Heaven! I can conceive that the soldiers and others who would come up with them along the Roman road, stopping at the taverns, and so on, would have many things to talk of. One of them would say, “There will be a grand fight at the amphitheatre next week.” And another would say, “Oh, but over at such a theater there is a splendid show—a hundred beasts are to be slain in a single night, and the famous German gladiator is to exhibit his prowess tomorrow evening.”

And others would say, “Who is to be commander in Spain next year?” “Who is appointed over the Praetorian Guard?” And the babble would be about a thousand things—but the Apostle would be supremely indifferent to it all. Not a topic that any one of those soldiers could bring before him, or any one of the people around him, could interest him. He was dead to the things to which they were alive and alive to the things to which they were dead. So is the Christian! The Cross has killed him and the Cross has quickened him! We are dead to sin that we should live unto righteousness—and now our very power to enjoy sin, if, indeed, we are resting in Christ, is gone from us!

We have lost, now, by God’s Grace, the faculty which once was gratified with these things. They tell us we deny ourselves many pleasures. Oh, Sirs, there is a sense in which a Christian lives a self-denying life, but there is another sense in which he practices no self-denial at all, for he only denies himself what he does not need and what he would not have if he could! If you could force it upon him it would be misery to him, his views and tastes are now so changed. Have you ever looked at a green field and marked the sparkling dew drops, and thought how bright they are? Did you ever then turn your eyes on the sun and look at him and try to stare him out of countenance?

If you have, I know what has happened, for when you looked down upon the landscape again, you could not see it—you seemed to have lost your eyes—they had been put out by the brightness on which you gazed. So you may look on the world of sin and see some beauty in it till you look at HIM—and then the brightness of His Glory puts out your eyes! The world is dark and black, after that, and you wish it to be so. Let these eyes be forever sightless as the eyes of night, and let these ears be forever deaf as silence, rather than *sin* should have a charm for me, or anything should take up my spirit save the Lord of Love who bled Himself to death that He might redeem me unto Himself! This is the royal road to sanctification! The death of Christ becomes the death of sin. We see Him bleed for us and then we put our sin to death.

And it seems to me, Brothers and Sisters, and listen to it, as if the last sentence of our text told us this—“By His stripes you were healed.” It is as good as if the Spirit said, “*There* is the recipe for sanctification. If you want to know how to be dead to sin and alive unto righteousness, there it is—His stripes will heal you.” The welts, the blue marks of His scourging—

these will take out the lines of sin. The wounds, the sweat, the death throes of the Savior—these will cure you of sin’s disease. You go to a physician and ask him to heal you. He gives you what we commonly call a recipe. What does “recipe” mean? *Take*. Ah, *there* is the cure for sin! We think that the cure for sin is to *give* something out from ourselves and to *do* some good thing. But in truth the cure for sin is, “Take.”

Take what? Take your dear Lord’s wounds and trust them! Take His griefs and rest in them! Take His death and believe in it! Take Himself and love Him! And by His stripes you are healed! Sanctification is by faith in Jesus Christ! We overcome through the blood of the Lamb. And oh, as the topmost stone is stained with the blood, so must the foundation be. And I say, in parting, to every man and woman to whom I have spoken—as you and I shall meet at the Great White Throne at last, in the general assembly which shall be the last meeting of the sons of men, and the last parting—if you would be found at the *right hand* of God, believe the message I have brought you, for it is the very Truth of God!

Do not only hear it, but act upon it, and before you leave this house I do pray that the Spirit of God may show you what it is to believe in Him, alone, “who His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree.” And if you do, though your sins have been as scarlet, they shall be as wool. Though you have been the most atrocious offender existing on the face of the earth, you shall be clean every whit from every sin! You may have come here as black as Hell, but you shall go out pure as the white-robed hosts in Heaven, if you will but believe in Jesus. This is the washing in the fountain, the Fountain which alone can make us clean.

God help us to wash immediately, lest the time for washing be past and the time for judgment be today. God bless you, for His name’s sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 Peter 2.

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OUR LORD'S SUBSTITUTION NO. 2790

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 3, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 23, 1878.

*"Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree."
1 Peter 2:24.*

PETER had almost incidentally mentioned his Master's name and, having done so, he felt that he must enlarge upon that theme, for the name of Christ was very dear to him. He seems to again hear that thrice-repeated question ringing in his ears, "Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?" and he can still answer, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." So, having mentioned his Master's name, he feels that he must say something about Him. Oh, that we, also, may have such love for Christ that a touch of His hand, or a glance of His eyes may suffice to detain us! May we never be weary of hearing about Him! May His name exercise a sacred fascination upon us! May it cheer us in life and in death and be the theme of our song throughout eternity!

There is, perhaps, a special reason why Peter wrote, in this place, concerning the vicariousness of Christ's death. He had just been alluding to another aspect of that death. In the 21st verse, he had said, "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps." "Ah," thought Peter, "they may, from my mentioning His death by way of example, draw the inference that Christ only died as our Exemplar." They may say—as, alas, so many in modern times have done—"that the death of Christ was merely the completion of His life and that He is simply the Savior of men by setting before them a higher ideal of what men should be than they would otherwise have been." The Holy Spirit forewarned Peter of this danger and taught him how to avert it, in the best possible way, by adding this most significant sentence, "Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree." It is quite true that Christ is our Exemplar, but no man can ever follow Christ's example until he has first believed in Him as his Substitute and Savior. Christ did not come merely to be an example—when we are dead in trespasses and sins, of what use can His example be to us? It is *life* that dead men need and Christ came to bring us life! In our natural state, we are already condemned because we have not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. Of what use would an example of perfect innocence be to those who are already condemned? None whatever. But Jesus comes to bring us pardon bought with His own precious blood, that then, through gratitude to

Him, we might begin a new life—and then His example might be of service to us. It behooves us, first and foremost, to view Christ as the Sin-Bearer, for, if we do not receive Him in that capacity, we have missed eternal life altogether and all our professed imitation of Christ will be but mere empty formality—which will fall far short of the righteous requirements of God.

We are going, therefore, to meditate upon the great central doctrine of our Lord's Substitution. I shall have nothing new to say upon it, for I find that "the old, old story" has an endless charm for Believers and I wish to tell it again in such a way that if it should have been, up to now, unknown to any hearer, he may give heed to it and, this very hour, find peace and pardon through believing in Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior!

First, I shall speak upon the *blessed fact* mentioned in our text—"Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree." And then, secondly, I shall call your attention to *some points of practical instruction* which may be found in this blessed fact.

I. First, then, let us think about THE BLESSED FACT ITSELF.

That fact is *that Christ Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree*. This fact is the sum and substance, the pith and marrow of the whole Gospel, so, lay hold of it, feed upon it and live by it. God, of old, in Infinite Justice, determined that sin must be punished, but He also determined to save His people, whom He had given to His Son by the Everlasting Covenant. How could both these results come to pass? Divine Wisdom devised the plan of substitution and Jesus Christ, the Son of God, became Man, that He might be able to be the Substitute for sinners. It was fitting that He should take that position, for He had, by His Covenant with the Father, assumed the place of Head of the race of mankind—the second Adam, the Lord from Heaven. The people, whom He had chosen as His own, were all represented in Him and, therefore, He was fully qualified to stand in their place and to serve and suffer in their place.

And He did so, first, because the sins of God's people were laid upon Him. What says Isaiah? "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." If you carefully read through that 53rd Chapter of Isaiah, you will notice that, several times, in so many distinct words, the sin of Christ's people is said to have been transferred to Him and borne by Him. I remember, once, hearing a certain Divine assert that sin could not be transferred—but it was, for Holy Scripture again and again declares that it was. "Blessed is the man," says David, "unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity." The man has committed iniquity, but it is not imputed to him because it has been imputed to Christ Jesus, his Substitute, who stood in that sinner's place and took upon Himself that sinner's sin. In vision, I can see the Christ of God coming forth from the Father, bearing upon His shoulders the enormous load of His people's guilt. It well near crushes Him with its awful weight, but He presses on. He is Himself perfectly innocent, but sins not His own are reckoned to Him, for "He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bore the sin of many."

In due time, in consequence of this imputation, our blessed Master bore our sins in another sense, namely, by answering for them at the bar of God. As Joseph Hart sings—

**“Came at length the dreadful night—
Vengeance with its iron rod
Stood, and with collected might
Bruised the harmless Lamb of God”**

—because He was the Sin-Bearer. Christ then appeared with His people's sin upon Him—so, when Divine Justice came to punish sin and found it upon Christ, it arrested Him and bruised Him so sorely that He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground. Justice took Him off, like a malefactor, to the Hall of Judgment and there was no one to declare His innocence or to plead for His release. He was brutally scourged and given over to the Roman soldiers, that they might treat Him as they would—for nothing was thought of Him, even as He had made Himself of no reputation. In the hall of the Praetorian guards, all manner of insults were heaped upon Him.

Then they took Him out to the hill of doom—they nailed Him to the transverse wood, they lifted Him up on high, they fixed His Cross in the earth and there they let Him die, hanging by His hands and feet. Thus was He, “Himself,” bearing, “in His own body on the tree,” the sins of all His people and, all the while, His soul was being tortured with sufferings that cannot be described in human language! We must be perfectly pure, as He was, before we can even begin to understand how sin must have affected Him. We must be perfectly happy, as He was, before we can comprehend how He suffered when He was enduring the wrath of God for our sakes and was forced to cry, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” That was because He was bearing the consequences of our sin. He took the sin upon Him and, therefore, He also took the sorrow which resulted from the sin. He took the place of the guilty, so He must suffer the penalty which they had incurred. And the text tells us, as a matter of fact, that He, Himself, bore our sins in His own body on the tree.

Before we pass on, let us draw the right inference from this blessed fact—namely, that if Christ bore our sins, we need not bear them—no, we do not bear them. If, as a believer in Jesus, I know that He bore my sin, it cannot be on my back and also on His! It cannot be that He took the sin upon Himself, yet left it upon me. A thing cannot be in two places at one time, so, if He bore my sin, I am clear! Again is verified the text I quoted to you just now—“Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity.” How can He impute it to him when He has already imputed it to Christ and caused Christ to suffer in that man's place? So there, again, I say, is the very core of salvation, the heart of the Gospel—Christ suffering in the place of all who believe in Him!

Note carefully the words of the text. It says not only that Christ bore our sins, but, from the full, unqualified expression that is used, it is implied that He bore them all—“Who Himself bore our sins.” That is to say, whatever sins a Believer has ever committed, or ever *will* commit, Christ bore them on the Cross! Sins original and sins natural. Sins actual and practical. Sins of thought, word and deed. Heinous sin—blasphemies,

uncleanness. Those that are thought to be the minor sins—evil imaginations, hasty words. I will not go on with the list, for time would fail me to get to the end of it! But when you have mentioned all the sins you can think of, I can still say that the text covers them all—“Who Himself bore our sins”—not *some* of them, not the *greater* ones, not the lesser ones to the exclusion of the greater, but *all* our sins—in His own body on the tree”—

**“Covered is our unrighteousness,
From condemnation we are free.”**

And the text, from its unguardedness, teaches us that *Christ bore all our sins completely*—“Who Himself bore our sins.” They were all laid upon Him and He did effectually carry them away and make an end of them. He bore them “to the tree,” says the margin, and crucified them there. He carried them upon His shoulders, up to the Cross and there, once and for all, annihilated them, so that they have ceased to be. O my Soul, rejoice as you look upon the Sin-Bearer who made a full, complete and absolutely acceptable Atonement, finished transgression, made an end of sins, made reconciliation for iniquity and brought in everlasting righteousness, as it was foretold that the Messiah would do! In this, we do rejoice—yes, and will rejoice!

The text also implies, from its being free from any kind of limitation, that *Christ alone bore them*—“Who Himself bore our sins.” There was no Peter, or James, or John to help Him in His hour of deepest need. Nor did an angel tread that winepress side by side with Him. Alone and singlehanded, our great Champion entered the arena and won the victory for us! Let this be one of the chief articles in our creed henceforth and forevermore. I say to the man who calls himself a priest, “No, Sir, I do not need any absolution from you, even though you may be a lineal descendant of the Apostles—through Judas Iscariot—for I am perfectly satisfied with the forgiveness which I have obtained by faith in Christ Jesus! You say that you can offer for me the unbloody sacrifice of the “mass” in order to help in the putting away of my sin, but I need nothing of the kind, for Christ, Himself, bore our sins in His own body on the tree.” On that tree, He Himself said of His atoning Sacrifice, “It is finished.” “This man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever them that are sanctified.” Let these words roll out like a thunder peal and let all men know that there is no need of any addition to that Sacrifice—either of penance, or “purgatory,” or human merit, or priestly power—nor can there be any repetition of it! Love’s redeeming work was done by Christ, alone, and in Him we rest and in Him, alone!

The sweetness, however, of this passage lies in the fact that *Christ bore our sins*. Come, Brothers and Sisters, can we all say that—“Christ bore our sins”? I am not now talking of the general aspect of the work of Christ, for it had a special aspect to Believers and the full blessings of the Atonement only comes to them. “Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it.” Can we say, then, “Who Himself bore our sins”? Let me

put it in the singular, and pass it round to each one here—can *you* say, my Friend, “Who Himself bore *my* sins in His own body on the tree”? My sins, so many and so heavy, and once so terrible to me—He bore them, bore them all and I am clear and free from every charge because He bore them! This is being saved. I trust Christ and know, in consequence, that He bore my sins—then I am saved! How many of you are thus saved? May the heart-searching Spirit of God go from soul to soul and constrain you to give a true answer! And if you cannot reply in the way we wish, give the other answer and say, “I do not know that Christ bore my sins.”

When you get home, write that down, and look at it—“I am not trusting in Christ. I have no part nor lot in Him. My sin is pressing upon me, but I have no saving interest in Christ.” I think that if you were to write that down legibly with pen and ink—and then sit down a little while and think it over—it might be much more useful to you than any word of mine. “No, Sir,” you say, “I would not like to write that.” But, surely, you may write what is true! A man ought not to be afraid to know the truth about his spiritual state, nor yet to write it for his own eyes to see. I do not ask you to print it in the newspaper or in a book, but just to put it down for your own information—“I am without Christ. I am an unbeliever. I am still in my sins. If I die as I am, I shall be lost.” Oh, may God grant that you may see your true condition and feel it and not rest until you can say, “Now I have believed, and I know that Christ, Himself, bore my sins in His own body on the tree.” If you are trusting Him, you know that He did so. Your faith is the evidence of your election and the proof of your redemption—and if you do but simply and completely trust Him, He has saved you and you may rejoice in the fact that, in the sight of God, you are fully and freely forgiven!

II. Now, secondly, I am to call your attention to SOME POINTS OF PRACTICAL INSTRUCTION which may be found in the blessed fact mentioned in our text. I always like to be as practical as possible in my preaching and I think there are, in this great Truth of our Lord's Substitution, some practical lessons which we shall do well to learn.

The first is this. *See the self-sacrifice of Christ and imitate it.* Jesus Christ bore our sins in His own body on the tree. He was not forced to do it. He might still have remained in Heaven, sharing in all His Father's Glory, forever, but, out of love and pity for us, He descended from His Divine eminence, veiled His Godhead in our humanity and came to earth among the sons of men that He might bear His people's sins up to the tree and away from the tree. Can anybody measure the self-denial of the Savior in acting thus? Is it possible for us to estimate the stoop of love and the amazing suffering which He endured for us? Then, let us learn from Him what self-sacrifice means. I do not believe in our service for Christ always being pleasant. If we are truly His servants, there will sometimes be a galling of the shoulders by the yoke of our servitude and we shall delight to be thus galled for His sake. Has any Christian ever given what he ought to give until he reaches the pinching point when he has to deny himself in order that he may give to God's cause? Has any Christian ever done for his Savior what he ought to do if he has not come

to the point of real self-denial in it? To go to the Sunday school class when it is a pleasing duty, is all very well, but, in the service of our Master, we ought to keep on at such work even if the brain should be weary and if, in such trying weather as we often have, it should seem to be almost impossible to get through it.

I have sometimes heard it said, "Oh, but the Lord cannot expect us to do that!" There are two ways of looking at that expression. I do not expect much from some people, but from those for whom Christ died, from those whose sins He bore, we ought to expect anything and everything of which they are capable if they act up to the measure of their sacred obligations! Many servants of our Lord Jesus Christ have been content to be poor, or have been satisfied to abide in a very lowly station in life, or have been willing to go to distant lands and suffer great privations and hardships. And the secret of their willingness to deny themselves has been that each of them could truly say, "Christ denied Himself for my sake. He bore my sin on Calvary's Cross and if His blessed and perfect shoulders could bear the load of my sin, shall I not bear the far lighter load of His service? Shall I not take His yoke upon me and learn of Him, as He has bid me do?"

Are you worried by the little troubles of the family? Are you getting tired of trying to bear a testimony for Christ in the workshop? Are you becoming weary, my Brother, or my Sister? Then remember what Paul wrote to the Hebrews, "Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest you be wearied and faint in your minds." Think how He bore your sins and from this moment feel, "I will count self-denial to be a luxury if I may but exhibit to Him my love and let Him see that I am not altogether oblivious of that which He endured for me." Come, Beloved, can you not be stirred up to some nobler form of love than you have ever before known? Is there not something more that you could do, or something more that you could suffer by way of proving your love to Him who, Himself, bore your sins in His own body on the tree?

In the next place, see *what abasement there was in Jesus Christ bearing our sins*. Up, up, up, our soaring thoughts may fly, but we can never reach the height of His magnificence in the eternal world with the Father! Yet down, down, down He comes, till He is a poor Man—no, more—a despised Man, a suffering Man, a condemned Man, a crucified Man, a dead Man lying in a borrowed tomb! That is a wondrous stoop, but the greatest condescension of all is indicated by that expression in our text "Who Himself bore our sins." Well, then, what say we concerning this abasement of our Lord? Why, surely, that we ought to be ready to be despised and reproached for Christ's name's sake! I think we get off wonderfully easy, in these days, compared with what some Christians have had to bear for Christ's sake and the Gospel's. Yet, in days gone by, some of us have known what it was to have all manner of evil spoken against us falsely and to be reviled again and again for Christ's sake. It is a good thing when a Christian minister feels that he has given up his character and everything else to Christ, so that, if men choose to slander and

abuse him, he will bear it all so long as he may thereby but honor Christ and keep his conscience clean.

If you are a Christian, you must expect to be dragged through all the muddy pools that your persecutors can find. If you do even a little wrong, they will magnify it a thousand times—and if you do no wrong at all, the most blameless life will not enable you to escape from the envenomed tongue of slander! If that is your lot, just bear it. Be willing to be Christ's servant, to be, as the Apostle Paul was, Christ's branded slave, bearing in your body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Say, to your Lord, as Thomas Haweis wrote—

***“If on my face, for Your dear name,
Shame and reproaches be,
All hail reproaches and welcome shame,
If You remember me.”***

I know that some of you young people get dreadfully frightened at the ugly epithets which have been applied to you. Perhaps you say that you do not like to be ridiculed because you are a Christian. Why, you ought to be *proud* of such treatment! Just adopt the very nickname that they give you and let it be to you what the stars and garters are to the nobility of England—bear it as the insignia of a Knight Companion of the Cross of Christ. The Lord grant you Grace, in this matter, to account the reproach of Christ to be greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt!

Those two things are, I think, clearly enough set forth in the text—our Savior's self-sacrifice and self-abasement. And it is equally clear that those who would be His followers should imitate Him, as far as they can, in both these respects.

Notice, next, *our Savior's willingness*, as it is set forth in the text. “Who Himself bore our sins.” There was, in His self-sacrifice and self-abasement, the utmost spontaneity, freeness, voluntariness. Nobody pressed Him to it. He Himself did it and He did it of Himself, unprompted, unsolicited. No sinners followed at His heels, crying, “Blessed Savior, bear our sins for us!” No necessity, except the wondrous love of His own great heart, constrained Him to be a Sin-Bearer. He could truly say, “Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O My God.” He told His disciples that He had a baptism to be baptized with and that He was straitened until it was accomplished. He loved us so much that He could not be content without dying for us. Now, mark, this is the way in which we ought to serve God—freely, cheerfully, gladly. I dislike, above all things, that kind of holiness into which a man has to be flogged, for it could only be a mockery of holiness! I loathe that generosity which only flows through much pumping and that work for Christ which results from such a remark as this, “You must do it. Somebody will think ill of you if you don't.” Bear your fruit to Christ *freely*—do not need to have it forced, like hothouse grapes. Grow on the wall and bear your fruit freely. The best juice that comes from the grape is that which leaps from it on the first pressing—and the best piety in the world, the best virtue, the best service is that which a man freely yields to Christ and His cause.

We say that one volunteer is worth five pressed men in the defense of one's country and I am sure that he is. The mercenary is but a poor tool compared with the noble citizen who grasps his sword to defend his hearth and home. And, in the service of Christ, troops of slaves may be urged forward, but they never do anything for Him. It was said of the Persians that whenever they went to battle, you could hear the sticks of the captains who were beating the soldiers to make them fight—and they won no victories. Look, on the other hand, at the brave Spartan—he was glad at the very thought of fighting, he lived in it. He was a born lion and he rushed to the fray, delighted to be in the fiercest conflict! He was the man to win battles and so is it with the Christian to whom the service of God is his holiday—his holy day. To serve the Lord Christ in any way that is possible to him, is his highest ambition. He does not wish to be excused. He desires to be invited. As the eagles gather to the place where the carcass is, so do men of this stamp gather to the spot where the service of God can best be carried on! Leap to the front, Christians! Leap to the front and let no one hold you back, for, if Christ willingly suffered for us, we ought willingly and gladly to serve Him!

I ask you, next, to notice *the reality of our Lord's Substitution*. "Who Himself"—what? *Proposed* to bear our sins? Oh, no! That rendering will not do! We must try again. "Who Himself *promised* to bear our sins"? No, no! That is not correct. "Who Himself *began* to bear our sins and then became tired of the task"? No! Yet I have read, in somebody's book, something very much like that. "Who Himself *talked* about bearing our sins"? "Who Himself had a good word to say in commendation of *somebody else* who would bear our sins"? No! None of these are correct readings, for our Lord's Substitution is something actual and real! He bore our sins and bore them, not according to fiction or imagination, but, "in His own body"—in His own hands, His own feet, His own side—"Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree." The bearing of our sins was as real as our sins were! Well, then, let us take care that we render to the Lord Jesus whatever actual service we can in return for His actual Sacrifice for us!

Did you ever hear a thrilling sermon or a very stirring speech about serving the Lord and, as you listened to it, did you keep on saying to yourself, "Yes, I will do that! I will excel others in earnestness! I will make great sacrifices for the cause of God! I will be very prayerful! I will be one of the most devoted Christians who ever lived"? So you talked and patted yourself on the back and said, "Well done!" But you never did anything, yet you gave yourself the credit for doing it.

I have heard of a man who owed a great deal of money and when a bill became due, he got it renewed—and then he came away and said, "There, that is all right now." And when the bill became due again, he did the same, yet he never paid sixpence of the debt—but he always walked away and seemed as pleased as if it had been paid! We have far too many professing Christians of that kind—they are great at moving and seconding resolutions and making fine speeches—but nothing ever comes of them!

Now, in our Lord's case, there was actual, solid service and suffering for us! So do not try to put Him off, Brother, Sister, with good intentions and with the repetition of those intentions again and again! Come, now, for the love we bear His name—let us really get at actual service for Him. If it is only the teaching of one poor little boy to read his Bible, it will be far better than talking about what we mean to do, even if we utter it with commanding eloquence which might move the nations!

To drop two-pence into the offering box will be better than writing a fine essay on generosity and never giving anything! To breathe one real fervent prayer to God will be better than a long parade of your own excellencies, or a doleful talk about the sad declension of the Church and I know not what besides! There is nothing that can take the place of real service for Christ! We have a great deal of talk from some people who do very little work.

I sometimes wish that those who write me long epistles about various plans and schemes and who draw out elaborate details of what could be done if everybody gave so much, would only give their share and not make any plans at all! We can all make plans when we need them, but a more important thing is to take our share and to do our part in the actual work. If we all do that, some of us will be following our Lord better than we are now doing.

My last observation is this—*Notice the strong personality of our Lord's Substitution*—"Who *Himself* bore our sins *in His own body* on the tree." He did not employ anybody else to accomplish the great work of our redemption, but He did it Himself, in His own proper Person. You and I do not believe in sponsors, but, assuredly, one of the worst forms of sponsorship is that of a man getting somebody else to do his work for Christ. I sometimes admire the way in which certain persons, who have no special gifts, will try to get others to do what they cannot do. A friend said to me, "I have often wished to preach the Gospel, but I am slow of speech and I have come to years at which I cannot expect to ever become fluent. So I want to find somebody who has a ready tongue and who can speak well for my Master. I wish you could tell me of such a man." I said that I thought I knew several, but what would be the good of them? "Because," he said, "I will sponsor one—I will find the means for his support so long as he will go about and preach Jesus Christ."

That seemed to me to be a right thing, especially when the gentleman said, "I do speak for Christ as much as I can." Many Christian people say, "We are doing a great deal at our church. We have an excellent Sunday school. We have an admirable Tract Society. We have a capital Young Men's Institute." Wait a moment, Friend, and let us sit down and figure it all out. What class do you take in the Sunday school? "Oh, ahem! Ahem! I don't take any." I thought so, but what part do you take in the tract-distribution? Oh, there are 50 or 60 distributors, Sir!" Yes, but what part do *you* take in it? None at all, I can see. "Well, our church does a great deal for home missions." But what do *you* do for home missions? I see that some of you smile at this personal question. I wonder whether that is because you would not like to be pushed into a corner in that way! But

I want to push you into that corner! I want to get you to answer—without any personal questioning from me—by taking stock of yourself! An owl is a fine bird to look at, but he is a very small bird when he is plucked—he is nearly all feathers—and I think that a great many Christian professors are very much like owls. They are fine birds to look at, but it is mostly feathers—is it mostly feathers with you?

Let me remind you of our text—“Who *Himself* bore our sins in His own body on the tree.” There is a poor Christian woman lying bedridden. She very seldom has a visitor—do you know her? “Yes, I know her, and I got a city missionary to call upon her.” But the text says, “Who *Himself* bore our sins.” Poor Mary is in great need. “Yes, I know, Sir, and I asked somebody to give me something to give to her.” Listen—“Who *Himself* bore our sins in His own body on the tree.” There is your sister, who is unconverted. “Yes, Sir, I know it, and I-I-I have asked Mrs. So-and-So to speak to her.” “Who *Himself* bore our sins.” Can you not get to that point and do something yourself? “But I might do it badly.” Have you ever tried to do it at all? I believe that personal service for Christ, even when it is far from perfect, is generally much more efficient than that sort of substituted service which so many prefer. Oh, if we could but get all those who are members of our churches to *personally* serve the Lord Jesus Christ, what a powerful church we would have! Would not the whole South of London soon feel the power of this church of more than 5,000 members if you all went to this holy war—each man, each woman—by himself or herself? But it is not so. Many of you just talk about it, or propose to do something, or try to get other people to do something.

“Well, but really, Sir,” one says, “what could I do?” My dear Friend, I do not know exactly what you could do, but I know that you could do *something*. “Oh, but I have no abilities! I could not do anything!” Now, suppose I were to call to see you and, meeting you in your parlor, I were to say, “Now, my dear Friend, you are no good to us. You have no abilities—you cannot do anything.” I am afraid that you would be offended with me—do you not think that you would? Now, it is not true, is it? You can do *something*—there never yet was a Christian who had not some niche to occupy—at least one talent to lay out in his Master’s service! You young people who have lately joined the church—little more than boys and girls—begin personally to serve Christ while you are yet young, or else I am afraid that we shall not be able to get you into harness in later life. And even those who are encumbered with large families and great businesses, or with old age and infirmities, yet say, nevertheless, “We must not sit still. We must not be idle, we must do something for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We must serve Him who, Himself, bore our sins in His own body on the tree.”

In the spirit of this text, go forth and, even before you go to bed, do something to prove your love to Jesus—and unto His name be glory forever and ever! Amen and Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 PETER 2.**

Verses 1-3. *Therefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby: if, indeed, you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.* If you have once had that sweet taste in your mouths, you will wish to have it always and you may do so if you continue to drink the unadulterated milk of the Word of God and do not sour that good milk through tempests of malice, envy and evil speaking.

4. *To whom coming.* We should always be coming to Christ. We have come to Him, we are coming to Him and we will keep on coming to Him—"To whom coming."

4. *As unto a living stone.* Sinking down, settling, resting on that Stone—always pressing closely upon Christ. "To whom coming, as unto a living stone."

4, 5. *Disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, you also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.* All of you who are in Christ Jesus are the living stones in this spiritual temple! And you are also priests who offer up spiritual sacrifices. You need no material temple, for you are yourselves the temple. You need no other priest save the Great High Priest who has gone into the heavenly, for you are, yourselves, priests unto the Most High God.

6-8. *Therefore also is it contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious: and he that believes on Him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe, He is precious: but unto them which are disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient whereunto also they were appointed.* God grant that we may not be found among that unholy company who, rejecting Christ as a foundation, stumble over Him and, in consequence, find themselves broken to pieces!

9. *But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people that you should show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.* Oh, the dignity which Christ has put upon the meanest Believer! What a high office and, consequently, what a solemn responsibility is ours!

10. *Which in times past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.* Look back to what you were before your conversion. Whenever you are tempted to be proud of your present standing, remember the horrible pit and the miry clay out of which Sovereign Grace, alone, has plucked you! When you are on the throne, recollect the dungeon from which the Grace of God lifted you up. When you are in full possession of your spiritual faculties and are rejoicing in the Lord, do not forget the time when you lay sick, even unto death, until the Great Physician passed that way and healed you.

11-17. *Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul; having your conversa-*

tion honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men; as free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honor all men. Honor even the poorest of men. Remember that they are men. Even though they are sunken in vice or crime, honor the manhood that is in them, however much you may detest their crimes. "Honor all men."

17-20. *Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king. Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endures grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when you are buffeted for your faults, you shall take it patiently but if, when you do well, and suffer for it, you take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. This is a correction of what we often hear a slandered person say. "So-and-So has been spreading an evil report against me and I am depicted in a bad way. I would not have minded it if it had been true, but I cannot bear the slander, as it is false." My dear Friend, you ought not to mind it if it is not true! But, "when you do well, and suffer for it," there is then an acceptableness with God if you take it patiently.*

21-23. *For even hereunto were you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: who, when He was reviled, reviled not again: when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judges righteously, who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes you were healed. For you were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls. The Lord make this true of all of us, for Christ's sake! Amen.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—290, 77, 278.

—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.**

A DIRE DISEASE STRANGELY CURED NO. 2887

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 9, 1904.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 28, 1876.

“With His stripes we are healed.”
Isaiah 53:5.

“By whose stripes you were healed.”
1 Peter 2:24.

IT is well for the preacher, every now and then, to go back to the very beginning and once again traverse the whole ground of the Gospel, just as the schoolteacher does when, after his pupils have advanced to some of the higher branches of study, he deems it desirable to make sure that they are well grounded in the very elements of knowledge, for he knows that it is quite possible for him to be doing mischief in leading them on to the higher forms of study unless they are thoroughly familiar with the first principles. So he goes back to the beginning over and over again—and a wise preacher will do likewise. As for myself, it is not at all grievous to speak, in the simplest terms, of Jesus Christ and the plan of salvation and, for you, it is safe as Paul said in writing “the same things” to the Philippians. I have always noticed that those who love Christ best and who know the most about His great salvation are just the very people who delight to hear again and again—

*“The old, old story
Of Jesus and His love.”*

To persons of that sort, the Gospel message never grows stale! It is like that familiar song, “Home, Sweet Home,” which had such a strange influence over our soldiers in the Crimea, only that whereas the playing or singing of that tune brought on such an attack of homesickness that the men who heard it, when far from their native land, were rendered quite unfit for duty! In our case, the familiar story of Jesus and His dying love, and His substitutionary sufferings will never cease to charm our ears and fire our hearts with holy ardor in His blessed service. I am also quite sure that to those who least relish the Gospel and who know the least about it, it is beyond measure important that they should hear it as often as they possibly can—for it may be that one of these days it will find an entrance into their hitherto closed hearts.

Therefore, preacher, ring that bell again and again! It may be that when you rang it before, their ears were stopped up, so that they did not catch its sweet silvery note. So, ring it again, Brother, for it may be that the next time you do so, the Holy Spirit will unstop those ears that have been so long shut to the Gospel—yes, even though the blessed bell has been ringing close to them for 70 years or more and they have grown

gray, or white, without having ever caught the sweetness of its melodious music! So, ring that bell again, Brother! Yes, even if they are dying, let them still hear it, for the dying have, through the mercy of God, at last heard and heeded it and so have begun to hear the harps of angels only a few moments afterwards!

I am going, at least on this occasion, to do what I urge other preachers often to do—that is, keep to the simplicities of the faith, trying to show how the dire disease of sin is strangely cured by the stripes that fell upon our Lord Jesus Christ—for both the Prophet and the Apostle say that we are healed by or with “His stripes”

I. So, I begin by saying THERE IS A DISEASE IMPLIED.

You cannot heal men who are not sick, or wounded. It matters not how matchless the medicine is—even though it is the substitutionary suffering of the Son of God, Himself—if it is to heal, it must heal some malady or other and, Brothers and Sisters, it is quite true that there is a dreadful disease which has attacked the whole human race! You scarcely need that I should tell you that it is the disease of *sin*. It came to this earth when that old serpent, the devil, tempted Mother Eve. Then did this dire disease begin to course through human veins and it has descended to every individual of the whole race and, at this moment, it lurks within each one of us. “Lurks,” did I say? No, it is worse than that, for it has manifested itself—it has displayed its venom and virulence, it has shown itself in the life and, like the leprosy upon the brow of the man suffering from that dreadful disease—it is visible upon us all!

The disease of sin is exceedingly injurious. There are some diseases that affect the heart and sin has turned the heart of man to a stone. There are some other diseases that afflict the eyes and sin has blinded man’s understanding—his mental and spiritual eyesight. There are some diseases that affect the hands and, in our natural condition, we cannot work for God’s Glory, or grasp Gospel blessings because the disease of sin has spiritually withered our hands. We never know at exactly what point the danger from any disease may be the greatest, for it is not always that which appears upon the surface which is most to be dreaded, as there are hidden places in the system which may be seriously affected without giving eternally any indication of the mischief. The Lord desires truth in our inward parts, but sin is the enemy of truth and it is only the Lord who can make us to know wisdom in our hidden parts, for sin has made us foolish, even as Solomon says that “foolishness is bound in the heart of a child.” Sin has injured us in more ways than I can tell. When man fell, it was no slight accident that happened—it was the utter ruin of humanity that occurred! There is something grand, at least in appearance, about humanity, even in its ruined condition, for it is the work of God, but, alas, the bat, the owl and the viper and many other unclean creatures have made human nature to be their foul den. “Lucifer, son of the morning,” is not the only one who has fallen as from Heaven, for this is also true of the whole race of mankind!

You see, then, that this disease of sin is most injurious. There are some diseases that make men quite helpless. We have seen a man who could not do a day’s work even if his very life depended upon it. He could

not lift so much as his hand—and he had to be fed, nursed and cared for by others, for he was paralyzed. And, in a *spiritual* sense, so far as anything in the nature of good works is concerned, sin has paralyzed man altogether. Indeed, it has taken his very *life* away from him so that he is truly said to be “dead in trespasses and sins.”

Sin is also a disease which frequently becomes loathsome. In some men who have had the opportunity of indulging their evil propensities and passions to the utmost, sin has become so loathsome that even their fellow men have had to put them away by themselves. What are our prisons and many of our asylums but moral morgues where we have to shut up leprous men and women lest they should ‘contaminate the whole race.’ I said that sin is a disease which frequently becomes loathsome—I meant loathsome to men—for it is always loathsome to God and to the holy angels. I suppose that the most lascivious ulcer which ever sickened the pitying gaze of a sympathizing onlooker could not be so disgusting to the mind of the most delicate man or woman as the slightest sin is to the mind of God. His righteous soul loathes and abhors it and He says of it, “Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate!”

Frequently, also, sin makes men a source of danger to others. It is really always so, although we do not always know it, for every evil example is contagious, every foul word is infectious and there is something about even the most moral man which it would not be safe for others to copy. Certainly, if he has that dreadful disease of unbelief in his heart, it would be wrong for any other person to imitate him in that respect, whatever excellences may stand side by side with it!

In some cases this disease of sin becomes very painful. I wish it were painful to every unhealed man and woman, for they might then be anxious to be cured of it. And let me tell you that there is no disease to which our flesh is heir that can bring such pain to a man as sin can, when once his conscience is quickened by the Holy Spirit! I think I know, as well as most men, what physical pain means, but I would sooner lie bedridden, suffering all the pains that could be crowded into a human body and lie like that for 70 years than endure the tortures of a guilty conscience, or the pangs of a soul under sentence of condemnation! I know that when I was under conviction of sin, I could sympathize with Job when he said, “My soul chooses strangling and death rather than my life.” It is a terrible thing to see yourself as in a mirror with all your wounds bleeding and to feel that you must say, “They have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.” It is a truly awful experience to see a devil in each wound and to realize that you are, yourself, the worst of devils—and to hear the curse of God, like distant thunder, rumbling far away, yet constantly coming nearer and nearer—and to live in dread of the storm of everlasting wrath beating upon your unprotected head! Yes, the disease of sin is painful to the last degree to men whose consciences are not “seared with a hot iron.”

Worst of all, this disease causes death. There is no human being in whom sin has not already caused spiritual death—and no one in whom it will not cause eternal death unless God, in His Almighty Grace, shall prevent it. “The soul that sins, it shall die,” is a declaration that is only

too terribly true! What that death will be, I shall not, at this time, attempt to show, but such words as these, coming from the lips of Christ, may tell you—"These shall go away into everlasting punishment," "into the fire that shall never be quenched; where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched." May none of you ever have to endure that death which never dies—that dread eternal death of which the Lord of Life so positively speaks! Yet, as surely as God lives, you will experience even that dread doom unless this mortal malady is healed!

II. Now, turning from the disease, let me point out to you THE MEDICINE MENTIONED IN THE TEXT—"With His stripes we are healed."

Brothers and Sisters, you know right well that the medicine here meant is the substitutionary suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ on His people's behalf. I cannot imagine how anyone can read the chapter from which our first text is taken without seeing that "the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all," "the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." This is strange medicine—that the wounds of Jesus should heal the wounds which sin has made—that the wounds upon His back and shoulders where the cruel scourge struck Him, should, by their blueness, bring spiritual healing to us—yet so it is. And this is the *only* remedy for the malady of sin. There have been many remedies recommended by various quacks—some have come with their so-called "sacraments." Some with their ceremonies, some with their philosophies—but they are all quacks and their medicines have no healing power! The only cure for the wounds of sin is to be found in the stripes of Jesus!

Let me put this point very plainly before you. Jesus Christ stood in the place of the sinner and bore—that the sinner might not have to bear—the righteous anger of God because of the sinner's guilt. They who say that we represent God as being angry and only to be appeased by the sufferings of His Son, know that they altogether misrepresent the Truth of God that we believe. What we say is that the Infinitely Holy God could not righteously have pardoned sin without having first vindicated His Justice and the majesty of His Law. I do not think that the enlightened conscience of man could ever have been contented without an atoning sacrifice. There is a necessity, not only with God, but also with us, for a sacrifice for sin—we must have it, or else our conscience cannot rest. This was the question I used to ask when I was in the depths of soul trouble—"How can God be just and yet forgive my sin?" I wanted Him to forgive me, but I did not want Him to do it unjustly, for, if I could have obtained the forgiveness of my sin at the expense of His Justice, I do not think that such forgiveness could ever have appeared to me to be consistent with the Character of God!

It was only when I understood that God could be both just and the Justifier of all who believe in Jesus that my soul rolled herself upon that blessed Truth of God and enjoyed such a luxury of rest as she had never even dreamt of before! Yes, God is infinitely just! His Justice is as stern as if it had never been blended with His Grace, yet He is as merciful and gracious as if justice had never been one of His attributes! This wonderful blending is gloriously manifested in the Atonement of Jesus Christ,

where, mark you, God Himself—for Christ is God, as He says, “I and My Father are One”—God, Himself, the righteous Judge, becomes the innocent Sufferer, standing in the culprit’s place and sheathing in His own heart the gleaming blade that must, otherwise, have been bathed in human blood! O Sirs, it is what Jesus bore that will heal you—what Jesus bore when He stood in the place of sinners and offered to Infinite and inflexible Justice a full recompense for the crime, guilt, sin and transgression of all who believe in Him!

Look away from your sin to the great Sin-Bearer! We will not trace Him through all His sufferings, but begin with the “stripes” He endured in the Garden of Gethsemane. Can you bear to look upon that terrible agony, to hear His piercing cries and to see His copious tears? Above all, can you bear to look upon His bloody sweat? His three favored disciples could not, for, “He found them sleeping for sorrow.” Can you bear to look upon Him as the rough men, guided by Judas, the traitor, seize Him and lead Him away to the various halls of judgment and charge Him with sedition and blasphemy? Can you endure to see Him forsaken by every friend He had and denied by that impetuous follower who had said, not, long before, “Though I should die with You, yet will I not deny You”? Can you bear to see Him surrounded by the brutal Roman soldiers—maltreated, mocked and spit upon by the unfeeling mob of railing legionaries? Can you bear to gaze upon His crown of thorns? Can you bear to listen to the blows from that awful scourge as they fall in quick succession upon His blessed back and shoulders?

I must not go on to tell the sad, sad story at full length—it is too sorrowful to relate—but you know how, at last, they fastened Him to the tree of the curse, then lifted Him up upon the Cross, dislocating all His bones as they dashed it into the socket in the earth which they had prepared to hold it. You have read of the fever which came upon Him till His mouth was dried up like an oven and His tongue clung to the roof of His mouth. Yet, after terrible as all this was, it was only the shell, the externals of His bodily suffering! The suffering of His soul was the very soul of His suffering. It was by the smiting of His body and the more terrible smiting of His soul—the suffering of His entire Manhood in unison with His Godhead—that He took away the sin of His people and opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all Believers!

Let me urge all of you who are diseased through sin to go for healing to those blessed wounds of Jesus! Long ago I learned the secret of this wondrous way of healing and, now, whenever my wounds bleed afresh, I go again to the—

**“Fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins”—**

for it is “with His stripes” that I am healed.

III. Now, thirdly, I want to say a little about THE HEALING HERE MENTIONED.

Our second text speaks of it as a thing that was done in the past—“By whose stripes you *were* healed,” so I would like you, my dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, to remember when you were healed years ago. Do you recollect the place where Jesus met with you? I remember, to a yard,

where He revealed Himself to my soul. Some of God's saints do not, but that does not matter in the least! A living man must have been born, at some time or other, even if he does not know when his birthday was. And as long as we have been healed, we need not be anxious to know when it took place. Still, it is helpful if we can recollect when God gave us healing through the wounds of His beloved Son.

Let me try to describe the process of healing. First of all, the stripes of Jesus heal us *by taking away the guilt of sin*. That is the all-important work. By nature and by practice, too, we are guilty. But when we look to Christ's stripes, we see our guilt laid upon Him and, as it cannot be in two places at one time, we know that it is not on us any longer. The moment that a poor sinner sees Christ bearing His burden of guilt and trusts Christ as his Burden-Bearer, his burden is all gone. We sang, a little while ago, that blessed hymn about Substitution in which one line says—

“Now there's no load for me.”

There *was* a load on me, but Jesus took my load upon Himself, so—

“Now there's no load for me.”

That was the grandest of all God's transactions, when He took sin off the sinner and laid it upon His sinless Son! As the Prophet Isaiah says, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, everyone to His own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” Or as the Apostle Paul says, “He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” Yes, the sinner who believes in Jesus is no longer accounted guilty by God! Though black as night, before, the moment he looks to Christ, he becomes white as the newly-fallen snow. Though he was a stranger to God and condemned for his sin, as soon as he believes, he becomes “accepted in the Beloved” and he may shout with the Apostle Paul, “Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us!”

The stripes of Jesus are also *an Infallible remedy for the disease of despair*. What thousands of men and women in this world have been ready to lay violent hands upon themselves while under a sense of sin! They never had even half a glimpse of comfort till they were told that Jesus took their sin and carried it, in His own body, up to the tree and there forever made an end of it, that they might be saved! I should like those who do not believe in Christ's substitution for sinners to have to deal with some troubled souls who have come to me. Ah, you may evoke, you may charm, you may use fine language and talk about the “moral influence” of the Sacrifice of Christ—but what use will all that be to those who are on the borders of despair? Will you take from us, who have to deal with sin-sick souls, the only balm we have to give them? I have done with Christianity, I have done with the Bible, I have done with all preaching if you can once convince me that the Substitution of Christ is not a fact! This Truth of God is, to me, the kernel, the core, the marrow, the vital essence of the Gospel! With this remedy in my hands, I can turn despair into confidence! But, take this away and there remains nothing for me to preach to the despondent and the despairing. Let the man who can

disprove it—if disproved it can be, and that I do not believe—recollect that he will have taken away from the sky of many of us the only sun that shines and from our life the only joy we have, for, if this Truth of God is gone, all is gone! O bleeding Savior, if You did not suffer in our place, it would have been better for us if we had never been born! But we know that Your stripes do heal the disease of despair, so we will still pass on the remedy to all whom we find in that terrible condition.

Bring the stripes of Jesus home to a man—they heal his soul of a thousand other ills, such as this—*the idea of trifling with sin*. That is a very common disease. It is incidental to sin that men sin and think nothing of it. “Oh,” they say, “What is sin? We are poor frail creatures and we make mistakes, but what of that?” That is man’s estimate of sin, but, O You bleeding Son of God, when we once get a clear view of Your wounds—

“Sin does like itself appear.”

See God’s only-begotten Son dying on the Cross that sin may be put away and you will never again think it a trifle! The Sacrifice of Calvary was upon a scale so vast that there is no human method of measuring it. God, the Creator, Provider and Judge of All, has taken upon Himself our Nature and made expiation for our sin by His own death in the midst of the utmost ignominy, shame and agony! Now, sin could not have been a little thing to need such an Atonement as that to put it away—and the man who believes in Jesus, henceforth looks on sin in the right light and never trifles with it again.

It also corrects his estimate as to eternal things. The other day he said, “What do I care about Heaven or Hell? What is the Day of Judgment to me? These are bugbears to frighten children! What is it to me whether God is angry or not? Eternal things are for old women to think about—I mind the main chance and make all the money I can.” Ah, but a sight of Christ on the Cross cures all that! Now eternity seems to be everything and time insignificant! Now to be reconciled to God, to live to His Glory seems to be the one thing necessary! The Cross of Christ is the great rectifier of human judgments. We trifle no longer with eternal things, but they become of infinite concern to us.

Then, next, *the wounds of Jesus cure us of the love of sin.* By nature, we love sin, but when we understand what sin cost Christ, we cannot love it any longer. If you had a very favorite knife which you prized much, but someone took it—and with it murdered your mother—you would loathe the instrument with which so foul a deed was done! And sin that you prized and played with has the blood of Christ on it. It cut Him to the very soul! So now you hate it. You say to yourself, “How can I love that cursed thing that made my Savior bleed?” There is no cure for the love of sin like the blood of Christ!

And it cures us, yet again, *because it awakens the dull, inanimate soul which had long been indifferent to God, into life and love.* When a man knows that Jesus died for him, he must love Him and serve Him. He cannot help doing so. You may tell him about the punishment of sin in terms of terror and you may describe the Glory of God in the most glowing language, but you cannot win a human heart. The deaf adder will not

hear with such charming, but, O Jesus, if You say to a sinner, with Your own lips, "I love you and I have given Myself for you," the iceberg-soul thaws into feeling, the granite begins to throb and the man says, "Love You, my Savior? Oh, how can I have lived so long without loving You? Love You?"

**“Yes, I love You, and adore—
Oh, for Grace to love You more!”**

Nothing cures the hearts of coldness towards God like a sense of blood-bought pardon—and that will dissolve a heart of stone!

And so, let me add there is no form of mischief which sin takes, but the stripes of Jesus, when we come to know them, will heal us of them. If you love the world too much—yes, if you love it at all—come and drink from my Master’s cup and it will make you feel yourself a stranger in the earth and you will set no store by this world any more. If you have been redeemed, you must have been a slave, so you will bow yourself in the dust with gratitude to your Redeemer. We see advertisements of medicines which are said to cure all diseases, but this is a medicine which *will* cure all ills. There is no form of the disease of sin upon which the stripes of Christ have not been tried—and the wondrous medicine has healed in every instance! Oh, whom has it not healed? We have seen the harlot healed and she has become a joyous Magdalene singing chastely and sweetly the love song unto Him that washed her from her sins in His own blood! We have seen the thief touched with this sacred heal-all and he has become a saint amidst the seraphim above! We have seen a persecutor who has but taken a draught of this medicine and he has begun to preach—and he has preached right on and he has said, ‘Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this Grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.’ Yes, we have seen men lying at the very gates of Hell, in their own estimation, despairing, feeling the serpents of remorse twisting their desperate coils about them everywhere and the venom coursing through their blood—and they have lifted up themselves and smiled—and the serpents have dropped off them, as they have looked to the Son of Man, as the bitten Israelites looked to the bronze serpent—and they have been healed at once! I would that any here who doubt this, would try it for themselves. “Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good,” for there never was a soul yet that received this medicine of the stripes of Jesus who was not thereby healed!

IV. Now, to close, WHAT IS NECESSARY IN ORDER TO GET THIS HEALING?

The answer is, first, *you must believe this to be true*. You must believe in the wondrous mystery of God Incarnate. There were many witnesses to Christ’s Incarnation and death and there are four narrators of the story of His life and Sacrifice. There were many who saw Jesus risen from the dead and saw Him till He rose to Heaven—they knew that they saw Him and many of them died as martyrs because they said so. They were simple, honest witnesses—not ecclesiastics trained in twisting language and inventing fictions. They were fishermen and, many of them, poor men, with a few of another rank, but they all saw Jesus and they saw His mi-

rales. They saw Him tread the sea and they saw Him die—and saw Him after He was risen—and they tracked Him till He went up into Glory! And they received His Spirit and, in His name, they worked miracles—and they were quite sure that what they testified was true. Some of us have believed their testimony and we have been healed by this medicine. And if you would be healed, you must receive it yourselves.

I think I hear you say, “Why, I have always believed the Bible to be true.” Well, then, next, *you must take the medicine*. What does the physician put at the beginning of his prescription? A great “R,” which stands for the Latin word, “*Recipe*.” What does that mean? “Take.” “Take of such-and-such a drug so much, and of another, so much.” That is what the Gospel says—“Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” That word I leave with you, *Recipe*—take—receive. Take what? Why, take the sufferings of Christ to be instead of your sufferings! Trust in Him to save you now because He died for all who trust Him! Rest yourself on Him now!

“Suppose I should trust Him and He should not save me?” Ah, Soul, that were to suppose Him to be a liar—and that cannot be! He that believes in Him is not condemned. Or, as He put it Himself, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” You have to come to Him just as you are and trust Him to save you, relying upon the merit of His blood and righteousness to stand for you before the Justice of God. Can you do that? “Why,” says one, “it seems so simple!” And are you going to quarrel with it because it is simple? Are you as foolish as Naaman who would not wash in Jordan because it was so simple? He wanted the Prophet to perform a great many ceremonies, but he would not at first bring himself down to wash, that he might be clean! Surely, my Friend, you are not such a fool as that! I will give you credit for more sense. “But do you really mean that if I trust my soul with Christ, believing He can save me, I am saved?” Mean it? Mean it? If that is not so, I am not saved myself, for this is where I stand! I have believed in Jesus Christ and rested myself on Him. and if He does not, cannot, or will not save me and I should ultimately be ashamed of my hope, I must be damned—for I have not a second hope! You have heard of the fox that had three holes to run to—but the Christian has only one—and if that is stopped up, “There is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

I do not know what you think about sermons. Perhaps you imagine that preaching is very easy work. It is not so to me. After having been laid aside sick, I tell you that if I could crawl to this pulpit on my hands and knees, it would be a delight to me to once again proclaim my Master’s Gospel! But, at the same time, I feel that I may have very few more opportunities of preaching and, as the Lord lives, before whom I stand, my anxious desire is that every time I preach, I may clear myself of the blood of all men—that if I step from this platform to my coffin, I may have told at least all I knew of the way of salvation! I wish you unconverted ones could bring yourselves to take this Word of God home to yourselves, for, some day you will hear the Gospel for the last time—you will listen to

the last invitation—and *this* may be the last time you will hear the story of the dying Savior.

Will you have Him now, or not? With some of you, it is now or never! Hark to the ticking of the clock! As the pendulum swings to and fro, it says to some of you, “Now or never! Now or never! Now or never! Now or never!” Will you trust your soul with Jesus? If you will, the soft persuasions of His blessed Spirit are guiding you that way. Cast your guilty soul on Him and you are saved! But if you will have another Savior, or be your own Savior and reject Christ, I am clear of your blood! And when we stand before that dread tribunal when Heaven and earth shall shake, and reel, and pass away like a mist before the rising sun, you will have no one but yourself to blame that you are lost! God save you, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 27:27-54.**

Verses 27-30. *Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered unto Him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped Him and put on Him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him, and mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head.* Ridicule is very painful to bear at any time and soldiers have been masters of that cruel art when they have been encouraged in it by their leaders. Remember, Brothers and Sisters, who it was that bore all this shameful treatment from these brutal men—your Lord and the angels’ Lord—the Maker of Heaven and earth who had deigned, for a while, to veil his Deity in human flesh! And there He stood, to be “set at nothing”—to be made nothing of—by those rough Roman legionaries, the creatures of His own hands whom He could have destroyed in a moment by a word or a wish! What matchless condescension our gracious Redeemer displayed even in His own deepest degradation and agony!

31, 32. *And after that they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him, and put His own raiment on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him. And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name; he they compelled to bear His Cross.* And I think that he must have been a glad man to have such an honor thrust upon him, yet you need not envy him, for there is a cross for you, also, to carry. Bear it cheerfully. If anything happens to you by way of ridicule for Christ’s sake and the Gospel’s, bow your shoulder willingly to the burden and, as knights are made by a stroke from a sword held in their sovereign’s hand, so shall you be made princes of the realm of Christ by bearing the Cross after Him!

33. *And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull.* We do not know why it was so called. There have been many conjectures concerning the name, but they are only conjectures. It was probably just a little knoll outside the gate of the city—the common place of execution for malefactors. The special points to be

noted are that Jesus suffered *outside* the gate, in the regular place of doom—the Tyburn or Old Bailey of Jerusalem—and so was numbered with the transgressors.

34. *They gave Him vinegar to drink mingled with gall.* A stupefying draught was usually given to the criminals who were crucified, to mitigate their agony. But Christ did not wish for that to be done in His case.

34. *And when He had tasted thereof, He would not drink.* He came to earth that He might suffer and He would retain all His faculties while suffering. He would have every nerve made into a straight road for the hot feet of pain to travel over, for He would drink, even to the last dregs, every drop that was in the cup of suffering for His people's sin.

35, 36. *And they crucified Him, and parted His garments, casting lots that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Prophet, They parted My garments among them, and upon My vesture did they cast lots. And sitting down they watched Him there.* Some of them gloating their cruel eyes with the sight of His suffering. Others watching Him out of mere curiosity. But there were some, hard by the Cross, who stood there to weep in sympathy with Him—a sword piercing through their own hearts while the Son of Man was being put to death.

37. *And set up over His head His accusation written, THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS.* And so He is. When will the Jews acknowledge Him as their King? They will do so one day. Perhaps they will do so when Christians begin to think and speak more kindly of them than they usually do. When the hardness of heart on our part towards them shall pass away, it may be that their hardness of heart towards Christ will also pass away. Long have they been despised, oppressed and persecuted in many lands, so that, by some means, they might be brought to look, in penitence, upon Him whom they crucified—and to claim Him as their Lord and Savior!

38-40. *Then were there two thieves crucified with Him, one on the right hand, and another on the left. And they that passed by reviled Him, wagging their heads and saying, You that destroyed the temple, and build it in three days, save Yourself. If You are the Son of God, come down from the Cross.* That is the devil's old Doctrine—"Save yourself. Look out for yourselves. Live for yourselves. Be selfish." But Christ could never act like that. He came to live and die for others. "Save yourself," was not the Doctrine that He either preached or practiced. And this is another old taunt of Satan and those who follow him—"If You are the Son of God, come down from the Cross and we will believe in You." There are plenty who would be willing to believe in Christ, but not in Christ Crucified. "He was a good Man," they say, "a great Prophet, no doubt far in advance of His times," and so on. But, if you talk like that, you are not on safe ground, for if Christ was not the Son of God, at any rate He professed to be and He made people think He was—and if He was not, He was an impostor and not a good Man at all! You must either repudiate Christ altogether, or take Him with His Cross—it must be Christ Crucified, or no Christ at all.

41-44. *Likewise also the chief priest mocking Him with the scribes and elders said, He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of*

Israel, let Him now come down from the Cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God, let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him: for He said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also. Those who were crucified with Him and were sharers of His misery.

44-46. *Which were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth. Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama Sabachthani? That is to say, My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? This was the climax of His grief—not merely to suffer intense agony of body, not only to be mocked alike by priests and people—but to be forsaken of His God. Yet this was necessary as a part of the penalty that was due to sin. God must turn away from anyone who has sin upon him, so, as sin was laid upon Christ, God had to turn His face even away from His well beloved Son because He was bearing His peoples' sins upon the accursed tree.*

47-49. *Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calls for Elijah. And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave Him to drink. The rest said, Let Him be, let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him. Mocking Him even in His prayers, for they well knew the difference between Eloi and Elijah!*

50. *Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. You know what He said when He cried with a loud voice—"It is finished."*

51-54. *And, behold, the veil of the Temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks split; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept, arose, and came out of the graves after His Resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. Now when the centurion, and they that were with Him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquakes, and these things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly that was the Son of God.*

**HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—439, 819.
AND FROM "SACRED SONGS AND SOLOS"—14.**

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

SARAH AND HER DAUGHTERS

NO. 1633

**DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 28, 1881,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bore you.”
Isaiah 51:2.***

***“Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters you are,
as long as you do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.”
1 Peter 3:6.***

I DESIRE to thank God for having had the privilege of preaching in Exeter Hall, yesterday, to a large congregation from the whole of the second verse of the 51st of Isaiah—“Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bore you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.” [See No. 1596, *HEARKEN AND LOOK—OR, ENCOURAGEMENT FOR BELIEVERS* preached on behalf of the Baptist Missionary Society on the morning of April 27, 1881.] On that occasion I confined my remarks to Abraham and tried to make prominent the facts that God called him while he was a heathen man, one man and a lone man—and yet He blessed him and made him the founder of His people, multiplying his seed as the stars and as the sand of the seashore. I devoutly beseech the Lord to accept my testimony to His power and to increase the faith of the many of His servants to whom I spoke on that occasion. His Holy Spirit gave me the word—may He cause His saints to feed upon it!

Now, I never like to do an injustice to anybody and I feel that I did not, in that sermon, speak sufficiently about Sarah, though I did not quite forget her. Let us make up for our omissions. If we had Abraham at Exeter Hall yesterday morning, we will have Sarah at the Tabernacle, tonight, and maybe we shall learn a lesson from her holy character as well as from that of her husband. And the two lessons combined may go to the perfecting of each other. May our great Teacher, the Holy Spirit, now instruct us! To begin with, let us note what a happy circumstance it is when a godly, gracious man has an equally godly and gracious wife.

It is ill when there is a difference, a radical difference, between husband and wife—when one fears God and the other has no regard for Him. What a pain it is to a Christian woman to be yoked with an unbelieving husband! In a case which I remember, the husband lived all his life indifferent to Divine things, while the wife was an earnest Christian woman and saw all her children grow up in the ways of the Lord. The father lived unregenerate and died without giving any testimony of a change of heart. When our Sister speaks of him, it is with fearful anguish. She does not know what to say, but leaves the matter in the hands of God, often sighing, “O that by a word or a look I could have been enabled to indulge a hope that my poor husband looked to Jesus at the last.”

The same must be the case of a husband who has an ungodly wife. However much God may bless him in all other respects, there seems to be

a great miss there—as if a part of the sun were eclipsed—that a part of life which should be all light is left in thick darkness. Oh, let those of us who have the happiness of being joined together in the Lord thank and bless God every time we remember each other! Let us pray God, that having such a privilege—that our prayers are not hindered by irreligious partners—we may never hinder our prayers ourselves! God grant that we may give unto His name great glory because of His choice favor to us in this respect.

Abraham had cause to praise God for Sarah and Sarah was grateful for Abraham. I have not the slightest doubt that Sarah's character owed its excellence very much to Abraham. I should not wonder, however, if we discover, when all things are revealed, that Abraham owed as much to Sarah! They probably learned from each other. Sometimes the weaker comforted the stronger and often the stronger sustained the weaker. I should not wonder if a mutual interchange of their several Graces tended to make them both rich in the things of God. Perhaps Abraham had not been all that Abraham was if Sarah had not been all that Sarah was.

Our first text bids us, "Look to Sarah," and we do look on her and we thank God if we, like Abraham, are favored with holy consorts, whose amiable tempers and characters tend to make us better servants of God. We notice, next, as we look to Sarah, that God does not forget the lesser lights. Abraham shines like a star of the first magnitude and we do not, at first sight, observe that other star with light so bright and pure, shining with milder radiance but with kindred luster, close at his side. The light of Mamre, which is known under the name of Abraham, resolves itself into a double star when we apply the telescope of reflection and observation. To the common eye, Abraham is the sole character and ordinary people overlook his faithful spouse, but God does not!

Our God never omits the good who are obscure. You may depend upon it that there is no such difference in the love of God towards different persons as should make Him fix His eyes only upon those that are strong and omit those who are weak. Our eyes spy out the great things, but God's eyes are such that nothing is great with Him and nothing is little. He is infinite and, therefore, nothing bears any comparison to Him. You remember how it is written that He who counts the stars and calls them by name also binds up the broken in heart, and heals all their wounds. He who treasures the names of His Apostles, notes, also, the women that followed in their train. He who marks the brave confessors and the bold preachers of the Gospel also remembers those helpers who labor quietly in the Gospel in places of retirement into which the hawk's eyes of history seldom pries.

Let, therefore, those here present who count themselves to be of the tribe of Benjamin, to be little in Israel, never be discouraged on that account—for the Lord is too great to despise the little ones! You are not forgotten of God, O you who are overlooked by men! The Lord's eyes are upon innumerable the creeping things in the great sea as well as upon leviathan—He will observe you. If He sends the deluging showers that make strong the cedars, which are full of sap and adorn the brow of Lebanon, so does He send to each tiny blade of grass its own drop of dew. God forgets

not the less in His care for the greater! Sarah was in life covered with the shield of the Almighty as well as Abraham, her husband—in death she rested in the same tomb—in Heaven she has the same joy! In the Book of the Lord she has the same record!

Next, notice that it would be well for us to imitate God in this—in not forgetting the lesser lights. I do not know that great men are often good examples. I am sorry when, because men have been clever and successful, they are held up to imitation, though their motives and morals have been questionable. I would sooner men were stupid and honest than clever and tricky! It is better to act rightly and fail altogether than succeed by falsehood and cunning. I would sooner bid my son imitate an honest man who has no talent and whose life is unsuccessful, than point him to the most clever and greatest that ever lived—whose life has become a brilliant success—but whose principles are condemnable.

Learn not from the great but from the good! Be not dazzled by success, but follow the safer light of truth and right! But so it is that men mainly observe that only which is written in big letters. But you know the choicest part of God's books are printed in small characters. They who would only know the rudiments may spell out the words in large type which are for babes, but those who want to be fully instructed must sit down and read the small print of God, given us in lives of saints whom most men neglect! Some of the choicest virtues are not so much seen in the great as in the quiet, obscure life. Many a Christian woman manifests a glory of character that is to be found in no public man. I am sure that many a flower that is "born to blush unseen" and, as we think, to "waste its fragrance on the desert air," is fairer than the beauties which reign in the conservatory and are the admiration of all!

God has ways of producing very choice things on a small scale. As rare pearls and precious stones are never great masses of rock, but always lie within a narrow compass, so full often the fairest and richest virtues are to be found in the humblest individuals. A man may be too great to be good, but he cannot be too little to be gracious. Do not, therefore, always be studying Abraham, the greater character. Does not the text say, "Look unto Abraham, your father, *and* unto Sarah that bore you"? You have not learned the full lesson of patriarchal life until you have been in the tent with Sarah, as well as among the flocks with her husband.

Furthermore, another reflection arises, namely, that faith reveals itself in various ways. Faith makes one person this and another that. Faith in Noah makes him a shipbuilder and the second of the world's great fathers. Faith in Abraham makes him a pilgrim and a stranger. Faith in Moses makes him plague Egypt and feed a *nation* for 40 years in the wilderness. Faith in David makes him kill a giant, save a kingdom and ascend a throne. Faith in Samson makes him slay a thousand Philistines and in Rahab it makes her save *two* Israelites. Faith has many ways of working and it works according to the condition and position of the person in whom it dwells. Sarah does not become Abraham, nor does Abraham become Sarah.

Faith in Isaac does not make him the same royal man as Abraham—he is always tame and gentle rather than great and noble—he comes in like a

valley between the two great hills of Abraham and Jacob. Isaac is Isaac and Isaac has such virtue as becomes him whom the Lord loved. And Jacob, too, is Jacob and not his father. He is active, energetic and far-seeing. God does not, by His Grace, lift us out of our place. A man is made gentle, but he is not made a fool. A woman is made brave, but Divine Grace never made her masterful and domineering. Grace does not make the child so self-willed that he disobeys his father—it is something else that does that. Grace does not take away from the father his authority to command the child. It leaves us where we were, in a certain sense, as to our position, and the fruit it bears is congruous to that position.

Thus Sarah is beautified with the virtues that adorn a woman, while Abraham is adorned with all the excellences which are becoming in a godly man. According as the virtue is required, so is it produced. If the circumstances require courage, God makes His servant heroic. If the circumstances require great modesty and prudence, modesty and prudence are given. Faith is a wonderful magician's wand! It works marvels, it achieves impossibilities, it grasps the incomprehensible. Faith can be used anywhere—in the highest Heaven touching the ear of God and winning our desire of Him—and in the lowest places of the earth among the poor and fallen, cheering and upraising them. Faith will quench the violence of fire, turn the edge of the sword, snatch the prey from the enemy and turn the alien to flight.

There is nothing which it cannot do. It is a principle available for all times, to be used on all occasions, suitable to be used by all men for all holy ends. Those who have been taught the sacred art of believing God are the truly learned—no degree of the foremost university can equal in value that which comes with much boldness in the faith. We shall see, tonight, that if Abraham walks before God and is perfect—if he smites the kings that have carried Lot captive, if he does such deeds of prowess as become a man—the same faith makes Sarah walk before God in her perfectness and she performs the actions which become her womanhood. And she, too, is written among the worthies of faith who magnified the Lord!

We are led by our second text to look at the fruit of faith in Sarah. There were two fruits of faith in Sarah—she did well and she was not afraid with any amazement. We will begin with the first. It is said of her that SHE DID WELL, “whose daughters you are as long as you do well.” She did well as a wife. She was all her husband could desire and, when, at the age of 127 years, she at last fell asleep, it is said that Abraham not only mourned for her, but the old man wept for her most true and genuine tears of sorrow. He wept for the loss of one who had been the life of his house. As a wife she did well. All the duties that were incumbent upon her as the queen of that traveling company were performed admirably and we find no fault mentioned concerning her in that respect.

She did well as a hostess. It was her duty, as her husband was given to hospitality, to be willing to entertain his guests. And the one instance recorded is, no doubt, the representation of her common mode of procedure. Though she was truly a princess, yet she kneaded the dough and prepared the bread for her husband's guests. They came suddenly, but she had no complaint to make. She was, indeed, always ready to lay herself

out to perform that which was one of the highest duties of a God-fearing household in those primitive times. She did well, also, as a mother. We are sure she did, because we find that her son Isaac was so excellent a man—and you may say what you will, but in the hands of God the *mother* forms the boy's character!

Perhaps the father unconsciously influences the girls, but the mother has evidently most influence over the sons. Any of us can bear witness that it is so in our own case. There are exceptions, of course, but for the most part, the mother is the queen of the son and he looks up to her with infinite respect if she is at all such as can be respected. Sarah, by faith, did her work with Isaac, well, for from the very first, in his yielding to his father when he was to be offered up as a sacrifice, we see in him evidence of a holy obedience and faith in God which were seldom equaled—and were never surpassed. Besides that, it is written that God said of Abraham, "I know Abraham, that he will command his children and his household after him."

There is one trait in Abraham's character that, wherever he went, he set up an altar unto the Lord. His rule was a tent and an altar. Dear Friends, do you always make these two things go together—a tent and an altar? Where you dwell, is there sure to be family worship there? I am afraid that many families neglect it and often it is so because husband and wife are not agreed about it. And I feel sure that there would not have been that invariable setting up of the worship of God by Abraham in his tent unless Sarah had been as godly as himself. She did well, also, as a Believer, and that is no mean point. As a Believer, when Abraham was called to separate himself from his kindred, Sarah went with him. She would adopt the separated life, too, and the same caravan which traveled across the desert with Abraham for its master had Sarah for its mistress.

She continued with him, believing in God with perseverance. Though they had no city to dwell in, she continued the roaming life with her husband, looking for "a city which has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God." She believed God's promise with all her heart, for though she laughed, once, because when the promise neared its realization it overwhelmed her—it was but a slip for the moment, for it is written by the Apostle in the 11th of Hebrews—"Through faith, also, Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised." It was not by nature, but by *faith*, that Isaac was born, the child of another sort of laughter than that of doubt—the child according to the promise of God. She was a believing woman, then, and she lived a believing life and so she did well.

She did well to her parents, well to her husband, well to her household, well to her guests, well before her God. Oh, that all professing Christian people had a faith that showed itself in doing well! But never let it be forgotten that though we preach faith, faith, faith, as the great means of salvation, yet we never say that you are saved unless there is a *change* worked in you and good works are *produced* in you, for "faith without works is dead, being alone." Faith saves, but it is the faith which *causes* men to do well. And if there is a faith (and there is such a faith) which

leaves a man just what he was and permits him to indulge in sin, it is the faith of devils!

Perhaps not so good as that, for, “the devils believe and tremble,” whereas these hypocrites profess to believe and yet dare to defy God! They seem to have no fear of Him whatever! Sarah had this testimony from the Lord, that she did well. And you are her daughters, all of you who believe, if you do well. Be no discredit to your queenly mother. Take care that you honor your spiritual parentage and maintain the high prestige of the elect family.

The point that I am to dwell upon just now is this—that she proved her faith by a second evidence—SHE WAS “NOT AFRAID WITH ANY AMAZE-MENT.” The text says, “whose daughters you are, as long as you do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.” She was calm and quiet and was not put in fear by any terror. There were several occasions in which she might have been much disquieted and put about. The first was in the breaking up of her house life. You see, her husband, Abraham, gets a call to go from Ur of the Chaldees. Well, it is a considerable journey and they move to Haran. There are some women—unbelieving women—who would not have understood that.

Why does he want to go away from the land in which he lives and from all our kindred, away to Haran? That would have been her question had she not been a partaker in her husband’s faith. An unbelieving woman would have said, “A call from God? Nonsense! Fanaticism! I do not believe it!” And when she saw that her husband would go, she would have been afraid with great amazement. When Abraham went to Haran with his father Terah, and Terah died in Haran, and then God called him to go further, they had to cross the Euphrates and get right away into a land which he knew nothing of, and this must have been a still sterner trial.

When they packed up their goods on the camels and on the asses and started with their train of servants and sheep and cattle, she might very naturally have said, if she had been an unbelieving woman, “Where are you going?” “I do not know,” says Abraham. “Why are you going? What are you going to get?” “I do not know,” says Abraham, “God has bid me go, but where I am going, I do not know. And what I am going for, I cannot exactly say, except that God has said, ‘Get you out from your country and your kindred, and I will bless you and multiply you, and give you a land wherein you shall dwell.’” We do not read that Sarah ever asked these questions, or was ever troubled at all about them. The things were put on the camels’ backs and away she journeyed, for God had called her husband to go and she resolved to go with him. Through floods or flames, it mattered not to her—she felt safe with her husband’s God and calmly journeyed on. She was not afraid with any amazement.

Then, though we do not hear much about her, we know that all those years she had to live in a *tent*. You know the man is out abroad attending to his business and he does not know much about the discomforts of home, not even in such homes as ours. But if you were called to give up your houses and go and live in *tents*, well, the master might not mind it, but the mistress would! It is a very trying life for a housewife. Sarah traveled from day to day and what with the constant moving of the tent, as

the cattle had to be taken to fresh pastures, it must have been a life of terrible discomfort. Yet Sarah never said a word about it. Up tomorrow morning; every tent-pin up; and all the canvas rolled away, for you must move to another station. The sun scorches like an oven, but you must ride across the plain, or if the night is cold with frost and heavy dews, still, canvas is your only wall and roof.

Remember, they were dwelling in tents as pilgrims and strangers, not for one day, or two, nor for a few days in a year, but for scores of years at a stretch! It was bravely done by this good woman that she was not afraid with any amazement. Besides, they did not live in a country where they were all alone, or surrounded by friends, for the tribes around them were all of other religions and of other tastes and ways—and they would have slain Abraham and killed the whole company if it had not been for a sort of fear that fell upon them—by which Jehovah seemed to say to them, “Touch not My anointed and do My Prophets no harm.” The Patriarch and his wife dwelt in the midst of enemies and yet they were not afraid! But if she had not been a believing woman, she must have often been afraid with great amazement!

And then there was a special time when the old man, Abraham, put on his harness and went to war. He hears that Chedorlaomer has come down with tributary kings and swept away the cities of the plain and taken captive his nephew, Lot. Abraham says, “I will go and deliver him.” And she might have said, “My husband, you are an old man. Those gray locks should not be touched with the stains of warfare.” She said nothing of the sort, but doubtless cheered him on and smiled as he invited some of his neighbors that dwelt near to go with him. She is under no distress that her husband is gone and all the herdsmen and servants round about the tents all gone, so that she is left alone with her women servants. No, she sits at home as a queen and fears no robbers, calmly confident in her God!

Abraham has gone to battle and she fears not for him. And she needs not, for he smites the kings and they are given like driven stubble to his bow. And he comes back laden with spoil. God was pleased with Sarah’s quiet faith, because in troublous times she was not afraid with any amazement. Then there came, a little while after, that great trial of faith which must have touched Sarah, though its full force fell on her husband. She observed the sudden disappearance of her husband and his servant. “Where is your master? He does not come into breakfast.” The servants say, “He was up a great while before day and he has gone with the servant, and with the ass, and with Isaac.”

He had not told her, for Abraham had struggled enough with himself to take Isaac away to the mountain and offer him! He could not bear to repeat the struggle in Sarah. He was gone without telling Sarah of his movements. This was a new state of things for her. He did not return all day. “Where has your master gone? I never knew him go away, before, without informing me. And where is Isaac?” Oh, that Isaac! How she feared for her jewel, her delight, the child of promise, the wonder of her old age! He did not come home that night, nor Abraham either. Nor the next day, nor the next. Three days passed and I can hardly picture the

anxiety that would have fallen upon any one of you if you had been Sarah, unless you had enjoyed Sarah's faith—for by *faith* in this trying case she was not afraid with any amazement.

I dare say it took three days for Abraham to come back, so that it was nearly a week, and no Abraham and no Isaac. One would have thought she would have wandered about, crying, "Where is my husband, and where is my son?" But not so. She calmly waited and said within herself, "If he has gone, he has gone upon some necessary errand, and he will be under God's protection. And God, who promised to bless him and to bless his seed will not suffer any evil to harm him. So she rested quietly, when others would have been in dire dismay. She was not afraid with any amazement. We hear so little said about Sarah that I am obliged, thus, to picture what I feel she must have been, because human nature is so like itself and the effect of events upon us is very like the effect which would have been produced upon the mind of Sarah.

Now, this is a point in which Christian women and, for that matter, Christian men, also, should seek to imitate Sarah. We should not let our hearts be troubled, but rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him. What is this virtue? It is a calm, quiet trusting in God. It is freedom from fear, such as is described in another place in these words—"He shall not be afraid of evil tidings. His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." Or, as we read in David's words, the other night, "Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff they comfort me." It is composure of mind, freedom from anxiety, the absence of fretfulness and clean deliverance from alarm, so that, whatever happens, trepidation does not seize upon the spirit, but the heart keeps on at its own quiet pace, delighting itself in a faithful God.

This is the virtue which is worth a king's ransom and Sarah had it! "Whose daughters you are if you are not afraid with any amazement." When is this virtue to be exercised by us? Well, it should be exercised at all times. If we are not self-composed when we are happy we are not likely to be calm when we are sad. I notice that if I am at all pleased with the praise of a friend, I become in that degree open to be grieved by the censure of a foe. By so much as you are elated by prosperity, by so much are you likely to be depressed when adversity comes. But if you are calm, quiet, happy—no, more than that—when everything goes well, then you will be calm, quiet, happy—not less than that—when everything goes ill. To keep up an equable frame of mind is a thing to aim at, even as the gardener desires an even temperature for his choice flowers.

You ask, Who are to exercise this virtue? We are all to do so! But the text is specially directed to the sisterhood. I suppose women are exhorted to it because some of them are rather excitable, a little hysterical and apt to be fearfully depressed and utterly carried away. I am not saying that this fault is general or common among women, neither am I *blaming* them, but only stating the fact that some are thus afflicted and it is a happy, happy thing if they can master it so that they are not afraid with any amazement. But this virtue especially serves in time of trouble when a very serious trial threatens us. Then the Christian is not to say, "What shall I do? I shall never endure it. I cannot live through it. Surely God has

forgotten me. This trouble will crash me. I shall die of a broken heart." No. No. No! Do not talk so! My dear Friend, do not talk so.

If you are God's child do not even *think* so. Try in patience to lift up your head and remember Sarah, "whose daughters you are if you are not afraid with any amazement." And so must it be in times of personal sickness. How many are the pains and sufferings that fall to the lot of the sisterhood! But if you have faith, you will not be afraid with any amazement. I saw one, the other day, who was about to suffer from the surgeon's knife. It was a serious operation, about which all stood in doubt. but I was happy to see her as composed in the prospect of it as though it had been a pleasure rather than a pain. Thus calmly resigned should a Christian be! I went to see, yesterday, an aged Sister—a member of this Church, close upon fourscore years of age. She is dying with dropsy and, being unable to lie down in bed, is obliged to always sit up—a posture which allows little or no rest.

When I entered her room she welcomed me most heartily, which, perhaps was not amazing, for she is greatly attached to her minister. The wonder lay in the fact that she expressed herself as being full of happiness, full of delight, full of expectancy of being with Christ! I went to comfort *her* but she comforted me! What could I say? She talked of the goodness of God with an eye as full of pleasure as if she had been a maiden speaking to her young companion of her marriage day! Our Sister used to sit just there, in yonder pew. I seem to see her sitting there now, but she will soon sit among the bright ones in Heaven! I was charmed to see one with such evident marks of long-continued pain upon her face, but with such sweet serenity there, too! Yes, with *more* than serenity—with unspeakable joy in the Lord—such, as I fear, some in health and strength have not yet learned! A Christian woman should not be afraid with any amazement either in adversity or in sickness, but her holy patience should prove her to be a true daughter of Sarah and Abraham.

Christian women in Peter's day were subject to persecution as much as their husbands. They were shut up in prison, scourged, tortured, burned, or slain with the sword. One holy woman in the early days of the Church was tossed upon the horns of bulls. Another was made to sit in a red-hot iron chair. Thus were they tortured, not accepting deliverance. In the early days of martyrdom the women played the man as well as the men! They defied the tyrant to do his worst upon their mortal bodies, for their conquering spirits laughed at every torment! If persecuting times should come again, or if they are here, already, in some measure, O daughters of Sarah, do well and be not afraid with any amazement! And so, if you should be called to some stern duty; if you should be bound to do what you feel you cannot do, remember that anybody can do what he *can* do. It is the believing man who does what he *cannot* do. We achieve impossibilities by the power of the Almighty God. Be not afraid, then, of any duty, but believe that you will be able to do it, for Grace will be sufficient for you.

At the last, in the prospect of death, my dear Friends, may you not be afraid with any amazement! Oftentimes a deathbed is vantage ground for a Christian. Where others show their fear and, sometimes their terror,

there should the Believer show his peacefulness and his happy expectancy, not afraid with any amazement, whatever the form of death may be! Now, what is the excellence of this virtue? I shall answer that question by saying it is due to God that we should not be afraid with any amazement. Such a God as we have ought to be trusted. Under the shadow of such a wing, fear becomes a sin! If God were other than He is, we might be afraid. But while He is such a God, it is due to Him that fear is banished. Peacefulness is true worship. Quiet under alarming conditions is devotion. He worships best who is most calm in evil times.

Moreover, the excellence of this virtue is that it is most impressive to men. I do not think anything is more likely to impress the ungodly than the quiet peace of mind of a Christian in danger or near death. If we can be happy, then, our friends will ask, "What makes them so calm?" Nor is the usefulness confined to others. It is most useful to ourselves, for he who can be calm in time of trouble will be most likely to make his way through it. When you once become afraid, you cannot judge wisely as to your best course. You generally do wrong when you are frightened out of your confidence in God. When the heart begins palpitating, then the whole system is out of order for the battle of life. Be calm and wait for your opportunity. Napoleon's victories were, to a large extent, due to the serenity of that masterly warrior and, depend upon it, it is so with you Christian people—you will win if you can wait. Do not be in a hurry. Consider what you should do.

Do not be so alarmed as to make haste. Be patient; be quiet; wait God's time and so wait your own time. Wait upon God to open your mouth. Ask Him to guide your hand and to do everything for you. Calmness of mind is the mother of prudence and discretion. It gives the firm foothold which is necessary for the warrior when he is about to deal a victorious blow. Those who cannot be amazed by fear shall live to be amazed with mercy! "How," asks one, "can we obtain it?" That is the question! Remember, it is an outgrowth of *faith* and you will have it in proportion as you have faith! Have faith in God and you will not be afraid with any amazement.

Very early in my preaching days I had faith in God in times of thunderstorms. When I have walked out to preach, it has happened that I have been wet through and through with the storm and yet I have felt no annoyance from the thunder and lightning. On one occasion I turned in, by reason of the extreme severity of the rain, to a little cottage and I found a woman there with a child who seemed somewhat relieved when she had admitted me, but previously she had been crying bitterly with sheer alarm and terror. "Why," she said, "this is a little round lodge house and the lightning comes in at every window. There is no place into which I can get to hide it from my eyes."

I explained to her that I liked to see the lightning, for it showed me that an explosion was all over and, since I had lived to see the flash, it was clear it could now do me no harm. I told her that to hear the thunder was a splendid thing, it was only God saying, "It is all over." If you live to see the lightning flash, there is nothing to be afraid of—you would have been dead and never have seen it if it had been sent to kill you! I tried to console her on religious grounds and I remember well praying with her and

making her happy as a bird! It was my being so calm and quiet and praying with her that cheered her up and, by God's Grace, when I went on my way I left her in peace. You may depend upon it, my dear Friends, that unless our own souls have peace we cannot communicate it to others.

In this way we must believe in God about everything. It so happened that about that matter—the thunder and lightning—I did believe in God up to the very last degree and, therefore, I could not be alarmed on that score. So if you believe in God upon any other subject, whatever it is, you will have perfect peace with God about it. If you can believe God when you are in a storm at sea, that He holds the water in the hollow of His hand, you will be at peace about the tempest. It is the thing that troubles you that you must believe about—and when Faith makes an application of her hand to the particular trial—then will peace of mind come to you.

This holy calm comes, also, from walking with God. No spot is so serene as the secret place of the tabernacles of the Most High. Commune with God and you will forget fear. Keep up daily fellowship with Christ in prayer, in praise, in service, in searching the Word, in submitting your heart to the work of the eternal Spirit—and as you walk with God, you will find yourself calm. You know how our poet puts it—

***“Oh for a closer walk with God,
A calm and heavenly frame.”***

These go together. If you would feed upon certain Truths of God which will produce this calm of mind, remember, first, that God is full of love and, therefore, nothing that God sends can harm His child. Take everything from the Lord as a token of love, even though it is a stroke of His rod, or a cut of His knife. Everything from that dear hand must mean love, for He has said, “I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands.” When you accept every affliction as a love token, then will your fear be ended.

Next, remember the faithfulness of God to His promises and the fact that there is a promise for your particular position. The Lord is, at this moment, under promise to you, and that promise is registered in His Book. Search it out and then grasp it, and say, “He must keep it! He cannot break His Word.” He has said, “In six troubles I will be with you.” Have you got to number six? He has said, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you,” and how can He run back from His Word? If He does not leave you nor forsake you, what can you fear? Whatever is coming—poverty, sickness, shame, slander—if all the devils in Hell are loosed and they are all coming up against us at once, yet, if the Lord is with us, we will smite them hip and thigh and send them back to the infernal deep as quickly as the swine of old ran down a steep place into the sea and were drowned in the waters!

“Oh,” says the devil, “I can overcome *you*.” We say nothing to him but this—“You know your Master! You know your Master. Lie down, Sir! You know your Master and that Master is our Covenant Head, our Husband and our Lord.” Neither the world, the flesh, nor the devil shall be able to overcome us since we have the promise of a faithful God to protect us! Many of you here tonight have gray hair, or bald heads. I have always such a large proportion of aged people in my congregation that I can say to you what I might not say to the young folk. We, dear Friends, ought not to be afraid, for trials are no novelties with *us*! We have smelt powder and

been grimed with the dust of the conflict times out of mind! We ought not to be troubled—we have been to sea before.

And has not the Lord helped us? Tell it for His honor! He has been a very present help. He has borne us through such things that to doubt Him would be an impudent slander upon His Character! As for myself—and I suppose the language I now use would come from the lips of many here—my way has been strewn with wonders of Divine mercy! Trials have abounded and I am glad that they have—they have been opportunities for the display of Divine Grace. Labors have been attempted of which some said, “these are visionary schemes.” But God has always been better than our faith! We have never been confounded and I think we ought, by this time, to have learned that trusting in God is the most reasonable thing that we ever do!

There are speculations in business, risks, even, in the most solid trading. But there is no speculation in believing God, no risk in trusting in Him! He that hangs the world upon nothing and yet keeps it in its place, can bring His people to have nothing and yet to possess all things! He that makes yon arch of Heaven stand secure without a buttress or a prop—a mighty arch such as no human engineer could ever contrive—He can make us stand without helpers, without friends, without riches, without strength and stand, too, when all other things except that which God supports shall have come down in the final crash! “Trust you in the Lord forever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.”

I pray for you who are most timid, that from this day you may be true daughters of Sarah and not be afraid with any amazement. God bless you with this gracious help and you will praise His name. Amen.

THIS SERMON is revised at Mentone, and the preacher is happy to say that he is receiving rapid restoration through perfect rest. The Lord’s goodness in moving friends to send in help to the various enterprises and His Grace in blessing special services, have kept the pastor’s mind free from anxiety, and thus supplied the best form of repose. Friends who read these sermons regularly are reminded that a Bazaar will be held at the Tabernacle during the first week of the coming year to provide further buildings for the Girls’ Orphanage. It is hoped that each reader will have a brick in the wall. Monies are to be sent to C. H. Spurgeon, Beulah Hill, Upper Norwood. And parcels of goods to V. J. Charlesworth, The Orphanage, Stockwell, London.

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HINDRANCES TO PRAYER

NO. 1192

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 13, 1874,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“That your prayers be not hindered.”
1 Peter 3:7.***

TO many persons this discourse will have but little reference because they do not pray. I fear, also, there are some others whose prayers are so worthless that if they were hindered it would be of no very material consequence. It is even possible that their being forced to omit them might arouse them out of a self-righteous lethargy. Merely to bow the knee in formality, to go through a form of devotion in a careless or half-hearted manner is rather to mock God than to worship Him. It would be a terrible theme for contemplation to consider how much of vain repetition and heartless praying the Lord is wearied with from day to day. I would, however, most solemnly remind those who do not truly pray that the wrath of God abides on them! He who never seeks for mercy has certainly never found it. Conscience acknowledges it to be a righteous thing with God that He should not give to those who will not ask.

It is the smallest thing that can be expected of us that we should humbly ask for the favors we need and if we refuse to do so, it is but right that the door of Divine Grace should be closed so long as men refuse to knock. Prayer is no hard requirement—it is the natural *duty* of a creature to its Creator—the simplest homage which human need can pay to Divine liberality. Those who refuse to render it may well expect that one of these days, when in dire extremity they begin to bemoan their folly, they will hear a voice from their insulted God, saying, “I called and you refused; I stretched out My hands and no man regarded; therefore I, also, will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear comes.”

The old story tells of a monarch who gave to a favorite courtier a ring which he might send to her in case he should be under her displeasure, promising that at the sight thereof he should be restored to favor. Later, when the courtier was implicated in treason, the Queen anxiously awaited the ring, but that ring was never shown, though long waited for, and it was little wonder that, concluding the offender to be stubbornly rebellious, a sentence of execution was carried out. If a sinner will not plead the name of Jesus to which the promise of forgiveness is appended—if he will not bend his knee in penitential prayer and ask for pardon at the hand of God, none will wonder that he perishes for his folly. None will be able to accuse the Lord of too great a severity when He casts away forever all prayerless souls! O you who never pray, I tremble for you! Would to God you would tremble for yourselves, for there is cause enough for it!

To those who pray, prayer is a most precious thing, for it is the channel by which priceless blessings come to them, the window through which their needs are supplied by a gracious God. To Believers, prayer is the great means of soul enrichment—it is the vessel which trades with Heaven and comes home from the celestial country laden with treasures of far greater worth than ever Spanish galleon brought from the land of gold. Indeed, to true Believers, prayer is so invaluable that the danger of hindering it is used by Peter as a motive why, in their marriage relationships and household concerns, they should behave themselves with great wisdom. He bids the husband “dwell” with his wife “according to knowledge,” and render loving honor to her, lest their united prayers should be hindered! Anything which hinders prayer must be wrong. If any management of the family, or lack of management, is injuring our power in prayer, there is an urgent demand for an alteration. Husband and wife should pray together, as joint-heirs of Divine Grace, and any temper or habit which hinders this is evil.

The text would be most appropriately used to stimulate Christians to diligence in *family* prayer, and though I shall not so use it on this occasion, it is not because I undervalue the institution, for I esteem it so highly that no language of mine can adequately express my sense of its value. The house in which there is no family altar can scarcely expect a Divine blessing. If the Lord does not cover our habitation with His wings, our family is like a house without a roof. If we do not seek the Lord’s guidance, our household is a ship without a pilot. And unless guarded by devotion, our family will be a field without a hedge. The mournful behavior of many of the children of professing parents is mainly due to the neglect or the coldness of family worship—and many a judgment has, I doubt not—fallen upon households because the Lord is not duly honored therein.

Eli’s sin still brings with it the visitations of a jealous God. That word of Jeremiah bears hard upon prayerless families, “Pour out Your fury upon the households that call not upon Your name.” His mercy visits every house where night and morning vows are paid, but where these are neglected, sin is incurred. In the good old Puritan times it was said that if you had walked down Cheapside you would have heard in every house the voice of a Psalm at a certain hour of the morning and evening, for there was no house, then, of professed Christians without family prayer! I believe that the bulwark of Protestantism against Popery is family worship. Take that away—and the instruction of children in the fear of God—and you lay this country open, again, to the theory that prayer is most acceptable in the parish Church.

And then you get into the sacredness of *places*. Then, taking away the priesthood from the father of the family—who ought to be the priest in his own house—you make an opening for a superstitious priesthood and, leaving the teaching with these pretenders, mischief innumerable are introduced! If neglect of family prayer should become general throughout

our Churches it will be a dark day for England! Children who observe that their parents are practically prayerless in the household will grow up indifferent to religion—and in many cases will be utter worldlings—if not altogether atheists. This is a matter about which the Church cannot make any inquisitorial inquiry—it must be left to the good sense and the Christian spirit of the heads of households! I therefore speak all the more strongly and pray you to order things at home that family prayer is not hindered.

At this time, however, I shall use the text for another purpose, and apply it to the hindrances which beset *private* prayer. Our prayers may be hindered thus—first, we may be hindered *from* prayer. Secondly, we may be hindered *in* prayer. And, thirdly, we may be hindered *from our prayers being effective with God*.

I. First, there is such a thing as being HINDERED FROM PRAYER—and that may be done *by falling into a generally lax, lukewarm condition in reference to the things of God*. When a man becomes cold, indifferent and careless, one of the first things that will suffer will be his devotion. When a sick man is in a decline his lungs suffer, and his voice—and so when a Christian is in a spiritual decline the breath of prayer is affected—and the cry of supplication becomes weak. Prayer is the true gauge of spiritual power. To hold back prayer is dangerous and of deadly tendency. You may depend upon it that, take it for all in all, what you are upon your knees you are really before your God.

What the Pharisee and the Publican were in prayer was the true criterion of their spiritual state. You may maintain a decent reputation among men, but it is a small matter to be judged of *man's* judgment—men see only the surface—while the Lord's eyes pry into the recesses of the soul. If He sees that you are prayerless, He makes small account of your attendance at religious meetings, or your loud professions of conversion. If you are a man of earnest prayer and especially if the spirit of prayer is in you, so that in addition to certain seasons of supplication your heart habitually talks with God, things are right with you. But if this is not the case and your prayers are “hindered,” there is something in your spiritual system which needs to be ejected, or something lacking which ought to be taken care of at once. “Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life,” and living prayers are among those issues.

Prayers may be hindered, next, *by having too much to do*. In this age this is a very common occurrence. We men have too much business for ourselves. The quiet days of our contented forefathers are gone and men allot to themselves an increasing drudgery. Not content to earn as much as is necessary for themselves and families, they must have much more than they can possibly enjoy for themselves, or profitably use for others. Wisdom seems to say that one staff is enough for a man to walk with, but ambition cannot be contented unless it carries a load of staves upon its back. “Enough is as good as a feast,” said the old proverb, but nowadays neither enough nor a feast will satisfy men! They must accumulate more

than would feast thousands of families before they can be content—no, they are not even content then!

Many a man who might have been of great service to the Church of God becomes useless because he must branch out in some new direction in business which takes up all his spare time. Instead of feeling that his first care should be, “How can I best glorify God?” his all-absorbing objective is to “stretch his arms like seas and grasp in all the shore.” Thousands, hundreds of thousands and even millions of pounds cannot silence the greedy horseleech which men have swallowed, which continually cries, “Give, give!” Many add house to house and field to field, as though they meant to be left alone in the land! Alas, that Christians should be infected with the same fever! The rich man in the parable had no time for prayer, for he was busy in planning new barns in which to bestow his goods—but he *had* to find time for *dying* when the Lord said, “This night shall your soul be required of you.” Beware, I pray you, of “the desire of other things,” the canker of riches, the insatiable greed which drives men into the snare of the devil, for if it works you no other ill, it will do you mischief, enough, if your prayers are hindered.

We may even have too much to do in God’s house, and so hinder our prayers by being like Martha, numbered with much serving. I never heard of anyone who was hindered with too much *praying*. The more we do, the more we should pray, and prayer should balance our service, or rather, it should be the lifeblood of every action and saturate our entire life, as the dew of Heaven filled Gideon’s fleece. We cannot labor too much if prayer is proportionate, but I fear that some of us would do far more if we attempted less and prayed more about it. I even fear that some allow public religious engagements to override private communion with God—they attend too many sermons, too many conferences, too many Bible readings, too many committees—yes, and too many Prayer Meetings! They are all good in their way, but all acting injuriously when they cramp our secret, or private prayer.

Mrs. Row said that if the Apostles were preaching at her time of private communion with God she would not forsake her closet to go and hear them. It must be better to be with God than with Peter or Paul! Praying is the end of preaching, and woe to the man who, prizing the means more than the end, allows any other form of service to push his prayers into a corner. There can be no doubt, also, that prayer is hindered *by having too little to do*. If you want a thing well done, you must go to the man who has a great deal to do, for he is the man to do it for you! People who have nothing to do generally do it with a great deal of fuss. From morning to night they waste other people’s time—they are the callers, the interviewers, the people who write catching paragraphs about public men—very frequently invented in their own silly brains.

These are the propagators of slander, who in very wantonness spit upon good men’s characters. Having nothing to do, they are hired by Satan to hinder and injure others. If such people ever do pray, I am sure

their indolence must very much hinder them. The man who has to teach in the Ragged School finds he must cry for help to master those wild young natures. The young lady who has, around her, a dozen girls whom she longs to bring to the Savior, feels it imperative upon her to pray for Jane and Ellen, that they may be converted to God. The minister, whose hands are full of holy toil and whose eyes fail with sacred watching, finds he cannot do without drawing near unto his God! If these servants of Jesus had *less* to do they would *pray* less, but holy industry is the nurse of devotion!

I said we might do too much and I could not balance that truth unless I added that a very large proportion of Christians do too little. God has given them enough wealth to be able to retire from business. They have time upon their hands and they have even to *invent* ways of spending that time—and yet the ignorant require instructing, the sick need visiting, the poor need helping—should they not lay out their abundant leisure in the service of God? Would they not, then, be quickened in prayer? I wish that all could say with one of the Lord's saints, "Prayer is my business and praise is my pleasure"—but I am sure they never will till the zeal of the Lord's house shall more fully consume them. Some people hinder their prayers, again, *by a lack of order*. They get up a little too late and they have to chase their work all the day and never overtake it. They are always in a flurry, one duty tripping up the heels of another.

They have no appointed time for retirement, too little space hedged about for communion with God and, consequently, something or other happens and prayer is forgotten—no, I hope not quite *forgotten*, but so slurred and hurried over that it amounts to little and brings them no blessing. I wish you would each keep a diary of how you pray next week, and see how much, or rather how *little* time you spend with God out of the 24 hours. Much time goes at the table, how much at the Mercy Seat? Many hours are spent with men, how many with your Maker? You are somewhat with your friends on earth, how many minutes are you with your Friend in Heaven? You allow yourself space for recreation, what do you set apart for those exercises which in very truth re-create the soul?

"A place for everything, and everything in its place," is a good rule for schools and houses of business, and it will be equally useful in spiritual matters. Other duties should be done, but prayer must not be left undone—it must have its own place and sufficient time for it. Care must be taken that our "prayers be not hindered," so that we omit or abridge them. But time compels me to leave this wide subject and proceed.

II. Secondly, we must watch that we are not HINDERED IN PRAYER, when we are really engaged in that holy work. Here I might go over the same ground as before and remark that some are hindered while *in* their prayers by being lax and lukewarm—a great hindrance. Others by having too much or too little to do, and another class by being in that hurried condition of heart which results from a lack of order. But I need not repeat myself when you are so eagerly drinking in my words! Let us note

that some are hindered in prayer *by selecting an unfit time and place*. There are times when you may expect a knock at your own door, do not just then knock at God's door! There are hours when your letters arrive, when customers call, when trades people need attention, when workmen need orders—it would be foolish to be going into your closet just then!

If you are employed by others, you must not present to God those hours which belong to your employer. You will be honoring the Lord better by diligence in your calling. There are times that are demanded of you by the necessities of the household and your lawful calling—these are already the Lord's in another way—let them be used for their own purpose. Never defile one duty with the blood of another. Give to God and prayer those suitable times in which you can reasonably expect to be alone. Of course you can pray at your work in ejaculations and silent groans—and you ought to be in the spirit of supplication all day long—but I am alluding, now, to times specially devoted to supplication—and I say choose a season and a place where you can be free from interruption.

A pious lad who had no place at home to pray, went to the stable and climbed up into the hayloft. But very soon someone came up the ladder and interrupted him. The next time he took care to pull the ladder up after him—a very useful hint for us. It would be well, indeed, if we could so completely pull the ladder up that neither the devil nor the world could invade our sacred privacy. “You, when you pray, enter into your closet, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father which is in secret. And your Father which sees in secret shall reward you openly.” Select, then, the fittest time and place that your prayers are not hindered.

Worldly cares are frequent and most mischievous hindrances to prayer. A Christian man should be the most careful man in the world and, yet, without carefulness. Do you understand that paradox? He should be careful not to sin, but as for other matters, he should cast his care on “Him who cares for him.” To take everything *from* God's hands and to trust everything *in* God's hands, is a happy way of living and very helpful to prayer. Has not your Master told you of the ravens and the lilies? Your heavenly Father feeds and clothes them—will He not clothe you? “Seek you first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.” Faith gives peace and peace leaves the soul clear for prayer—but when care comes in, it confuses the mind and puts the heart away from pleading. A heart clogged with care is like a man trying to swim with heavy clothes upon him—he must get them off if he hopes to swim to shore. Many a sailor has cut his clothes to pieces because he felt he should sink if he did not get them off.

I could wish that many Christians would tear themselves away from their excessive worldly engagements, for they have such a mass of care upon them that they scarcely keep their heads above water! Oh, for more Grace and less worry! More praying and less hoarding! More intercession and less speculating! As it is, prayers are sadly hindered. *Earthly pleasures*, especially of a dubious kind, are the worst of hindrances. Some professors indulge in amusements which I am sure are not consistent with

prayer. They resemble flies which plunge into the honey until the sweet sticks to their wings and legs and they cannot fly. I once remember reading, "A prayer to be said by a Christian man after coming home from a theater," "A collect for a saint on returning from the races," and, "A prayer for a Christian lady on returning from a ball." Of course they were written sarcastically and were, indeed, a broad farce.

How can you come home from frivolity and sin and then look into the face of Jesus? How can the fashions of the world be followed and communion with God be maintained? You cannot roll in the mire and then approach with clean garments to the Mercy Seat! How can you come before the Throne of God with petitions when you have just been dishonoring the name of the Most High? O Christians, keep yourselves from everything about which you have any doubt as to its rightness or even its expediency—whatever is not of faith is sin and will hinder your prayers! Further, prayers may be hindered equally much by *worldly sorrow*. Some give way to sorrow so extremely that they cannot pray. The tears of rebellious repining dampen the powder of prayer so that a Christian man cannot send his desires heavenward as he should. The sorrow which prevents a man's praying is flat rebellion against the will of God!

Our Lord was "exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death," but then He prayed—no—"therefore He prayed." It is right to be sorrowful, for God intends that affliction should be grievous and not joyous. But when sorrow is right it will drive us *to* prayer—not drive us *from* it. And when we find our grief at the loss of some dear child, or at the decay of our property hinders our prayers, I think we should say to ourselves, "Now I *must* pray, for it must be wrong for me to be so rebellious against my Father as to refuse to ask anything at His hands." You would think your child in a very mean temper if, because he could not have his own way, he would refuse to ask anything of you and went about the house pouting. Yet many mourners act in this fashion. We would deeply sympathize with their sorrow, but we may not excuse their repining—for the "sorrow of the world works death"—and is unfitting in a child of God. With all your grief, bowed into the very dust by affliction, still, like your Lord and Master, cry, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will," and then your prayers will be helped and not hindered.

There are cases in which prayer is very greatly hindered by a *bad temper*. I do not know where this may apply, but, wherever it does, I trust that it will go home. You cannot habitually speak sharp to servants and children. You cannot join in a grand row or in small squabbles and then go and pray with power. I cannot be effective in prayer if I feel anger in my heart and I do not believe that you can, either. Get up and go and settle the matter before you try to talk with God, for the prayer of angry men makes God angry. You cannot wrestle with the Angel while you are under the power of the devil. I appeal to your own consciences—you, yourselves, shall be judges—is it not so? That was good advice on our Lord's part—"Leave there your gift before the altar, and first go and be reconciled to

your brother.” If that is not done, the sacrifice cannot be accepted, nor do I see how you can *dare* offer it!

I have heard of two good men who had a sharp difference with each other in business. I do not know which was to blame—perhaps neither of them—they might have misunderstood each other. One of them, as he walked home very much ruffled, saw the sun going down, and the passage occurred to him, “Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.” He thought, “I will go back and offer an apology, for I believe I have spoken much too strongly.” He went back towards his friend’s office and half way there he met the other coming to him on the same errand. Happy Christians to be both so mindful of the Holy Spirit’s teaching and so like the Lord Jesus! It must be that offenses come, but blessed are those who are foremost in removing them! Alas, men of a certain mold cannot do this, but will keep a grudge till it rots and fills their whole nature with its vile odors. Surely they cannot expect to be heard in prayer while their unburied enmities pollute their souls! Endeavor, dear Christian Friends, as much as you can, whenever you are angry, not to sin. It is possible, for it is written, “Be you angry and sin not.”

A man who has no anger in him is scarcely a man and certainly not a good man, for he who is not angry at sin is not in love with virtue! They say of some that they are as easy as an old shoe—and they are generally worth no more than that article. Anger against injustice is right, but that anger against the person which degenerates into wishing him hurt is sinful and effectually blows out the fires of prayer. We cannot pray for forgiveness unless we forgive the trespasses of others against us.

Prayer can be hindered—very terribly hindered—in three ways. If we dishonor the Father *to* whom we pray, or the Son *through* whom we pray, or the Holy Spirit *by* whom we pray. I say we can dishonor *the Father*. This can be done by inconsistency of life—if children of God are not obedient to the Father’s will, they must not wonder if they find it difficult to pray. Something will rise in their throat that will choke their pleading. You cannot pour out your heart acceptably unless you believe in your heavenly Father. If you have harsh thoughts of God. If you have a cold heart towards Him and a lack of reverence for His name. If you do not believe in that great willing heart which is waiting to bless you, your lack of love, faith and reverence will strangle your prayers. Oh, when a man is fully at one with the great Father! When “Abba, Father,” is the very spirit of his soul! When he speaks to God as One in whom he places implicit trust and to whose will he yields himself up perfectly! When God’s glory is his soul’s delight—*then* he is on a vantage ground in prayer—he will win what he wills of God. If he is not so with God, his prayers will limp most painfully.

And, Brothers and Sisters, if we are wrong with *Jesus*, through whom we pray. If we are in any measure self-righteous. If we delight in self and forget our Beloved. If we fancy that we can do without the Savior and if, therefore, we pray like complacent Pharisees, our prayers will be hindered! If we are not like the Savior. If we do not make Him our Example. If we

have none of His loving spirit. If, above all, we crucify Him afresh and put Him to an open shame—and if we are ungrateful for the blessings we have already received—our prayers will be hindered. You cannot plead in the court if you have quarreled with your Advocate. If your prayers are not taken in hand by the great Intercessor and offered by Him on your behalf, you will have no heart for the sacred exercise.

So, again, with the *Holy Spirit*. There is never a prayer that God accepts but the Spirit first writes it in our hearts. True prayer is not so much *our* intercession as the Spirit of God making intercession in us. Now, if we grieve the Spirit, He will not help us to pray. And if we attempt to pray for something that is contrary to the Spirit's holy, gracious, loving Nature, we cannot expect Him to enable us to pray in contradiction to the mind of God. Take care that you vex not the Spirit of God in any way, especially by shutting your ears to His gentle warnings, His loving calls, His earnest entreaties, His tender monitions—for if you are deaf to the Divine Comforter, He will be speechless to you. He will not help you to pray if you will not yield to Him in other matters.

So then, dear Friends, I have stated to you in a hurried manner some of the ways in which prayer may be hindered. May God grant that none of us may be overcome by them, but we may be delivered from everything which could mar our petitions!

III. I shall now want your earnest attention to the most important part of all, upon which I shall endeavor to be brief. We may be HINDERED IN THE EFFECTIVENESS OF OUR PRAYERS. We may pray, but yet the prayer may not be heard. And here let me interpose a remark. The Lord will hear *any* man's prayer who asks for mercy through the mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ. He *never* despises the cry of the contrite. He is a God ready to hear all those who seek reconciliation. But concerning other matters it is true that God does not hear sinners—that is, while they remain sinners He will not grant them their wishes—indeed, to do so would encourage them in their sins! If they will repent and cry for mercy through Jesus Christ, He will hear their cry and will save them. But if they are not, first, reconciled to Him, their prayers are empty wind.

A man will grant his child's request, but he does not listen to strangers. He will listen to his friends, but not to enemies. It is not right that the golden key which opens the caskets of Heaven should be hung at a rebel's belt. Yet more, God does not hear all His children, alike, or alike at all times. It is not every Believer who is mighty in prayer. Read the 96th Psalm, and, if I remember rightly, you will find words like these—"Moses and Aaron among His priests, and Samuel among them that call upon His name; they called upon the Lord and He answered them. They kept His testimonies, and the ordinances that He gave them." Yes, he answered *them*—Moses, Aaron, Samuel—He answered *them*, for they kept His testimonies. When children of God find that their prayers do not succeed, they should search—and they would soon discover a reason why their prayers are hindered.

First, there must be *holy living* in a Believer if his prayers are to succeed greatly with God. Listen—"The effectual fervent prayer of a *righteous man* avails much." Note that point of *a righteous man*. Listen to our Savior (John 15:7)—"If you abide in Me, and My Words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you." There is an *if* there! If *you* do not do Christ's will, *He* will not do your will. This is not legal! It has nothing to do with the Law, but is the Gospel rule of Christ's house that obedience should have for its reward power in prayer! Just as you do with your children—you have a discipline over them—you do not turn them out of doors or give them over to the policeman because they do amiss. But you have ways of chastening the willful and rewarding the obedient. You are in no hurry to grant the requests of yonder fractious boy—in fact you deny him his request. But that other dear, gentle, loving child has only to ask and have!

This is correct discipline and such as God exercises among us. He does not cast off His children for sin and utterly disown them, but He chastens them in love. And one of His chastisements lies in shutting out their prayers. If we compare prayer to shooting with a bow, you must have clean hands or you cannot shoot, for this bow refuses to bend to hands polluted with unrepented sin. If a sinner prays for mercy for Jesus' sake he shall be heard, but for general blessings it is written, "The desire of the *righteous* shall be granted"—*not* the desire of the *wicked*. First wash in the Fountain of atoning Grace and have your heart cleansed by the Holy Spirit, or else you cannot succeed in prayer. If anyone should tell me of a man whom God greatly answered in prayer and then inform me that he lived in gross sin, I would not believe it! It is impossible for God to patronize a guilty professor of religion by giving him success in prayer! The blind man whom Jesus healed most truly said, "If any man does His will, him He hears."

In addition to obedience there must be *faith*. "He that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." "Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering, for he that wavers is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed: let not that man expect that he shall receive anything of the Lord." Faith "obtains promises, unbelief goes empty-handed." The Lord may give a blessing to a doubter, but that is more than the promise, and the doubter has no right to *expect* it. The prayer which avails most with God is the prayer of one who believes that God will hear him and who, therefore, asks with confidence. In a word, faith is the bow of prayer. You must lay hold on the bow or you cannot shoot—and the stronger that bow the further you can send the arrow—and the more execution you can do with it. Without faith it is impossible to please God in prayer or in anything else. Faith is the very backbone, sinew and muscle of intercession.

Thirdly, there must be *holy desires*, or else prayer will be a failure. And those desires must be founded on a promise. If you cannot find that God has promised a blessing, you have no right to ask for it and no reason to

expect it. There is no use in asking money of a banker without a check—at the counter they do not know you—they *do* know the promise to pay from a check and if you present that, you will get the amount. You must bring God's own promises to the Mercy Seat, which is the counter of the Divine bank, and you will obtain what you need, but only in that way. Observe, then, that faith is the bow and strong desire fits to the string the arrow which is to be sent upward. No arrow may be shot towards Heaven but that which came down from Heaven. Christians take their arrows from God's quiver and when they shoot them they shoot them with this on their lips, "Do as You have said. Remember Your Word unto Your servant upon which You have caused me to hope." So the successful prayer is the desire of a holy heart, sanctioned by the promise. True prayers are like those carrier pigeons which find their way so well—they cannot fail to go to Heaven, for it is from Heaven that they came—they are only going home!

Furthermore, if prayer is to be effective, there must be *fervor and importunity*. It is written, "The effectual *fervent* prayer of the righteous man avails much." Not the dead-and-alive prayer of the mere professor—not the prayer of one who does not care whether he is answered or not. There must be eagerness, intensity, the pouring out of the heart before God! The arrow must be put on the bow string and the bow must be drawn with all our might. The best bow is of no use until you draw it. And if you draw the bow of faith and shoot at the target up there in Heaven, you will get what you will—only you *must resolve to have it* with only this boundary—"the will of the Lord be done"—and you will succeed.

There must be, next, a *desire for God's Glory*—for that is the white of the target—and if we do not shoot towards that, the arrow will avail nothing. We must earnestly desire what we ask because we believe it will glorify God to give it to us. If we are wholly living unto God, our prayers will run side by side with His purposes and none of them will fall to the ground. "Delight yourself, also, in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart." We must also have *holy expectancy* or we shall hinder prayer. The man who shoots must look to see where his arrow goes. We must direct our prayer unto God and look up! Eyeing the Lord Jesus in all, we must look to succeed through the merits of the Redeemer. "If we believe that He hears us, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him."

Presumption in prayer shoots with the bow of self-confidence, not for God's Glory, but for the gratification of *itself*, and therefore it fails. Some have the idea that ask what they like of God, they are sure to have it. But I would ask them, first, "Who are you?" Secondly, "What is it you are going to seek?" And, thirdly, "What right have you to expect it?" These inquiries must be clearly answered, otherwise prayer may be an *insult* to God. I wish some Christians who pray about temporal things would be a little careful as to how they act. When they get into scrapes and messes by extravagance, do they expect God to get them out?

I remember hearing of a remark of good Mr. Muller, of Bristol. At a Prayer Meeting he read a letter from a Brother who thanked him for a gift of some 20 pounds which had arrived very Providentially, for he owed half a year's rent. Mr. Muller remarked, "Yes, our Brother *should* be very thankful. But I intend to write to him and tell him he ought not to owe half a year's rent without being prepared to pay. And he is acting unwisely and unjustly by not laying by in store to meet the claim. When I took a house I said, 'This is another person's house. I am bound to pay his rent,' and therefore week by week, as I used the house, I put by a portion to pay what was due. I did not spend the money and at the end of the quarter expect the heavenly Father to send me more."

This was sound morality and common sense, and I pray you attend to it. Pray by all means, but "owe no man anything." Daily bread is to be prayed for, but speculations which may involve you in ruin, or make your fortune, are *not* to be mentioned. If you take to *gambling*, you may as well give up praying! Straightforward transactions you may pray about, but do not get the Lord mixed up with your finances! I have been requested to pray for a young man who has lost his job, through an embezzlement, that he may get another place of employment. But instead of doing so I have suggested that he should, himself, pray to be made honest. Another who is deeply in debt wants me to pray that he may obtain help, but I suggest that he should let his creditors have a dividend while there is anything left. I shall not ask of my God what I would not ask of man!

The approach to the Mercy Seat is holy ground and not to be trifled with, or made to minister to sin. "You ask and receive not because you ask amiss, that you may consume it upon your lusts." If we walk contrary to the Lord, He will walk contrary to us. And I say to every man and woman here who is in trouble and is a Christian, take the straight path out of it—do the right thing—and if it brings you trouble, bear it like a man, and then go to God, and say, "Lord, I have, by Your Grace, chosen a plain, honest path, now help me," and He will. God grant us Grace, as Christians, to walk with God in the power of His Spirit, resting alone on Jesus—and may He make each one of us mighty in prayer! A man whom God has taught to pray mightily is one with God's mind and is God's hand moving among the sons of men! When he acts, God acts in him. He must, however, be careful and watchful, for the Lord is a jealous God—and most jealous where He loves most.

God grant you, Brothers and Sisters, to walk humbly with God and to live near to Him, "that your prayers be not hindered." Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Malachi 3.*
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" 434 (SONG III), 1001, 994.**

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UNPARALLELED SUFFERING NO. 2573

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 5, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 4, 1883.

“Christ also has once suffered.”
1 Peter 3:18.

IT is very unpleasant to our poor flesh and blood to suffer. Physical pain is a grievous infliction—mental agony or spiritual sorrow is still worse. Irons around the wrists can be worn till they fit easily, but when the iron enters into the soul, how it rusts the heart and eats into the spirit! Perhaps, to some minds, the most difficult of all suffering is that which is not deserved at all, but which comes because we do *not* deserve it. I mean that suffering which innocent persons are called to endure because of their innocence when they are slandered and oppressed and persecuted, not for evil-doing, but for well-doing. I admit that there is much about this form of trial which should tend to make it a light affliction, for we ought to take it joyfully when we suffer wrongfully. Yet, as a rule, we are not able to do so. Certainly not by nature, for there is a sort of sense of justice within man which makes him feel that it is very hard that he should have to suffer, not for unrighteousness, but for righteousness—not for any wrong-doing, but for having espoused the cause of God and His Truth.

The Apostle Peter would have Christians prepare themselves for this suffering. They had to bear very much of it in his day—they will have to bear some of it as long as the Church of Christ remains in this wicked world. He says, in the verse preceding our text, “It is better, if the will of God is so, that you suffer for well-doing, than for evil-doing.” Further on, at the beginning of the next chapter, he says, “Forasmuch, then, as Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves, likewise, with the same mind.” He warns us that we shall need to be clad in heavenly armor, for we shall have to pass through conflict and suffering for Christ’s sake and for righteousness’ sake. We must put on a coat of mail and be enveloped in the whole panoply of God. We must have, as our great controlling principle, the mind of Christ, that, as He endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, we, also, may endure it and not be weary or faint in our minds. We shall best bear our own sufferings when we find fellowship with Christ in them. Therefore, it is for your strengthening, that your spiritual sinews may be braced, that you may be armed from head to foot and preserved from the darts of the enemy that I would set forth before you, as best I may, the matchless sufferings of the Son of

God, who, “once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.”

It has sometimes struck me that the first Epistle of Peter is greatly concerning Christ’s First Advent and that his second Epistle tells us about our Lord’s Second Advent. In this first letter there are many references to the sufferings of Christ. It may interest you to notice some of them. In the first Chapter, at the 11th Verse, we read, “Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ.” When the Apostle gets to the second Chapter, at the 21st Verse, we find him writing thus, “For even hereunto were you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.” Next comes our text in the third Chapter. Then, in the Fourth chapter, at the first Verse, is the passage I have already read to you. [See Exposition at end of sermon.] And in the 13th Verse, the Apostle says, “Rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ’s sufferings.” And in the 5th Chapter, at the first Verse, he calls himself, “a witness of the sufferings of Christ.” Thus his frequent expression—his peculiar idiom—is, “the sufferings of Christ” and, in the language of our text he thus describes the great work of our redemption—“Christ also has once suffered.” It may seem a very small thing to you to call your attention to such words as these, but it does not appear small to me. It seems to me that there is a great depth of meaning within these few words and it shall be my objective, at this time, to bring out that meaning, as far as I can, under the Holy Spirit’s guidance.

I. Notice then, first of all, A SUMMARY WITHOUT ANY DETAILS—“Christ also has once suffered.” There is compassed within that expression a summary of the whole life and death of Christ! The Apostle does not give us details of Christ’s sufferings, but he lets us, for a moment, look into this condensation of them—“Christ also has once suffered.”

It is *the epitome of His whole earthly existence* up to the time of His rising from the dead. Christ begins His life here with suffering. He is born into the world, but there is “no room for Him in the inn.” He must lie in a manger where the horned oxen feed. He is born of a poor mother. He must know the ills of poverty and, worse still, Herod seeks the young Child’s life. He must be hurried away by night into Egypt. He must be a stranger in a strange land, with His life in peril from a blood-thirsty tyrant! When He comes back from Egypt, He grows in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and men—but you may rest assured that the years He spent in the carpenter’s shop at Nazareth, though we are not told about them, were years of sore travail—perhaps of bodily pain, certainly of mental toil and preparation for His future service. Such a public life as His could not have been lived without due training. I will not attempt to lift the veil where God has let it fall, but I see, in the whole public ministry of Christ, traces of a wonderful mental discipline through which He must have gone and which, I should think, must have involved Him in suffering. Certainly it was one main point in His preparation that He was not without spiritual conflicts and struggles which must have involved suffering to such a nature as His was.

No sooner does He appear on the stage of action and the Spirit of God descends upon Him in the waters of Baptism, than He is hurried off to a forty days' fast in the wilderness and to a prolonged and terrible conflict with His great enemy and ours. Of that time we may truly say that "*He suffered, being tempted.*" Throughout His life you may read such words as these—"Jesus, being weary, sat thus on the well." "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head." And then you can understand some of the ways in which He suffered. We cannot tell how much our Lord suffered even in the brightest portion of His career, for always was He "despised and rejected of men; a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief." We cannot go into all the details of His life, but I think you may see that even in the very smoothest part of it, He suffered. And Peter does well to thus sum it up—"Christ suffered."

But when He comes to *Gethsemane*, shall I speak of the bloody sweat and the groans which startled angels? No, I need not say more than this—"Christ suffered." Shall I tell of His betrayal by Judas, of His being hurried from court to court, falsely accused, despitefully entreated, bruised, scourged and made nothing of? Truly, I may sum it all up by saying that He suffered! And as for all the rest, that march along the *Via Dolorosa*—that fastening to the wood—that uplifting of the Cross. The wounds, the cruel fever, the direful thirst, the mockery, the scorn, the desertion of His Father when He must, at last, yield Himself up to death itself—what better summary could even an inspired Apostle give than to say—"Christ also has once suffered"? This expression sums up the whole of His life.

It is well for you and for me, when we have the time and the opportunity, to make as complete as possible our knowledge of Christ as to all the details of His life and death. But, just now, it must suffice us, as it sufficed Peter, to say, "Christ suffered." When next you are called to suffer, when pains of body oppress you, let this text whisper in your ears, "Christ also has once suffered." When you are poor, needy and homeless, remember that "Christ also has once suffered." And when you come even to the agony of death, if such shall be your portion, then still hear the soft whisper, "Christ also has once suffered." I know of no better armor for you than this—"Arm yourselves likewise with the same mind"—and be prepared to count it your honor and glory to follow your Master with your cross upon your shoulders!

Much may be said to be known concerning Christ's sufferings, but still, to a great extent, they are unknown sufferings. Some eyes saw Him suffer, yet I might truly say, "Eye has not seen, neither has ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man the things which Christ suffered for His people." You may think, Brothers and Sisters, that you know something of Christ's sufferings, but they are a unfathomably deep, a height to which the human imagination cannot soar! We are obliged to leave this summary without any details. "Christ also has once suffered."—

***"Much we talk of Jesus' blood,
But, how little's understood!"***

***Of His sufferings, so intense,
Angels have no perfect sense.
Who can rightly comprehend
Their beginning or their end?
'Tis to God and God alone
That their weight is fully known."***

II. Secondly, this is A STATEMENT WITHOUT ANY LIMIT. How indefinitely it is put! "Christ also has once suffered."

Do you ask the question, "*When did Christ suffer?*" It is answered by not being answered, for, truly, we may reply to you—"When Christ was on earth, when was there that He did not suffer?" "Christ also has once suffered." The Apostle adds no note of time. He says not, "Christ suffered on the Cross, or in the garden," but the very indefiniteness of the statement leaves us to understand that as long as Jesus was here, He was the acquaintance of grief. His life was, in a sense, a life of suffering. All the while He was here, even when He was not upon the Cross, and even when no bloody sweat was on His brow, it is written, "He, Himself, took our infirmities and bore our sickness." He was bearing the load, not, as some say, "on the tree" alone, but *up to the tree*, as the passage may be read—daily bearing it till, at length, He came to the Cross—and there it was for the last time that He felt the pressure of human sin. You cannot get and yet you do, in some sense, get, from my text, an answer to the question, "When did Christ suffer?"

Perhaps another asks, "*What did Christ suffer?*" The text is remarkable in giving no limit whatever to the statement. "Christ also has once suffered." What did He suffer? I answer—what was there that He did *not* suffer in body, in mind, and in spirit? What of pain—what of shame—what of loss—what of hatred—what of derision? He suffered from Hell, from earth, from Heaven—I was going to say—from time and from eternity, for there was a certain sense in which eternal pangs passed through the heart of Christ and spent themselves upon Him. What did He suffer? Peter says, as if that should be enough for us to know, "Christ has once suffered"—the very indefiniteness implies that He suffered everything that He could suffer.

And *where did Christ suffer?* Peter does not answer that question. Where did He suffer? In the wilderness? In the garden? In Pilate's Hall? On the Cross? The text as good as says, "No. Yes. Not somewhere only, but everywhere!" Wherever He was, Christ was enduring that great burden which He came into the world to bear till He would carry it away and it should be lost forever.

From whom did Christ suffer? Mark how unlimited is the text—"Christ also has once suffered." From men falsely accusing Him and slandering Him? Yes, and that is the comfort of His slandered people. But He suffered not from only wicked men, but even from good men—the best of His disciples cost Him many pangs and sometimes made His heart ache. He suffered from devils. He suffered from the Father, Himself! There it stands—a sky without horizon—a sea across which I look and see no end—"Christ also has once suffered." I think that Joseph Hart spoke well when he said that Christ—

"Bore all Incarnate God could bear,

With strength enough, and none to spare.

So we leave this part of our theme. It is a statement without any limit. "Christ also has once suffered."

III. Now I want you to notice, in the third place, that this is A DESCRIPTION WITHOUT ANY ADDITION. "Christ also has once suffered."

Is that all? Was there not something else? No. This line sweeps the entire circumference. There was nothing in Christ, *before His suffering*, which was contrary to it. He never regretted that He had entered upon a course which involved suffering. "When the time was come that He should be received up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem," warning His followers that He was going there to be mocked, to be scourged and to be crucified. He might at any moment have relinquished His terrible task, but that idea never entered into His mind. Even when He came near to the worst part of His pain and His human Nature shrank from it, His true heart never was discouraged or thought of turning back. He said, "The cup which My Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?" And He did drink it, though it involved more suffering than we can imagine! Yet there was no resistance to that suffering. He suffered, but He never rebelled against it. He could truly say, "I was not rebellious, neither turned back." He did not even complain and Isaiah's prophecy was literally fulfilled by Him—"He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opens not His mouth."

If we were to describe the experiences of even the best of men, I am afraid that we would have to say, "He suffered very much and he did not often murmur. Sometimes, however, he rebelled and cried out." It was not so with Christ. Peter says, He suffered and there is no addition to that. You know, my Brothers and Sisters, how, having undertaken to suffer for sins, He went through with it. If He stood before Pilate and His enemies smote Him, what did He do? He suffered. If they bound His eyes and buffeted Him, what did He do? He suffered. When they spat in His face, what did He do? He suffered. When they nailed Him to the Cross, what words did He speak against His murderers? Not one! He suffered. "Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again." Even when they jested at Him, His only reply was the prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." He suffered and there was nothing to take away from the completeness of that suffering. The whole of His Nature ran out into that act of obedience called suffering! It was the time when He must do the Father's will by suffering—and all the power of His Being ran into that channel. The Lord had made to meet upon Him the iniquity and, consequently, the *suffering of us all!* And He just accepted it at the Father's hand without a complaint or a murmur. You can sum it all up in the language of our text, without a single word added to it—"Christ also has once *suffered.*"

IV. Once more, I want you to notice that this is A DECLARATION WITHOUT ANY QUALIFICATION. "Christ suffered."

There is no word to bid us imagine that He had *any alleviation of His agony*. Of a person in very bad health we may be able to say, "He suffers a great deal, but he has an excellent medical attendant, a good nurse

and he has every comfort that can be given to him.” But, in the case of our Lord, all is summed up in these two words, “*Christ suffered.*” Were there no comforters? No. He suffered. Was there no sleeping-draught to deaden His pain? No. He suffered. But did not His Father help Him in the hour of His agony? No. His cry, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” proves that we may say of Him, even with reference to God, that He suffered! The death of Christ was quite unique—none of the martyrs were ever brought into the same condition as their Lord was in.

I remember reading in Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*, the story of a man of God who was bound to a stake to die for Christ. There he was, calm and quiet, till his legs had been burned away and the bystanders looked to see his helpless body drop from the chains. He was black as coal and not a feature could be discerned. But one who was near was greatly surprised to see that poor black carcass open its mouth and two words came out of it! And what do you suppose they were? “Sweet Jesus!” And then the martyr fell over the chains and, at last, his life was gone. Oh, how much of the blessed Presence of God that poor saint must have had to be able to say, at the last, when he was charred to a coal, “Sweet Jesus!”

But the Lord Jesus had not that help and comfort. His Father’s Countenance was hidden from Him. “Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabachthani,” is such a shriek as even Hell itself has never heard, for the lost ones there have never known what it was to have the love of God shed abroad in their hearts, as Christ had known it and, therefore, they could never know the loss of it as Christ knew it in that supreme moment of His agony. “Christ suffered.” That is all you can say of Him, He suffered, without any alleviation of His pain.

Further, He suffered *without any qualification in the sense of being compelled to suffer*. We say of such-and-such a person, “He suffers greatly, but he cannot help suffering. He has a deadly disease, the pain of which cannot be alleviated. He is, therefore, obliged to bear it.” The martyr, whom I mentioned just now, was bound to the stake—he could not get away—he suffered under compulsion. He was made to suffer. But you cannot say that of Christ. Herein is a marvelous thing, that while Christ suffered, you may take the word in the active sense. I do not know how exactly to express my meaning, but there is a sort of passive sense in which He suffered—that is the sense in which we all suffer according to our share—but Jesus also suffered in an active sense. That is to say, He suffered willingly, resolutely, without any compulsion. At any moment He might have broken loose from the Cross! He might have called for 12 legions of angels and scattered all His foes. He might have flung off His body and appeared before them as a Consuming Fire to utterly destroy them!

Or, retaining His Humanity, He might have smitten them with blindness, or worked some other miracle and so have escaped from them. If we should be called to die for Christ, it would only be paying the debt of nature a little beforehand, for we are bound to die sooner or later—it is the lot of man. But there was no such need in the case of Christ! There was no necessity of death about that Holy Thing which was born of the

Virgin Mary! It would not corrupt and it needed not to die. All the way through His death, remember that He did not die as we do—gradually losing consciousness, floating away and never able to suspend the process of dissolution—but, at any instant, up to the final committal of His spirit to His Father, He could have caused all those pains to cease! Now see with what an extraordinary meaning my text is girt about. As the painters foolishly depict Christ with a halo around His head which was never there, I may truly picture His sufferings, mystically and spiritually, with a halo about them which is really there, for He suffered in this superhuman fashion, without any qualification as to alleviation or as to compulsion!

Dear Friends, how shall I speak further upon this part of my subject? Only this word would I add—that “Christ suffered” *without any desert*. If we suffer, we must say to ourselves that we suffer less than we deserve, and even when a man suffers so as to die, we know that death is the penalty of sin. But “Christ suffered” in a very special sense because “in Him was no sin.” He had never done anything worthy of death, or of bonds. He suffered “for sins not His own.” There was nothing about Him that brought the suffering upon Him—His was the suffering of a pure and holy Being. We say of a criminal, not so much that he suffers, but that he is punished, He is executed, He is put to death. We never say that of Christ—we say that He suffered—voluntarily and without any obligation on account of demerit. He comes and takes upon Himself the sins of His people, stands in their place, is chastened with their chastisements, is smitten with their smiting. Well does He say, by the mouth of the Psalmist, “Many a time have they afflicted Me from My youth: yet they have not prevailed against Me. The plowers plowed upon My back: they made long their furrows.” So indeed they did, not only on His back, but on His heart!

I am speaking now, not only of His external but of His internal sufferings. Truly did one say that “the sufferings of Christ’s soul were the very soul of His sufferings.” And so, no doubt, they were. But, in His case, there was no punishment due to Him, so in His sufferings there was nothing exacted from Him on His own account. I must leave you to think upon this great mystery, for I cannot speak of it as it deserves.

V. I close with this last reflection. My text is AN EXPRESSION WITH AN EMPHASIS. “Christ also has once suffered.”

When we think of our own sufferings, as compared with our Lord’s, we may print them in the smallest type that the printer can use. But where shall I find capital letters that are large enough to print this sentence when it applies to Him—“CHRIST ALSO HAS ONCE SUFFERED”? It is almost as if the Apostle said, “You have, none of you, suffered when compared with Him.” Or, at least, He was the Arch-Sufferer—the Prince of Sufferers—the Emperor of the Realm of Agony—Lord Paramount in sorrow. Just take that term, “a Man of Sorrows.” You know that in the Book of Revelation, there is the expression, “the man of sin.” What does, “the man of sin” mean but a man made up of sin, one who is all sin? Very well, then, “a Man of Sorrows” means a Man made up of sorrows, constructed of sorrows—sorrows from the crown of His head to the sole

of His feet—sorrow without and sorrow within. He did sleep with sorrow and wake with sorrow—Christ was a Man of Sorrows, a *mass* of sorrow.

Take the next expression, “and acquainted with grief.” Grief was His familiar acquaintance, not a person that He passed by and casually addressed, but His acquaintance that kept close to Him throughout His life. He said once, “Lover and friend have You put far from Me, and My acquaintance into darkness.” But this acquaintance was with Him there—“acquainted with grief.” Listen to the words and if you can see my Lord pressed by the strong arm of grief until He is covered all over with a gory shirt of bloody sweat, then you know that grief had made Him to be acquainted with its desperate tugs. When you see Him bleeding from His hands, feet and side, with all His spirit exceedingly sorrowful even unto death—and God, Himself, leaving Him in the thick darkness—then you know that He was, indeed, acquainted with grief! You know a little about grief, but you do not know much. The hem of Grief’s garment is all you ever touch, but Christ wore it as His daily robe! We do but sip of the cup—He drank it to its bitterest dregs. We feel just a little of the warmth of Nebuchadnezzar’s furnace, but He dwelt in the very midst of the fire!

There I must leave the whole matter with you. But as you come to the Communion Table, come with this one thought upon you—“Christ also has once suffered.” Somebody, perhaps, asks me, “Is there any comfort in that thought?” Is it not an amazing thing that there should be more of comfort in the sufferings of Christ than in any other thing under Heaven? Yet it is so—there is more joy in the sufferings of Christ, to those whose hearts are broken, or sorely wounded—than there is in His birth, or His resurrection, or anything else about the Savior! It is by His stripes rather than even by His glory that we are healed! Come, Beloved, take a draught from this bitter wine, which shall sweetly charm away all your sorrows and make you glad! May God the Holy Spirit grant that it may be so!

And if there is anybody here who is not saved, remember, Friend, that your salvation depends upon the sufferings of Christ. If you believe on Him, then His sufferings are yours—they have taken away your sin and you are clear! Therefore, go your way and be glad.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 27; ROMANS 8:14-17.**

Psalm 27:1. *The Lord is my light and my salvation;* First comes light and then salvation. We are not saved in ignorance. The knowledge of our sinfulness is revealed to us—we discover our true condition in the sight of God—and then we perceive the mercy and the love of God. We see first the light and then the fullness of salvation, for this is not a matter of the past only, but of the present. At this very hour, each Believer can say, “The Lord is my light and my salvation.” Can *you* say that, dear Friend? If so, there is more real eloquence in that little sentence than in all the orations of Cicero!

1. *Whom shall I fear?* “There is nobody that I have any need to fear. I need not fear the powers of darkness, for ‘the Lord is my light.’ I need not fear damnation, for ‘the Lord is my salvation.’ Then, ‘Whom shall I fear?’”

1. *The LORD is the strength of my life.* Is not that a wonderful expression? Ordinarily, a man lives by the strength of his constitution, but the spiritual life lives by the strength of God within the soul.

1. *Of whom shall I be afraid.* “For, if God is my strength, then am I strong as Samson, and I may slay the lion or the Philistines with equal ease.”

2. *When the wicked, even my enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.* Good men have enemies because they are good men. There are two classes in the world—the righteous and the wicked—the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. And you know that even in Eden, the Lord said to the serpent, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed.” We must expect, then, if we are among the righteous, that we shall be attacked by the wicked. But, when they come against us, we may believe that they shall be overcome even before we strike a single blow in our own defense!

3. *Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear. Though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.* You know that, usually, we fear just before the battle begins—when we see the enemy encamped against us. We do not know what they are going to do and we are sure to imagine the very worst. But such was David’s confidence in his God that he said, “Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear.” There they lie, their legions marshaled against him in all their dread array! But says the Psalmist, “In this will I be confident.” Oh, the joy of the man who has received this confidence from God and who is, therefore—

**“Calm ‘mid the bewildering cry,
Confident of victory.”**

4. *One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in His Temple.* Did David refer to any special spot, or to any one sacred shrine? I think not. He meant that he wished to be always at home with God. And, you know, at the same time we can also be in our own houses or in the fields, on the land or on the sea. This was David’s great desire, that he might always dwell with God, like a child at home, wherever he was. And that he might have such communion with God that he might “behold the beauty of the Lord,” that he might ask of God guidance in all his difficulties, “and to enquire in His Temple.” Those are two things, dear Friends, for which I hope many of us have come here—that we may behold God’s graciousness and loveliness in the ordinances of His sanctuary—and that we may ask and receive of Him help in all our difficulties and guidance in all our dilemmas. How often, in this house, has God spoken so personally to His dear children that they have thought that the preacher knew all about them, when he really knew nothing whatever of them, though God did, and sent a message by His servant, straight to their souls!

5. *For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion: in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me; He shall set me up upon a rock.* If I dwell with God, He will hide me away in the pavilion of His Sovereignty

and, as long as He is King—and that will be forever and ever—He will not let me perish! His sword and shield shall be stretched out for my defense. Then God has also a tabernacle as well as a royal pavilion—as of old He had the Holy of Holies into which no man could enter, on pain of death, save only the High Priest on the appointed day. “In the time of trouble,” the Lord Himself shall take us and hide us there by the Mercy Seat, near the Ark of the Covenant, where His Glory shall shine upon us, and where none can intrude to hurt us. We have the protection of the Pavilion of Sovereignty and the Tabernacle of Sacrifice—what two places can be safer? We have also the rock of God’s Immutability—His people shall stand on that high mount, beyond the reach of their adversaries, where their feet shall never slide.

6. *And now shall my head be lifted up above my enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in His tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises unto the LORD.* This is a blessed resolution! Oh, that you and I would carry it out more and more! David says twice that He will sing the Lord’s praises—“I will sing, yes, I will sing praises unto the Lord.” Come, all you who sigh, change that word, and say, “I will sing.” Come, all you who make a mourning noise, and ask the Lord to help you to make a joyful noise before His face! Is not praise comely and fitting in the Presence of such a God as He is who has dealt so well with us? Let each individual who knows the goodness of God say, “I will sing, yes, I will sing praises unto the Lord.”

7. *Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice! Have mercy also upon me, and answer me.* The Psalmist has only just begun praising when he takes to praying—and that should be a Christian’s double occupation—praising and praying! I have often said that as our life is made up of breathing in and breathing out, so we should breathe in the atmosphere of Heaven by prayer and then breathe it out, again, in praise—

***“Prayer and praise, with sins forgiven,
Bring down to earth the bliss of Heaven!”***

8. *When You said, Seek you My face; my heart said unto You, Your face, LORD, will I seek.* David springs forward to accept the Divine invitation which invitation was general—“Seek you My face”—but the response was personal, “Your face, Lord, will I seek.” Whether others would do so, or not, David resolved and declared that he would seek the face of the Lord! Let everyone of us, dear Friends, do the same.

9. *Hide not Your face far from me; put not Your servant away in anger—*
“Dismiss me not Your service, Lord.”

You know how masters sometimes discharge their servants in anger. But what a gracious Master you and I have, Beloved, or else He would have sent us adrift long ago! “Get you gone,” He would have said, “you disgrace My house, you mar My work, you do not perform your service well. Be gone!” But He does not speak or act in that fashion.

9, 10. *You have been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation. When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up.* “They carried me when I was a child and He will carry me now! ‘The Lord will take me up.’ When they steel their hearts

against me, because I become a Christian, He will love me and more than make up my loss of their love.”

11. *Teach me Your way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path, because of my enemies.* “Lord, do not let me get into difficulties, so that I shall not know what to do, for my foes are so sharp-eyed that if they can find a fault in me, they will! And even if there is no fault, they will make one up. Therefore, Lord, ‘lead me in a plain path, because of my enemies.’”

12. *Deliver me not over unto the will of my enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty.* Am I addressing anyone who is being slandered? Has somebody borne false witness against you? Well, be very thankful that it is false! I do not quite understand why it is so often said, “You see, it is such a downright lie and that is what grieves me so.” But, dear Friend, it is much better that it should be false than true! If anyone brings an accusation against me, I shall be glad to find that it is false. Let not that be the sting of the trouble which really is the sweetness of it—be glad that they cannot say anything against you unless they speak falsely! However, if you expect to go to Heaven without being slandered, you expect what you are not likely to get, for God Himself was slandered in Paradise! Our Lord Jesus, in whom was no fault, was slandered when He was upon the earth—His Apostles and followers in all ages have had the same treatment! And here is David saying, “False witnesses are risen up against me.”

13. *I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.* That is the point to be noted—there is no getting over fainting except by believing, for believing saves us from swooning and makes us strong—“I had fainted unless I had believed.”

14. *Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart.* Here is a man of God giving us the benefit of his own experience! He waited upon God and now he bids us do the same, that we may be blessed as he was. At our Prayer Meeting before we came in here, one dear friend thanked the Lord that, for more than 60 years, he had been enabled to rest upon the Divine promises and he had never found one of them to fail in the hour of need. These testimonies are very precious. I remember, in my early Christian days, how my soul was greatly sustained by hearing a blind man say that he had lived on God by faith for more than 60 years, and he had found the Lord faithful to His promises all that time. Those of you, dear Friends, who are younger than others of us, may be comforted by the experience of your seniors! But if we were to live to be ten times as old as Methuselah, we would never find God backward in keeping His promises—He must be true whatever happens.

14. *Wait, I say, on the LORD.* Now let us read just a few verses to remind us of our union with our suffering Lord.

Romans 8:14. *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.* You can judge yourself, dear Friend, by this test. Do you follow the Spirit’s leading? Do you desire continually that He should be your supreme Guide and Leader? If you are led by the Spirit of God, then you have this highest of all privileges—you are one of the sons of God! Nothing can equal that honor! To be a son of God is more than anything

of which ungodly kings and emperors can boast, with all their array of pomp and wealth!

15. *For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear.* You did receive it once and it was a great blessing to you. This came of the Law and the Law brought you under bondage through a sense of sin—and that made you first cry for liberty and then made you accept the liberating Savior. But you have not received that spirit of bondage again to fear.

15. *But you have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.* We who believe in Jesus are all children of God and we dare to use that name which only children might use, “Abba.” And we dare use it even in the Presence of God and to say to Him, “Abba, Father.” We cannot help doing it because the spirit of adoption must have its own mode of speech—and its chosen way of speaking is to appeal to the great God by this name, “Abba, Father.”

16. *The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.* There are two witnesses, then, and in the mouth of these two witnesses the whole Truth of God about our adoption shall be established. Our own spirit—so changed as to be reconciled to God and led in ways which once it never trod—our own spirit bears witness that we are the sons of God. And then God’s own Spirit bears witness, too, and so we become doubly sure!

17. *And if children, then heirs.* For all God’s children are heirs and all equally heirs. The elder-born members of God’s family, such as Abraham and the rest of the Patriarchs, are no more heirs of God than are we of these latter days who have but lately come to Christ! “If children, then heirs.” Heirs of what?

17. *Heirs of God.* Not only heirs of what God chooses to give, but heirs of Himself! There need be nothing else said, if this is true! “The Lord is my portion, says my soul.” “Heirs of God.”

17. *And joint-heirs with Christ; if it is so that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.* Do you ever have in your heart a longing to behold the Glory of God? Do you feel pressed down when you see abounding sin? Are your eyes ready to be flooded with tears at the thought of the destruction of the ungodly? Then, you are having sympathy with Christ in His sufferings and you shall as certainly be an heir with Him, by-and-by, in His glory!

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

OUR ASCENDED LORD

NO. 1928

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 7, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Who has gone into Heaven and is at the right hand of God;
angels and authorities and powers being made subject to Him.”
1 Peter 3:22.***

LAST Lord's Day morning [#1927—*Our Sympathizing High Priest*] we considered the humiliation of our Divine Lord and, I think, if one may speak for the rest, that we consciously and deeply felt how very near He came to us in His suffering condition and how very near He still is to us as truly Man. On that happy occasion we had fellowship with Him of the truest kind. The sympathy of His soul toward us awoke our sympathies towards Him. We felt it exceedingly profitable to sit and weep with Him who not only wept but *bled* for us.

This morning, in considering our Lord's Glorification, I hope we shall feel quite as near to Him as we did on the former occasion, for if He was humiliated for us, He is also exalted for us. If He, Himself, once stooped to come near to us, He now lifts us up from our low estate and brings us near to Himself in His Glory. It is not only that He is partaker of our lowliness, but we are partakers of His exaltation. The fellowship is full and complete, for while He takes upon Himself our fall, we, on the other hand, partake in His rising again! He comes down to us in His Incarnation, but He calls us up to Him in His Ascension. He wears our garb of poverty by bearing our flesh, but He robes us in His splendor as He bears our nature into Heaven. Remember, it is “this same Jesus” whom they saw on earth who also is gone into Heaven and who is to come again a second time. Yes, it is “this same Jesus” and He is no less Man on the Throne of God than He was on the Cross—He is as truly our Brother, now, amid the acclaim of angels as among the weeping women of Jerusalem.

I beseech you, do not let the change of His estate create any distance in *your* hearts, since there is no distance in His heart, but rather ask for Grace that you may rise up unto Him, to joy in His joy and triumph in His triumph! Let us behold our Lord's glories today, not as a blaze of intolerable splendor, driving us back with fear, but as a radiance of peace, drawing us near with hope! Let us go to the land where our greater Joseph is Lord of all! Let us go into His palace, let us sit at His table with Him, there, as He once sat at our table with us here! We went to David in the cave, let us not fear to approach Him now that He is King! Yes, let us re-

joyce that we share His royalty, for He has made us kings and priests, and we shall reign with Him forever and ever.

The history of our Lord after His death is as simple as it is sublime and I shall not try to set it forth with garnishing of human speech. When a renowned warrior writes home after great victories, his dispatches are short and to the point. The brilliance of the news is sufficient without the light of sparkling sentences. His words are few; he has so much to tell that he does not waste a letter! His achievements are so great that they do not require the aid of poetry or oratory. A dash from the conqueror's pen is enough to set a nation rejoicing. "I came, I saw, I conquered," is a line which will be quoted to the end of time! Such is the life of our Lord Jesus from the Cross onward. If I seem to preach very plainly and even baldly, this morning, you will understand that my theme forbids the adornments which other subjects invite.

Our Savior died, but He rose again. It is a sort of courtesy to death to speak of the period of our Lord's entombment as three days. The victory of death was so short that Scripture can afford to let it be reckoned in the roughest manner, to give to death the utmost it could claim by the broadest method of reckoning. Give Death his three days—that is the outside of all his victory! Let Death and Hell make the best they can of it—the bruised heel of the Seed of the woman soon ceases to be lame!

When the first day of the week began to dawn, before yet the sun had gleamed through the veil of the olives and lit up the garden of Joseph of Arimathaea, our Lord arose from His slumber and began to disrobe Himself of His grave clothes. In orderly manner He folded them up and divided them with intent of instruction. He left the grave clothes for us, that our last chamber may be fitly furnished when we shall come to lie in it—and then He put the napkin by itself, that our friends may dry their tears thereon when they remember that there is now a glorious hope in death for all who are in Christ! The living Lord waited a while and then the messenger from the courts of Heaven descended to set Him free. The angel touched the stone which shut the mouth of the grave—the stone removed—the Risen One came forth from the dampness of the vault into the freshness of the morning air, frightening the watchmen and causing the solid earth to quake with fear! He was as truly risen as He had been truly dead! He was no apparition or phantom—that body which had most certainly given up the ghost now received life again!

Our Lord tarried here for 40 days—a time sufficient for the establishment of His identity and the production of proof of the fact that He had truly risen. During that 40 days He so showed Himself in different places that the testimony to His Resurrection became most abundant and convincing. He was seen by ones and twos who could the more carefully examine Him because they were alone with Him. He was tested by one who put his finger into the print of the nails and thrust his hand into His side—nothing could be more conclusive than the verdict of that suspicious examiner! He was seen by about 500 brethren at once, that by the eyes of many the fact of His being the once Crucified Jesus might be as-

certained beyond all further question. His appearance was not a vision beheld by one or two enthusiasts when alone—He was manifestly set forth among a great company as their Lord and Master who had been cruelly put to death, but had risen from among the dead! Our Savior would not go to Heaven till He had settled the fact of His Resurrection upon a basis which can never be shaken. There is no fact in history, ancient or modern, which is half so well attested as the Resurrection of our Lord from the dead! You shall turn to the pages of the most veracious and sober historians of any age you please, but you will not there find such assured evidence of any event as the Gospels give to us of the rising again of Jesus! Events which we now speak of as indisputable are not so surely true as that Jesus, who was taken down from the Cross and laid in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathaea, did really rise and live again among the sons of men!

He tarried 40 days, not only for the establishment of this great Truth of God, but for the comfort of His disciples. He wiped away the tears which they shed at His death and made them feel that it was no longer a calamity that their Lord had died. He also prepared them for the more enduring grief of His departure—indeed, He so elevated their minds and raised their spirits, that we never hear of their lamenting His Ascension! He made them see that it was expedient that He should go away so that the Comforter might come to them. He also communed with them, gave them of His Spirit and filled them with His peace. He raised them from being common peasants to be the Patriarchs of a new age, the vanguard of the Divine crusaders who would conquer the world for Jesus! They went forth strong in the Lord and in the power of His might because He had spoken to them and they had heard from His own lips the Gospel which they were commissioned to proclaim.

He also stayed long enough to give them directions how to act. In fact, He organized His forces, ordered their line of battle and prepared them for the victory! To all He gave the direction to tarry at Jerusalem till they were endowed with power from on high and, in that command, we have our marching orders for all time. Some of the disciples He had to address individually, for they had special needs. He had to cheer the heart of Magdalene, to overcome the unbelief of Thomas, to give warning and encouragement to Peter and to brace them all for their coming struggle. The Great Shepherd of the sheep could not return unto His rest till He had seen to every sickly sheep and put the whole flock in order. He would not go to His Glory till He could leave all whom the Father gave Him prepared for their future destiny.

Those forty days were soon over. Very remarkable days they were, if you study them—so different from His former life. Nobody molested the Lord. No scribes or Pharisees contradicted Him, no malicious Jews took up stones to stone Him. Those were calm days, days wherein the birds of peace sat on the still waters and not a wave ruffled the calm. I might almost say that those days were the prelude of His Glory, a sort of anticipation of His reign of peace when He shall stand in the latter day upon the

earth and wars shall cease unto the end of the earth. When those 40 days were over, the Master went His way. All was done that He had covenanted to perform and He ascended to His reward. Now we have come to our text.

I shall this morning, first of all, *rehearse the circumstances* which are here mentioned in three parts—He has gone into Heaven. He is at the right hand of God. Angels and authorities and powers are made subject to Him. When I have rehearsed these circumstances, I shall then, Beloved, by the help of God's Spirit, ask you to learn the simple but sublime lessons which these facts are meant to teach us.

I. First, LET US REHEARSE THE CIRCUMSTANCES.

They begin thus—*“Who is gone into Heaven.”* “He is gone”—that sounds rather gloomy. You might touch the mournful string as you hear these words, for if He is gone, we are bereaved, indeed! Yet we dare not raise a monument to Christ as one who is dead! Let us complete the sentence—*“Who is gone into Heaven.”* Now you demand the trumpet, for the words are full of soul-stirring music and create intense delight! Still, there are the words, “He is gone”—He is gone away from you and from me—we cannot embrace His feet, nor wash them, nor lean our head upon His bosom, nor look into His face. We have to sing to our Well-Beloved—

***“Jesus, these eyes have never seen
That radiant form of Yours!
The veil of sense hangs dark between
Your blessed face and mine!”***

We are strangers here because He is not here. He intends us to remove, for He has removed. We are not at home on earth. If He were here, we might think this world could be our abiding place, but it cannot be so now. If He were here, earth would be a kind of Heaven to us, but away from Him it is a place of exile. If we could now run to Him and tell Him our griefs as they arise, they would cease to be griefs, but Jesus does not mean this to be our lot and portion. Our inheritance is not on this side of Jordan. Truly, this world and all the works that are in it, are to be burned up—in token of which He is gone from it. It is vain for us to think that we can make our abode here! We are, ourselves, to go away soon and, therefore, He is gone—

***“When He arose, ascending high
He taught our feet the way.”***

He seems to say, “Upwards, my Brethren, upwards from off this earth! Away from this world to the Glory Land! I am gone and you must be gone. This is not your place of resting, but you must prepare yourselves for a time when it shall be said of each one of you, ‘He is gone.’” Those who linger behind us will see us no more, for we shall be gone into Heaven to be with our Lord in His Kingdom.

I like to remember that our Lord Jesus is gone in the entirety of His Nature. His body is gone. He has not left His flesh in the grave. Jesus has carried with Him His entire Self, His whole Humanity. Therein I rejoice, for He has carried my nature to Heaven with Him! My heart is with Him on His Throne and all my being longs to follow it! Jesus has taken our man-

hood into Heaven. He is in Heaven, our Adam, the Representative of His people. He has taken us up with Himself, Beloved, even all of us who are in Him. He has gone into Heaven in His true and proper Manhood. In the New Jerusalem He looks like a Lamb that has been slain and still He wears His Priesthood, His Manhood and His sympathetic heart. He who is gone into Heaven is not an imposter, but the real Christ! We shall know Him there if we have known Him here. He on whose head are many crowns, is identical with the Christ whose head was encircled with thorns! Despite the change in His circumstances, there is no change in Him—He is “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever.” He, His own Self, who bore our sins, is gone up into Heaven!

We have dwelt long enough upon the words, “He is gone.” Now let us consider that He “is gone *into Heaven*.” What does this signify but, first, that He is gone out of the region wherein our senses can perceive Him? Be sure of this, that you will not now see Him, nor touch Him, nor handle Him. He is gone into Heaven—out of reach of our earth-bound senses. It is a vain idea of carnal-minded men that Christ is corporeally in the “sacrament.” He is gone into Heaven! His very flesh and blood cannot be here among us. He is gone up into Heaven and, therefore, He is not where He can be recognized by these bodily senses. Spiritually He is here, according to His promise, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world,” but to say that He is here *corporeally* is to deny that He is gone up into Heaven. As Man, as His body was of substance, it is not capable of being in more than one place at a time! You must not transform His *Humanity* into Deity—His Deity is everywhere, but His substantial Humanity can only be in its one proper place—and to suppose it to be everywhere is virtually to deny that it is anywhere! A covert unbelief in the reality of our Lord’s body thus veils itself under the appearance of a *superstitious* faith. Jesus is really and indeed gone into Heaven and, therefore, we see Him not, we hear Him not and our communion with Him is by *faith*—not by the senses.

But then, Beloved, we know that our Lord, as Man, is gone into a greater nearness to God than ever—“He is gone into Heaven” where is the Throne of the Great King. The High Priest, on the Day of Atonement, lifted the mysterious veil which shut in the Holy of Holies. He passed within and the veil fell between him and the people. They could not possibly see him while he was performing his sacred functions. But they knew that he stood before the Throne of God. Though he was not with them, he was with God which was better for them. The High Priest was more useful to them within the veil than outside of it—he was doing for them, out of sight, what he could not accomplish in their view. I delight to think that my Lord is with the Father! Sometimes I cannot get to God—my access seems blocked by my infirmity—but He is always with God to plead for me! Sometimes my intercessions seem to die outside the veil—but His prayers are always within the Holy Place, since He, Himself, is there, presenting His potent pleas directly to the Father and being always accepted by Him! Let us joy and rejoice that our Covenant Head is now in the

bosom of the Father, at the Fountainhead of Love and Grace—and that He is there on our behalf.

In going into Heaven there is also this thought, that our Lord is gone, now, into the place of perfect happiness and of complete Glory. We rightly sing—

***“No more the bloody spear,
The Cross and nails no more,
For Hell itself shakes at His name,
And all the heavens adore.”***

No weariness, no mockery, no sinking of heart, no bearing of reproach, no crying, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” He is gone into peace, bliss, honor and renown. “Heaven” is a great word—none of us can understand it—nor shall we approach its meaning till we reach the place. He is where there are pleasures forevermore. The Human soul and body of Jesus are filled with delight! The Man, Christ Jesus, the son of Mary—He that died upon the Cross is now blessed forevermore! The Lord Jesus is filled with ineffable satisfaction which is the reward of His passion and His death. Let us this day be glad and rejoice in Him, for He is gone up into Heaven!

Thinking this over, let us reflect, dear Brothers and Sisters, that nothing could stop His going there. “He is gone up into Heaven, despite all who raged against Him.”

Death could not hold Him. Death bound Him very fast with the strongest cords, but He could not be held by them. This great monster must give up Jesus, even as another monster gave up Jonah, after the third day! Our greater Jonah came up, again, from the depths of the earth. He died and was a captive for our sakes, but His body could not see corruption, nor could His soul abide in the realms of death. He is gone to Heaven, despite the stone, the watch, the seal—despite the clay-cold hand of death.

He is gone into Heaven despite malicious men. Have you ever wondered why they did not attack Him when He had showed Himself openly and had led out His disciples to the Mount of Olives? They paid the soldiers to say that His disciples stole Him away while they slept—why did they not seize Him? Why is Herod so quiet and Caiaphas so still? Scribes and Pharisees, where are they? Are these lions *chained*? Our greater Daniel is in their den, but they do not even roar at Him! It is now or never with them—if they could capture Him, now, and stop His way to His eternal triumph, it would be a great victory! It is the last chance for the overthrow of His power! But truly, against Him did not a dog move his tongue! They were still as a stone while He passed over to take possession of the inheritance!

As death could not hinder Him, so neither could the malice of men detain Him, nor could all the forces of the devil block His way. I see no trace of the arch-enemy after Christ has risen from the dead. O Prince of Darkness, you did meet Him in the wilderness at the beginning—why not close with Him at the end? Why not assail Him by the sea when He stands there with His coals of fire, with fish laid on them, and bread? Prince of Dark-

ness, why did you not hasten up to shoot a last arrow at Him and summon all your bands to waylay Him in mid-air to block His passage to the Golden City? No, the powers of darkness were baffled! In their silence they gnashed their teeth for rage, but they could not even hiss against Him! He had so thoroughly cowed and subdued Satan and all his angels in Gethsemane and on the Cross, that nothing remained but to triumph over them and lead captivity captive! The leaguered hosts of Hell could not summon courage for another encounter—His warfare was accomplished and the road to His Father's capital lay open before Him! In peaceful triumph He passed beyond the clouds. Troops of angels on the road met with their joyful songs, the Heir of all things returning to His Home! My heart rejoices as I think that He is gone into Heaven, none disputing His passage.

But I beg you to remember that He is gone up into Heaven *as our Representative*. Jesus does nothing by Himself, now. All His people are with Him. He says, "Behold I and the children which God has given Me." They are always in union with Him. The Head is never separate from the members—the supposition is ghastly! He is our Forerunner marking the way; our Herald predicting our coming; our Breaker clearing the road. As the great Lord calls them Home, it shall be said of each one of the saints, "who is gone into Heaven." Jesus is gone there as Pioneer to open the way, as our Friend to prepare a place for us and as the Pledge that all who are in Him shall come to the same happiness! If He had not entered, neither could we, but in His Person God has given to us a token that we, also, shall rise from the dead and shall enter into Heaven! He who is the Surety of the Covenant is our guarantee of entrance into Heaven! This is the best seal that our faith could desire, the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ being practically the resurrection and the home-bringing of all His redeemed! I stop—may the Lord bless this to your souls.

Secondly, we have to look at the next circumstance, *His sitting at the right hand of God*—"who is gone into Heaven, and is at the right hand of God." Remember that this being at the right hand of God relates to the complex Person of our Lord. It relates to Him not as God, alone, but as God and Man. It is His Manhood that is at the right hand of God. Wonderful conception! The next being to God is Man! Infinite leagues must necessarily lie between the Creator and the created, but between God and man, *in Christ Jesus*, there seems no distance at all—the Man Christ Jesus sits at God's right hand. Is not this a sublime thought, that man, creature as he is, is now so linked with the Second Person of the Divine Trinity in Unity, that he is so near to God as to be at His right hand? So near, so very near to God—he cannot be nearer! This is a wonderful thing—Jesus sits at the right hand of God as Man—and man is thus brought into a singular nearness to God! As I said before, there is an immeasurable chasm between God and a seraph, and yet man, whom He made a "little lower than the angels," and who was, consequently, a little further off, is, in the Person of the Son of God, brought so near to God that no being of any kind now intervenes between the Almighty God and man!

What does it mean that Christ sits at the right hand of God? Does it not mean, first, unrivalled honor? To sit at the right hand of God is the highest conceivable glory. The mother of Zebedee's children asked that her sons might sit, the one on His right hand, and the other on His left, in His Kingdom, but Jesus said it was not His to give. The Father has given the Son to sit in the highest place nearest to His Throne, yes, *on the very Throne of God*, for we read of "the Throne of God and of the Lamb." Jesus, our Brother, is elevated to the throne of the Most High!

Does not it also signify intense love? When Solomon would describe the love of the king to his bride, he said, "Upon your right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir." The Lord God places the Son of Man in the seat of love, where none may be but the One who is the beloved of the Father. He loves Him with an unutterable, inconceivable love and even thus does He love us in Him! Christ at the right hand of God means all His people at the right hand of God—all the saints are in the place of the nearest and dearest love!

It means, also, communion and counsel. We speak of a person with whom we take advice as "the man of our right hand." God takes counsel with the Man, Christ Jesus. When you have a friend at court, you hope you will do well, but what a Friend have we in the King's courts—even He who is The Wonderful, Counselor! He is the King of Glory, the Governor of earth, the Distributor of thrones and crowns, the Man Christ Jesus! Now I know that the decree of God must mean my good, for my Lord sits at the right hand of Him that does decree! Now I understand that the purposes of God must work out the happiness of the chosen, for He who loves them is in union with the Maker of the purpose!

Does it not also signify perfect repose? Jesus is gone up to the right hand of God and sits there. While He was occupied with His holy service, He did not sit down. There were no seats for the priests in the tabernacle—their work was too laborious for sitting down. But Jesus has *forever* taken His seat at the right hand of God, expecting till His enemies are made His footstool! O restful Savior, we, toiling and laboring, come to You and find rest in You—we also sit down longing for and expecting the time when You shall put down all our enemies and we shall tread even Satan under our feet! Even now we sit with You in the heavenlies and enjoy Your peace. So much concerning the seating of our Lord.

The third fact is, *His dominion*—"Angels and authorities and powers being made subject to Him." Angels are subject to Him upon whom cowards spat—to Him whom they nailed to the Cross—and at whom they wagged their heads! This is one of the wonders of Heaven. Is it possible that the conjecture of the old writers was true, that Satan rebelled against God because He heard a whisper that a man would one day be Head over all principalities and powers? I do not know, but certainly the angels must often marvel that Gabriel, nor the brightest of the seraphim is next to God—but a Man! Lord, what is man! Man made of the dust of the earth—what is he that he should sit above more spiritual beings, crowned with glory and honor? Yet it is so. God has set the Christ above all angels and principalities

ties and powers. Is not this one of those things which angels desire to look into? Although Lucifer has fallen, there is yet no gap in Heaven. Creatures in part, material, are lifted up to fill the void caused by the great dragon when he drew down with his tail the third part of the stars of Heaven. Men in countless myriads are in Heaven, white-robed, praising God! And one Man is actually on the Throne of God, Vice Regent, Lord over all—having every knee to bow before Him and every tongue to call Him Lord, to the Glory of God the Father!

Oh, think of it! The Man Christ Jesus is Lord of all the shining ones! He can send an angel to comfort you in your grief—“Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” When you count up the available forces of your Lord, do not forget these invisible armies. Did He not say in the hour of His agony, “Can I not now pray to My Father and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels”? The air will soon teem with invisible spirits if they are needed for our defense, for our Savior is their Lord! They will count it all joy to do His bidding on our behalf. They are the chariots of God in which He rides to the rescue of His own. The day shall come when all the hosts of Heaven shall come down to earth, attending the Son of Man—then shall they gather out of His Kingdom all things that offend and, at the same time, they shall delight to display their loyalty to Him that once did hang upon the Cross. We rejoice, today, that God has set Him far above all principality, power, might and dominion—and every name that is named!

But I must not forget that He has power over all devils as well. They are fallen angels and Jesus has subdued them once and for all. They cannot tempt His followers without His permission. They cannot put forth their finger to bring any calamity upon a Job unless God wills it. These dogs are muzzled and, therefore, we should not fear them—

***“A faithful God restrains their hands,
And binds them down in iron bands.”***

Jesus is Lord of all!

Whatever else this term “angels and authorities and powers” may comprehend, Christ has under His sway. That is to say, all kings and princes upon earth, all leaders of thought—political or religious—all controllers of human movements are subject to Him. Do not be afraid of this or that form of anarchy—nothing can shake the eternal Throne of the Prince of Peace! Monarchs may die and crumble back to dust and their empires with them, but the Throne of the Son of David shall endure forever and ever! No acts of senators, nor decrees of despots, nor raging of the multitude, nor foaming of rebels, nor deliverances of sages can interfere, in the least degree, with the supreme power of Jesus of Nazareth! His very Cross proclaimed Him King—and King He is! Be cheered by His reign. “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.” It is surely so, for the Lord has given Jesus the Kingdom and He shall reign forever and ever.

Yes, and all kinds of forces other than human are under subjection to Jesus. The Psalmist, when he measured the domain of man, said—“You

made him to have dominion over all the works of Your hands; You have put all things under His feet: all sheep and oxen, yes, and the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatever passes through the paths of the seas.” We do not yet see all things put under man, but we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with Glory and honor! All things this day bow before the Lord Jesus, willingly or unwillingly. It matters not what powers, forces and energies may be now developed, or may be yet developed in the ages to come—they are all subject to the Lord Christ! That heel which once was bruised when the serpent wounded it, has crushed the dragon’s head and holds it down upon the earth. Life, death, Hell and worlds unknown lie in subjection to Him that lives and was dead! Oh that my Lord had a servant that could worthily declare His glories! Great princes have their heralds who, with blast of trumpet, proclaim their honors and dignities, but who shall proclaim the glories of the Son of Man who once died for our sins?

Come, let us rejoice together in the victories of our Leader and Lord! I know of no better theme to stir the pulses of my soul with holy exultation than the thought that Jesus is victorious! I have heard of wounded men crushed amid a heap of bleeding bodies lying on the battlefield and awakening all the life that remained in them when they saw the great Napoleon come riding over the plain. With their legs gone, they raised themselves upon their arms, once more to salute their captain! Poor souls, to be thus enthusiastic for one who shed their blood like water! Far more wise is our enthusiasm for Him who shed His blood for us! If I knew that I must die in a ditch and be forgotten or slandered and abhorred of men, I would yet rejoice and cry, “Hosanna!” at the prospect of my Lord’s sure victory! Yes, I will salute Him now with my most hearty praises and be glad because I know that He is, even now, King of kings and Lord of lords. Hallelujah! He of whom they said, “Crucify Him, crucify Him,” is now Head over all! There I leave it. God grant us Grace to rejoice in this story of our Lord!

II. Secondly, and very briefly, LET US LEARN THE LESSONS OF THESE CIRCUMSTANCES.

The first lesson is—*the religion of Christ is true*. Whenever I read modern doubts—and you cannot read long without coming across them—I am glad to get back to facts. If you read a certain set of modern sermons, you will find all the eternal Truths of God denied or maligned. Too many ministers, instead of being servants of Christ, are servants of the devil dressed in the livery of God—may the Lord have mercy upon them! Whenever a doubt is proposed to me, I fall back upon this fact—Jesus did rise from the dead. That is sure. He did also ascend into Heaven, for His disciples saw Him rise. Well, then, I am satisfied to be the least of His disciples and to take His Word and the words of His Inspired Apostles and believe them—even though faith is denounced as ridiculous! “You are left behind in the march of progress. You are poor fools who cannot think for yourselves.” I confess that I am such a fool—I believe what God has revealed. I have more confidence in the Revelation of God than in the opinions of

men. I know nothing among men except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. For this is the Truth of God! We know it! We have facts at our back. Our doctrine is not sentiment, view and opinion, but fact! "Who has gone into Heaven and is at the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject to Him."

I learn another lesson—that *Christ's cause is safe*. Let not His Church tremble. Let her not think of putting out the hand of unbelief to steady the Ark of the Lord. The history of the Church is to be the history of Christ repeated—she is to be betrayed, she is to be scourged, she is to be falsely accused and spit on—she may have her crucifixion and her death. But she shall rise again! Her Master rose and, like He, she shall rise and receive Glory. You can never kill the Church till you can kill Christ—and you can never defeat her till you defeat the Lord Jesus who already wears the crown of triumph! The grand old cause is safe! The outlook may be dark, just now, and it may be unpopular to follow the Lamb wherever He goes, but the day will come when they who do so shall walk in white, for they are worthy! The wheel will turn and they that are lowest, now, shall soon be highest—they that have been with Him in the dust shall be with Him in His Glory.

Now I can see that *His saints are safe*, for if Jesus has risen and gone into His Glory, then each individual in Him shall be safe, too. Where does your hope lie, Brothers and Sisters? Why, in Christ! Well, then, your hope is always safe, is it not? If you have any hope outside of Him, it may perish, but if your hope is all within Him, your treasure is all within the heavenly casket and it is always secure! Therefore, be glad and rejoice! You, too, may have to cry, "Why have you forsaken me?" You, too, may thirst. You, too, may die. But you shall live again and you shall triumph, for as He is, so are you and *what Jesus is*, that you shall be in Him!

I can also see another lesson here—*this explains the way in which Jesus deals with sinners*. That which took place in His own Person, He makes to be a picture of what takes place in the men whom He saves. If you come to Him, you can only get to know the fullness of His gracious power by being scourged and buffeted with conviction and repentance—and by having self, especially self-righteousness, crucified and slain! You must know the destruction of self, you must see death written upon all carnal hopes and then, out of that death, you shall live again in newness of life and you shall receive honor and glory and immortality! Therefore, dear troubled Heart, if Christ is killing you, be assured He will make you alive, for this is what He says, even He, the mighty God—"I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal." The history of Christ has to be written out again in us! Death to sin and a new life unto righteousness must be ours. That is a lesson worth the learning!

And so I must close with one more division which will have several points in it. I think, Beloved, since Christ has gone into Heaven and sits at the right hand of God, *it shows which way we ought to go*. "I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." He draws them to the Cross and you may be sure He will draw them to the crown! Do you think

He has lost His appeal, now that He sits on the Throne? Not He! He is drawing us up this morning! Let us send all our thoughts upward—our desires, our rejoicings, our aspirations—let them all climb Jacob’s ladder up to the Lord! Oh that we could at once rise to Him! Stop a while, my Soul! Be patient through your appointed days. Though you can hardly stand delay, yet follow His example, for your Lord, Himself, had to wait. He had His time of waiting and so must you, in order that you may have fellowship with Him in His sufferings. Still feel the drawings. Remember that pretty parable, given by one of our ministers, of the boy’s kite. He made it fly aloft. It rose up so high that he could no longer see it. Still, he said he had a kite and he held fast to it. “Boy, how do you know you have a kite?” “I can feel it pull,” he said.

This morning we feel our Jesus pull. He draws us with a far greater force than a mere string. He is gone into Heaven and He draws us after Him! O Lord, draw us with greater power than ever! “Draw us, we will run after You.” Do we not feel as though we could kneel down and pray over those words of the spouse? Wait a bit and soon you shall climb the shining way to embrace your risen Lord! Yield to His upward drawing! Do not pull away from Him to grasp earth and things that are earthly, but yield to His drawings. As you yield to them, begin to sing—He has conquered! He has conquered! He has conquered! What matters it though my garments are rolled in dust and blood? He has conquered! He has conquered! What does it matter though the arrows fly thick about me, winged by the feathers of death? He has conquered! He has conquered! My Soul, grasp the victory, for there is laid up for you, also, a crown of life that fades not away!

God bless you, Brothers and Sisters, for Jesus’ sake!

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LUMINOUS WORDS

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“Therefore since Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves, likewise, with the same mind: for he that has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin; that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. For the time past of our life may suffice us to have worked the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, drinking parties and abominable idolatries.”
1 Peter 4:1-3.

Our Lord Jesus Christ has suffered for sin and He has suffered to the utmost extent, for He has paid the death penalty on His people's behalf. Look at the 18th verse of the previous chapter—“For Christ also has once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.” Christ has fought with sin to the bitter end. He has now done with sin, for He has died to it. He has borne the capital sentence pronounced upon the guilty, dying, “the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” Now, as many as have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ are one with Him. And what He did, He did representatively for them, so that they virtually did it in Him. Therefore, every Believer ought to regard Himself as having been put to death on account of sin—as having undergone, in the Person of His Great Substitute, the capital sentence on account of sin and now, as a man who has been executed is clear of the guilt, so are we! And as a man who has been executed should not return, could he live again, under the old sin, so neither must we. “Christ being raised from the dead dies no more; death has no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He lives, He lives unto God. Likewise reckon you, also, yourselves, to be dead, indeed, unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Now read between the lines of our text. In Christ we have died unto sin once, but now that we live unto God, we are as if we had actually died to sin and had passed into a new state and condition by virtue of our union with Jesus Christ our Lord. But while this is true, there is an experience of it which we have to undergo within our own spirits—hence the Apostle says, “Therefore since Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves, likewise, with the same mind.” As He has died to sin, we are to die to sin, also. This takes place—the commencement of it, at any rate—at the time of conversion. The man who formerly loved sin begins to hate it. The sin which he used to swallow greedily, he now loathes and shuns. There is such a change worked by the Spirit of God in the heart of

the Believer that sin can no more have dominion over him. It is dethroned from the place which it occupied over his nature. It once put its foot upon his neck, but now he puts his foot upon its neck. He is dead to sin and he ceases from it—not only that—in the sight of the all-seeing Jehovah, he has his infirmities, his failures and his sins, but still, as far as his heart is concerned, he has done with it.

There is not any sin which he would willingly do. There is no sin which he wishes to spare. “Destroy them all,” he says, “There is not one of them which is not a deadly viper which would cause my ruin. Sweep them all out, my happiness can never be complete till my character is perfect! O Lord, I can never have my heart’s desire till—

**‘The dearest idol I have known,
Whatever that idol is shall be once
And forever torn from off Your throne,
That I may worship only You.’”**

You see, dear Friends, what a wonderful change it is, that is worked in those who are united to the Lord Jesus Christ. (It is as though a man were made to be dead to all for which he once lived and were made to live for that to which he was before dead). He has passed from death unto life, from loving evil into loving righteousness, from hating that which is good to the following after it with all his heart and soul and spirit! I am not going to enlarge upon that great Truth of God except to say this. I beg you to remember that there is no quitting of sin—there is no escaping from its power—except by contact and union with the Lord Jesus Christ. I may stand here and preach against the prevalent vices of the age, as I hope I never shall be ashamed to do, but no vice will be put down merely by my denunciation of it. I may charge this man to shake off his sins by righteousness and to escape for his life, but I have set him a task which is quite impossible to him unless I also tell him *where the power is to be found by which this work is to be done*.

You will not bring a man into the humor to break off his sin by merely telling him that it is his duty, or by warning him that he will be ruined unless he does so. No, but if you can lay that dead man at the foot of the Cross—if you can bring the pierced hands of Jesus to touch that dead and powerless sinner—then he will live! If he does but look to Christ, a glance at Him will give that moral and spiritual power which shall enable the man to make a total alteration in his life, because inwardly there shall be made, by the Holy Spirit, a complete transformation in his inner self. You may take a lantern which has no candle in it and you may clean the exterior as long as you like, but it will not guide you through the darkness. There must be a candle placed within, or else it will be useless to you, cleanse it as you may! And within man’s secret nature there must be put the Divine candle of *faith in Christ*, otherwise all his outward moralities will leave him a dark lantern. You may take a sow from the trough and you may wash it with much soap and expend much toil upon it—but whatever you may do, as soon as it is set free—the creature will go back to its wallowing and be as filthy as the rest of the swine. It can never be cleanly, like the sheep, unless an Almighty hand shall transform the sow into a sheep and, in like manner, sinners are never really changed until they are born again!

It is a good thing for the sow to be washed, I have no doubt it is all the better for it. It is a good thing for the lantern to be cleaned though it has no candle—it is all the better for it. And so, it is a good thing for the drunk to become a total abstainer. It is a right thing for the thief to become honest. It is a wise thing for the impure to become chaste. All these things are good, but, still, they fall short of what is needed to enable a man to enter Heaven. And there comes down, again, this great Nasmyth hammer which, at every blow, crushes all self-righteousness! “You must—you must—you must be born again! There is no escaping from the bondage of sin except by that wonderful means which God has ordained—“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” There is no way of getting the power with which we can kill sin, the great adversary of our souls, except by laying hold upon the conquering Cross of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior!

That is the great Truth of God I shall try to enforce all through my discourse, but I intend just to light up portions of my text as I have sometimes seen, at illuminations, a few oil lamps lit up, and not the rest. I am going to select a few words here and there, and to try to illuminate them by the light of the Holy Spirit.

I. The first words I want to light up are but two—“NO LONGER.” “That he *no longer* should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.”

Those words, “no longer,” strike me as exceedingly suggestive to some of you. If God the Holy Spirit shall open your eyes to see Jesus Christ as having died for you—and you shall look to Him and find life in that look—then you will “no longer” be what you are! You will “no longer” wish to do what you have been doing. You will not even ask for an hour’s furlough or respite, but this will be your cry, “No longer! No longer would I spend my time in the flesh to the lusts of men.” It is near the end of the year, the last Sabbath evening in another year. My Heart, have you been living to please yourself and have your own passions been your master? Then, O my God, help me to say that it shall be so no longer!

For, first, *it is a dishonorable thing* for a man to let his body, which is his baser part, rule his spirit, which is his nobler part. It is a disgraceful thing for a man to live only for the pleasures of the day and never cast a glance into the future and think about his immortal soul which will outlive the stars. Say to yourself, “Why should I act so dishonorably? Come, my spirit, wake yourself up!” If you are, indeed, a man with intellect and soul within you, let your spirit take its right position and say to the body, “You shall no longer rule, but you shall be a drawer of wood and a drawer of water to my mind and my spirit, which shall henceforth come to the front, for no longer will I seek after the lusts of the flesh.”

And for this reason, also, because it is not only dishonorable, but *it is wrong* “to live in the flesh to the lusts of men.” Are you not conscious, you who have never lived unto God, that you are living altogether a wrong kind of life? I do not mean, necessarily, that you are leading a vicious life, but is your Maker, your Creator, getting glory out of you, or does this complaint of God apply to your case—“Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord has spoken, I have nourished and brought

up children and they have rebelled against Me. The ox knows his owner and the ass his master's crib, but Israel does not know, My people do not consider." Have I not often put it to you that you would not keep a dog if it never followed at your heel? You would not care to have an engine that never worked according to your will. You would soon say, "I must get rid of this useless thing." Yet here is God who has created you and provided for you—and preserved you in being—and all this while you have scarcely thought of Him! You have never loved Him, you have never truly worshipped Him and, whatever kind of outward homage you have rendered to Him, you have had no real delight in it. You have been a trembling slave, but you have never been an obedient servant to Him! Well, then, as this is all wrong, we must alter it! A man who is a man says, "If this course is wrong, I am going no further in it. If this is a dishonest thing, I will have no more to do with it. No longer! No longer! No, not a moment longer will I continue as I have been! If I can have an alteration made, that alteration shall be made at once, for this is my motto, 'no longer.'"

Let me also say to you, dear Friend, that you ought "no longer" to live "in the flesh to the lusts of men" because *the tendency is for you to get hardened in that evil state*. Remember that text on which I spoke to you, a fortnight ago? [Sermon #1821, Volume 31—*Cords and Cart Ropes*—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org> .] "Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin, as it were, with a cart rope." As cords of vanity grow into cart ropes, so little evil practices consolidate into dreadful habits which hold a man as with bands of steel! There are some of you who, if you mean to go to Heaven, must begin at once! I feel that there are some here to whom God seems to say, "now, or never!" I can hear the great pendulum of the clock of time and as it goes to and fro it says, "Now, or never! Now, or never! Now, or never!" Before, like Lot's wife, you stiffen into a pillar of salt that can never move, I charge you, escape for your life! Run to the only refuge set before you! May God help you to do so, looking unto Jesus! Let the words, "no longer," enter into your heart as they now come forth from my mouth!

"No longer," for if, dear Friend, you have found out that Jesus has loved you, and that He gave Himself for you, you will say to yourself, "*No longer will I harbor His enemies.*" I pray the Holy Spirit to help me to lead you right away to Calvary where Jesus hangs bleeding on the Cross. Will you not sit down with me upon the ground and look up, and see Him die? Mark the precious blood flowing from His many wounds and hear Him cry, "I thirst." "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Look unto Him! Oh, that you would look, as I now do! I am looking unto Jesus and trusting myself entirely with Him to save me. And I feel in my heart that He *has* saved me. Now I cannot live as I once lived. I cannot sin as I once sinned. I must have done with sin if I have, indeed, trusted in Christ. Do you not feel the same? I am sure that if you do, now, look to Him, and live by Him, you will not want to have your sins spared you even until the end of this year but you will say, "No! Take them out! Hang them up! Let them all be put away forever. There is no darling sin that I would keep back. Let them all die, for no longer would I seek to find a

perilous and poisonous enjoyment in them, but my delight shall consist in seeking to be holy and in endeavoring to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ.” If you have received the new life into your soul, then I know that you will say, “No longer will I abide in sin.” I have been charmed, this week, by some whom I have seen who have found the Savior just lately. And I am pleased to find that the Lord is at work in many ways bringing sinners to Himself. Why should He not bring you? And what better time could there be than just at the close of this year?

Remember that *it must be short work with every sin*. Your watchword must be, “NO LONGER!” There must be no parleying, no trifling. You have already parleyed too long and trifled too long. Now for the one deadly shot that shall penetrate the very heart of sin-love and make it fall slain within you. *It will have to be sharp work* with some of you, as well as short work. It will be like cutting off your right arm or tearing out your right eye, but it must be done! It must be with you as it was with John Bunyan, “Will you have your sins and go to Hell? Or will you give them up and go to Heaven?” There is no other alternative. As God lives, it must be one of these two! As it is short work and sharp work, *it will be saving work*, for, when you have parted with your sins, you will be joined to Christ! And when at Christ’s feet you have laid down your love of sin, then you may go your way hearing the Apostle’s comforting message, “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Trusting in Christ, you are saved, and you may sing of it, and bless the name of the Most High!

So much for these two words, “no longer.”

II. Now I want you kindly to turn to my text, again, that I may light up five words in the second verse. They are these, “THE REST OF HIS TIME.”

“The rest of his time.” I do not know how much there may be, but, *in any case, it cannot be very long*. “The rest of his time,” cannot be very long even with the longest-lived among us. Some have good constitutions and they are yet only in the beginning of their days, so they may live a considerable long time. Still, they cannot be sure that it will be so. God has been visiting this congregation very frequently of late. Every day, almost, somebody is taken away from us. Elderly persons have gone in immense numbers during the last two months. Some of our young friends are also going and we shall have to carry to the grave, this week, some who have scarcely reached middle life. The hand of God is at work among us in a very marked manner, taking away one and another from our midst. “Who’ll be next? Who’ll be next?” One who was here on Sabbath week has now gone into the world of spirits—I know of one—there may be many more besides. Well, then, dear Friends, it is clear that the rest of our time cannot be very long.

“The rest of his time.” *With some, it must be very short—persons* who are very sickly. Others who are very aged. And to some who are neither sickly nor aged, the bolt of death shall be let fly in a moment and they will be in the unseen world. Come, then, dear Friends, let us think this matter over! I would like to think it over myself. There is this consideration which we must not forget—while we are *talking* about the rest of our

life—it is already going. Every moment that we are here, we are traveling at an immense rate, speeding onward to the great goal of death. We had need be in earnest, for while we are making up our minds to be earnest, our time is slipping away! We say that we will find a firm foundation to build on for eternity and while we are thinking and talking of the foundation, the earth is crumbling from underneath our feet and we are gradually gliding away! “It is time to live,” said Anacreon, “for I grow old.” And surely we may each one of us say, “It is time to live, since, whether old or not, my life is continually passing away.”

I should like to cheer up some of you who are not yet converted. With the belief that although the rest of your time for serving the Lord cannot be as long as it would have been if you had been converted earlier, yet, if you yield yourself to Christ at once, there may be *enough time left to you to do good work for your Lord and Master*. I have known an aged man converted to Christ long after gray hairs have been upon him, even when tottering to his grave. He has not been wholly useless—he has still brought forth fruit in his old age to show that the Lord is upright. It has been the happy lot of some of us to be working for our Lord and Master ever since our boyhood, but we have not yet done enough. We feel, indeed, hungry to do much more, and we have the satisfaction of hoping that we may be spared, to do in the future, more than we have ever done up to the present. Who knows? God may give us fresh health and strength and we may be enabled to accomplish more than in the past—we shall do so if it pleases Him. But if any of you are converted in your old age, if you are brought to Christ at a period when your years must be few, yet take care to redeem the time, because the days are evil. It is wonderful how God can use even *you*—there is a testimony for you to bear—bear it and may God bless it very abundantly!

Meanwhile, as for the rest of our life, *it has immediate demands*, and I beg to impress that thought upon everybody here. The way to do a great deal is to keep on doing a little. The way to do nothing at all is to be continually resolving that you will do everything. Let that grand dream of yours, “baseless fabric of a vision” as it is, go where dreams must go. And begin to do the day’s work in the day, yes, and tonight’s work—the work of the hour upon which we have entered—do that while the hour is here. I am sure that there are many of you professing Christian people who do not bring anybody to Christ because, although you know how it ought to be done, you keep on finding fault with those that do it. Now, just leave your fellow servants alone and get to your own work. “Oh,” you say, “there is a person who is constantly trying to speak to others. He is really quite intrusive.” Yes, I know him very well, but, instead of bothering your head about *him*, would it not be as well for you to do the work better, yourself, if you can? If you tried to do so, you would then not have any inclination to find any fault with your fellow servant. If we were all determined to do what we could and to do it well, we should serve the Lord acceptably and be blessed in doing it.

“When I get home,” says someone, “I know what I can do. I am a nursemaid and I shall hear the children say their prayers.” Yes, hear them say their little prayers, but be sure to tell them something about

“Gentle Jesus.” “Oh, but,” says another, “I have such a number of children around me that I hardly ever get out. It is only now and then, on a Sunday evening, that I can come here. It seems as if there is nothing that I can do for Jesus.” “My dear good soul, you are the very person who has much to do for Christ! You have a great and precious charge entrusted to you—seek to bring all those dear children to the Savior.” “Well,” says another, “I really do not know what I can do.” Now, for a person who lives in London to say that is really wicked! You know what Solomon says about our work, “Whatever your *hand* finds to do, do it with all your might.” I should have thought that he would have said, “Whatever your eyes can see that needs to be done.” No, he seems to say, “You may shut your eyes and put out your hand and do the first thing that comes within your reach.” In such a city as this, there is so much to be done that you may just put out your hand and do the first thing that comes within your reach—that is the best thing for you to do!

“The rest of his time.” I have tried to light up those words and I want every Christian and every unconverted person, also, to go away thinking in some such fashion as this, “the rest of my time—let me use it, Lord, for You. Let me work at double-quick speed. Lord, help me to make forced marches for You. Lord, help me to do thoroughly what I do. Enable me to throw my whole soul into it and, by Your Divine Spirit, so inspire me, so fill me with Your own power and Grace, that what I do may be done effectually and efficiently.” Know you not that you are laborers together with God, and that what you do aright, God does through you? If you can but realize this, how honorably and gloriously will the rest of your life be spent!

III. Now, to close, I would throw the lamp-light on six words in the third verse. The words are these—“THE TIME PAST OF OUR LIFE.”

“The time past of our life.” Well, *that has gone past recall*. Oh, if you could only get your life back, again! But you cannot—not even a *moment* of it. What is done can never be undone—

**“Could your tears forever flow,
Could your zeal no respite know,”**

you cannot undo anything that is done. There your past life will always stand. If you are a believer in Jesus, the sin of your past life is forgiven. Still, it was your sin. The penalty of it will never be executed. Still, you did have that evil feeling, you did think that rebellious thought, you did say that word, you did commit that transgression, you did omit the keeping of that precept. There it is and it cannot be altered.

And further, *there is no way of making up for the past of your life*. The duties of today are not the duties of 10 years ago. If I live unto myself during the first 20, 30, 40, or 50 years of my life, I had need to be doubly zealous in the ardor of my service for God in the future. But, still, that does not fill up the void in the past. That does not remove the fact that all those fields behind me lay untilled through many a year, bringing forth nothing but thorns and thistles—no acceptable harvest for my God. Ah, me, this makes “the time past of our life” appear very solemn. Certainly it is true that it has sufficed “to have worked the will of the Gentiles.” There is no man here whom God has converted by His Grace, who

wishes that he had spent more of his life in sin. No doubt, it has given him a knowledge of the world, but it is a knowledge of the world which those who have, would be glad to be rid of. I know many a child of God who, when he is in prayer, will have suggested to him, even by the words he uses, some lascivious song. And even what the preacher says, though perfectly pure, may raise before the mind some impure thought, some unhallowed act. It is a blessed thing for a man who has been steeped up to his throat in the bogs of devilry, to be converted, but he who has never seen the world at all has seen quite enough of it. He who has never seen even the hoof of the devil, nor a print which he has made in the earth has seen enough of him. The time past may well suffice us to have worked the will of the Gentiles. If we were converted to God in boyhood, we had had quite enough of sin. Enough, did I say? Far too much, for a single drop of that burning acid will leave a scar upon the flesh even after it has no longer any power to destroy the spirit!

“The time past of our life” seems to me to be *a matter of humiliation* to us all, without exception, but most of all to those who are newly converted. I never mind hearing a man tell that he is converted, but I must confess to feeling a kind of sickness come over me when I have heard some people tell what they used to do before they were converted. I have thought, “I wish that Brother would get away in a corner somewhere and tell that story where nobody could hear it.” I have heard some men tell the tale of their past lives as if it really was very grand and very creditable to them to have done such abominable things! A man gets up in a meeting and says, My dear Friends, I have done that which, if it had been known, would have brought me to the gallows.” “Then sit down,” says someone, “sit down!” A very sensible thing to say, because perhaps the man might die on the gallows if he went on with his story. But some fellows will get up, and, under the pretense that they are going to glorify God, will tell of all manner of filthiness and vice which cannot do any good to anybody. Stand up and cry, Brother, that is the best thing you can do. Or else, sit down, and cover your face, and say, “Concerning those things whereof I am now ashamed, I only pray God, as He has blotted them out of His memory, to put them out of mine, also.”

“The time past of our life” ought to also come before us as a *matter of contrast*. A Christian should say, “I cannot do this or that. I used to do it, but that is the very reason why I cannot do it now. I cannot make the angry answer that I once would have done to a man who injured me. The time was when my blood would have been up and I would soon have let him know that he could not insult me in that fashion. But now he may insult me if he pleases, for I am changed, and, by His Grace, I have become a Christian. Time was when, in my business, I would not have minded how the weights went, but now I would far rather defraud myself than injure another.” The Christian should recollect the time past to make his present converted life to be a strict contrast to it.

And he should sometimes remember it that it may be a *stimulus to him*. I remember a man who came a considerable distance to worship with us in the House of God, as some of you do. I often notice, when you come to join the Church, if you have to walk five miles here and five

miles back, and I say to you, "It is a very long way," you exclaim, "Oh, it is nothing, Sir! It does me good and I like a walk on Sundays." After you have been here a few years, if you get lukewarm or cold in spirit, those same miles grow terribly long—do they not? And you go somewhere nearer home—there is a great difference between a mile and a mile—as much difference as there is between a heart and a heart. And when the heart changes, the length of the miles increases directly. Well, this man, of whom I was telling you, one day was going to this place of worship and he felt very tired and his legs said, "don't go this morning." So he just pulled up and said, "Ah, you old rascals, you used to go further than that to the theater, and I will make you go to the Tabernacle." So, on he walked.

And, sometimes, it is a good thing to put it to yourself, "Why, I have stood up in the gallery of the theater among the 'gods' when it has been hot enough to bake me! And I will go, though the place is hot, or though the place is cold, to hear the Gospel!" Some of you would have sat on a very bare seat in the days of your flesh to take your enjoyment, and paid your money down as freely as possible to see what only did you harm. But now it often happens that in a place of worship you must have a very soft cushion, be very comfortable and everybody must be very polite to you, or else you get sick and tired of it. O Friend, remember the past in order to chide yourself about the present, and say, "I went through thick and thin for the devil and I will go through thick and thin for Christ! I was never ashamed to acknowledge my old master, I could swear and curse among the worst of his servants. And surely I will not be ashamed to acknowledge Christ, but I will sing to His praise and acknowledge that I belong to Him."

I would like you all to take up these three threads—"No longer," "The rest of His time," "The time past of our life." Wind them round your finger and keep them in your memory, and may God grant that we may all start afresh from this time, to the praise of the glory of His Grace! Amen and amen.

EXPOSITION OF C. H. SPURGEON: 1 PETER 4

Verse 1. *Therefore since Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves, likewise, with the same mind.* Accepting this great Truth of God, that it is well that the flesh should die that the spirit may triumph, even as it was with Christ.

1. *For he that has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.* If he has, indeed, died with Christ, and the power of Christ's sufferings has made him dead to sin, he has ceased from it.

2-4. *That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God for the time past of our life may suffice us to have worked the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, drinking parties and abominable idolatries: wherein they think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you.* For the very thing in which they ought to

speaking well of you, men will speak evil of you. If you will not drink as they do, if you will not follow after sinful pleasures as they do, if you will not sing their songs, or use their language, then straightway they will hate you and call you a hypocrite. It is a pity that if we are not willing to go into sin as they do, they should, for that reason, speak ill of us, yet this is what we must expect.

5. *Who shall give account to Him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.* There will be a day when those who are alive at the coming of Christ will be judged. And those who were dead long before that time will not escape the judgment—for they shall be raised from their graves to appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ.

6. *For this cause was the Gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.* Men who heard the Gospel and believed it, and are now dead. They have undergone the sentence of death like other men, but, still, they are living “according to God in the spirit.”

7. *But the end of all things is at hand.* We are never told the exact date of the times or seasons which are yet to come. It is the evident aim of the Holy Spirit to keep us on our tiptoes of expectation. We are always to be as men whose Lord may come at any minute of the day or night. “The end of all things is at hand.”

7. *Be you, therefore, sober.* Do not get intoxicated with anything, neither with pride, nor with covetousness, nor with the cares of this world. Maintain your equilibrium. Stand steadfast and firm. “Be you, therefore, sober”

7, 8. *And watch unto prayer. And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves.* For, when Christ comes, He will know you as His disciples if you love one another. But if there is an absence of Christian affection when He comes, He will say at once that you have missed the main mark of discipleship.

8. *For charity shall cover the multitude of sins.* Not your own sins, but the sins of your friends, so that you will not see them. Where love is thin, faults are always thick. Wherever there is true love in the heart, we make many apologies and allowances for the weaknesses and infirmities of our friends. Often we cannot see the faults in them and when we know they are there, we go backward, like the godly sons of Noah, and cover the nakedness upon which we will not think of looking—“for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.”

9. *Use hospitality, one to another, without grudging.* Whenever saints of God traveled in those days, there were few public inns available for their accommodation, so they stayed with Brothers and Sisters in Christ as they went on their way.

10. *As every man has received the gift, even so minister the same, one to another, as good stewards of the manifold Grace of God.* God’s Grace takes many shapes, it is manifold, and He gives to one Brother one form of Grace, and to another quite a different form. And, to a third, yet another form of His blessing. Now, as nations increase their wealth by mutual commerce, so do Christians increase their Grace by a sweet fellowship in the good things with which God has entrusted them.

11. *If any man speaks.* Let him speak thoroughly well, but, in order that he may do so, what shall be his model?

11. *Let him speak as the Oracles of God.* As truthfully, carefully, solemnly, as the Bible, itself, speaks. “If any man speaks, let him speak as the Oracles of God.”

11. *If any man ministers, let him do it as of the ability which God gives.* “If any man ministers,” or serves—if he is called to serve the Church in any capacity—“let him do it as of the ability which God gives.”

11. *That God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever. Amen.* Note how Peter has the same spirit in him as that which burned in the breast of Paul, for he stops in the middle of a letter, lays down his pen, and lifts up his heart to God in an adoring strain of thanksgiving—“to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

12. *Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.* In Peter’s day the Christians were called, not only to what might be metaphorically termed, “the fiery trial,” but they had literally to suffer thus for Christ’s sake. Nero had multitudes of Christians brought to his gardens and tied to stakes, that he might light up his midnight revelries by the burning of these godly men and women smeared with pitch. They had to bear even that fiery trial for the name of Christ. Many periods of martyrdom have passed, since then, in which the saints of God have willingly died rather than deny their Lord. We have fallen upon comparatively silken times—a jest, a slander, a calumnious observation—these are the only weapons with which our enemies can smite the most of us.

13, 14. *But rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ’s sufferings, that, when His glory shall be revealed, you may be glad, also, with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, happy are you.* Did not your Savior say, “Blessed are you when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man’s sake. Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for, behold, your reward is great in Heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the Prophets.” So, be glad about it.

14. *For the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you: on their part He is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified.* Whenever they speak against you that which is not true, they think that they shall slander the name of God by slandering you, but they do no such thing. As far as they are concerned, God is evilly spoken of, but that is all you could have expected from such people. “But on your part”—and that is the thing you have to look to—“on your part He is glorified.”

15. *But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or as a busybody in other men’s matters.* A curious mixture that—is it not? A murderer is classed with “a busybody in other men’s matters.” But, really, people of this latter sort are very obnoxious. There are some who seem as if they cannot mind their own business. I have heard that it is for two reasons. First, because they have not any business to mind and, secondly, they have no mind at all with which to mind their busi-

ness! But these very people think they can mind other people's business and the more is the pity. See how strongly Peter condemns them and asks that none of those to whom he writes may have to suffer because of such wrongdoing.

16, 17. *Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God.* Trial and testing must begin there. We must not expect to have our religion taken for granted and ourselves to be saved simply upon our own warranty. We must be tried—"The Lord is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed." "The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God."

17. *And if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God?* If the wheat is winnowed, what is to become of the chaff? If God puts even the gold into the fire, what is to become of the dross? If that which is really valuable has to be tested, what is to be done with the mire and the clay? Oh, that all who have no part or lot with Christ would consider this solemn Truth of God!

18. *And if the righteous scarcely are saved*—If they are saved with difficulty—

18. *Where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?* If even men who live godly lives are often hard put to it to know whether they shall be saved or not—if they raise the question again and again with a terrible seriousness, "where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

19. *Therefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in doing well, as unto a faithful Creator.* The whole run of the chapter is that we are to prefer any suffering of the flesh to the sin of the spirit and we are to be prepared to endure whatever trial or pain may come upon us for Christ's sake, and to hear it joyfully, rather than to seek the pleasures of sin and to be plunged under the waves of the wrath of God. May He give us the Grace thus to glorify Him, for Christ's sake! Amen.

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

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

END OF VOLUME 43.

IF SO—WHAT THEN?

NO. 3047

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 4, 1907.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 15, 1871.

*“If the righteous are scarcely saved, where shall
the ungodly and the sinner appear?”*
1 Peter 4:18.

SOME people suppose that it is a very easy thing to be saved, but our Lord said, “Strive (“Agonize” is the original word) to enter in at the strait gate, for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able.” When men hear a simple Gospel sermon of which the pith and marrow is the great soul-saving message, “Believe and live,” they say, “If it is such a simple matter, will not all believe?” But the Prophet Isaiah spoke not so, for his sad inquiry was, “Who has believed our report (“our doctrine” is the marginal reading)?” Faith seems so easy that one might ask, “Where will it not be found? But our Savior thought not so, for He asked, “When the Son of Man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?” He who knows where to look for it and who has the quickest eyes to discern it, asks whether He shall be able to find, anywhere on the earth, that scarce thing called *faith*—“the faith of God’s elect.” Believe me that though “the way of holiness” is so plain that “the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein,” yet on account of the hardness of our hearts, it is no easy thing for any of us to enter that way and to continue in it until it leads us to our everlasting Home above.

I do not intend to keep strictly to my text, but to give you the meaning of it in this way. First, *here is a fact stated*—“The righteous are scarcely saved.” Then, secondly, *there is an inference drawn from that fact*—if they are truly saved with great difficulty, “where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” When we have considered that inference, we shall take the liberty to draw *two other inferences which may afford us further instruction*.

I. First, then, HERE IS A FACT STATED—“The righteous are scarcely saved.” That is to say, they are only saved with great difficulty. This is not because there is any deficiency in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, or any lack of efficacy in His atoning Sacrifice, or in His intercession for transgressors. God be thanked that there is no difficulty *there!* It is not through any lack of power to save on the part of the Holy Spirit. Nor is it through any failure of God’s faithfulness that “the righteous” are only saved with great difficulty. But it is for two reasons which I will now give you.

The first reason is, *because of the strictness of Divine rule*. Read the first clause of the verse preceding our text—"The time is come that judgment must begin at the House of God." And that judgment is so severe that even "the righteous are scarcely saved." When Christ comes even to His own people, He comes to purge and purify them. The Prophet Malachi wrote concerning His first coming, "He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap; and He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." John the Baptist said, concerning Christ, "He that comes after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire: whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." Judgment must always "begin at the House of God" and there is, as good Archbishop Leighton very properly says, both "equity and congruity in such an arrangement." There is equity in it, for Christians profess to be better than others and so they ought to be. They say they are regenerate, so they ought to be regenerate. They say that they are a holy people, separated unto Christ, so they ought to be holy and separate from sinners, as He was. It is right that where there is a high calling and an honored name, there should be a life proving the accuracy of these two things. So, when God begins to test that which professes to be gold and silver, who can say that He does not begin His testing at the right place, and with the right material? There is also a congruity or fitness in this arrangement. The Church of God is His house—and where does a man begin cleansing and reforming? Why, in his own house, of course! He might perhaps feel that he must have some filth in the farmyard, but not in his own sitting-room! There may be much evil abroad that he cannot remove, yet he can begin cleaning up at home. If we want to do any good in reforming the world, the very first duty for each of us is to begin reforming at home—and the Lord, when He means to clear away the dross, begins at home by setting up His "fire in Zion and His furnace in Jerusalem."

The tests to which God subjects those who profess to be His people are not easy ones. When His fan is in His hand, woe be unto those who are "like the chaff which the wind drives away." The Lord says, by the mouth of the Prophet Amos, "I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth." Nor shall an atom of chaff be left in the sieve. When Omnipotence and Omniscience unite to sift the chaff from the wheat, you may depend upon it that the sifting will be thoroughly done! There is also the testing by fire. And if any are not able to endure that test, "reprobate silver shall men call them because the Lord has rejected them." Then God will weigh us—we shall be put into the balances of the sanctuary and if we are found wanting, how terrible it will be! We often judge by appearances, but God looks at the heart. We may be deceived by the outward profession, but God sees what is within. He looks for the Truth in our

inward parts and in our hidden parts there must be the true Wisdom or else we are not saved.

Now, dear Friends, as the tests are so severe, you see how it is that the righteous are only saved with difficulty. Oh, if I may but come out of that scale full weight, if I may but come out of that fire as pure gold, if I may but remain with the wheat in that sieve and not be blown away with the chaff, I shall bless God forever and ever that I was saved, even though it was with great difficulty!

Further, *the experience of all Christians proves that the work of Grace in their hearts is not easily accomplished* and that their pilgrimage to Heaven is full of difficulties. At the very beginning of the Christian life, some find it hard to lay hold on Christ. We truly sing or say—

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

Yet there was a time when I felt that I would gladly give my life in exchange for that look! Easy as it seems to be to cast ourselves into the Savior’s arms, there are Satanic doubts, evil questionings, and fierce temptations that cause even that simple act to be accomplished only with great difficulty. Indeed, wherever it is accomplished, it is a miracle of Divine Mercy and in every case saving faith is “the gift of God.”

Then, how difficult it is to overcome the flesh! Are you a Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ? Then I need not ask whether you find it so. You love holiness, yet unholiness tries hard to make you its slave. Perhaps it is a fiery temper that is your “thorn in the flesh,” or some constitutional sin, or some lust that you thought had been subdued. You may have said, with David, “My feet were almost gone; my steps had well-near slipped.” And I know that if your life is that of a true child of God, you have to fight hard in order to “put off the old man with his deeds,” and to lead a godly life in the midst of this ungodly generation.

The temptations that assail you from without are equally hard to overcome. There are temptations of wealth and temptations of poverty—temptations to turn aside to the right or to the left—and it is not easy to keep to the middle of the King’s highway and to walk in the footprints of Jesus who has left us an example that we should follow His steps. When the world, the flesh and the devil combine to assail us—if the Lord does not cover our head in the day of battle, how can we gain the victory? With some Christians it is a very hard struggle from day to day, and even from hour to hour—and then we are like Mr. Stand-Fast who, when he was in what Bunyan calls the Enchanted Ground, was assailed by Madam Bubble and who could do nothing but fall on his knees and cry to God for help! There are many of us who have felt like that and who, in the bitterness of our agony, have had to cry to God to help us, for it is only with difficulty that we are saved. I can say, with good John Fawcett—

***“Temptations everywhere annoy,
And sins and snares my peace destroy.
My earthly joys are from me torn,
And oft an absent God I mourn.
My soul, with various tempests tossed,***

***Her hopes overturned, her projects crossed,
Sees every day new straits attend,
And wonders where the scene will end.
Is this, dear Lord, that thorny road
Which leads us to the Mount of God?
Are these the toils Your people know,
While in the wilderness below?
'Tis even so, Your faithful love
Does thus Your children's graces prove—
'Tis thus our pride and self must fall,
That Jesus may be All-in-All."***

How difficult is it for a true Christian even to perform necessary duties in a humble and holy spirit! It is a simple matter to pray—it is just going, like a child, to tell God all that you feel and all that you need. Yet I ask you, Christian, whether you do not sometimes find it hard work to pray? When you are on your knees, all sorts of cares come buzzing about you, like so many hornets. You want to wrestle with God as Jacob did, but you find that your wrestling has to be with the devil! I know what it is to long to pray when I cannot find a prayer in my soul! I make this confession because I believe there are many of God's people who get into that state. And, moreover, I know that we often pray best when we think we are not praying. Perhaps those groans that come from the lowest depths of our spirit when we think we are not groaning at all are just the most potent prayers that ever reach the Throne of God! But there are seasons when one can only say, "May the Holy Spirit feel for me what I cannot feel, and utter for me what I cannot speak, and do for me what I cannot perform!"

And if such ordinary acts of devotion are so difficult, how much more difficult is it to reach gracious attainments in the Divine life! If any of your graces come to you very easily, suspect whether they are genuine, for in the Christian life, all that is worth having has to be fought for in stern conflict. So determined are the powers of darkness to prevent the Christian pilgrim from entering the Celestial City that all the way to Heaven will be more or less a Hill of Difficulty. You will have to go often upon your hands and knees because the road is so rough and the ascent is so steep that you cannot advance in any other way. We would be holy as God is holy, but there is another law in our members warring against the law of our renewed minds. God knows that we yearn after perfection but, alas, like the bird that would gladly fly, there is something that holds us down! Many of you have seen an eagle in a cage and you know how he looks up with those bright eyes of his that were made to gaze into the sun! If he stretches his wings and tries to fly, he only wounds himself against the bars of his cage and, oh, what wounds some of us have had when in our aspirations after better things, to will has been present with us, but how to perform that which we would, we found not! Often have I had to cry, with Paul, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Yes, it is hard work for any of us to get to Heaven. God, the Eternal Spirit, helps us to overcome our infirmities, but we are often made to feel those infirmities and to confess that our

weakness is no match for the strength of sin—and to admit that were it not for God Himself, we should certainly perish after all. I delight to sing with holy John Newton—

***“Beyond a doubt, I rest assured
You are the Christ of God!
Who has eternal life secured
By promise and by blood.
The help of men and angels joined
Could never reach my case,
Nor can I hope relief to find
But in Your boundless Grace!”***

Do you not, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, sometimes feel how hard it is for you to be saved when you put your soul before the tribunal of your own enlightened conscience? Our own conscience, at the best, is a poor partial judge compared with the impartial and Infallible Judge who will, by-and-by, sit upon the Great White Throne. Yet I ask any Christian here who is really aware of his own frailties and infirmities—when he comes seriously to take stock of himself, whether he finds any reason in himself for glorying? I have turned over my sermons and my many labors for the Lord, but there is scarcely one of them that I dare to think of without tears—they are all marred by sin and imperfection! As I think of every act I have ever done for God, I can only cry, “O God, forgive the iniquity of my holy things!” But what about our unholy things? Brothers and Sisters, look well to the evidences of your new birth. And as you examine them, see if you do not have to say with the Prophet, “We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.” If so, then let each one of us pray with penitent David, “Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean. Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.” If we are really God’s people, it is a great consolation for us to know that—notwithstanding our many infirmities and iniquities, our many anxieties and doubts and fears as to whether, after all, we have been self-deceived or devil-deceived—God will never forsake us!

II. This must suffice concerning the fact that Christians are only saved with great difficulty. Now, secondly, let us consider THE INFERENCE FROM THAT FACT.

Peter says, “If the righteous are scarcely saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” By which he means, I think, first, that *if even the righteous are so severely tested, what short work will God make with the unrighteous*—if the wheat must thus be winnowed, how certainly will the chaff be destroyed—if the gold must pass through the fire, how assuredly will the dross be consumed! The God who tries and tests the best will certainly not wink at the worst.

He means next, I think, that *if “the righteous” only attain to felicity with great difficulty, “the ungodly and the sinner” can never attain to it.* Suppose there has been a terrible storm on a rock-bound coast. The lifeboat has gone out and the men have nobly done their duty and saved

many precious lives. But as each man leaps ashore, he says, “I was never before out in such a storm. It is only by the merciful Providence of God that we were able to get back.” When the people on the shore see that even the lifeboat so narrowly escaped destruction, they naturally ask, “What must become of those poor leaky and unseaworthy boats that are hardly fit to be in a mill pond?” Or imagine a river, full of sandbanks, with a channel that twists and turns in a tortuous fashion—and there is a vessel on it with an experienced pilot on board—yet even he is very anxious and is constantly heaving the lead, and frequently going at half-speed, or stopping altogether! Now, if a steamer with a good pilot on board can scarcely get up the river, what will happen to a small sailboat, in the charge of a reckless drunk, who scarcely steers at all, but lets the boat drift wherever it will? Why, it must be lost! So, if “the vessels of mercy...before prepared unto glory,” on which Christ is the Pilot, barely escape the rocks and quicksands, what must be the end of “the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction” which have no pilot on board and drift here and there at the mercy of winds and waves? If there is a great conflagration in the city and there is a massive stone structure with iron girders which the firemen can only save from destruction with great difficulty, what will be the fate of a wooden house, covered with pitch and tar and full of oil? If a man who has built for eternity upon Christ, the only true Foundation—and who has built, not with gold, silver and precious stones, but with wood, hay and stubble—if such a man “shall be saved, yet so as by fire,” what will become of the sinner who is only like a dry log fitted for the everlasting burning?

My text does not tell us *where* “the ungodly and the sinner” will appear. This is one of the unanswered questions of Scripture—“Where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” So I shall scarcely speak of that dreadful place where our Savior says, “There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth,” “where their worm dies not and the fire is not quenched.” These metaphors, terrible as they are in their grim suggestiveness, are only faint images of the awful reality! And I again remind you that they are the words of Him to Whom we teach our *children* to pray—

**“Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
Look upon a little child.”**

In Psalm 50:22 there is this dreadful Divine warning, “Consider this, you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.” If it is difficult for a Christian to be saved—and I have shown you that it is—where shall you who are not God’s people, you who have no Christ, you who have no Holy Spirit to guide you—where shall *you* appear? The Apostle Paul wrote, “I keep my body under and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.” If Paul entered Heaven with difficulty, where will *you* be? Martin Luther’s biography tells us that he was the subject of grievous doubts, depressions and soul anxieties. So, if he only reached Heaven as a sinner saved by Grace, where will *you* be who know nothing experimentally of the Grace of God? If John Knox, after serving his God

so faithfully that his epitaph truly says, “Here lies a man who in his life never feared the face of man”—if he, on his deathbed, found it hard to cherish a hope of Heaven—what will *you* do who despise Christ’s mercy and riot in sin?

Before I close, I want to draw two other inferences. The first is this—IF THE RIGHTEOUS ARE ONLY SAVED WITH DIFFICULTY, WHAT ABOUT THOSE PEOPLE WHO ARE “SAVED” SO VERY EASILY? It looks as if they were not righteous, does it not? Perhaps there is a man here who is like Bunyan’s Formalist. This is his hope—“I was ‘christened’ when I was a child, I was confirmed as a youth, I attend my church and take the ‘sacrament’ regularly.” Or he may say, “I regularly attend chapel.” He says, “Don’t talk to me about anxieties as to my state—I have no such anxieties.” No, I expect you have not, but if you have no doubts about yourself, permit me to have *my doubts about you!* And let me go a great deal further than doubts and solemnly tell you that a hope founded on ceremonies will lead to your “everlasting destruction from the Presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.”

There may be another who says, “I have made a profession of religion, but I never have any questions about whether I am saved or not. I pray—in a fashion. As to praising God, I always could sing and I believe I am about as right as I can be. I don’t see any cause for distressing myself.” Yes, Friend, but let me remind you that there is a great difference between presumption and “full assurance of faith.” There is also a very great difference between believing that you are saved and being really saved!

Possibly there is another who says, “I believe I am one of God’s elect and that I am quite safe.” Well, Friend, if it is so, no one is more thankful than I am. But if that is your only hope of salvation and you have never been born-again and know nothing of the new life with its anxieties and joys, I would not give a bent pin for your hope of Heaven! And the sooner you get rid of it, the better. A dead fish finds no difficulty in floating down the stream—it is only the living fish that can swim against the current. The broad road is very smooth and there is a good deal of company on it—but it leads to destruction. There are few in the narrow way and many difficulties there—but it leads to eternal life. You say that you never know any changes. No, nor do the statues in St. Paul’s Cathedral. There they stand, year after year, upon their marble pedestals because they are dead—and you are the same. “But I never have to fight that battle of which you have been speaking.” No, of course not, because the world and you are friends! And because you are of the world, the world loves its own. If you were a stranger and a foreigner in this world, you would be treated as strangers and foreigners are in an inhospitable country.

I will draw only one more inference from our text and that is a very comforting one. THE RIGHTEOUS ARE ONLY SAVED WITH DIFFICULTY—THEN TEMPTED SOULS MAY BE SAVED. That Truth of God has given me comfort when I have thought, “Well, it is difficult for me to be saved, then it appears that I am numbered with the righteous

and that I am on the right road.” “Oh, Sir,” says a poor sinner here, “I am glad you said that. I hope I have cast myself wholly upon the Lord Jesus Christ and I thought I was going to have peace always, but, instead of that, ever since I have believed, or thought I had believed, I have had more fights in my soul than I ever had before.” Well, the righteous are only saved with difficulty, so do not be depressed. “But I have been more tempted than I ever was before and it seems, Sir, as if everybody is against me and tries to drive me back. I thought I should find cheerful companions who would help me on the road to Heaven, but I seem to be alone in an enemy’s land.” My dear Brother, it is always so with the righteous—no strange thing has happened to you. “But, Sir,” says one, “horrible thoughts and terrible blasphemies arise in my mind even when I try to pray. And I say to myself, ‘If I were a child of God, could it be thus with me?’” Dear Friend, be comforted! Satan is afraid of losing you, so he is putting out all his force to try to hold you. Now that you are a Christian, you are a target for all the devil’s fiery darts, so do not be astonished—this is the lot of the people of God! When a man has been drowning, I have heard that his sensations have often been very pleasant, but when the circulation of the blood commences again, pain begins at once and the more pain he suffers, the more surely is he being restored to life! It is just so with the spiritual blood that is circulating in your soul. You are not dead, so you smart and suffer because you are alive. If you imagine that the moment you believe, your battle is over, you make a great mistake—your battle has only just begun and because while really trusting in Jesus, you have battles, contentions, difficulties and troubles, conclude that, *therefore*, you are a child of God!

Remember this, if the righteous are only saved with great difficulty, they would never be saved if they did not look right away from themselves to the Lord Jesus Christ. There lies the one hope for sinners and saints—in the finished work of the blessed Redeemer! “I know what you are at,” said a good man once to one who was doubting, “Christ has finished the work of salvation, but you are not content with what He has done, so you want to patch it up with something of your own.” Come sinners and come saints, back to the foot of that dear Cross where Jesus bought with His own blood the souls of all who believe in Him! let us throw ourselves prostrate before Him and say, “You are all our confidence, our only hope and our full salvation forever and ever. Save us, O Savior! We are sinners and You are the sinners’ Friend—save us now and we shall be saved forever!” Amen, so let it be!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ZECHARIAH 8.**

[See Note to Sermon No. 3045, on Zechariah 8:13.]

Verses 1, 2. *Again the word of the LORD of Hosts came to me, saying, Thus says the LORD of Hosts; I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy,*

and I was jealous for her with great fury. Because they worshipped idols instead of the living God, Jehovah of Hosts, who is a jealous God, was very angry with His ancient people and allowed them to be carried away into captivity. And it is well for us in these days to remember that we serve a jealous God and that if our hearts are not true to Him, He will soon send us sharp afflictions and make us feel the weight of His rod! It was Paul's anxious desire that he might be able to present the Church at Corinth "as a chaste virgin to Christ" and, certainly, our Lord Jesus Christ will not accept the professing Church of these days on any other terms. Let your heart be loyal and true to Him, or else you will stir up the holy jealousy of your God! Yet the same jealousy which makes God punish His people for their unfaithfulness, prompts Him to return to them in love as soon as He sees that He can justly do so. When their enemies have sorely vexed and oppressed them, then is the Lord jealous, not against them, but against their enemies—and He swiftly returns to His own people in love.

3. *Thus says the LORD; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the LORD of Hosts the holy mountain.* The first coming or the return of God to a Church, or to an individual heart, always promotes holiness. So, unless your piety is growing daily, do not imagine that God is in the midst of you, for wherever the Lord comes, He comes "as a refiner and purifier." You will never find Jesus come except as John the Baptist pictured Him to the Pharisees and Sadducees of his day—"whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor." The coming of Christ into any soul, or into any Church, is the death of sin and the birth of holiness!

4, 5. *Thus says the LORD of Hosts, There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof.* It is an indication that there is peace in the city when the children can play in the streets without fear. We may thus apply these verses spiritually—when God greatly blesses a Christian Church, there are sure to be many aged persons in it, those who, by their long experience and their matured wisdom, are able to teach others the lessons which they have themselves learned at the feet of Jesus. Happy is the Church that has in it many fathers and mothers in Israel. At the same time, a Church that is largely blessed by God will also have in it many young converts who will be as full of life and joy as children playing in the streets of a city in time of peace. There is a text which is true both in its literal and its spiritual sense—"Lo, children are a heritage of the Lord...Happy is the man that has his quiver full of them." There is no glory so great to a Christian minister and a Christian Church as that of having an abundance of spiritual children and multitudes of converts brought to Christ. So shall it be with any Church when God is in the midst of her.

6. *Thus says the LORD of Hosts; If it is marvelous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvelous in My eyes? says the LORD of Hosts.* This is a very remarkable passage, warning us not to judge of God by ourselves. Though a thing may be difficult to us, there are no difficulties with God. No, even if we imagine anything to be impossible to man, the word *impossibility* has no relation to the Deity, for “with God all things are possible.” Are you in trouble today? Do you say that it is impossible for you to be delivered? It is an easy thing for God to deliver you, though the task seems so hard to you. Do you feel the weight of your sin and do you imagine that it is impossible for your sin to be pardoned? Would you look upon it as a miracle and because it seems so marvelous to you, do you think it is marvelous in God’s eyes? Remember what He said by the mouth of Isaiah, “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the Lord.” Consider the infinite difference between God and man—and look no longer at God through the misleading glasses of your own feebleness!

7, 8. *Thus says the LORD of Hosts; Behold, I will save My people from the east country, and from the west country; and I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness.* Mark God’s emphatic language, how full it is of, “shalls” and, “wills.” “I will,” and “they shall,” says He, again and again. And if God says, “I will,” who shall dare to say that it shall not be? What God declares shall certainly come to pass. Surely this is golden language of comfort to those who are bowed down! Then how great must be the sinfulness of that unbelief which dares to despair when God says, “shall” and, “will”! That one sentence in the eighth verse contains the whole Gospel in two short sentences—“They shall be My people, and I will be their God.” This is the tenor of the Covenant of Grace. There is no “if,” nor “but,” nor “perhaps” in it. God does not say, “I will be their God if they will be My people.” Nor, “I will love them if they will keep My Laws.” That is the Old Covenant of works which has been broken forever! The Covenant of Grace runs thus, “They shall be My people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness.”

9-11. *Thus says the LORD of Hosts; Let your hands be strong, you that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the Prophets, which were in the day that the foundation of the house of the LORD of Hosts was laid, that the Temple might be built. For before these days there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast; neither was there any peace to him that went out or came in because of the affliction: for I set all men, everyone against his neighbor. But now I will not be unto the residue of this people as in the former days, says the LORD of Hosts.* The Jewish people had been brought into abject poverty. They were all so poor that there was not one who could hire his fellow man or even pay for the hire of a beast of burden. This was before the foundation of Solomon’s Temple was laid. But, as that wondrous structure grew, the State also grew and often the

prosperity of a Church brings prosperity to the people around it. And to the residue of God's people there comes a blessing, and not a curse.

12. *For the seed shall be prosperous.* It is a happy omen for a Church when the Word preached is with power.

12. *The vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase.* Happy are the hearts that are like fruitful vines, and good and fertile ground yielding thirty, sixty, or a hundredfold increase.

12. *And the heavens shall give their dew.* We cannot bring forth fruit unto God without the bedewing influences of the Holy Spirit. This is that “womb of the morning” of which David speaks in Psalm 110:3—and out of which the precious fruit of the Spirit must come.

12-15. *And I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things. And it shall come to pass, that as you were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and you shall be a blessing; fear not, but let your hands be strong. For thus says the LORD of Hosts; As I thought to punish you, when your fathers provoked Me to wrath, says the LORD of Hosts, and I repented not: so again have I thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: fear you not.* Did you notice the repetition of the exhortation, “Fear not,” and then again, “Fear you not”? The Lord knows how much mischief, doubts and fears do to His people and, therefore, many a time in Scripture He aims a blow at them. “Fear nots” abound in Scripture! It would be well if you made every one of them into a gallows upon which to hang your unbelief until it died! What is your fear at this moment? What is the cause of your trembling? “Fear you not,” says God to you! Will you dare to fear after this?

16, 17. *These are the things that you shall do; Speak you every man the truth to his neighbor; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates: and let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbor.* Some have wickedly said that “thought is free and can't be condemned.” But here we see that if it goes after evil, it is a wicked thing which God abhors.

17-19. *And love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, says the LORD. And the word of the LORD of Hosts came unto me, saying, Thus says the LORD of Hosts; The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace.* God turns sad fasts to glad feasts when He visits His people in love! Is there one here who has been having a long fast? Has your soul been sorely afflicted? Have you been desponding and trembling so that you have had no joy and gladness? Ah, when the Lord Jesus Christ reveals Himself to you, He will soon change your sad state into something brighter and better! He will give you “beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.” Look up, poor trembling Soul, to yonder hill of Calvary where Jesus bled and died for you—and there let your joys begin and never, never end!

20, 21. *Thus says the LORD of Hosts; It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities: and the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of Hosts: I will go also.* You see that in the latter days there is to be a great spirit of prayer and of seeking the Lord. This will include the hearing of the Word and the love of the Truths of God. And one good sign is that the people will say, “Let us go speedily.” They will not come in late, as so many do nowadays, just getting into their seats when the Scripture is being read, instead of being present at the opening prayer. I am sorry to say that some of you are getting later and later—and some morning I shall most certainly carry out my threat, and preach the sermon first unless you are more punctual! A little more thought and a little sooner start and you might all be at God’s House on time. David longed to be a doorkeeper in the Lord’s house and you know that the doorkeeper is always the first in and the last out. May you all have more of David’s spirit, though you cannot all be doorkeepers! These people are to say, “Let us go speedily (the marginal reading is ‘continually’) to pray before the Lord and to seek the Lord of Hosts: I will go also.” That is the best way of bringing others to God’s House—to say, “I will go also.” I have read that Julius Caesar never said to his soldiers, “Go,” but, “Let us go.” So should we seek to get others to God’s House by saying to them, “Let us go...I will go also.”

22, 23. *Yes, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of Hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD. Thus says the LORD of Hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you.* In the latter days, the Jews, who are still despised, oppressed and persecuted in many countries, shall be so highly honored by God that men of other nationalities will want to be in their company! But, no doubt, there is here a special reference to Jesus, the Jew, the Son of God who became the Son of Mary, too. Oh that this very day many Jews and Gentiles may take hold of His skirt by a living faith and so may receive blessing from Him and be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation!

—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.**

A WITNESS AND A PARTAKER

NO. 2610

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 19, 1899.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 4, 1883.**

***“The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.”
1 Peter 5:l.***

KINDLY notice, dear Friends, the Apostle's great gentleness. Peter was not always thus gentle, but the Spirit of God had rested upon him and now he writes with much tenderness. He does not say, “As an Apostle, I command,” but, “As an elder, I exhort.” It is always well to combine the *suaviter in modo* with the *fortiter in re*, that is, suavity in our method blended with strength in the thing, itself. There are some who are very blustering in their style of speech and there are others who, if they do not bluster, yet in the smallest matter always put forth their greatest force, or what they think to be so. They command and rebuke with all authority—yet here is Peter, who certainly was not a whit behind the very chief of the Apostles—and he speaks, not by way of command, but, addressing the elders, he tenderly exhorts them. Oh, that we may always manifest such a meek and gentle spirit—not drive men, but *draw* them to Christ—not terrify and threaten, but entice and woo to the Savior those to whom we are speaking or writing!

Next, notice Peter's humility. “The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder.” He was an elder, most truly, as are all those who, in word and doctrine, feed the flock of God and who, at Christ's command, take the oversight of the souls of men. But Peter was much more than an elder, he was an Apostle. There were but few Apostles and those who were called to that high dignity were greatly favored—yet Peter does not mention his higher office, but, with true humility, he puts himself on a level with his Brothers. “The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder.” My Brother, if God has given to you extraordinary talent, do not exalt yourself on that account. If others willingly follow your leadership and you have the privilege of rendering to the Lord greater service than they can give, what have you that you have not received? And should not the chief among the saints be the servant of all? Is not he really the highest in Christ's esteem who is willing to be counted the lowest? Therefore, let no man exalt himself, or think highly of himself, for this he ought not to do. We admire in Peter—the once headstrong, impetuous Peter—the gentleness blended with humility

which leads him to say, “The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder.”

At the same time, let us especially note the wisdom of Peter, for it would have been an unwise thing for him to speak to the elders as an Apostle, for they might have replied to him, “You do not know the worry and toil and trouble of our service. You labor in a higher sphere. You, sitting on the Apostolic benches, are far above us. We, poor plain elders, cannot hope to attain to such eminence as yours.” “No, my Brothers,” says Peter, “I am one of you, for I, also, am an elder and, as a brother speaks to brother, so I exhort you. Knowing all your travail of heart and all your hard service in the cause of the Master, I, sympathizing with you, and altogether one with you, speak from my heart to your heart. Exhorting you, the elders, I, who am also an elder, say to you, Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away.”

It will always be our wisdom, dear Friends, to put ourselves as much as we can into the position of those whom we address. It is a pity for anyone ever to seem to preach *down* to people—it is always better to be as nearly as possible on the same level as they are. Paul knew this and, therefore, he became “all things to all men.” To the Jew, he was a Jew. Among Gentiles, he was a Gentile, for it so happened that he belonged to both classes. He was one with all men, barbarian, Scythian, bond or free. If he had to argue with the learned upon Mars’ Hill, he could be a match for them. If he had to speak with the rough and illiterate, he threw out all beauty of language and talked to them in the plainest style. And you and I, if we want to win men to Christ, must act after the same wise fashion. Dear Sunday school teachers, would you be the means of blessing to the children under your charge? Then, be yourselves, children! Keep a child’s heart throbbing beneath a manly breast. If you are a mother, go to the girls in your class as though you were still a girl, yourself, and you shall soon find the key of their heart and enter into the innermost chambers of their spirit. A true man welcomes a fellow man—he sees that he is a member of the great family of mankind and he says to him, “Come in.” But if you, in your majestic greatness, speak to me like Jupiter thundering from a cloud, I shall not be likely to regard you. Or, if I do regard you, your message will be forgotten in the grandeur and glory of yourself! This is what never ought to happen, my Brothers—that people should think of *us* and forget our *message*! Let us belittle ourselves that we may magnify our God. Let the Truth of God be borne before us like a shield! And though we are the Lord’s armor bearers, let us hide behind the great shield which we lift up before the eyes of men. “The elders which are among you I exhort’—not as Peter, the head of the College of Apostles—but as one who is a fellow elder with you.” Therein, we see Peter’s gentleness, humility and wisdom combined—and we shall be wise if we imitate him in all those respects.

With this introduction, I now come to speak of the two great offices which Peter said that he filled. I cannot help calling them great, yet they

are open to you and to me—and I hope that, by God’s Grace, we have also, in our measure, been what Peter said that he was—“A witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.”

I. First, then, let us think of Peter as “A WITNESS OF THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST.” And, as far as possible, let us be witnesses with him.

Peter was what we have not been, *an eyewitness of the suffering of Christ*. He actually and in very deed saw our Divine Master in His terrible griefs. Peter could never forget that he saw the Lord Jesus in His agony in the Garden. He was one of the three disciples who failed to watch with their Lord even for one hour and who, for very sorrow, fell asleep within a stone’s cast of the place where Christ was “exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death.” Peter remembered how, when the Master rose from prayer, and said, “He is at hand that does betray Me,” he was there and saw the traitor imprint that cruel kiss upon the cheek of Him who still called him, friend. Peter was, about that time, drawing his sword and cutting off the ear of Malchus—and he could not fail to remember the look upon his Master’s face when he who had eaten bread with Him did lift up his heel against Him, and the Son of Man was betrayed with a kiss from the apostate Apostle. Peter was also an eyewitness of our Lord’s being hurried away to the bar of Annas where He underwent His preliminary examination. He remembered seeing one strike Him on the mouth. He could recall how they charged Him with blasphemy. He could remember how, after the first examination was over, Annas sent Him, bound, to Caiaphas. Peter was in the palace of Annas, warming himself by the fire, so he was an eyewitness of all that transpired. I do not quite know how far that witnessing went, for the time came when he denied his Master, but he could never forget that gaze of concentrated agony and pity when Jesus looked at him—not so much reproachfully, perhaps, as mournfully—feeling in His own soul that sorrow which He knew that Peter must, before long, feel. A spark from the torch of the Savior’s anguish set the heart of Peter on fire and he went out and wept bitterly.

I believe—I cannot help believing—that Peter rallied, by-and-by, from his fit of cowardice and that he came to the front, again, and saw the Master in Pilate’s judgment hall. You know the story of our Savior’s griefs and woes and I think that Peter and others of the Apostles were eyewitnesses of His sufferings. They saw Him after He had been scourged. They marked Him after He had been despised, flouted and mocked. They saw Him as the Cross-Bearer and heard Him say, “Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.” They watched Him as He went in awful anguish along the *Via Dolorosa* to the Mount of Crucifixion. And they stood and saw Him nailed to the tree, to die there, like a felon, with no relief or succor, for God Himself forsook Him. And the bitterest pain of all was that He had to cry, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Possibly, Peter saw it all. Certainly he was an eyewitness of Christ’s sufferings and, I think, when he was writing to these elders, he seemed to say to them, “Feed the flock of God, for I saw the Great Shepherd when He bought that flock. I was there when He purchased the sheep with His own blood. And, after He had risen from the dead, three times He said to me, ‘Simon, son of Jonas, Do you love

Me?’ And when I answered, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You,” He said to me, ‘Feed My lambs. Shepherd My sheep. Feed My sheep.’ Therefore, O my Brethren, by His agony and bloody sweat, by His Cross and passion, by His precious death and burial, by His glorious resurrection and ascension, I beseech you, ‘feed the flock of God which He has purchased with Jesus’ own blood.” I see great force in this exhortation by the eyewitness who is writing to his fellow elders.

But, dear Brothers and Sisters, you and I, never having seen Christ in His sufferings, might never have had a participation in this part of our text if there had not been another kind of witnessing, namely, *the faith-witness*. I do not place this second in importance, though I put it second in order, for, indeed, it is of the very greatest importance. There were thousands who were eyewitnesses of our Lord’s sufferings who, nevertheless, saw not the true meaning of them. They saw the dear Sufferer besmeared with His own blood, but into His wounds they never looked by faith. Thousands saw the Savior die, but they simply went their way back to Jerusalem, some of them beating on their breasts, but none of them believing in Him, or really knowing the secret of that wondrous death. I trust that I am addressing many who could be grouped together as faith-witnesses of the sufferings of Christ. Speaking for myself, I remember well when my sins, like an intolerable burden, crushed me down. I dared not look up and I never would have been *able* to look up, or to speak to anyone of the joy which is now within my bosom if I had not, by faith, seen—

**“One hanging on a tree,
In agonies and blood,
Who fixed His languid eyes on me
As near His Cross I stood.
Sure never till my latest breath
Can I forget that look!
It seemed to charge me with His death,
Though not a word He spoke.
A second look He gave, which said,
‘I freely all forgive.
This blood is for your ransom paid,
I die, that you may live.’”**

Then I saw not only that Christ Jesus died upon the Cross, but I also perceived who He was and why He died—and what He accomplished by that death. I was helped to learn that He “loved me and gave Himself for me.” I understood that He took my place that I might take His place—that He took my sin that I might take His righteousness—that He bore my woe that I might share His joy. And when I saw that—I do *not* mean when I heard about it—I do *not* mean when I read of it—but when I *saw it with my soul’s inner eyes* and not only understood it, but perceived my share in my Savior’s Sacrifice, and believed in Him to the saving of my soul, oh, it was a blessed day for me! Many of you, dear Friends, know well what I mean, for you also had just such a sight as I have described. You were faith-witnesses of Christ’s sufferings! With some of us, many days have passed since we had that first sight of our suffering Lord, yet that sight has been often renewed to us. Sitting at the Communion Table I have seen it most clearly—the bread and the wine have set forth

Christ's broken body and poured out blood—and my soul has realized within herself His Godhead and His Manhood, His perfection and His grief, His sinlessness and yet His sin-bearing, His suretyship and the way He smarted for it. And it has been a great joy to see it, and to be able to sing—

**“He bore on the tree the sentence for me,
And now both the Surety and sinner are free”—**

for Jesus redeemed us completely and effectually when He died upon the Cross. Many of you, Beloved, have been in like manner, faith-witnesses of Christ's sufferings.

There are some who depreciate this faith-witness, but, Sirs, it is faith that saves! You may be an eyewitness and yet perish as Judas did. You may be an eyewitness and yet be lost as Pilate was. You may be an eyewitness and still hate Christ as Caiaphas did. But if you become a faith-witness, then shall you be included among those of whom it is written, “They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.” Such a faith-view begets repentance, hope and love—and brings salvation to every soul that has it!

Peter, then, was an eyewitness, but, better still, he was a faith-witness. And this being the case, he went on to be *a testifying witness*. If a man sees anything happen, he is a witness of it. But he is more manifestly a witness when he comes and says that he saw it—when he appears in court and bears a public testimony concerning it. I judge that the principal business of any minister of Christ, or of any elder of the Church of Christ, is to bear testimony to the sufferings of Christ. If the atoning sufferings of Christ are left out of a ministry, that ministry is worthless. “The blood is the life thereof,” is as true about sermons as it is about animals and sacrifices. A bloodless gospel, a gospel without the Atonement, is a gospel of devils and not the Gospel of God. Many are laboring hard, till their oars bend, to get away from the Gospel of Jesus Christ—I mean hundreds of so-called ministers of Christ—but in proportion as they forsake the Gospel, they cease to be what they pretend to be. They are not the ministers *of God, or of His Christ!* They are not ambassadors telling of reconciliation to men if in their teaching the sufferings of Christ are hazy and their cause and motive and objective are obscured. It is the glory of some of us that whatever else we bear witness to, we certainly are witnesses of the sufferings of Christ. We declare to men that there is no hope for them but in Christ who died! We testify to them that we have, ourselves, exercised faith in His death and have, thereby, received eternal life! We tell them that we know that what we say is true—we are as sure of it as was that disciple who, when he saw the blood and water flowing from Christ's side, bore witness to it, and added—“He knows that what he says is true, that you might believe.” These things are not like dreams to us, they are part of our very being! We have believed in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ and our troubled conscience has therein found peace. Our soul has been filled with all the fullness of God and, therefore, we are and must be witnesses to the sufferings of the crucified Son of God, to the reality of the Atonement that

He made on the Cross and to the effect of that Atonement upon the heart and conscience of all those who receive it.

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, this is not only the minister's work, but it is your work, too. We are all to be constantly bearing our witness to Christ and saying, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." You know what the people said of John the Baptist when he was dead—it is a kind of epitaph which any one of us might be glad to have put on our tombstone—"John did no miracle, but all things that John spoke of this Man were true." He had no great talents. He was not noted for His eloquence. He was not a man of commanding presence. He had no recondite knowledge. He had no profound logical power, but all that he said concerning Christ was true! I would like to have John the Baptist's epitaph as my own and I would be glad for you to have it, too—that in life and death we might be known as true witnesses to the sufferings of Christ, the power of which we have felt in our own souls.

There is one other view of this witness-bearing, and that is that Peter was, to a very large extent, *a partaking witness* in the sufferings of Christ. He does not say so in our text, but in the 13th verse of the fourth Chapter he wrote, "Rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings." And he could write like that because of what he had, himself, endured for Christ's sake. He had been mocked, despised, persecuted. His life had been sought and he knew that he would have to suffer a painful death, for His Master had said to him, "When you shall be old, you shall stretch forth your hands, and another shall gird you, and carry you where you would not." Putting all these things together, Peter could truly say that he was a witness of Christ's sufferings because he had, in a measure, participated in them.

I hope I am addressing some who can also say—though to a far smaller degree than could the saints of old—"Yes, for Christ's sake we have been accounted fools. We have been reckoned among those who have not the courage to advance with the times. We have been willing to be mocked in the workshop, or in the pulpit, or wherever our lot has been cast among men. And we would cheerfully have borne far more if it had been imposed upon us." As the persecuted Believer looks up to his Lord, he can truthfully say—

***"If on my face for Your dear name,
Shame and reproaches be,
All hail reproach, and welcome shame,
If You remember me."***

Thus you see how Peter was a witness of the sufferings of Jesus Christ. May each of us be appointed to the same high and honorable position!

II. The second thing which Peter says of himself is, perhaps, more remarkable than the first. He says that he was 'A PARTAKER OF THE GLORY THAT SHALL BE REVEALED.'

I like to see that word, "partaker," coming after the word, "witness," for I do not think that any man can really be a useful witness for Christ unless he is a partaker. Can you go and talk to others about the bitterness of sin when you have never wept over it or repented of it, yourself? Can you speak of the sweets of Divine mercy of which you have never tasted? Will you magnify "precious faith" when you are, yourself, a

stranger to the faith of God's elect? Will you set forth Christ, evidently crucified among men, when you have never seen Him, yourself? Can you describe the love which has never cheered your own heart? Will you tell of communion with Christ when you know nothing of its blessedness? Unhappy man! Your office would be, indeed, terrible if you were called to such a work! It were better for you to perform the most menial labor with the most grievous sweat and wear and tear of your very marrow and bones, than have to occupy a pulpit to talk of things which you have never tasted, handled and felt yourself. I would sooner not exist than be a preacher of the Truths of God which I had never believed in my own soul! The old writers used to speak of men who served in the shambles and butchers' shops and who saw and handled and sold the meat, but who, themselves, died of hunger. And they spoke of wretched folk who prepared dainties for their fellow men, but who did not, as they expressed it, get so much as a lick of their own fingers, but died of famine while they were feasting others.

Oh horrible, horrible, must it be to be sick unto death and yet to be selling medicines that will heal! Oh, dreadful must it be to be hammering away building an ark, as Noah's carpenters did, and yet never to enter it, but to die in the deluge while the ship which you helped to build bears others over the wild waste of waters! Get home, minister! Tear off your gown and lay aside the very name that makes you appear to be a servant of God! Get down on your knees and cry, "God be merciful to me, a sinner, and forgive me for ever having dared to assume an office whose duties I could not fulfill! For how can I, who am blind, be the guide of others? And how shall I, who am spiritually deaf and dumb, make others hear? And how shall I tell of God and of His Covenant, and of His Grace, while I know not God experimentally and have no evidence that I am in the Covenant and have never tasted of His Grace?" That is right, Brother—you are getting on the right lines—if you would be a witness, you must first be a partaker! And you who teach in the Sunday school, you who preach at the street corners, you who go from house to house with your tracts—whoever you are who profess to be witnesses for Christ, take care that you are both *witnesses and partakers*. Join the two together—you cannot witness if you do not partake, or if you witness and do not partake, you only witness to your own condemnation!

Very strangely, Peter here writes of himself as "*a partaker of the glory.*" Did he mean that he was on the holy Mount of Transfiguration and saw the splendor of that sight when Christ was all aglow with a white light which gathered up all brightness and beauty into its solitary ray? Was he thinking of that memorable scene? I know not. It may have flitted across his mind but, in this passage, he says that he is "*a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.*" Not the glory that *had been* revealed, but that *shall be* revealed. Is that possible? Can a man be a partaker of a glory that, as yet, is not revealed?

I answer that he may, first, *by the closeness of his union with the glorified Christ*. If I am, by faith, indissolubly one with Christ, then in His Glory I am glorified. On His Throne I am enthroned. By His victory I am "more than conqueror." If we are one with Him, then we are raised up together with Him and made to sit together with Him in the heavenly

places. Oh, it is grand when a Believer does not so much think of himself as himself, but as part and parcel of his Lord! This is a very high attainment, yet Peter had reached it—and if you are vitally joined to Christ, you may reach it, too. If you have been, indeed, planted with Him in the likeness of His death, you shall also share the likeness of His resurrection—and you even now share it with Him, for as He is, so are you in this world! Was He humbled? Every saint underwent humiliation in Christ. Is He glorified? All His elect are virtually glorified in the glorification of their Covenant Head. It is indeed a blessed thing to know your union with Christ so completely that you are made “a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed” as far as you are personally concerned, but which is already revealed to Christ and, therefore, is already yours.

I am sure that Peter also means that he had become a partaker of this glory to be revealed *by the absolute certainty which he felt in his own soul that he should be ultimately, in very deed, a partaker of it.* When a man knows that he has such-and-such a possession in reversion, if he is very poor, he discounts it and begins to live upon its present worth. It is a very blessed thing when a child of God knows that because he is in Christ by faith, therefore, whatever things God has laid up for His people in general, He has laid up for him in particular! Whatever Christ has prepared for His redeemed, He has prepared for this redeemed one. Often his faith does, as it were, appropriate the future glory, and cry, “It is mine.” The Believer begins to glorify God for it, though as yet he has not actually partaken of it, for faith brings him the substance of things hoped for, and is to him the evidence of things not seen. Brothers and Sisters, the next best thing to being actually in Heaven is to be assured that you *will be there*, and also to have this thought at the back of the assurance—that you may be there within the next five minutes! Oh, how speedily may you and I be in Glory! Before the clock ticks again, I may see the face of the King in His beauty, in the land that is very far off, in some respects, but very near in others. You know how John Newton puts it—

***“In vain my fancy strives to paint
The moment after death,
The glories that surround the saint,
When yielding up his breath.
One gentle sigh the fetter breaks—
We scarce can say, ‘They’re gone!’
Before the willing spirit takes
Her mansion near the Throne.”***

Well, since this glory is certain and may be so near, let us sit down and look at the golden gates—look until we see them—until they seem to come nearer and nearer and nearer, until the vision becomes so vivid that it ceases to be a vision and we are actually where we were thinking that we should soon be! It has so happened to many a child of God. There is one whom God favored with great wealth and to whom a friend said, “What a paradise this lovely garden is!” “Yes,” he replied, “and I bless God for the assurance that, when I leave it, I shall go from one paradise to another and a better one.” Some have said to a poor Christian, “What an ill-furnished place your room is! How scanty are your worldly goods!” “Ah,” the man, has answered, “but I have enough to last

me till I get Home, for I have the promise that bread shall be given me, water shall be sure and then I shall have Heaven to crown it all." When we have faith like that, then are we partakers of the Glory that shall be revealed!

There is a step even beyond this when we advance from faith to positive enjoyment. There is such a thing as *anticipating the glory to be revealed* with such a full, realizing faith that we begin to enjoy it even now! Surely, you have, at times, sat down with your fellow Believers, when the Word has been preached in the demonstration of the Spirit, and you have said, "Well, Heaven must be glorious, indeed, to be any better than this! My soul is all ablaze with love to Christ and even while my poor body is lingering here—

***"My heart is with Him on His Throne,
And ill can brook delay.
Each moment listening for the voice,
'Rise up, and come away.'"***

And when the service has been over, you have said, "My soul was like the chariots of Amminadib—whether I was in the body or out the body, I could not tell." On your bed, sometimes, or in the chamber of sickness, or sitting alone in quiet meditation after you have been enraptured with a vision of your Lord, has it not seemed as if God had taken some dainty dish from off the table of the angels and passed it down to His waiting child below? Have you not heard stray notes of which you could almost say, "I am persuaded that is the angels' song"? And sweet sounds have reached your ears, like the music of "harpers harping with their harps," making you impatient of your exile here, but, at the same time, making you unspeakably happy until you shall be called up to join in the grand chorus of the Church of God above! "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever!"

Yes, Beloved, Peter could truly say that he was a partaker of the Glory yet to be revealed. I have no doubt that, sometimes, when he preached the Word, his soul was all aglow with holy fervor. I know that, often, I have been so graciously helped by the Holy Spirit to uplift my Lord and Master from this platform, that I have not wanted to go up those stairs any more. I would have liked to just finish up my discourse and say, "Amen," on earth, and at once begin to sing the everlasting song above! Have not you, dear Friend, also reached that blessed state? I am sure that Peter was often in that condition. And when he was persecuted, despised, imprisoned and his own brethren cast him out, there was often within his own bosom a company of the angels of God, Christ's sacred host—a very Mahanaim—and, still better, there was the Prince of Princes, the Angel of the Covenant, the Lord and Master of all the angels, speaking deep bliss into His servant's soul and filling him with unspeakable joy and glory!

Now, my Brother or my Sister, if you get that Presence of Christ—and I pray that you may—you will be qualified to be a witness for Christ. People will say, "What makes those eyes so bright? What causes that man to be so happy? What is it that produces that calm, quiet spirit in the

house? How is it that that man is not troubled as others are? He does not seem to have much cause for joy, but he is very serene and placid in spirit." They will perhaps say to you, "What is the secret of it all?" Then you will have an opportunity of saying, "I am a witness of Christ's sufferings, but I am also a partaker of the Glory that shall be revealed." Come with me, in thought, to Calvary, that you may learn the meaning of His sufferings, that you may afterwards be taught how you may share His Glory.

I wish I could speak right to the very soul of some of you who do not know my Master—how I wish you did know Him! I cannot imagine what some of you have to comfort you which you can, for even a moment, compare with the bliss of knowing my Lord! I have seen your joys. I know something of what mirth can do and what relief laughter may be able to bring, but I also know that these things are of little use in the time of sickness, or when one is near death. It is just at such times that true joy in Christ becomes more deep, more sweet than ever! The less there is of the creature, the more room is there for the Creator. The more of suffering and sorrow we have to endure, the more of content and bliss can we enjoy. And oftentimes, when the body is weak and the head is aching, and the soul is faint, there is, as it were, a sweet swoon of Divine delight which comes over the spirit, which has more strength in it than strength, more joy in it than joy, and almost as much of Heaven in it as there is in Heaven! May you know this, for the sake of Him who has loved us and given Himself for us! God bless you all! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: 1 CORINTHIANS 1.

I am going to speak about the testimony of the Apostle Peter concerning his Lord, but we will first read together part of the writings of his "Beloved brother Paul," that we may see how these eminent servants of Christ agreed in their witness-bearing.

Verses 1-3. *Paul, called to be an Apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. So this is a message to us, also, who "call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord."*

4-9. *I thank my God always on your behalf, for the Grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; that in everything we are enriched by Him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that you come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall also confirm you unto the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Paul was going to blame them for some things that were not right, but he began by commending whatever good was in them by God's Grace.*

10-12. *Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that everyone of you says, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.* So that, at the least, there were four parties in that one little Church which ought to have been knit together in unbroken harmony! This is only one instance of what has happened hundreds of times since. These Corinthians had a great many speaking Brothers among them and they held services in which it was open to anybody to speak as he felt inclined. There was no reason why they should not do so, but what was the result of it? This Christian liberty of theirs, by-and-by, tended to mischief. They became divided into factions. They did not practice discipline as they ought to have done and, therefore, this community at Corinth is a beacon to all other churches, warning them not to carry on their worship in a similar style. It is a very curious thing that some people have taken these Corinthians as an *example* instead of a warning and, having copied their methods, the very same result has followed until there is no section of the Church of Christ that has become such a scandal, through its divisions and its intestine quarrels, as that which has imitated the Corinthians in their mode of worship! I suppose that while human nature is what it is, the same causes will produce the same results to the very end of the chapter. Paul does not tell them that their mode of worship was wrong—perhaps it was not—for great liberty is allowable to Christians, but he does lay the axe at the root of their divisions.

13, 14. *Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius.* They were such a quarrelsome set of people that he could not have taken any comfort from having baptized them. He was glad that they could not quote his name as having done so and thus it may be, have added still more to their division and strife.

15-18. *Lest any should say that I have baptized in my own name. And I baptized also the household of Stephanus: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the Cross of Christ should be made of no effect. For the preaching of the Cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.* I suppose that in that Church, with its many eloquent speakers and men of knowledge, there came to be a spirit of emulation among them as to which should speak best. And some were tempted to find novel meanings in the Word, and to come to the meetings to tell of their wonderful discoveries. The Apostle says that he did not so preach—he kept to the Cross of Christ, which some counted to be but foolishness. “We know all about that,” they said. “Ah, but,” replied the Apostle, “unto us which are saved it is the power of God.”

19-21. *For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wiser, where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Has not God*

made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. God, in His infinite wisdom, raised up a number of philosophers just about the time of the coming of Christ and a little before that great event. If ever there were great minds upon the earth, it was then—yet these men, with all their schools of thought, knew not God—and the people did not follow after them, so that the earthly wisdom turned out to be a failure.

22-29. *For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men for you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound 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: that no flesh should glory in His Presence. And, at this day, it is a great snare to the Church when she glories in her education, when she puts any confidence in the learning, or the wit, or the eloquence of her ministers, when she relies in any degree, whatever, upon an arm of flesh. The sword of the Spirit, if it is put into a velvet and embroidered scabbard, is all the worse for that. Pull it out! The Word of God cannot cut while it is hampered with human wisdom and human learning half as well as when its keen edge, alone, is used! It is the Lord, by the power of His Spirit, who must make the Word effectual. Oh, for more faith and truer faith in Him!*

30, 31. *But of Him are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, he that glories, let him glory in the Lord. There is no one else in whom we may glory! Away with every form of boasting except that of making our boast in the Lord, and especially of glorying in the great atoning Sacrifice of His dear Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!*

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—331, 282.

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

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

ON HUMBLING OURSELVES BEFORE GOD NO. 1733

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

*“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God,
that He may exalt you in due time.”*
1 Peter 5:6.

PRIDE is so natural to fallen man that it springs up in his heart like weeds in a watered garden, or rushes by a flowing brook. It is an all pervading sin and smothers all things like dust on the roads, or flour in the mill. Its every touch is evil as the breath of the cholera-fiend, or the blast of the Sahara wind. Pride is as hard to get rid of as charlock from the furrows, or the American blight from the apple trees. If killed, it revives; if buried, it bursts the tomb. You may hunt down this fox and think you have destroyed it, but lo, your very exultation is pride! None have more pride than those who dream that they have none! You may labor against vainglory till you conceive that you are humble and the fond conceit of your humility will prove to be pride in full bloom. It imitates humility, but is most truly pride!

Pride is a sin with a thousand lives! It seems impossible to kill it, it flourishes on that which should be its poison, glorying in its shame. It is a sin with a thousand shapes and by perpetual change it escapes capture. It seems impossible to hold it—the vapory demon slips from you, only to appear in another form and mock your fruitless pursuit. To die to pride and self, one would need to die himself. Pride was man’s first sin and it will be his last. In the first sin that man ever committed, there was certainly a large mixture of pride, for he imagined that he knew better than his Maker—and even dreamed that his Maker feared that man might grow too great!

It has been questioned whether pride was not the sin by which the angels fell when they lost their first estate—I will not go into any controversy upon that subject—but there was certainly pride in the sin of Satan and pride in the sin of Adam. This is the torch which kindled Hell and set the world on fire! Pride is a ringleader and captain among iniquities—it attains unto the first three of Satan’s champions. It is a daring and God-defying sin, arraigning Divine justice as Cain did; challenging Jehovah to combat as Pharaoh did; or making self into God as Nebuchadnezzar did. It would murder God if it could, that it might fill His Throne. While it is first to come and first in horrible supremacy, it is also last to go. As Paul said, “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.”

I think I might say that the last enemy but one is pride, for even at our deathbed pride will be found in attendance. In his last moments, John Knox had a sharp conflict with self-righteousness though he had preached against it with all his might and knew, with a clearness seldom given to men, that salvation is of the Lord alone. Even within an hour of Glory he had to make a stand against that vile thing, the pride of the hu-

man heart! Many others of the Lord's valiant ones have been sorely assailed by the same crafty foe which shoots with feathered flatteries, shafts of destruction. In the most quiet minds the deadly calm of self-conceit may be found. Our hearts are deceitful above all things and in nothing less to be trusted than in this matter of pride.

Even while we breathe out our souls unto God it will attempt to puff us up—yes, it will puff up poor dying worms! Brothers and Sisters, for certain you and I are in danger of pride—possibly we are even now victims of it! Let us be on our guard, for it may be ruining us without our knowledge, even as the moth in secret eats up the garment, or as unseen rust cankers the hidden treasure. Let pride lodge where it may, it does its entertainer great mischief, for it bars out the favor of God, "God resists the proud." It must be sent adrift before God can visit us with favor, for no Grace comes to the proud, "but He gives Grace unto the humble." Humility is the Grace that attracts more Grace! As money makes money, so humility increases humility and, with it, every other spiritual gift.

If you would have much Grace, have much humility. God has assistance for the humble, but resistance for the proud. You know how He fought Pharaoh. What blows He struck at the haughty monarch! He would have him down from the pinnacle of defiance, one way or another, and make him learn, in bitterness, the answer to his own insolent question, "Who is the Lord?" Remember how Nebuchadnezzar had to eat grass like an ox because he spoke with a haughty tongue? Wherever God sees pride lifting itself on high, He resolves to level it in the dust! He draws His bow, He fits His arrow to the string—and pride is the target that He shoots at. The more pride enters into the Christian's heart, the less Grace will enter there—and the more opposition from God will come—for pride is never so hateful to God as when He sees it in His own people.

If you see disease in a stranger you are very sorry, but if you discover its symptoms in your own child, your grief is much more deep. A viper is loathsome anywhere, but how it would make you start if you saw the head of one of those creatures peeping out from the bosom of a beloved friend! So pride is detestable anywhere, but it is worst in those whom the Lord loves best. If God sees pride in a David, He will smite him till he ceases from his high thoughts. Or if it is in a Hezekiah, he will abase him—and you can be sure that if the Lord sees pride in *you*, he will smite you! Yes, smite you again and again till you wait humbly at His feet!

All this I have given by way of preface, but I think it is also an argument which may run before the words of the text and strengthen them. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God! I shall handle the text, not at any great length, but for practical purposes in three or four ways. May the Holy Spirit bless the discourse!

I. First, our text is evidently intended to bear upon us IN OUR CHURCH LIFE. We will use it in that respect. Observe that Peter has been speaking to the elders and telling them how they should behave themselves in the flock over which they are set as overseers. Then he speaks to the younger members and says, "Submit yourselves unto the elders." He says to all Church members, "All of you be subject, one to another, and be clothed with humility." And it is in the same context that he writes,

“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God.” I am, as a member of a Church, not to seek honor for myself, but I am to walk humbly. I am not to make it in any respect the objective of my Christian life to be esteemed among my fellow Christians so as to have influence over them and to take the lead among them.

I am to have far humbler motives than that. I am to think very little of myself and to think so much of others that I admire all that I see of God’s Grace in them—and am glad to learn from them as well as to help them in their progress to Heaven. Each one of us should think little of himself and highly of his Brothers and Sisters. I cannot say that all of us, as Christians, are clothed with humility as we should be. I am afraid that from the preacher down to the most obscure member, we may, everyone of us, listen with awe to the injunction, “humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God.” And I am afraid that all of us can confess that we fall short of this command. Yet I may honestly add that in this Church I have seen more submissiveness, deference to others and less of ambitious self-esteem than anywhere else in the world. I have spoken nothing less than bare justice when I have said this.

Let all the world know that as a pastor I can, in this point, praise the people of my charge beyond any that I have ever heard of! I am not apt to judge too favorably—I speak as I have seen and this is my honest testimony. We owe our union and prosperity under God to the readiness of most of the Brethren to do anything and everything for Christ, without considering ourselves. Now, true humility in our Church relationship will show itself in our being willing to undertake the very lowest offices for Christ. Some cannot do little things—they must be ordained to great offices or they will sulk in indolence. Genuine humility makes a man think it a great honor to be a doorkeeper in the house of God, or to be allowed to speak a word to a little child about Jesus, or even to wash the saints’ feet. I am sure, Brothers and Sisters, that those who are not willing to fulfill the lesser offices will never be used by Christ to mind the greater duties.

Humility is a qualification for greatness. Do you know how to be little? You are learning to be great. Can you submit? You are learning to rule. My symbolic sketch of a perfect Christian would be a king keeping the door, or a prince feeding lambs, or, better still, the Master washing His disciples’ feet! The next point of humility is that we are conscious of our own incompetence to do anything right. He who can do all things without Christ will end in doing nothing! The man who can preach without Divine aid cannot preach at all. The woman who can teach a Bible class without the Holy Spirit cannot teach a Bible class. Human ability without the Grace of God is puffed-up inability! Those of you who, apart from supernatural help, feel quite sufficient for any kind of holy service, are miserably deluded. Self-sufficiency is inefficiency. The fullness of self is a double emptiness. He that has no sense of his weakness has a weakness in his sense!

I believe, Brothers and Sisters, that any man whom God uses for a great purpose will be so emptied out that he will wonder that God uses him in the least degree—and he will be ready to hide his head and long to get out of public notice because he will feel himself to be utterly unworthy

of the favor which God manifests towards him. I do not believe that God ever fills a cup which was not empty, or that He ever fills a man's mouth with His Words while that man has his mouth full of his own words. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God! If you desire that the Holy Spirit should bless you, be purged from your own spirit. The way to rise into God is to sink in your own self. As our Lord Jesus descended into the depths, that He might rise above all things and fill all things, so we, in our imitation of Him, must descend to the uttermost that we may rise to the highest.

This humility will show itself, next, in that we shall be willing to be ignored by men. There is a craving in the heart of many to have what they do written upon tablets and set up in the market places. I once heard a professing Christian complain bitterly that he had been ignored. He had been a Sunday school teacher for years and yet he had never been publicly mentioned by anyone. Did he make that a complaint? He might far rather have rejoiced in his quietude! The fierce light of public notoriety is not much valued by those upon whom it falls. I wish some people would ignore me—at least all next week, so much as not to call to see me, or write me a letter, or name me in the papers! I would be as happy as all the birds in the air to be ignored—if I might be left alone and allowed peacefully to work for God with His sweet smile to cheer me in my loneliness! Oh, to be a little ant, allowed to labor on at God's bidding, receiving nothing of men but the high privilege of being left alone!

A saintly soul was known to pray, "Grant me, O Lord, that I may pass unnoticed through the world!" It seems to me to be one of the highest delights of life for people to permit you to work for God without being interrupted by their praises or censures. When I have seen a certain great artist at work, I have peeped at him from a corner and have kept out of his sunshine—I am quite sure he did not want me to express my valueless opinion about his glorious creations! To have people forever talking *about* you, *for* you and *against* you is one of the wearinesses of mortal life—and yet some people sigh for the attention that others would be glad to be rid of! Yes, so it is. It is but a little thing that certain friends have done, but they would like much made of it—their slender alms must be published at the corners of the streets—their prosy speech must be reported in all the papers!

Oh, Brothers and Sisters, do not let us care about its being known that we have done our part! Let it be done as to God and in God's sight! And then, as to what our fellow mortals shall say, let us have scant concern, for, if we live on human praise, we shall grow not only proud, but vain, which, if it is not more wicked, is certainly more silly. Serve God and do not wish to have a trumpet blown before you. Never cry with Jehonadab, "Come, see my zeal for the Lord of Hosts." Go on serving God year after year, though you are altogether unknown, feeling it quite sufficient that you have, by the Grace of God, served your generation and honored your Redeemer. This would be a great attainment in our Church life if we could reach to it. Brethren, we need humility, all of us, in our Church life, in the sense of never being rough, haughty, arrogant, hard, domineering, lordly—or, on the other hand—unruly, quarrelsome and unreasonable.

We should endeavor to think very carefully of those who are poor, for fear we should hurt their feelings. And we should be very noticeable of those who are obscure, lest we should seem to despise them. It is ours never to take offense and to be most cautious never to cause it even by inadvertence. He that is set as a leader in the Church of God, let him be the person that is most ready to bear blame and least ready to give offense—let him say, “You may think what you please of me, but I shall lay myself out to do you good and to be your servant, for Christ’s sake.” The lower you can stoop, the greater is your honor. In the eyes of wisdom, no piece of furniture in the house of God has greater dignity than the doormat. If you are willing to let others wipe their feet on you, then shall Christ Jesus take pleasure in you, for you are a partaker of His lowly mind.

Even for your own sake it will be wise to occupy a humble place, for in the valleys the streams of peace are flowing. The mountains are the playgrounds of the storm, but in the quiet villages the dove finds her shelter. If you would escape from ill will and live peaceably with all men, practice the maxims of an influential man, who, when asked, after the Revolution, how he managed to escape the executioner’s axe, replied, “I made myself of no reputation and kept silent.” I am speaking to a number of young men who have begun to speak for Jesus Christ in the Church—let me earnestly entreat them to take great notice of my text—“Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God.” Remember, you cannot do any good unless “the mighty hand of God” is with you! Therefore be humble and look to *His* hand for all success.

Feel it to be a wonderful thing that the mighty hand of God should ever use you and, therefore, lie very low *in* that hand, and *beneath* that hand, for then you may claim the promise that He will exalt you in due time. If you are willing to look after a few poor people in a village and to do your duty thoroughly well among a lowly company, you shall have a larger sphere before long. If you are satisfied, young Brother, to stand in the corner of the street and talk about Jesus Christ to a few rough folk, you shall find hundreds of hearers, by-and-by. If you are willing to be *nothing*, God will make something of you! The way to the top of the ladder is to begin at the lowest rung.

In fact, in the Church of God, the way up is to go down—and he that is ambitious to be at the top will find himself, before long, at the bottom. “He that exalts himself shall be abased but he that humbles himself shall be exalted.” Suffer, my younger Brethren, this word of exhortation.

II. And now, secondly, I will use the text in quite another way—in reference to OUR BEHAVIOR IN OUR AFFLICTIONS. Here let every tried Believer listen to the counsel of the Holy Spirit. Certain of us are never long together without affliction and trial. Like salamanders, we live in the flame, passing from fire to fire. As by a succession of shafts we descend into the heart of the earth, going down from woe to woe—we need to learn the way of these dark places! Frequently our heavenly Father’s design in sending trial to His children is to make and keep them humble. Let us remember this and learn a lesson of wisdom. The advice of Peter is that we should humble ourselves. Many people have been often humbled and

yet they have not become humble. There is a great difference between the two things.

If God withdraws His Grace and allows a Christian man to fall into sin, that fall humbles him in the esteem of all good men—and yet he may not be humble. He may never have a true sense of how evil his action was. He may still persevere in his lofty spirit and be far from humility. When this is the case, the haughty spirit may expect a fall. The rod will make blue wounds when pride ignores gentler blows. The most hopeful way of avoiding the humbling affliction is to humble yourself. Be humble that you may not be humbled! Put yourself into a humble attitude and draw near to God in a lowly spirit—and so He will cease from His chiding. And do this, first, by noticing whether you have been guilty of any special sin of pride. You are suffering—let the rod point out to you in which way you have erred through pride. I believe that David was afflicted in his children because he had been proud of his children and had indulged them.

When there is a breakage in the house, it is generally the idol that is broken. Usually our sins lie at the roots of our sorrows. If we will repent of the sin, the Lord will remove the sorrow. Have you been tried in your worldly possessions? Were you ever puffed up by them? Is your health failing? Did you ever glory in your bodily strength? Are you deceived? Were you ever boastful of your own wisdom? Are you mourning over a failure in character? Did you not once dream that you were past temptation? Look into your affliction till you see, as in a glass, what was the thing you were proud of—then take the idol down from its pedestal, humble yourself before God—and from then on worship only Him! In your affliction, humble yourself by confessing that you deserve all that you are suffering. Is it poverty? Then, dear child of God, admit that you deserve poverty because of your love of the world!

Is it physical pain? Then acknowledge how every erring member deserves to smart. It is a great thing to have wrung out of us the confession that our chastisement is less than we deserve and that the Lord is not dealing with us according to our sins, but rewarding us according to our iniquities. Is there a bereavement in the house? Then, I pray you, acknowledge that if God were to visit you, as He did Job, and take all your children away in a stroke, you deserve it at His hands! Confess that the chastening hand is not dealing too severely with you. Humble yourself and then you will not quarrel with your grief.

But, more than that, humble yourself so as to submit entirely to God's will. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you in this act of self-humiliation while you meekly kiss the rod. Bow yourself before the mighty hand of God, ready to receive harder blows if God so pleases, for when your will entirely yields to the will of God, it is highly probable that either the affliction will be removed, or else the sting of it will be taken away. Down, Brothers and Sisters, down in the dust as low as you can get! God is evidently dealing within you as with a child and a child's wisdom lies in cheerful submission to parental discipline. When a child is under his father's chastening hand, it will not help him to kick, quarrel and say anything—his best hope lies in submitting absolutely to his father's good pleasure. When that is done, the chastisement will soon end.

Humble yourself, therefore, under the mighty hand of God. Yield up your will so as to have no suit-in-law against the Lord—no difference as to His goodness, not even if the evil you dread should actually come and come in the worst form! Submit to the Lord's will as the rush bends to the wind, or as the wax yields to the seal. Pray against the calamity which moves you to fear, but let your petition always end with, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." Ask that you may not be obliged to drink the bitter drink, but do not upset the cup, nor push it away. There let it stand, while you, for the moment, supplicate for its removal. And when there comes no answer to your prayer, then take it up meekly, put it to your lips resolutely, and drink right on, even as your Master drank His cup and drained it to the dregs.

This needs the help of the Holy Spirit and truly He waits to help us—He *delights* to aid us in such holy acts of submission! Nothing is better for us in our time of tribulation than to bow ourselves in lowliest obeisance before the hand of God. Dear Friend, what can be the use of striving against the hand of the Lord? It is a mighty hand—we cannot resist it, even if we are wicked enough to attempt rebellion! If affliction is to come, it will come, and come with all the greater sharpness because we refuse to yield. If God appoints a trial, we cannot escape it. What can be the use of our striving against Divine decrees? It will only make our sorrow more severe. When the ox kicks against the goad, the iron enters deeper into its flesh, but when the bullock hastens on its way, sensitive to the least touch, the driver scarcely urges it again.

The tender, sensitive horse scarcely receives a stroke from the whip; he feels it too much. But the mule that will not move is struck again and again for his obstinacy. So will it be with us. We can make rods for ourselves by willfulness. Oh foolish fingers which prepare thorns for our own pillows! Humble yourself, therefore, under the mighty hand of God and, by-and-by, Brothers and Sisters, you shall be exalted to consolation and prosperity. Your affliction shall bring forth the comfortable fruits of righteousness. You shall come out of the furnace purified and refined. You shall have more knowledge, more Grace, more zeal, more of every excellence as the result of sanctified trial—but all this must come by obedient resignation.

A *rebellious* heart comes out of affliction worse rather than better. Submit, and you shall be so exalted by your affliction that you shall bless God for it, and feel that you would not have missed the trouble for 10,000 pounds if you could have done so! Heavy tribulation shall bring with it unspeakable preferment. You shall be exalted to a higher degree in the peerage of Christianity by putting up with adversities. Therefore, I pray you, humble yourselves under the hand of God.

III. Thirdly, I am going to use the text in another way. IN OUR DAILY DEALINGS WITH GOD, whether in affliction or not, let us humble ourselves under His hand, for only so can we hope to be exalted. It is a blessed thing whenever you come to God, to come wondering that you are *allowed* to come, wondering that you have been *led* to come—marveling at Divine election, that the Lord should ever have chosen *you* to come—wondering at Divine redemption, astonished that such a price should

have been paid that you might be brought near to God! It is well to draw near to God weighed down with gratitude that the Holy Spirit should have ever deigned to work effectual calling upon *you*. Humble yourself under the mighty hand of Divine Grace which has brought you into the family of love—constantly say, “Why me, Lord? Why *me*?”

A grateful walk is a gracious walk and there is no gratitude where there is no humility. Never trace the difference between yourself and others to your own free will, nor to any betterness of your natural disposition, but entirely to the mercy and Grace of God which have been freely bestowed on you! Let Grace be magnified by your grateful heart! When you are doing this, be very humble before God because you have not made more improvement of the Grace that He has given you. You are chosen, but you are not as choice as you ought to be! You are redeemed, but you are not so much your Lord’s as you ought to be! You are called, but you are still too deaf to the Divine call! You are blessed, enriched, instructed, adopted, comforted—with Heaven before you and everything prepared on the road—but what a poor return you have made! Always feel thus humbled in reference to your God and His Grace.

When you are doing most and God is using you most, always feel that if you had been fit for it, He might have done much more by you—that if you had been meet to be used, He might have used you far more extensively. Thus you will always see cause for humility, even when you discern abounding reason for gratitude. Walk always so with God that when you stand on the highest point you still feel, “I might have been higher but for my own fault. I have not, because I have not asked, or because I have asked amiss. I have not become as rich as I might have been in spiritual things because I have not been as diligent in my Lord’s business, or as fervent in spirit, or as abundant in serving God as I ought to have been.”

Next, humble yourself, dear Brothers and Sisters, under the hand of God by feeling your own need of knowledge whenever you come to God. Do not think that you understand all Divinity. There is only one body of Divinity and that is Christ, Himself—and who knows Him to the fullest? When even His love, which is the most plain point about Him, passes knowledge, who shall know Christ in all His fullness? Come before God to be instructed in the knowledge of your God and Savior. Do not think that you understand Providence, for I am sure that none of us do. We sometimes think that we could manage things a great deal better than they are managed. Many farmers would not have appointed that heavy shower for this afternoon and yet that downpour was essential to the general well-being of the universal kingdom. I cannot tell why, but it is so. Everything that comes by God’s appointment is a cog in the wheel of Providence—and if that cog were gone, the machinery would be out of order. The Lord does all things wisely—only a vile pride will suspect otherwise.

Consider, O man that you do not know—only God knows! Little children sometimes think they are wise but they know nothing. Wisdom is with their father, not with *them*. Let us be content to humble ourselves under the hand of God as poor know-nothings, satisfied that He knows what is best for us. This humility is the vestibule of knowledge, the cornerstone of true philosophy. Commence with a confession of ignorance, or

you will never be taught of the Lord! It cannot be hard to confess this when the mighty hand of the Lord is seen and felt. One point concerning which I should like everyone of us to humble ourselves under the hand of God is about our little enjoyment of Divine things. The elder brother in the parable said, "Lo, these many years do I serve you! Neither transgressed I at any time your commandment: and yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends."

So have I known certain sincere Christian men fall into a horribly legal state of mind. They have always been very regular in their giving, constant in their religious observances, persevering in their prayers and yet they have never had much joy. But they see a poor soul, just saved from sin, full of delight, and they envy him and cry out, "Why is a fuss made over such a sinner, when I have been all these years a Christian and my Brethren have never made any rejoicing over me? There is no music and dancing about me! You never gave me a kid that I might make merry with my friends." I do not know how we could make a fuss over some of the elder Brothers—they would not allow it—they would be angry and enquire, in hard and surly tones, what these things meant! Music and dancing are things too trivial for their solid souls. They stand outside and grumble—and we cannot warm them into a revival spirit! They are freezing outside the door of our happy home. Must they always stand there?

How divinely sweet was the father's answer to that naughty elder brother! He said to him, "Son, you are always with me and all that I have is yours." That is to say, "You live in my house. You are with me as my own dear son. Everything I have is yours by heirship. Your brother had his portion and he spent it, but all that remains to me is yours." Hence his short commons had been of his own appointing! If he had not made merry with his friends, it was his own fault. Is it not much the same with us if we have been dull and melancholy? I mean those of us who are Believers. Are not all things ours? Come, let us humble ourselves under the hand of God because we have not made merry with our friends! You growling Christians—if you growl it is because you will growl—there is nothing to growl at!

You who never have a happy day, who never have any of the fervor and enthusiasm of young beginners—whose fault is that? It is your own! You might have anything in the Father's house. You have a right to rare music and dancing, for you are always with God, and all that He has is yours. It is meet that we should make merry and be glad! And if we are dull at the business of holy merry-making, let us humble ourselves under the hand of God because of our despondency and mistrust! O my Soul, if your ceilings are painted with black instead of vermilion, blame only yourself—not your God!

I am sure, dear Friends, if any of us will go over our daily lives, we shall find plenty of reasons for humbling ourselves under the hand of God. It is really dreadful how a man can serve God nobly and do great things and yet, in a certain matter, he may sadly fail. A grand old Prophet is that Jonah, going through the streets of Nineveh and bravely delivering the Lord's warning. Whoever did the same? "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown" are the words which he hurls into the face of princes.

Grand man! One, yet a conqueror of myriads! Yes! But look at him a day or two later! Call that a grand man sitting there crying because the cucumber that grew up over his head is withered? He is fretting because a worm has devoured a gourd! He is angry and he says that he does well to be angry about a couple of melon leaves! Dear me, that a man can be so great in noble things and so little in a trifling matter!

How many have the same cause to be humble before God? Observe that good man—he bore the loss of his property with holy resignation, but he lost his temper because a button was undone from his linen! Such a thing has often happened. Do I put it so that you smile at it? It would be better to weep over it! As you think about yourselves, my Brothers and Sisters, remember the causes that you have to be humble under the hand of God because of the gross weakness by which you have shown the natural depravity of your heart and the faultiness of your nature apart from the strengthening Spirit of God. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the hand of God as creatures under the hand of the Creator. We are the clay and You our potter, O Lord! It becomes us to be lowly.

Humble yourselves under the hand of God as criminals under the hand of their judge. Cry, “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.” Humble yourselves under the hand of God as chastened children under a father’s rod, for He chastens us for our profit and right well do we deserve each smarting blow. Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, lastly, as servants under their Lord’s Word. Ask no questions about your Master’s command, but go and do it! And when He rebukes you for shortcomings, answer not, but accept the reproof with bowed head and tearful eyes, acknowledging that His rebuke is well deserved. Humble yourselves thus, dear Brothers and Sisters, in your daily lives and God will exalt you in due time.

IV. I finish by using my text with all the earnestness my soul can feel in reference to the unconverted part of this audience IN OUR SEEKING FORGIVENESS AS SINNERS. Oh, tender Spirit of God, help me! The text was not originally meant for the ungodly, but it may fitly be applied to them. If you would find Grace in God’s sight and live, dear unconverted Hearers, you must humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God. So you want to be saved, do you? The way of salvation is, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.” “But,” you say, “I do not understand it.” Yet it is very simple—no hidden meaning lies in the words—you are simply bid to trust Jesus.

If, however, you feel as if you could not do that, let me urge you to go to God in secret and admit the sin of this unbelief, for a it is great sin! Humble yourself. Do not try to make out that you are good. That will be fatal, for it will be a falsehood which will shut the gate of Grace. Confess that you are guilty. When a man is clearly and manifestly guilty, it is of no use his standing before the judge and beginning to urge his own merit—his best course is to cast himself upon the mercy of the court. It is your only course, dear Soul, the only one that can be of use to you. Know that you have transgressed and feel that it is so. Sit down and think over the many ways in which you have done wrong, or failed to do right. Pray God to

break you down with deep penitence. It is no waste of time to dig out foundations when you build a house, and it is no superfluity to labor after a deep sense of sin.

When your sin is confessed, then acknowledge that if justice were carried out towards you, apart from undeserved Grace, you would be sent to Hell. Do not quibble at that fact! Do not entertain skeptical questions as to whether there is a punishment for sin and as to what it will be, but acknowledge that whatever it is, you deserve it. Do not fence with God or quarrel with Scripture, but as His Word declares that the wicked shall be cast into Hell with all the nations that forget God, admit that you deserve to be so dealt, for you deserve it. When this is acknowledged, you are on the road to mercy. You have almost obtained mercy when you have fully submitted to justice. You have, in a measure, received Grace when you are brought to admit your sin and the justice of its penalty.

Then, next, accept God's mercy in His own way. Do not be so vain as to dictate to God how you ought to be saved. Be willing to be saved by Free Grace through the blood of Jesus Christ, for that is God's way. Be willing to be saved by faith in Jesus Christ, for that, also, is God's way. If your unbelief begins to ask, "How can it be and why should it be?" cease from such questions! Humble yourself and say, "God says it is so and, therefore, it must be so." If God says, "Believe and be saved," I will believe and be saved. And if He says, "Trust Christ, and live," I will trust Christ and live! If a man had forfeited his life, but should be told by the court that he shall have pardon freely given to him if he will freely accept it—he would be a fool if he began to enquire, "But is this according to law? Is this according to precedent? What may be the effect of this pardon?" and so on. These enquiries are for the court, not for the prisoner! My dear Sir, you do not want to hang yourself, do you?

Yet some men argue against their own souls and labor to find out reasons why they should not be saved! If this perverse ingenuity could but be taught right reason and men would strive to find out why they should at once yield themselves to God's way of salvation, they might enter into comfort and rest much sooner. O quibbling Sinner, let your artful doubts and reasoning be nailed with Jesus to the Cross! Be a little child and come and believe in the salvation which is revealed in Jesus Christ. Trust Christ to save you and He will do it, as He has saved so many of us to the praise and glory of His Grace. "Ah," you say, "I have done this, but I cannot get peace." Then dear Friend, sink lower down! Sink lower down! Did I hear you say, "Alas, Sir, I need to get comfort"? Cease from that! Do not ask for *comfort*—ask for forgiveness—and that blessing may come through your greater discomfort. Sink lower down! Sink lower down! There is a point at which God will surely accept you and that point is lower down!

"Oh," you say, "I think I have a due sense of sin." That will not do! I want you to feel that you have *not* a due sense of sin and come to Jesus for it! "Oh, but I think that I have been brokenhearted." I should like to see you lower than that, till you cry, "I am afraid I never knew what it was to be brokenhearted." I want you to sink so low that you cannot say anything good about yourself—no, nor see an atom of goodness in yourself! When you look inside your heart and can see nothing but that which

would condemn you. When you look at your life and see everything there that deserves wrath—then you are on the road to hope! Come before God a criminal, in the prison dress, with the rope about your neck! You will be saved, then! When you confess that you have nothing of your own but sin. When you acknowledge that you deserve to die and to be cast away forever—God, in infinite pity, will let you live through faith in Christ Jesus!

Many years ago a certain prince visited the Spanish galleys where a large number of convicts were confined, chained to their oars to toil on without relief. I think nearly all of them were condemned to a life sentence. Being a great prince, the King of Spain told him that he might, in honor of his visit, set free any one of the galley slaves he chose. He went down among them to choose his man. He said to one, “Man, how did you come here?” He replied that false witnesses swore away his character. “Ah!” said the prince and passed on. He went to the next, who stated that he had done something that was certainly wrong, but not very much, and that he never ought to have been condemned. “Ah,” said the prince, and again passed on. He went the round and found that they were all good fellows—all convicted by mistake.

At last he came to one who said, “You ask me why I came here? I am ashamed to say that I richly deserve it. I am guilty, I cannot for a moment say that I am not. And if I die at this oar, I thoroughly deserve the punishment. In fact, I think it a mercy that my life is spared me.” The prince stopped and said, “It is a pity that such a bad fellow as you should be placed amongst such a number of innocent people! I will set you free.” You smile at that, but let me make you smile again. My Lord Jesus Christ has come here, at this time, to set somebody free! He has come here, at this time, to pardon somebody’s sins!

You that have no sins shall have no pardon. You good people shall *die* in your sins! But, you guilty ones, who humble yourselves under the hand of God, my Master thinks that it is a pity that you should be among these self-righteous people! So come right away and trust your Savior—and obtain life eternal through His precious blood! And to Him shall be glory forever and ever. Amen.

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A SERMON TO MINISTERS AND OTHER TRIED BELIEVERS NO. 3273

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 26, 1911.**

***DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
DURING THE SUMMER OF 1881.***

***“Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.”
1 Peter 5:7.***

THIS season of depression in trade has brought great care to many a house and heart, especially to village pastors and their flocks. Their troubles have been heavy and I am afraid their cares have not been light. Few have escaped the pinch of these hard times—the most prosperous have to watch the ebbing tide and ask—How long shall these things be? The subject will be seasonable to us all.

A very good preface to any sermon is the connection—let us look at the passage before us. The verse preceding it is, “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.” If we are truly humble, we shall cast our care upon God and, by that process, our joy will be exalted! We are slow to submit to the hand of God and oftentimes our care is fretful rebellion against our heavenly Father’s will. We determine to carve for ourselves, and so we cut our fingers! I saw upon a cart only yesterday the name of a tradesman who calls himself, “Universal Provider”—do we not aspire to some such office? There is a Universal Provider—and if we are humble under His hand, we shall leave our matter in His hands. Oh, for more humility, for then shall we have more tranquility! Pride begets anxiety—true humility gives birth to patience.

The verse which follows our text is this—“Be sober, be vigilant because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about seeking whom he may devour.” Cast your care upon God because you need all your powers of thought to battle with the great enemy. He hopes to devour you by care. Cast all your care upon God, for if you are worried you cannot be sober or watchful. Satan rides on the back of carnal care and so obtains entrance into the soul. If he can distract our minds from the peace of faith by temporal cares, he will get an advantage over us.

The preface allowed of expansion, but I have compressed it with stern economy of time. I must condense with equal rigor all through my discourse. We will first expound the text and then enforce it.

I. First, let us EXPOUND THE TEXT—"Casting all your *care* upon Him, for He *cares* for you."

It is noteworthy that in the Greek, the two words for, "care," are different. Hence the Revised Version reads, "Casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you." The care which you are to cast upon God is wearing you out and you are to cast it upon God because, in quite another sense, "He cares for you." The word used in reference to God is applied to caring for the poor and in another place to the watchfulness of a shepherd. Our anxiety and God's care are two very different things. His care, though tender and comprehensive, causes no anxiety to Him, for His great mind is more than equal to the task. But our care ferments within us and threatens the destruction of our narrow souls. You are to cast your care, which is folly, upon the Lord, for He exercises a care which is wisdom! Care to us is exhausting, but God is All-Sufficient. Care to us is sinful, but God's care of us is holy. Care distracts us from service, but the Divine Mind does not forget one thing while remembering another!

If our care is to be cast upon God, we are hereby led to make a distinction, for there is a care which we could not dare to cast upon God—it would be blasphemy to attempt it! Anxiety to grow rich—can we impart that to God? Anxiety to be famous, to live in luxury, to avenge an injury, to magnify myself—can I ask the Most High to bear such an anxiety for me? If any of you are vexed with such care, I charge you to fling it off, for it is like the poisoned tunic of Hercules, and unless you can tear it away, it will burn into your very soul! All cares of covetousness, anger, pride, ambition and willfulness must be cast to the winds—it would be criminal to dream of casting them upon God! Do not pray about them, except that God will redeem you from them. Let your desires be kept within a narrow circle and your anxieties will be lessened at a stroke.

"*Casting*," says the Apostle. He does not say "laying all your care upon Him," but he uses a much more energetic word. You have to cast the load upon the Lord—the act will require effort. It is no child's play to cast all our care upon our Lord when there are six little children, shoes worn out, cupboard empty, purse bare and the deacons talking of reducing the scanty salary! Here is a work worthy of faith—you will have to lift with all your soul before the burden can be shifted and the anxiety cast upon the Lord! That effort, however, will not be half as exhausting as the effort of carrying your load yourself. Oh, the burden of watching and waiting for help which never comes! Depending on the help of man who is altogether

vanity! Oh, the weariness of carrying a heartbreaking anxiety and yet standing up to preach! We have all seen statues of Atlas bearing the world on his shoulders, but we can hardly conceive of his preaching in that attitude! It would be better to make one tremendous effort and have done with it, rather than groan under a perpetual weight. If the fox is eating into our heart, let us pluck it from our bosom and kill it at once!

Note, next, the words, “*upon Him.*” You may tell your griefs to others to gain their sympathy, for we are bid to bear one another’s burdens. You may ask friends to help you and so exercise your humility, but let your requests to man be ever in subordination to your waiting upon God! Some have obtained their full share of human help by much begging from their fellow Christians, but it is a nobler thing to make known your requests unto God! But somehow, those who beg only of God are wondrously sustained where others fail! What a pleasant story is that in which we recount the loving kindness of the Lord and tell how “this poor man cried and the Lord heard him.” Quiet, patient Believers have come under my notice who have carried their cross in silence, waiting alone upon the Lord. How they endured their trial, I cannot tell, save that “they endured, as seeing Him who is invisible.” But their necessity became known, it leaked out, they knew not how, and they were helped—and helped better than they would have been if their appeal had been to man! I am condemning no appeal to our fellow Believers! Many are willing to help, but they cannot do so if the need is unknown—but do not place anyone in the office and throne of the great God who alone is the Caretaker and Burden-Bearer of His people! I am afraid that, sometimes, in our care not to alienate this great man who does so much for the cause, or that excellent lady who takes half-a-dozen sittings in the chapel, we may grieve the Lord and lose our true Helper. Cease, then, from man and cast all your care upon God—and upon Him only!

Certain courses of action are the very reverse of casting all your care upon God, and one is *indifference*. Whatever virtue there may be in stoicism, it is unknown to the true child of God. “I don’t care,” may be an appropriate expression for an atheist to use, but it is not suitable for a Christian! It may sound well and the man who utters the defiant words may think himself some great one, but it is an evil utterance for all that. I am afraid some Brothers’ “I don’t care,” is very sinful, for they get into debt and don’t care. They break their promises and engagements and don’t care. Brothers, such men ought to care! Every man is bound to care about his life duties and the claims of his family. He that cares not for his own household is worse than a heathen! Casting care upon God is the very reverse of reckless and inconsiderateness!

It is not casting care upon God *when a man does that which is wrong in order to clear himself*. Yet this is too often tried. Under pressure, some men do very unjustifiable things. We ought to be slow to condemn since we ourselves also may yet be tempted in the same way and may err in like manner. Still, faith ought to be able to win every battle. He who compromises truth to avoid pecuniary loss is hewing out a broken cistern for himself. He who borrows when he knows he cannot pay, he who enters into wild speculations to increase his income, he who does anything that is ungodly in order to turn a penny is not casting his care upon God! An act of disobedience is a rejection of God's help so that we may help ourselves. He who does the right thing at all hazards practically casts his care upon the Lord. Acts are with us, but their consequences are with God! Our main care should be to please God—and all other care we may safely leave to Him.

How, then, are we to cast all our care upon God? Two things need to be done. It is a heavy load that is to be cast upon God and it requires the hand of prayer and the hand of faith to make the transfer. Prayer tells God what the care is and asks God to help, while faith believes that God can and will do it. Prayer spreads the letter of trouble and grief before the Lord and opens all its budget. And then Faith cries, "I believe that God cares, and cares for me! I believe that He will bring me out of my distress and make it promote His own Glory."

When you have thus lifted your care into its true position and cast it upon God, take heed that you do not pick it up again. Many a time have I gone to God and have relieved my care by believing prayer—but I am ashamed to confess that after a little time, I have found myself burdened again with those very anxieties which I thought I had given up! Is it wise to put our feet into fetters which have once been broken off? My Brethren, there is a more excellent way—a way which I have tried and proved. I have at times been perplexed with difficulties. I have tried my best with them and I have utterly failed. And then I have gone with the perplexity to the Throne of God and placed the whole case in the Lord's hands, solemnly resolving never to trouble myself about the aforesaid matters any more, whatever might happen. I was quite incapable of further action in the matter and so I washed my hands of the whole concern and left it with God. Some of these cares I have never seen again—they melted like hoar frost in the morning sun—and in their place I have found a blessing lying on the ground. Other troubles have remained in fact but not in effect, for I have consented to the yoke and it has never galled my shoulder again. Brethren, let the dead bury their dead, and let us follow Jesus! Henceforth let us leave worldlings to fret and fume over the cares of this life—as for us, let our conversation be in Heaven, and let us carefully ab-

stain from carelessness, being anxious only to end anxiety by a childlike confidence in God!

II. Accept this little contribution towards an exposition, and let us now proceed to ENFORCE THE TEXT. I will give you certain *reasons*, and then *the reason* why you should cast all your care upon God.

First, *the ever-blessed One commands you to do it*. We need no other reason. The precept is akin to the Gospel command, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.” It is a blessed privilege and it is also a command. He who bids us cease from idolatry, also bids us cease from care. The Law of Sabbath-keeping is not more Divine than that of resting in the Lord. He whom we call Master and Lord bids us take no anxious thought—His bidding has all the authority of Law. Say to yourself, my anxious Brother, “I may roll my burden upon the Lord, for He bids me do so.” If you do not trust in God, you will be distinctly sinful—you are as much commanded to trust as to love.

Next, cast all your cares on God *because you will have matters enough to think of even then!* There are sacred cares which the Lord will lay upon you because you have cast your care upon Him. When He has broken your painful yoke, you will have His easy yoke to bear. There is the care to love and serve Him better, the care to understand His Word, the care to preach it to His people, the care to experience His fellowship, the care to walk so that you shall not vex the Holy Spirit. Such hallowed cares will always be with you and will increase as you grow in Grace. In a sense, we may cast even these upon God, looking for His Holy Spirit to help us, for it is He that works in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure—yet not without our care and zeal does He operate upon us—and this is one reason why you are not to allow lower ends and designs to inundate your mind. Your spirit has another vineyard to keep, another capital to put out to interest, another Master to please and it cannot afford to yield its thought to meaner pursuits. Ministers are shepherds and must care for the sheep! “The hireling flee because he is a hireling, and cares not for the sheep.” But you have the care of churches laid upon you daily, and it is peculiarly necessary that you should not be occupied with carnal care.

And, next, you must cast your care upon God, *because you have God’s business to do*. It is a dangerous thing for a merchant to employ a man who has a business of his own, because sooner or later the master’s business will suffer, or else the man’s own concern will die out. “No man that wars,” says Paul, “entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who has chosen him to be a soldier.” There is sure to be a clashing of interests when a Brother goes into business, unless he does it as Paul did—that he may not be chargeable to the Church—for

then he attains to double honor. Paul carried his needle and thread with him wherever he went, for everybody had a tent in those days, and he was ready for work at any moment either upon small family tents, or tents to cover a great assembly. When he had finished preaching, he could turn to mending tents and so earn his own living and preach the Gospel freely. Paul did not make his preaching a stalking-horse to his trade, but he made his handicraft a packhorse to his ministry, so that he could say, "These hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me." That is a very different thing from a minister deserting his charge to make a larger income by some other calling. The less we have to do with other business the better, for all our care is needed by the Church.

Queen Elizabeth bade a notable merchant in the City of London go to the Continent on royal business. "Please, Your Majesty, he said, "who will attend to my business while I am away?" The queen replied, "If you will go abroad and see to my business, I will see to your business." I will be bound to say that it would not suffer if such a queen took it in hand! Just so the Lord says to us, "You attend to My work and I will take care of you and your wife and children." The Lord pledges Himself to do it—bread shall be given us, our water shall be sure! The testimony of many among you will bear me out in this. I come of a line of preachers and though some of them have had to endure straitened circumstances, yet none of them were forsaken, nor have their seed been seen begging bread. The Lord has cared for us and we have lacked nothing.

You ought to do it not only for this reason, but because *it is such a great privilege to be able to cast your care upon God*. If I am plunged in a lawsuit and some eminent lawyer would offer to undertake it all, out of love to me, how glad I would be! I would worry no longer. I would say to all who troubled me on the matter, "You must go to my solicitor. I know nothing about the matter." Do this to your cunning enemy, the devil, who is always glad to see you anxious and fretful. Let us say to him, "The Lord rebuke you, O Satan, even the Lord who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you." What a file that is for the old viper to break his teeth upon! Chosen! CHOSEN! And if chosen, shall we not be cared for?

Let me add that you ministers ought to cast all your care upon God *because it will be such a good example for your hearers*. Our people learn much from our conduct. And if they see us fretting, they will be certain to do the same. You preach faith, do you not? How sad it will be for you to be convicted of unbelief! Our own words may condemn us if we are anxious. Once when I was unduly depressed, my good wife said to me, "I have a book here which I should like to read to you." It did me good to hear her read, but I felt myself rebuked by every word! I half suspected

what was coming when she said, "That is your own, remember?" She had been giving the doctor some of his own medicine! What a many things you have said, my Brothers, that will condemn you if you do not trust God! Is it, after all, mere talk? Did you mean what you said and is it true? Or have you merely been repeating official dogmas in which you have no personal confidence? Is the Providence of God a myth, or a living, bright reality? "Here," said a quack in the market, "is a medicine that will cure coughs, colds, consumptions [the fellow coughed horribly at this point]. It is of such efficacy that it would almost restore the dead. [Here he coughed again.] Nobody need remain a sufferer—he has only to buy a box of the pills" [here the quack's own cough prevented him from speaking.] Ah, laugh on, laugh on, Brothers, only find that nobody laughs at you for doubting while you extol faith! We must show in ourselves that faith in our God is a healing medicine, or man will not believe us! We shall make Christ, Himself, seem to be a pretender unless we practically prove that we have been healed by Him. Let your people see in you what comes of trusting Christ! Let them see what cheerfulness, what hopefulness, what buoyancy of spirit come to those who trust Christ and cast all their cares upon Him!

But the reason of reasons is that contained in our text, "*He cares for you.*" After all, what a small matter it must be to God to care for us, since He provides for the commissariat of the universe, the feeding of the cattle on a thousand hills and the wild beasts of the plains! Think of those myriads of fish, those armies of birds, those enormous multitudes of insects! What a God must He be who cares for all! Compared with the demands of all these, our little needs are soon supplied. We need but little and that little is scarcely a crumb from the table of the Lord our God. Surely if God says, "I will care for you," we need not give another thought except to sing, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." It does not need two of us for this small matter, and certainly not two when One is Infinite in wisdom and power! Even if we were wise, the Lord would not need our help. With whom took He counsel and who instructed Him when He created the earth, piled the mountains and spanned the sky? Let us, therefore, stand still and see the salvation of God! The Lord thinks about us, plans for us, arranges for us, studies to make things right for us—these are poor words with which to describe His care, for He does more than that—He loves us. That great, boundless, mighty heart loves us! This is fit matter for a heavenly song! Because He has set His love upon us, we can surely cast our care upon Him. He has given us Christ—will He not give us bread? See, He has called us to be His sons—will He starve His children? See what He is preparing for us in Heaven—will He not enable us to bear the burdens of this present life? We disho-

nor God when we suspect His tenderness and generosity! We can only magnify Him by a calm faith which leans upon His Word.

There, dear Brothers, there is my word from the Master for you. I should like to have hammered out that little grain of gold so that you might have gilded your lives with it, but please do it for yourselves. Now will you carry your cares away, or will you bow your heads in silent prayer and throw them all off? Holy Spirit, the Comforter, lighten our darkness, we beseech You!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 TIMOTHY 1; 2:1-13.**

Verses 1, 2. *Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus, to Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.* I would again remind you, as I have often done before, that the Apostle Paul, when he is writing to a minister, invariably begins his Epistle with the triple greeting, “Grace, mercy, and peace,” but when he is writing to a Church, he commences with the double benediction, “Grace and peace.” You will find that this is his wish for the Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Thessalonians, “Grace be unto you and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.” This is also his form of greeting to Philemon, who was a private Christian, not a minister. But when the Apostle is writing to Timothy and Titus, his own sons in the faith, and his fellow ministers of the Gospel, he says, “Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.” It seems as though, guided by the Holy Spirit, he thought that the office of the Christian ministry is of so weighty and responsible a character that the man who rightly fills that honorable position not only needs the Grace and peace that are necessary for all Believers, but that he must in addition have a special supply of mercy. And truly, no one needs mercy more than the preacher of mercy! Note, too, that the “Grace, mercy, and peace” are to come “from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.” Father and Son are united in the gracious act of bestowing “Grace, mercy, and peace.” The Father is the great eternal Fountain of all these blessings, but the Son is the Divinely appointed Channel through whom they flow down to us!

3. *I thank God whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of you in my prayers night and day.* Thank God that Paul had such a sympathetic spirit and that Timothy’s needs so continually rose before his supplicating eye—and that Paul was able to pray for Timothy, not with anxiety, not in doubtful-

ness—but with thankfulness. Oh, that all young Christians might be such consistent Christians that those who have brought them to Christ might always be able to pray for them with thankfulness!

4. *Greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy.* I suppose that Timothy was very tender-hearted and that he had been grieved because of Paul's many afflictions. And on his part, the Apostle greatly missed his dearly-beloved son in the faith. In the latter part of this Epistle, Paul writes, "Do your diligence to come shortly unto me: for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world." And again, "Do your diligence to come before winter." Looking forward to his impending martyrdom, Paul longed for the companionship of the one who was so specially dear to him.

5. *When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois, and your mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in you, also.* Grace does not run in the blood, but it often runs side by side with it. The "grandmother Lois" and the "mother Eunice" had the true Grace of saving faith dwelling in them, and Paul was persuaded that it dwelt in the son and grandson Timothy.

6. *Therefore I put you in remembrance.* Paul had been speaking of his own remembrance of Timothy and of Timothy's faith, and now he says, "Therefore I put you in remembrance—

6. *That you stir up the gift of God, which is in you by the putting on of my hands.* [See Sermon #1080, Volume18—OUR GIFTS AND HOW TO USE THEM—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] The best of fires sometimes need stirring and the best gift of God, even the sacred fire of the Holy Spirit, may sometimes burn low in the heart so that we have need to stir up the gift of God that is within us. There are some Brothers, also, who have more God-given gifts within them than they know of. They have never searched for them, so they allow them to lie hidden away unobserved and useless. We have need to stir up our gifts as well as our Graces and to use to God's Glory all the powers with which He has entrusted us.

7. *For God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.* What a gift this is to all who can truly say with Paul, "God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind!"

8. *Be not you, therefore, ashamed of the testimony of our Lord*—There is need to say this today, for many are becoming "ashamed of the testimony of our Lord," that old-fashioned Gospel which Paul received by direct Revelation from his Lord, and for which he laid down his life. It is fashionable, nowadays, to put on the ruffles of modern philosophy rather than to be robed in the snow-white garment of the Truth of God. Paul

says to Timothy, “Be not you, therefore, ashamed of the testimony of our Lord”—

8, 9. *Nor of me, His prisoner: but be you partaker of the afflictions of the Gospel according to the power of God who has saved us, and called us with an holy calling.* Salvation comes first, and calling afterwards—at least, so it is in the great plan of Redemption. We are saved by the death of Christ before we are effectually called by His Grace. The great work of our salvation was worked for us on Calvary and now we are made to know and to partake of that salvation by the effectual calling of the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the Gospel!

9. *Not according to our work, but according to His own purpose and Grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.* What a blessed Doctrine this is! Some people cannot endure even to hear or read of it, but it is full of comfort and joy for the Spirit-taught people of God! God’s Grace was “given us in Christ Jesus before the world began [See Sermon #703, Volume 12—SALVATION ALTOGETHER BY GRACE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]—

10, 11. *But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who has abolished death, and has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel: whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an Apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.* How Paul gloried in this triple Divine appointment! He commenced this Epistle by writing, “Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God,” and here he says of the Gospel, “whereunto I am appointed a preacher.” I see that some tradesmen put up a notice over their shops stating that they are so-and-so “by appointment to Her Majesty,” but Paul had the highest honor under Heaven in being “appointed a preacher, and an Apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.”

12. *For which cause I also suffer these things.* And I expect that his eyes glanced round on the walls of his dungeon, and that he rattled the chains that bound his hands to those of the soldiers who had him in their charge.

12-15. *Nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day. Hold fast the form of sound words, which you have heard from me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. What good thing which was committed unto you, keep by the Holy Spirit which dwells in us. This you know, that all they which are in Asia have turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.* Probably these were leaders who ought to have acted differently and to have stuck by the Apostle. But when he was in prison and likely to be put to death by Nero, many who had been his former companions forsook him, and were ashamed to acknowledge him—for which we also are ashamed of

them. It is the same, now—if the servant of God shall fall into the disfavor of the great ones of the earth, many will be ashamed of him. Paul mentions these who turned away from him, for their unfaithfulness evidently grieved him sorely. But he also mentions another case of quite a different sort—

16, 17. *The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chains: but, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me.* He did not know exactly where the Apostle was—in which prison he was confined—but he went from place to place until at last he lighted upon him! And then he was not ashamed to be seen ministering to the poor chained prisoner. We read of various corporations spending a great deal of money in buying chains of office for their mayors, but this chain, worn by the Apostle in his prison cell at Rome, was far more valuable than any of them. What an eternal honor it will be to him, and how sad it is that anyone should have been ashamed of his fetters when he was so bravely suffering for Christ's sake! There was more value in those chains on Paul's wrists than in all the chains that were ever worn on the necks of the great ones of this world!

18. *The Lord grant unto him, that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day.* I have no doubt he came to Paul and talked with him and probably sang with him, and prayed with him. He often refreshed the Apostle in Rome. And then Paul added—

18. *And in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, you know very well.* This happy Onesiphorus was a true servant of the Lord Jesus Christ who loved to minister to the Apostle when he was in suffering and sorrow.

2 Timothy 2:1-13

Verses 1, 2. *You, therefore, my son, be strong in the Grace that is in Christ Jesus and the things that you have heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit you to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.* This is the true Apostolic succession—one minister brings another to Christ and then charges that other to train other preachers and teachers to carry on the blessed work of evangelization!

3, 4. *You, therefore, endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that wars entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who has chosen him to be a soldier.* The man who has given himself wholly to the service of Christ must not undertake any other business that would prevent his giving his whole strength to his Master's work.

5-8. *And if a man also strives for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully. The husbandman that labors must be first partaker*

of the fruits. Consider what I say, and the Lord give you understanding in all things. Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to My Gospel. [See Sermon #1653, Volume 28—THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD JESUS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] The Resurrection of Christ is the cornerstone of the glorious Temple of Truth, the keystone of the arch of Revelation. Paul tells us, in that great chapter, 1 Corinthians 15, how hopeless our case would be if Christ was not “raised from the dead.” But he also proves most conclusively that he was raised “the third day, according to the Scriptures.”

9. *Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evildoer, even unto bonds; but the Word of God is not bound.* [See Sermons #1998, Volume 33—NOT BOUND YET and #1453, Volume 25—ETERNAL FAITHFULNESS UNAFFECTED BY HUMAN UNBELIEF—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Thank God that it is not yet bound though many have tried to fetter it! When they think that they have manacled it, it breaks loose again and so it always will. However low this heavenly fire may burn, it soon blazes up again and so it shall to the world’s end. Immortal as the Christ who is the sum and substance of it is the everlasting Gospel of the blessed God!

10-13. *Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal Glory. It is a faithful saying: For if we are dead with Him, we shall also live with Him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him: if we deny Him, He will deny us: if we believe not, yet He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself.*—Blessed truth, God grant us the Grace to mediate upon it until we also shall become faithful to Him and to His Truth!

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

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

A CURE FOR CARE

NO. 428

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JANUARY 12, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Casting all your care upon Him. For He cares for you.”
1 Peter 5:7.***

No one precept contains the whole of a Believer's duty. But usually in Scripture the precepts rise one above the other, like those stone steps by which the traveler in Egypt ascends to the pinnacle of the pyramid. You must first plant your feet firmly upon the preceding duty, before you shall be able fully to climb to the next command.

Let me, then, call your attention to the precept which precedes my text—“Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.” You know, Beloved, that there are some selfish, carnal cares which we must not cast upon God. It were an insult to Him. It were an act of infamy on our part if we should venture to ask for His assistance in them. Those are cares which would never molest us at all if we were obedient to the precept—“Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God.”

This cuts off the head at once of many of those anxieties into which Christians sometimes fall. For instance, covetous cares—if I desire to get and grasp more than is absolutely necessary, that I may hastily grow rich, I cannot, on my knees, ask God to carry this care for me, because it is none of His sending. He has taught me to say, “Give us this day our daily bread,” and He has given me a blessed example in Agur, that I may pray, “Give me neither poverty nor riches.” But I cannot go on my knees before God, honestly, as a miser and ask that He would enable me to add house to house and field to field. That care I never ought to indulge and I never should endure it if I attended to the precept, “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God.”

There is, also, the care of ambition, when men desire to attain honors, eminence and fame. To stand foremost, to be exalted upon the pinnacle, to be looked up to by all and to be almost adored by some. But if we allow ambition to creep into our minds, we cannot go to God with it. It is a care which we dare not cast on God, for that were to empty the filth of our house upon the altar of God's sanctuary. But then, I say, it is a care which would never fret us, if our souls were lowly before the Lord.

There are those cares, too, which we make for ourselves—those anxieties which anticipate the future—those foolish fears which are only created in our brain and which vex the head and then fret the heart. We cannot ask God to take those upon Himself—cares which have no existence except in our own fancies—we can scarcely cast on God. For, Beloved, we should never have them if we “humbled ourselves under the mighty hand of God.” Then, in such a state of subjection to the Divine will and of resignation to the eternal purpose, our soul would sit quietly and

be still—and our spirit would not agitate itself with frivolities which it has itself imagined, with fancies which have no origin but in our own imagination.

Oh that you may have Divine Grace to obey the *preceding* command, and then I think, without any limitation, I may address you in the words of the text—“Casting all your care upon Him. For He cares for you.” I repeat, sinful cares we cannot cast on God. But then, obeying the precept, “Humble yourselves,” would uproot such vexations. He that is down, need fear no fall. He whose soul is even as a weaned child will fret and cry no more.

In addressing you this morning from so rich a text as this, I would pray rather that the Holy Spirit may deliver you from anxiety, than attempt to deliver you from it myself, for I am not even able to obey this precept myself, much less shall I enable you to do it. Only when the Spirit of God is upon the preacher can *he* cast his cares upon his God and he is convinced by experience, that only as the Holy Spirit shall enable you, will you be able to do the same.

However, that our word may be the means of your comfort and of your strengthening, let us speak on this wise. First, for a few minutes, *let us expound this disease of care*, giving some description of it. Secondly, *let us manifest the blessed remedy of the text*, endeavoring, in God’s name, to apply it. And lastly, *let us hold out the sweet inducement of the second part of the sentence*, in order that Believers may be led to attempt the practicing of the precept, “He cares for you.”

I. First, then, LET US ENDEAVOR TO DESCRIBE THE DISEASE OF CARE. The care mentioned in the text, even though it is exercised upon legitimate objects, (and in this it differs from the cares of which I spoke just now, which were cares concerning wrong objects)—care, even when exercised upon legitimate objects if carried to excess, has in itself *the nature of sin*. This will be clear if you think for a moment that anything which is a transgression of God’s command is sin, and if there were no other command, the one in our text being broken would involve us in iniquity.

But it is a precept earnestly repeated by our Savior many times. It is one which the Apostles have reiterated again and again, and one which cannot be neglected without involving transgression. Besides, the very essence of anxious care is the imagining that we are wiser than God and the thrusting of ourselves into His place, to do for Him that which we dream He either cannot or will not do. We attempt to think of that which we fancy He will forget. Or we labor to take upon ourselves that burden which He either is not able or willing to carry for us.

Now, this impertinence, this presumption—what if I say, this *audacity*—has in it the very nature of sin, to attempt to know better than God, to snatch from His hand the helm by which He guides affairs, to attempt to correct His charts, to re-map His Providence. This, indeed, is such an impertinence that as the guardian Scripture pushes back the intruder, it demands of him, “Are you also one of the King’s counsel? What are you doing here? He took no counsel with you when He made the heavens and the earth and balanced the clouds and stretched out the skies like a tent

to dwell in, how dare you come here and offer advice to perfect Wisdom and aid to Omnipotent Strength?" There is in anxious care the very nature of sin.

But, further, these anxious cares very frequently lead to other sins, sometimes to *overt acts of transgression*. The tradesman who is not able to leave his business with God, may be tempted to indulge in the tricks of the trade. No, he may not only be *tempted* but he may be *prevailed* upon to put out an unholy hand with which to help himself. The professional or literary man, if he has no firm trust in Providence, may lend his skill to indirect and unlawful ends. And each man, if he has no other snare, will be tried with this—to forsake prayer and to forget the promise in order to trust to the wisdom of a friend, or to the natural sagacity of some mentor in whom he puts confidence.

Now this is forsaking the fountain to go to the broken cisterns—a crime which was laid against Israel of old—a wrath provoking iniquity. Even if it led to no other act except this sin of preferring the counsel of man to the direction of God, excessive anxiety were to be reprobated and detested. But think, my Brethren, of the many sins which our anxieties engender in our hearts—unbelief which makes us doubt our God. Want of love which is proven by our distrust of love. Want of hope which puts out our eyes so that we cannot see the clear shining after the rain.

Think, my Brothers and Sisters, how we fret and mistrust and thus vex the Spirit of God and often cause Him to depart from us, so that our prayers are hindered, so that our example is marred, so that we give ourselves rather to self-seeking than to seeking God. All these things are sins, the grapes of Gomorrah which grow on the vines of our cares. These base-born cares are the plentiful mothers of transgressions. Distrust is the egg out of which many a mischief is hatched. We indulge in these cares and think, surely we are doing no wrong—whereas the indulgence in them is in itself a crime—and is besides a tempter which guides us onward to the commission of other iniquities. The man that full of care, is ripe for any sin—but he who has cast his care on God stands securely—neither shall the Evil One be able to touch him.

To proceed further in uncovering this disease—as it is in itself sin and the mother of sin, we note again that *it brings misery*. Where sin is, sorrow shall soon follow. He who would have his spirit bowed down even to the very earth, has only to fix his thoughts upon himself and his circumstances, instead of looking to God and His promises. Some of you are placed in a very happy position in life but, my dear Brethren, you can make yourselves miserable if you please. Others of you are put in what the world considers unhappy circumstances—but if God enables you—you can be supremely blessed.

Poverty does not necessarily involve sorrow, nor do riches in themselves bring peace or happiness. If any of you wish for misery you need not go out of your own house—there is no need to travel far for causes of discontent. You can be surfeited with plenty and be poor. You can dwell in the midst of peace and be disturbed. You can possess the richest prosperity and yet be afflicted. We, to a very great extent make our own position. God ordains Providence and either Divine Grace makes us happy, or sin racks

us with pain. God does not make our misery. The cause of our trouble lies at our own door, not at His.

Do you see that Christian, there with the sparkling eyes and the light footsteps—the man who is swift to run upon his Master’s errands? That man has many troubles but when he wakes in the morning, if he retains remembrance of them, he bows his knee and leaves them with his God. He goes home and the day has had much of sorrow in it, but he shakes the weight from his own shoulder and leaves his burden upon God. That man, with all his troubles, is more blessed than yonder professor. He is the one who has very little to vex him except that he vexes himself, by making every little thing a ground for fretfulness, magnifying every small mischance into a strange calamity and by losing all patience, when all things suit not his proud will and dainty taste.

Oh Brethren! It is an ill thing for Christians to be sad. Let them rejoice, “Rejoice in the Lord always,” but they never can, so long as they indulge in anxious cares.

Besides this, these anxious cares do not only lead us into sin and destroy our peace of mind but they also *weaken us for usefulness*. When one has left all his cares at home, how well he can work for his Master! But when those cares tease us in the pulpit, it is hard preaching the Gospel. When cares buzz in the ear, the music of Divine Grace is hard to hear. What would you say of your workman who should come to you in the morning with a heavy piece of family furniture upon his back? He calls himself your porter, he is about to carry your goods and you see him going out of the door with your load, which is properly proportioned to his strength—but beside that he is carrying a heavy piece of his own upon his shoulders.

You say to him, “My good man, what are you doing there?” “Oh Sir, I am only loaded with household stuff.” I think you would say, “Well but you are not fit to do my work which you are engaged to do. I do not employ you to carry your own load, I had you here to carry mine.” “But Sir,” says he, “I am so weak, I cannot carry both.” “Then leave yours alone,” you say, “and carry mine.”

Or to use another simile. There was a great king who once employed a merchant in his service as an ambassador to foreign courts. Now the merchant, before he went away, said to the king, “My own business requires all my care and though I am always willing to be Your Majesty’s servant, yet if I attend to your business as I ought, I am sure my own will be ruined.” “Well,” said the king, “you take care of my business and I will take care of yours. Use your best endeavors and I will answer for it that you shall be nothing the loser for the zeal which you take from yourself to give to me.”

And so our God says to us, as His servants, “Do My work and I will do yours. Serve Me and I will serve you.” Like Peter—Peter is fishing, Christ needs a pulpit to preach in. He borrows Peter’s boat and preaches in it. What about Peter’s fishing? Oh, the Master will take care of that, for no sooner is the sermon done than He says, Launch into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.” And Peter gets more in ten minutes through having lent his boat to his Master, than he might have done in ten weeks,

if he had been fishing on his own account. Leave your cares with God and care for Him—

**“Make HIS service your delight,
Your wants shall be HIS care.”**

The subject would not be complete if I did not add that these little cares, of whose guilt, perhaps, we think so little, *do very great damage to our blessed and holy cause*. Your sad and miserable countenances hinder souls who are anxious, and they present a ready excuse for souls who are careless. “Look,” they say, “look, that man is a Christian man, the whole of the winters of a century have left their storm rifts on his forehead, and all the winds of ages seem to have ruffled his brow. He has no peace, no joy—who would be a Christian to be so miserable?”

Thus the careless man says he will not have Hell here, he will leave that for hereafter. Even anxious spirits say, “It cannot be that this religion is true, for if it were really true, one would think it would be able to support its followers in the troubles of life. If God’s Word is true, that God will sustain His people. Then Christians would be sustained and Believers would be cheered and comforted. But I see that they are as much fretful as other men, as impatient as they are and that So-and-So, who makes a profession, is quite as weak, quite as easily bowed before the storm as yonder man who has no God in whom to trust and no promises on which to lean.”

Ah, let it not be said so, Christian, through you. Open not the enemy’s mouth to blaspheme! Let not the dragon find food through you, who are of the seed of the Woman, but rather seek, casting your care on God, to disentangle yourself of all personal hindrances that you may be avenged upon your Master’s adversaries as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

I close the description of this matter by saying that in the most frightful manner, cares have brought many to the poisoned cup, the halter, and the knife, and hundreds to the madhouse. What makes the constant increase of our lunatic asylums? Why is it that in almost every country in England new asylums have to be erected, wing after wing being added to these buildings in which the imbecile and the raving are confined? It is because we *will* carry what we have no business to carry—our own cares. And until there shall be a general keeping of the Day of Rest throughout England, and until there shall be a more general resting of our souls and all we have upon God, we must expect to hear of increasing suicides and increasing lunacies.

So long as the present system of competition in business shall continue—and there seems no hope that it will ever cease—the signs of the times suggest that the battle will grow sterner every day. It will become a more stern duty with each of us to cast our care on God, unless we would see reason reel and would be howling maniacs in our cells. Oh, for your own sake, and for your children’s sake, for Christ’s sake and for His Church’s sake, I pray you spoil not the fair house which God has built! Cast not out the lovely tenant, leave not the temple of the Lord to be the prison of madness. Away with evil cares if you would still be a man.

II. I shall now want your attention to the second part of the subject, THE BLESSED REMEDY TO BE APPLIED.

Somebody must carry these cares. If I cannot do it myself, can I find any who will? My Father who is in Heaven stands waiting to be my burden-bearer. With broad shoulders, with omnipotence as His strength, He says "My child, roll your burden upon your God." Blessed privilege, dare I neglect it? Can I be wicked enough to reject it and to bear my cares myself? Here is the blessed remedy, "Cast your burden upon the Lord and He will sustain you."

Now in order, rather to *apply* this remedy, than to describe it, by the help of God's Holy Spirit I will mention some of those fears, those cares, which are legitimate enough in their objects but which can only be relieved by leaving them with God. One of the first and most natural cares with which we are vexed is *the care for daily bread*. "I should be content," says one, "with food and raiment. If I can but provide things honest in the sight of all men and see my family cared for, I shall then be happy." "But" says one, "what shall I eat, what shall I drink, with what shall I be clothed?"

"I am without a job, having, therefore, no opportunity to earn my livelihood. I am without substance, having, therefore, nothing to look upon by which I may be supported without labor. I am without friends or a patron who might give me his generous assistance. What shall I do?" You are a Christian, are you? You must use all diligence, that is your duty—but oh, if God shall help you, mingle no fretfulness with the diligence, no impatience with your suffering, and no distrust with your trials. No—remember what Jesus has said so sweetly to the point, "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns. Yet your Heavenly Father feeds them.

"Are you not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take you thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you that even Solomon in his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Why, if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore, take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, With what shall we be clothed? (for after all, these things do the Gentiles seek): for your Heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things. But seek you first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. And all these things shall be added unto you."

Such a care as that, I say, is natural enough—and to bid a man shake it off when he is in actual need—is cruelly absurd, unless you have a sure consolation to offer him. But you can say, "Cast your trial upon God." Use your most earnest endeavors, humble yourself under the mighty hand of God. If you cannot do one thing, do another. If you cannot earn your bread as a gentleman, earn it as a poor man. If you cannot earn it by the sweat of your brains do it by the sweat of your brow. Do something for an honest living—sweep a crossing if you cannot do anything else. If a man will not work, neither let him eat. But having brought yourself to that, if still every door is shut, "Trust in the Lord and do good, so shall you dwell in the land and verily you shall be fed."

Business men, who have not exactly to hunt for the necessities of life, are often tormented with the anxieties of large transactions and extended commerce. The failures of others, frequent bad debts, changes in the markets, monetary pressures, and sudden panics, cause a world of trouble. Through our fashion of credit in this age, it is very hard for a Christian to conduct business in the sober, substantial fashion which a tender conscience would prefer. "Owe no man anything"—if that could be interwoven into the system of trade, it would, I do not doubt, cure tens of thousands of ills which now grow out of that credit system which seems to be unavoidable, but which, I am sure, involves many of the crimes which are committed and very much of the care which racks business men.

Well, through the present high-pressure system of trade there is naturally much care. If any man here can say that he can go into his office having many in his employ and never at all have care, I should think he must be a *rarity* in the world. Surely he might walk till he dropped with weariness before he would meet with another of the same order. But if there is a Brother here who has a business so extensive that he does not sleep at night. One that lies there tossing on his bed, thinking about this servant who may have robbed him, or about that vessel that is out at sea, or about the low prices of a certain article which has gone down since he laid in a large stock and all those little things which all of you know.

Then I say, "Brother, wait a minute! What are you doing? What are you doing? Are you sure that in this you have used your best prudence and wisdom, and your best industry and given it your best attention?" "Yes." Well then, what more have you to do? Suppose you like to weep all night? Will that keep your ship from going on the Goodwin sands? Suppose you could cry your eyes out? Will that make a thief honest? Suppose you could fret yourself till you could not eat? Would that raise the price of goods?

One would think if you were just to say, "Well, I have done all that is to be done, now I will leave it with God," that you might go about your business and have the full use of your senses to attend to it. Whereas now you fritter away your senses and then commit blunders, and so you multiply your troubles by that very fretfulness by which you hoped to remove them. There—let them alone! We say, "Leave well enough alone." But I say, "Leave ill alone," leave them *both* alone and with both your hands. For you will want both hands to honor your Master—with the hand of prayer, "In everything by prayer and supplication, making known your wants unto God." And with the other hand, the hand of faith, trusting in God—lift your load right off from your own shoulders and let the whole crushing weight be left with your eternal God, for "He will sustain you, He will never suffer the righteous to be moved."

Another anxiety of a personal kind which is very natural, and indeed, very proper if it is not carried to excess, is the care of your children. Blessed be God for our children! We do not sympathize with those who look upon them as afflictions, for we believe them still to be a heritage of the Lord. But what anxieties they involve! How shall we bring them up? How shall they be provided for? Will they honor their parents, or will they bring disgrace upon the name they bear? A child may be the greatest

curse his parents ever had, while he may be their choicest comfort. "All these," as an old Puritan said, "are doubtful blessings and may be certain curses, yet I will not have it that there is any doubt about their being blessings, as God sends them."

A Christian parent must have care about his children and all the more because he is a Christian, since he will not be satisfied with their getting on in business, he will never be content till his children walk in the Truth of God. Mother, Father, you have prayed for your children. You trust you have set them a holy example. You labor day by day to teach them the Truth as it is in Jesus. You have travailed in birth for their souls till Christ is formed in them. It is well. Now let your souls quietly expect the blessing—leave your offspring with God—cast your sons and daughters upon their father's God. Let no impatience intrude if they are not converted in your time. Let no distrust distract your mind if they should seem to belie your hopes.

I met yesterday with a few verses which sound like the warbling of an American song writer. They exactly suit my subject and in reading them in private they have touched my heart. Excuse me therefore, if though I never read a *sermon*, I should for once read a part of one—

***"The Master has come over Jordan,"
Said Hannah, the mother, one day.
"He is healing the people who throng Him,
With a touch of His finger, they say.
And now I shall carry the children,
Little Rachel and Samuel and John
I shall carry the baby, Esther,
For the Lord to look upon.
The father looked at her kindly,
But he shook his head and smiled—
Now, who but a doting mother
Would think of a thing so wild?
If the children were tortured by demons,
Or dying of fever it were well.
Or had they the taint of the leper,
Like many in Israel.
No, do not hinder me, Nathan.
I feel such a burden of care
If I carry it to the Master,
Perhaps I shall leave it there.
If He lays His hand on the children,
My heart will be lighter, I know—
For a blessing forever and ever
Will follow them as they go.
So, over the hills of Judah,
Along by the vine-rows green,
With Esther asleep on her bosom,
And Rachel her brothers between.
Among the people who hung on His teaching,
Or waited His touch and His word,
Through the row of proud Pharisees listening,
She pressed to the feet of the Lord.
Now, why should you hinder the Master,
Said Peter, "with children like these?
See not how, from morning till evening,
He teaches and heals disease?"***

**Then Christ said, "Forbid not the children,
Permit them to come unto Me!
And He took in His arms little Esther,
And Rachel He set on His knee.
And the heavy heart of the mother
Was lifted all earth-care above,
As He laid His hands on the brothers
And blessed them with most tender love.
As He said of the babes in His bosom,
"Of such are the kingdom of Heaven.
And strength for all duty and trial
That hour to her spirit was given.
Thus do you and thus inherit the blessing."**

But each Christian will in his time have personal troubles of a higher order, namely, *spiritual cares*. He is begotten again unto a lively hope but he fears that his faith will yet die. He hopes he has some spark of spiritual joy, but there are dark and dreary nights which lower over him and he fears that his lamp will die out in darkness. As yet he has been victorious but he trembles lest he should one day fall by the hand of the enemy.

Beloved, I beseech you—cast this care upon God for He cares for you. "I am persuaded that He that has begun a good work in you will carry it on and perfect it unto the day of Christ." He has said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." "The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed. But My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the Covenant of My peace be removed, says the Lord that has mercy on you." "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you. And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you." "No good thing will I withhold from them that walk uprightly." "I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand."

Why, one might keep you all this morning and this afternoon and evening too, repeating the precious promises of God and we might close them all by saying—

**What more can He say than to you He has said,
You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?"**

Away, then with dark suspicions and anxieties! Is it care about past sin? "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleans us from all sin." Is it present temptation? "There has no temptation happened to you but such as is common to men: but God who is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able. But will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it."

Is it future peril? O leave that with Him, for neither "things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." If you begin to think always of yourself, you will be miserable. Why, it is Christ that makes you what you are before the eyes of God. Look, then, to Jesus in order to find out what you are in God's esteem. Soul, I say again, look at Christ and not at yourself. Never let anxieties about sanctification destroy your confidence of justification.

What if you are a sinner! Christ *died* to save sinners. What if you are undeserving! "In due time Christ died for the ungodly." Divine Grace is

free. The invitation is still open to you—rest the whole burden of your soul's salvation where it must rest. Do not be an Uzza—lay no hasty hand upon the ark of the Lord. Above all, do not be an Uzziah—attempt not to offer sacrifices or usurp the priesthood, for Christ must stand for you—you cannot stand or do for yourself. Cast, then, your care on Him, for He cares for you.

I shall want your patient attention two or three minutes more, while trying to apply this remedy. I notice that there are many cares not of a personal, but rather of an *ecclesiastical* character, which often insinuate themselves and plead for life, but which must nevertheless be put away. I am sorry to confess, that if I do not preach to anyone else this morning, I shall now be preaching to myself. There are cares about *how God's work is to be carried on*. I know a foolish young man who lies awake many nights thinking about that, and who sometimes by day makes himself foolishly sad, because with large purposes of heart and with great designs in his soul, he sees not the way by which they are to be carried out and has not yet attained the faith which—

**“Laughs at impossibilities,
And says, ‘It shall be done.’”**

If any of you are suffering from the same sad disease, let me exhort you from the words of Peter, to cast the care about God's work *upon God*. He never sent us a warfare at our own charge. He never did require us to do *His* work—that He will attend to Himself. And we ought to feel that if God does not enable us to do as much as we would, it is a blessed thing to be enabled and permitted to do as much as we can. If we think there are few men to work, or little means with which to work, we must not be fretful about where the means, or the men shall come from. We may properly pray, “Lord, send laborers,” and with equal propriety we may ask that He who has the silver and the gold, may give them for His own work.

But after that, we must cast our care on God. Then, if we get over that, there will be another anxiety—one which frets me often enough—*the success of God's work*. Oh, when there are souls converted, how our heart leaps for joy. When the Church keeps continually increasing, how glad we are! But if there is even a little lull, we feel so sad. If we do not see God's arm always bare, we are ready to lie down and say, “Lord, let me die, I am no better than my fathers.” When we are in a low state of body and heart, too, that weakening sickness of unbelief, like the woman's issue of blood, comes over us and we feel that life is ebbing as success decreases. Now, this is a care we must cast on God.

Preacher, your Great Employer sent you out to sow the seed—but if no grain of it should ever come up—if you sowed the seed as He told you and where He told you, He will never lay the blame of a defective harvest to you. It is ours to *preach*—but to convert souls is God's. It is ours to *labor*—but the success depends alone on Him. “They that go through the valley of Baca make it a well”—that is *their* business, to dig wells. “The rain also fills the pools”—it is not their business to fill the wells. And the wells do not get full from the bottom as they do in our country—it is the *rain* that fills the pools. The blessing comes from on High—if we have dug the wells and we have prayed six times and as yet the rain has not descended, go again seven times and the rain shall yet descend and the

pools shall be filled to the brim. Do not, therefore, let us have cares about success.

And sometimes there is another care. It is the care lest some little slip made by ourselves or others should give cause to the enemy to blaspheme. There are devils besides those in Hell—there are some on earth. And some of these are too glad to find an opportunity, if there is a word that is ever so fitly spoken, to wrest it out of its connection and make stock and capital for blasphemy out of it. It is an easy task and one which any fool can accomplish—this world is full of fools who are glad to find dirt to eat, and then having eaten it themselves, to cram it down others throats.

One is sometimes afraid to walk for fear of breaking something in such a frail world as this. Afraid to speak, lest we should say something which might open the enemy's mouth. A careful jealousy is very well if it leads to caution—but very ill if it leads to a worrisome, weak anxiety. What have you and I to do with what the enemy may do? If the Lord does not chain the devil, I am sure *we* cannot. And if He does not shut the mouths of liars, I do not know that we ought to wish He would, for if He lets them open their mouths I have no doubt they are best open.

Many a time, as Christ rode into Jerusalem on the back of an ass, the truth has ridden into the midst of Jerusalem in triumph on the back of its most despicable enemies. Beyond doubt, Christ has been lifted up even on the point of the spear and the light of the Gospel has beamed like a beacon from the stake where the martyr perished. Well, let us leave our enemies to do what they will and only stand fast to the Lord and cast our care on Him.

And then, one is so afraid of being unfaithful at the last, lest the blood of souls should be on our garments. Oh, that thought has dashed me on my forehead on the floor many and many a time. This heavy burden crushes me into the most pitiable state, until the body sympathizes with the mind so fully, that if you could see me with the tears running from my eyes and the cold sweat starting from my head, you would say, "What a creature is that to go forth and preach?" The thought of having all of you to address and that I must be faithful, or else your blood shall be required at my hands, is so awful a one that in private I never dare to think of it, for it utterly unmans me.

But oh, blessed be God, if He has enabled us to do all we can by His Spirit, we must leave it there. We know that He will not ask more of us than He has given to us and if He has helped us so far, His shall be the glory. But if we have failed, even that, too, shall be washed away through His precious blood and with all his weight of responsibility the minister shall yet enter Heaven and find a place among the sanctified.

III. My last point and only a word, of THE SWEET INDUCEMENTS TO CONVINCING YOU TO LEAVE YOUR BURDENS WITH HIM—"He cares for you."

Believe in an *universal* Providence, the Lord cares for ants and angels, for worms and for worlds. He cares for cherubim and for sparrows, for seraphim and for insects. Cast your care on Him, He that calls the stars by their names and leads them out by numbers, by their hosts. Why do

you say, O Jacob, and think, O Israel, “my way is passed over from God and He has utterly forgotten me?” Let His universal Providence cheer you.

Think next of His *particular* Providence over all the saints. “Precious shall their blood be in His sight.” “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.” “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to His purpose.” Let the fact that while He is the Savior of all men, He is specially the Savior of them that believe. Let that cheer and comfort you, that special Providence which watches over the chosen, “The angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him.”

And then, thirdly, let the thought of His special love *to you* be the very essence of your comfort. “I will never leave *you*, nor forsake *you*.” God says that as much to you, as He said it to any saint of old. “Fear not, I am your shield and your exceeding great reward.” Oh, I wish, Beloved, that the Holy Spirit would make you feel the promise as being spoken to *you*! Out of this vast assembly, forget the rest, and only think of yourself, for the promises are unto you, meant for YOU. Oh, grasp them. It is ill to get into a way of reading Scripture for the whole Church—read it for yourselves and specially hear the Master say to YOU this morning, “Let not *your* heart be troubled, you believe in God, believe also in Me.”

Think that you hear Him say, “I have prayed for *you* that your faith fail not.” Think you see Him walking on the waters of your trouble, for He is there, and He is saying, “Fear not, it is I, be not afraid.” Oh, those sweet words of Christ! Lord, speak them to me! Speak them to Your poor sorrowing child yonder! Speak them to each one of us! Speak them to us, and let us hear Your voice and say, “Jesus whispers consolation, I cannot refuse it, I will sit under His shadow with great delight.”

Sinners—ungodly persons here—you know not God. I send you away when I have said this one thing. What a blessed thing it is to be a Christian, to have Someone who will take your cares for you! Why, you know you will have your cares whether you are Christians or not—you are sure to have troubles even in the world—but then you have no Christ to comfort you, no God to sustain you, no promise to cheer you. You have the darkness without the lamp, you have to die without the immortality to follow. Oh that you knew what a Christian is, and your mouths would be watering to know the Christian’s privilege!

I say to you, cast your sins upon Christ. Jesus Christ can take them. If you believe on Him there is proof that *He did* take them of old, did carry them and suffered for them in His own Person that you might go free. Oh may we each this morning, saint and sinner, come to the Cross and to the Throne of Grace and say, “Lord, unload us of our burdens of guilt and care and give us now to go on our way rejoicing,” because God, all-sufficient, has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

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THE ROARING LION

NO. 419

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 17, 1861,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.”
1 Peter 5:8, 9.

SATAN, who is called by various names in the Scriptures, all descriptive of his bad qualities, was once an angel of God—perhaps one of the chief among the fiery ones—

***“Foremost of the sons of light,
Midst the bright ones doubly bright.”***

Sin, all-destroying sin, which has made an Aceldama out of Eden, soon found inhabitants for Hell in Heaven itself, plucking one of the brightest stars of the morning from its sphere and quenching it in blackest night.

From that moment this evil spirit despairing of all restoration to his former glories and happiness has sworn perpetual hostility against the God of Heaven. He has had the audacity openly to attack the Creator in all His works. He stained creation. He pulled down man from the throne of Glory and rolled him in the mire of depravity. With the trail of the serpent he despoiled all Eden’s beauty and left it a waste that brings forth thorns and briars—a land that must be tilled with the sweat of one’s face. Not content with that—inasmuch as he had spoiled the first creation—he has incessantly attempted to despoil the second.

Man once made in the image of God, he soon ruined. Now he uses all his devices, all his crafts, all the power of his skill and all the venom of his malice to destroy twice-made man created in the image of Christ Jesus. With ceaseless toil and untiring patience he is ever occupied in endeavoring to crush the Seed of the woman. There is no believer in Christ, no follower of that which is true and lovely and of good repute, who will not find himself, at some season or other, attacked by this foul fiend and the legions enlisted in his service.

Now, behold your adversary. Yes, though you cannot see his face, or detect his form, believe that such a foe withstands you. It is not a myth, nor a dream, nor a superstitious imagination. He is as real a being as ourselves. Though a spirit, he has as much real power over hearts as we have over the hearts of others, no, in many cases far more. This is, I repeat it, no vision of the night—no phantom of a disordered brain. That wicked one is as sternly real this day as when Christ met him in deadly conflict in the wilderness of temptation. Believers now have to fight with Apollyon in the Valley of Humiliation.

Woe to the professors of godliness who are defeated by this deadly antagonist. They will find it a terrible reality in the world to come. Against

this prince of darkness we utter afresh this morning the warning of the Apostle, "Whom resist steadfast in the faith."

I shall now speak to four points. First of all, *Satan's incessant activity*—"He walks about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." Secondly, we will dwell awhile upon his *terrible roaring*. Thirdly, *upon his ultimate aim*, seeking to devour God's people. And then, lastly, let us take up the exhortation of Peter—and *show how Satan is to be overcome*.

I. First then, SATAN'S PERPETUAL ACTIVITY. Only God can be omnipresent, hence, Satan can only be in one place at one time.

Yet, if you will consider how much mischief he does, you will easily gather that he must have an awful degree of activity. He is here and there and everywhere tempting us here and anon scattering his temptations in the countries which are antipodes to us—hurrying across the sea or speeding over the land. We have no means of asserting what are his means of flight. But we may easily infer from his being so constantly in all places that he must travel with inconceivable velocity. He has, besides, a host of fallen spirits who fell with him. This great dragon drew with his tail the third part of the stars of Heaven—and these are ready to execute his will and obey his behests, if not with the same potency and force which belongs by hereditary right to their great leader, still with something of his spirit, his malice and his cunning.

Think for awhile how active he must be! We know *that he is to be found in every place!* Enter the most hallowed sanctuary and you shall find him there. Go where men congregate upon the Exchange and you shall lack no signs of his being present there. Retire into the quietude of the family circle and you will soon detect in bickerings and jealousies that Satan has scattered handfuls of evil seed there. No less in the deep solitude of the hermit's cave might you find the impress of his cloven foot. You shall sail from England to America and find him there amidst the clashing of swords.

You shall come back and journey across the mighty empire of Russia and find him there in the tyrant's heart and perhaps, too, even in the enmity which is excited in the breasts of those who are oppressed. You shall go into the wilds where foot of Christian missionary never trod, but you shall find that Satan has penetrated into the far interior and tutored the untutored barbarian. You shall go where the name of Jesus is as yet unknown, but you shall find Satan having dominion there. He is the prince of the power of the air. Wherever the breath of life is inhaled the poisonous miasma of temptation is a thing familiar. They that dwell in the wilderness bow before him—the kings of Seba and of Sheba offer him gifts—yes and the dwellers in the isles acknowledge him too often as their king.

Then remember, that as he is found in all places, *so you have often found him in all your duties*. You have sought to serve God in your daily avocations but strong temptations—furious suggestions of evil have followed you there. You have come home from your business almost broken-hearted with your slips. You have come into the family and sought to magnify your Master in the social circle—but perhaps in the best moment, when you seemed about to achieve the greatest work, you were clipped up

by the heels. Your easily besetting sin overturned you and Satan exulted at your fall. You found him even there.

You have said, "I will go to my bed," but in your tossing at midnight you have found him there. You have risen and said, "I will go into my closet and shut the door." But who among us has not met the foul fiend even there in solitary conflict? When we wished to be wrestling with the angel of God we have had to contend with the fiend of Hell. Look upon any of your duties, Christian and will you not see upon them marks of sin—and on some not only marks of sin—but marks of Satan's presence, too? Satan is not in all sin. We sin of ourselves. We must not lay too much upon Satan's shoulders. Sin grows in our hearts without any sowing just as thorns and thistles will grow in fallow furrows. But still there are times when Satan himself must have been present and you have had to know it and feel it.

On some of the old bricks of Egypt and of Babylon there has been found the mark of a dog's foot. When the brick was made, while it was left to dry, the creature passed over it and left the imprint of his foot upon it. And now thousands of years afterwards when we pull down the wall we find the dog mark. Thus has it been often with us. While our duties were in such a state that they were yet impressible—before they were yet sunburned and dried and ready to be built up for real practical purpose—that dog of Hell has passed over them and left the footprint on the best things that we ever did. As we look back years afterwards we perceive what we might not have seen at the time—that he really marred and stained the best performance of our most willing hands.

Ah, when I think how Satan follows us in all places and in all duties I am sometimes almost ready to apply to him the language of David when he spoke of the omnipresent God—"Where shall I go from Your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from Your presence? If I ascend up into Heaven, You are there—if I make my bed in Hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Your hand lead me and Your right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me, even the night shall be light about me." But glory be to God, if I climb to Heaven Satan is not there. There I can escape him. Beyond the reach of his roaring my spirit shall find her rest in God.

We must observe also *how ready Satan is to vent his spite against us in all frames of heart*. When we are depressed in spirit—perhaps some bodily illness has brought us low. Our animal spirits have ebbed and we feel ready to sink—then that old coward Satan is sure to attack us. I have always noted as a matter of experience that he prefers rather to attack some of us when we are in a low and weak state than at any other time. Oh, how temptation has staggered us when we have been sick! We have said—"Ah, if this had but come when I was well then I could have caught it on the shield at once. In fact I would have laughed at it and broken it in pieces." But Satan avails himself of our sad and weak frames in order to make his fiery darts find their mark more effectively.

On the other hand, if we are joyous and triumphant and are something in the frame of mind that David was when he danced before the ark, then

Satan knows how to set his traps by tempting us to presumption—"My mountain stands firm, I shall never be moved." Or to carnal security—"Soul, take your ease, you have much goods laid up for many years." Or else to self-righteousness—"My own power and goodness have exalted me." Or else he will even attempt to poison our joys with the spleen of evil forebodings. "Ah," says he, "this is too good to hold, you will soon be cast down and all these fine plumes of yours shall yet be trod like the mire of the streets."

He well knows how, in every frame of mind to make our condition minister to his devouring purposes. He will follow you, Christian, when your soul is all but despairing and he will whisper in your ears—"God has forsaken you and given you over to the will of your enemies." And he will track your upward course, riding as it were on cherub's wings. When you tread the starry pathway of communion he will dog your footsteps even upon Tabor's summit and climb with you to Pisgah's brow. On the temple's pinnacle he will tempt you, saying, "Cast yourself down," and on the mountain's highest peak he will attack you with, "Bow down and worship me."

And ah, remember how well he knows *how to turn all the events of Providence to our ill*. Here comes Esau, hungry with hunting—there is a mess of pottage ready—that he may be tempted to sell his birthright. Here is Noah, glad to escape from his long confinement in the ark—he is merry and there is the wine-cup ready for him—that he may drink. Here is Peter, his faith is low but his presumption is high. There is a maiden ready to say—"You also were with Jesus of Nazareth." There is Judas and there are thirty pieces of silver in the priestly hand to tempt him, yes, and there is the rope afterwards for him to hang himself with.

No lack of means. If there is a Jonah, wishing to go to Tarshish rather than to Nineveh there is a ship ready to take him. Satan has his providences as if to counterfeit the Providence of God. At least he knows how to use God's Providence to serve his own ends. One of the greatest mercies God bestows upon us is His not permitting our inclinations and opportunities to meet. Have you not sometimes noticed that when you had had the inclination to a sin there has been no opportunity—and when the opportunity has presented itself you have had no inclination towards it? Satan's principal aim with believers is to bring their appetites and his temptations together—to get their souls into a dry seared state and then to strike the match and make them burn.

He is so crafty and wily with all the experience of these many centuries that man, who is but of yesterday, can scarcely be thought of as a match for him. Did he not drag down the wise man, even Solomon, whose wisdom was more excellent than any of the sons of men? Did he not lay the Royal Preacher like a helpless victim at his feet? Did he not cast down the strong man, Samson—who could slay a thousand Philistines, but who could not resist the dallying of Delilah? Did he not bring down even the man after God's own heart by a most sorrowful fault? Let us sorrowfully remember that we have hardly met with a perfect and an upright man against whom Satan has not vented his spleen and over whom Satan has not in some degree triumphed.

Well I have thus spoken of Satan's terrible activity—of his following us into all places and attending us wherever we may go. I am sure that no Christian heart here thinks this to be a mere trifle. Of course there are skeptics. There are some who will not believe in the existence of this evil spirit. Too generally I have noticed that when a man has no devil he has no God. Usually when a man does not believe there is a devil, it is because he never experiences his attacks and probably never will—for the devil does not take the trouble to go and look after those he is sure of. "Oh, no," he says, "let them take their ease. I do not need to tempt them."

But I say this, if a man has ever met Satan, as John Bunyan describes Christian meeting Apollyon in the Valley of Humiliation, he will have no doubt of the existence of a devil. When I have stood foot to foot with that arch-tempter in some dire hour of conflict, I could no more doubt his being shown struggling and wrestling within than a soldier who has been cut and scarred and grounded—while bleeding and faint—doubt that there must have been an antagonist to indict those wounds. Experience will be to man, after all, the best proof of this and we cannot expect that those who have never known the joys of the Holy Spirit will know much about the attacks of the Evil Spirit.

Nor that those who doubt that there is a God can ever be much tormented with the devil. "Oh," says Satan, "let them alone, they will fall into the ditch of themselves. There is no need that I should go abroad after them." I think I remember telling you of Mr. Beecher's illustration. When the Negro went out with his master to catch wild ducks, one of the ducks being a little wounded, the master made the most desperate efforts to get it. But he observed that when it was dead and had fallen down, his master did not bother much about it because he could pick it up at any time. And so it is with dead souls. The devil can pick them up at any time. It is those that are wounded—that have some life left that he is afraid of losing. Such as these he is sure to pursue. He will be ever striving to get them safe in his grasp.

II. And now we turn, secondly, to SATAN'S ROARING.

The Destroyer has many ways of mischief. Here in the text he is compared to a *roaring* lion. In some passages of Scripture you will remember he is compared to a fowler. Now a fowler makes no noise. It would altogether defeat his end if he were to frighten the birds. But as quietly as possible he sets his lure and with sweet notes he seeks to enchant his victim till it is taken in the trap. That is quite a different thing from the roaring lion of the text. In another passage it is said that he knows how to transform himself into an angel of light and then, plausibly and smoothly, he teaches false doctrine and error and all the while appears to have a holy zeal for Truth—and the most earnest love for that which is delicate and lovely and of good repute.

We have plenty of specimens in these days of the devil teaching morality. You sometimes take up a newspaper and read of the skeptic or scorpion school, whose writers hate all true religion as much as the devil hates virtue—and you find a most unctuous article upon the indelicacies of some honest preacher, or a very pious lamentation over the presumed follies of an earnest minister. Never let the devil accuse Christians of cant

and hypocrisy again—let him find his answer in his own dear allies who can plead for the sanctity of places which they abhor and for a solemnity which they despise. Of all devils the most devilish is the saintly hypocrite loving sin and yet pleading against it in order to promote it.

In this text, however, he is not an angel of light, but a roaring lion. I think it was Rutherford who said that he liked the devil best in this shape. I remember in one of his letters he thanks God that He had given him a *roaring* devil to deal with. Now what is the peculiar temptation which is intended under the metaphor of a roaring lion? Again we repeat it—not the slouching gait of a prowling lion who is seeking after its prey and will only roar when it ready to lunge—but a lion that roars till he makes the very forest startle and shakes the hills which gird the prairie.

These roaring of Satan are threefold. Perhaps Peter here alluded to *the roaring of persecution*. How Satan roared with persecutions in Peter's days. He roared and roared and roared again till none but stout hearts dared to show themselves valiant for Christ. There were the underground prisons filled with frogs and serpents and toads, where breath or fresh air never chased away the noxious smell and pestilential vapor. There were racks and gibbets. There was the sword for beheading and the stake for burning. There was dragging at the heels of the wild horse. There was smearing over with pitch and then setting the body still alive to burn in Nero's garden. There were torments which must not be described—the very pictures of which are enough to make one's eyes weep blood as you look upon them.

There was nothing for the Christian then but banishment and imprisonment—these were the lowest penalties. “They were stoned, they were sawn in sunder, they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, afflicted, tormented.” These were the roaring of the lion in good Peter's day. Since then, from his old den at Rome, what roaring has Satan given forth, like thunders indeed to all except the men who knew the difference between the mimic thunders of Hell and the real thunder of the God of Heaven! Let Smithfield testify to the roaring of this lion! Let our cemeteries and graveyards which still bear the memorial of our myriad martyrs testify how the lion has roared at us!

And let our denomination especially, persecuted alike by Protestant and Romanist, hunted both by good and bad upon the face of the earth—let the thousands that have been drowned in the rivers of Holland and Germany—let the multitudes who have there been put to the most exquisite torture merely because they would hold God's holy ordinance and would not prostitute it at will of the Pope or prelate—let all these speak and tell how Satan has roared in days of old! He has not half the roar in him now that he had then! Why, he can do nothing at all against us! His roars now-a-days are like the hissings of some angry cat. All he can do is but to use cruel mockings.

Now and then a wicked slander, or a jeer, or a caricature, or a witty sentence. What are these? Oh, if we cannot bear these, what would we have done when the lion used to roar in real lion-like style? Well, well, he may growl again yet before some of us have gone off the face of the earth,

for we know not what may happen. But let him roar. We know, blessed be God, that He who is for us is more than all they that is against us.

But there is another kind of furious attack—the *roaring of strong and vehement temptation*. This some of us have felt. Do you know what it is, Christian—I hope you do not—do you know what it is sometimes to be caught hold of by the clutch of some frightful temptation which you hate, loathe, detest and abominate? And yet the clutch of the hand is seconded by an arm so terrific in its strength that it drags you right on against your will. You look at the sin, look it in the very face. You feel you cannot do this great wickedness and sin against God—and yet the impulse strong and stern, mysterious and irresistible—drags you on till you come to the edge of the precipice and look down upon the yawning gulf which threatens to swallow you up. And in the last moment, by God's grace, as by the very skin of your teeth, you are delivered and your foot does not slip—neither do you fall into the hand of the Destroyer. You have had reason to say—"My steps had almost gone, my feet had well-near slipped."

Have you known what it is to have this temptation come again and again and again, till you were in agony? You felt that you had rather die than thus be perpetually assaulted for you feared that in an evil hour you might leave your God and turn unto perdition. You have been like good Mr. Stand-Fast in Bunyan's *Pilgrim*, when tempted by Madam Bubble he fell at last down upon his knees and with sighs and cries to God he begged Him to deliver him. And He that comes to the help of the feeble at last delivered His servant. Have you ever known this? This is one of Satan's roaring at you—thrusting his temptation against you like the torments to which they put some of the early martyrs—when they laid them down and poured filthy water down their throats in such immense quantities that they were at last killed. Though they loathed the filthy liquid yet their enemies continued to pour on and on.

So has Satan done with us—pouring down his filth—cramming us with his mire, constraining us as much as possible to yield to temptation. My peculiar temptation has been constant unbelief. I know that God's promise is true and that He that said it will do it. He that has performed of old changes not and will be firm and faithful even to the end. Yet does this temptation incessantly assail me—"Doubt Him. Distrust Him. He will leave you yet." I can assure you when that temptation is aided by a nervous state of mind it is very hard to stand day by day and say, "No, I cannot doubt my God. He that has been with me in days gone by is with me still. He will not forsake His servant, nor put him away." That perpetual assaulting, that perpetual stabbing and cutting and hacking at one's faith is not so easy to endure. O God, deliver us, we pray You and make us more than conquerors by Your Spirit's power!

Once more—Satan has another way of roaring. I do not suppose that one in ten of God's people knows anything about this—and they need not wish to—Satan can *roar also in the Christian's ears with blasphemies*. I do not allude now to those evil thoughts which spring up in the minds of men who, in their childhood and their early youth went far into sin. I know that you will sometimes, when in prayer, be troubled with the snatch of an old song which you once used to sing. And perhaps, when

you would be most free from every unhallowed thought, some coarse expression which you heard in your former haunts will return again and again and again. Why the verse of a hymn may suggest to you some unholy thing or a text of Scripture bring up some of those old recollections which you have longed to forget.

I allude now more especially to those yet more ferocious attacks of Satan when he will inject blasphemous thoughts into the minds of believers who never thought such things before. You know how Bunyan describes it—"Good Christian had to pass through the valley of the shadow of death. About the midst of this valley he perceived the mouth of Hell to be and just when he was come over against the mouth of the pit, one of the wicked ones got behind him and stepped up softly to him and whisperingly suggested many grievous blasphemies to him which he verily thought had proceeded from his own mind. This put Christian more to it than anything he had met with before—even to think that now he should blaspheme Him that he so much loved before. Yet, if he could have helped it he would not have done it. But he had not the discretion either to stop his ears or to know from where those blasphemies came."

Seldom does the ministry allude to these matters. But, inasmuch as they trouble some of the people of God I believe it to be the duty of a faithful shepherd of the flock to minister to those who are called to pass through this dark and dismal state. Oh, the horrors and terrors which Satan has sometimes caused God's people, by the thoughts that were not theirs—but proceeded from himself—or from some of his fiends! First, he suggested the thought so vividly that they cried with David—"Horror has taken hold of me, because of the wicked that keep not Your Law." And then when the thought had flashed for a moment upon the soul, he gave a second horror by saying, "Ah, you are not a child of God or you would not have so vile a nature."

Whereas *you* never thought it at all. It was *his* suggestion, not yours. And then, having laid his sin at your door, he has turned accuser of the Brethren and has sought to cast down your faith from its excellency by making you imagine that you had committed the unpardonable sin. Now if he roars against you, either with persecution, or with temptation, or with diabolical insinuations—take the language of our Apostle here—"whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."

III. I now turn to my third point which is SATAN'S ULTIMATE AIM—"Seeking whom he may devour."

Nothing short of the total destruction of a believer will ever satisfy our adversary. Nothing less than the perfection and complete salvation of a Christian is the heart's desire of our Savior. He will never see the full fruition of the travail of His soul till all His people are completely saved. The reverse is true of Satan. He can never be content till he sees the believer utterly devoured. He would rend him in pieces and break his bones and utterly destroy him if he could. Do not, therefore, indulge the thought that the main purpose of Satan is to make you miserable. He is pleased with that—but that is *not* his ultimate end. Sometimes he may even make you

happy for he has dainty poisons sweet to the taste which he administers to God's people.

If he feels that our destruction can be more readily achieved by sweets than by bitter, he certainly would prefer that which would best effect his end—

**“More the treacherous calm I dread
Than tempests rolling overhead,”**

said Toplady. And much in the same spirit said a Puritan Divine of old—
“There is no temptation so hard to bear as not being tempted at all.”

Indeed, it is a stern temptation to be left at ease. When we think we have no occasion for our sword we begin to unbuckle it from our side. We strip off our armor piece by piece and then it is that we become most exposed to the attack of our enemies. Satan will be glad enough, no doubt, to see your faith weakened, but his aim is to *destroy* that faith so that you may not believe in God to the saving of your soul. He will be pleased enough if he can throw mire into the eyes of your hope so that you can no more look to the goodly land that is beyond Jordan. But he will never be satisfied till he puts those eyes out altogether and sends you, like Samson, to grind at the mill.

Let us take this for our comfort. If it is Satan's desire that we may be utterly destroyed—in that at least he is certain to be defeated. When it comes to a question who shall have the victory, Christ, the Eternal Son of God, or Satan, the prince of the power of the air—we need have no doubt as to which shall succeed. The devil is but a *creature*, finite in his nature and limits are laid upon his prowess. If the battle were between Satan and man, then, indeed, woe the day to us! We might quit ourselves like men and be strong but before this giant all the host of Israel must flee. *But the battle is not ours.* It is the mighty God's. He that once broke this serpent's head still wages war with him.

Yes and Christ Himself must be defeated. The glory of His Cross must be dimmed. His arm must be broken, the crown of sovereignty must be snatched from His head—and His Throne must reel beneath Him—before one of those for whom He died and on whom He set his love, should ever be cast away or be given up to the power of His adversary. In this, then, tried Believer, count it your joy that Satan may worry, but he cannot rend. He may wound, but he cannot kill. He may get his foot upon you to make a full end of you, but you shall yet start up with fresh strength and say, “Rejoice not against me, O my enemy—when I fall, I shall arise. When I sit in darkness the Lord shall be a light unto me.”

IV. With the fourth point, we now draw to a close—WHAT WE SHOULD DO IN ORDER THAT WE MAY OVERCOME THIS ADVERSARY?

“*Whom steadfast in the faith.*” This is our first means of defense. When Satan attacks us as an angel of light we need not so much resist by open antagonism as by flight. There are some temptations which are only to be overcome by running away from them—but when Satan roars we most raise the shout and the war-cry. To run *then* would be cowardice and must entail certain destruction. Suppose now that Satan roars with *persecution*, (and it is a poor roar that he can raise in that way now) or, suppose you are slandered, vilified, abused—will you give way? Then are you undone. Will you say, “No, never. By Him that called me to this work, I

will see this battle out and in the name of Him who has been my Helper up to now, I set up the banner. And I cry—Jehovah-Nissi—the Lord of Hosts is our Banner, the God of Jacob is our Refuge.” You have done well—you have resisted—and you will win the day.

Has he assailed you with some temptation obnoxious to your spirit? Yield an inch and you are undone, but become more watchful and more vigilant over yourself in that particular sin and resistance must certainly bring victory. Or has he injected blasphemy? Resist. Be more prayerful every time he is more active. He will soon give it up if he finds that his attacks drive you to Christ. Often has Satan been nothing but a big black dog to drive Christ’s sheep nearer to the Master. Often has he been like a tremendous crested billow which has just lifted the poor shipwrecked mariner on to the Rock and from very fear has made him cling the more tightly there. If he thrusts you thus, match him by turning even his temptations to good account and he will soon give up that mode of warfare and exchange it for another.

Resist him. But how resist him? “Steadfast in the faith.” Seek to obtain a clear knowledge of the doctrines of the Gospel and then get a good grip of them. Be ready to die sooner than give up a particle of God’s revealed Truth. This will make you strong. Then take hold of the promises of God which are yes and amen in Christ Jesus. Be ready for every attack of Satan’s commencing with, “Is it written?”—answer Satan with “Thus says the Lord”—“Steadfast in the faith.” Remember all the water outside of a ship cannot sink it. It is the water *inside* that perils its safety.

So, if your faith can keep its hold and you can still say, “Though He slay me yet will I trust in Him,” Satan may batter your shield, but he has not wounded your flesh—

**“Amidst temptations sharp and long,
My soul to this dear Refuge flies;
Hope is my anchor, firm and strong,
While tempests blow and billows rise.
The Gospel bears my spirits up;
A faithful and unchanging God
Lays the foundation for my hope,
In oaths and promises and blood.”**

The conflict may be long, but the victory is *absolutely sure*. Oh poor Soul! Do but keep near to the Cross and you are safe. Throw your arms around the dying Savior. Let the droppings of His blood fall on your sins and even if you can not see Him, still believe Him. Still say, “I know that He came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief, and I will cling to the sinner’s Savior as my only hope and trust.” Then let Satan roar—he cannot hurt. Let him rage—his fury is in vain. He may but show his teeth, for he certainly cannot bite. “Whom resist, steadfast in the faith.”

But there is another word added for our comfort—“Knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.” This is well sketched by John Bunyan in that picture I have already alluded to, in the Valley of the Shadow of Death. “As Christian was going along the exceedingly narrow pathway, with a deep ditch on one side and a dangerous quay upon the other, he came to a stand and he had half a thought to go back and then again he thought he might be half-way through the valley so he resolved to go on. And while he pondered and

mused, he heard the voice of a man as going before him, saying, 'Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me.'

"Then he was glad and that for these reasons. He gathered from thence that some who feared God were in this valley as well as himself and that God was with them though they perceived Him not. He hoped to have company by-and-by so he went on and called to him that was before, but he knew not what to answer for that he also thought himself to be alone." Here honest John has our experience to the life. It is likely enough that as I am speaking this morning some of you will say, "I did not think that anybody ever felt as I feel." And though I tell you these things and know that many of you have heard Satan roar, I am compelled to confess that I have frequently said in my own heart, "I do not believe that any other man ever had this temptation before me."

Well, this text stands to refute our supposition—"The same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." Martin Luther was wont to say that next to Holy Scripture the best teacher for a minister was *temptation*—he put affliction next—but temptation he kept first in his view. When we have been tempted and tried ourselves we know how to succor others. I grant you it is hard to have the conviction on one's mind that you are standing in a perilous place where never man stood before and tempted as never man was tempted before you. Come, Believer, we will talk this matter over for two or three seconds. Certainly your Lord has been there before for He was tempted in all points like as you are. Scripture says that all your Brethren have had some participation in your trials.

Now mark—as they suffered as you suffer—no temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man. As *they* came through the temptation safe and unharmed, so shall you. As they testified that their light afflictions worked out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory—so that shall be your testimony. As they have overcome and now circle the Throne of God clothed in pure white garments—so will you. And inasmuch as their temptations have left no tears upon their brow, no stains upon their robes, no rent in their royal mantles—so neither shall Satan be able to disfigure or to mutilate you—you shall come out of every trial and of every struggle, losing nothing therein save that which it is well to lose—your dross and your tin, your chaff and your bran. You shall come forth from the deep waters washed, cleansed and purified. God grant that so it may be with you—but it can only be so by your resisting Satan—steadfast in the faith.

And now I am addressing some this morning whom the precept does not reach for they have no faith in which to stand fast. If you knew what a blessed thing it is to be a Christian you would weep your eyes out that you are not Christians yourselves. "Oh," you say, "but you have described to us the temptations of Satan." Just so, but it is a blessed thing to be a Christian in his very worst state. As I look sometimes upon those pictures which are drawn by the artist to illustrate the *Pilgrim's Progress*—even when I have seen poor John up to his neck in the mire—I have thought I

would sooner be Christian in the Slough of Despond, than Pliable on the dry land on the other side.

I would sooner be Christian when the dragon hurled all his darts at him though he smiled not all the day long—sooner be Christian then, than be Hypocrisy or Formality climbing over the wall to go by some other way. It is a good thing to be a Christian even in his very worst state and what must it be in his best? Young men and young women, as one of your own age, I bear my testimony that to follow Christ is the most blessed and pleasant thing, even in this present evil world—

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

But who am I, that I should say this? Why nothing but a poor miserable sinner who looks for all in Christ. With nothing in my hand, I simply cling to His Cross. Nor am I an inch forwarder than I was twelve years ago in this respect. My cry then was, “None but Jesus, none but Jesus,” and it is my cry now and shall be my cry even to the end. And what are you today but a lost, guilty sinner? But do not despair. Trust Jesus! Trust Jesus!—and the joys and privileges of the Christian are yours. Now—this moment—cast yourself on Him. Look to his agony and bloody sweat, His Cross, His passion, His death, His burial, His resurrection, His ascension and you shall find a balm for every fear, a cordial for every distress. All that you want and all that your heart can ever desire is most surely to be found in Christ Jesus your Lord.

May God grant us to be partakers of that grace which is in His most blessed name—that we may not be destroyed by the Destroyer!

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GLORY!

NO. 1721

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 20, 1883,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Who has called us unto His eternal glory.”
1 Peter 5:10.***

A FORTNIGHT ago, when I was only able to creep to the front of this platform, I spoke to you concerning the future of our mortal bodies—[Sermon #1719—*The Tent Dissolved and the Mansion Entered*]—“We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” On the next Sabbath, [Sermon #1720—*Christ in You*], we went a step further and we did not preach so much about the resurrection of the body as upon the hope of Glory for our entire nature, our text being, “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

Thus we have passed through the outer court and have trod the hallowed floor of the Holy Place. And now we are the more prepared to enter within the veil and to gaze, a while, upon the glory which awaits us. We shall say a little—and oh, how little it will be—upon that glory of which we have so sure a prospect, that glory which is prepared for us in Christ Jesus and of which He is the hope! I pray that our eyes may be strengthened that we may see the heavenly light and that our ears may be opened to hear sweet voices from the better land. As for me, I cannot say that I will speak of the glory, but I will try to *stammer* about it—for the best language to which a man can reach concerning Glory must be a mere stammering.

Paul did but see a little of it for a short time and he confessed that he heard things that it was not lawful for a man to utter. And I doubt not that he felt utterly unable to describe what he had seen. Though a great master of language, yet for once he was overpowered—the grandeur of his theme made him silent! As for us, what can we do, where even *Paul* breaks down? Pray, dear Friends that the Spirit of Glory may rest upon you, that He may open your eyes to see as much as can at present be seen of the heritage of the saints! We are told that “eye has not seen, neither has ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him.”

Yet the eye has seen wonderful things! There are sunrises and sunsets, Alpine glories and ocean marvels which, once seen, cling to our memories throughout life! Yet, even when Nature is at her best, she cannot give us an idea of the supernatural Glory which God has prepared for His people! The ear has heard sweet harmonies. Have we not enjoyed music which has thrilled us? Have we not listened to speech which has seemed to make our hearts dance within us? And yet no melody of harp nor charm of oratory can ever raise us to a conception of the glory which God has

laid up for them that love Him! As for the heart of man, what strange things have entered it! Men have exhibited fair fictions, woven in the loom of fancy, which have made the eyes sparkle with their beauty and brightness—imagination has reveled and rioted in its own fantastic creations, roaming among islands of silver and mountains of gold, or swimming in seas of wine and rivers of milk—but imagination has never been able to open the gate of pearl which shuts in the city of our God.

No, it has not yet entered the heart of man. Yet the text goes on to say, “but He has revealed it unto us by His Spirit.” So that Heaven is not an utterly unknown region, not altogether an inner brightness shut in with walls of impenetrable darkness. God has revealed joys which He has prepared for His beloved, but mark you, even though they are revealed of the Spirit, yet it is no common unveiling and the reason that it is made known at all is ascribed to the fact that “the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.” So we see that the glory which awaits the saints is ranked among the deep things of God and He that would speak, thereof, after the manner of the oracles of God must have much heavenly teaching. It is easy to chatter according to human fancy, but if we would follow the sure teaching of the Word of God, we shall have need to be taught of the holy Spirit, without whose anointing the deep things of God must be hidden from us. Pray that we may be under that teaching while we dwell upon this theme.

There are three questions which we will answer this morning. The first is, what is the destiny of the saints?—“Eternal glory,” says the text. Secondly, in which does this glory consist? I said we would answer the questions, but this is not to be answered this side the pearl gate. Thirdly, what should be the influence of this prospect upon our hearts? What manner of people ought we to be whose destiny is eternal glory? How should we live who are to live forever in the glory of the Most High?

I. First, WHAT, THEN, IS THE DESTINY OF THE SAINTS? Our text tells us that God has “called us unto His eternal glory.” “Glory!” Does not the very word astound you? “Glory!” Surely that belongs to God alone! Yet the Scripture says, “glory,” and glory it must mean, for it never exaggerates. Think of glory for us who have deserved eternal shame! Glory for us poor creatures who are often ashamed of ourselves! Yes, I look at my book, again, and it actually says, “glory”—nothing less than glory! Therefore it must be so.

Now, since this seems so amazing and astonishing a thing, I would so speak with you that not a relic of incredulity may remain in your hearts concerning it. I would ask you to follow me while we look through the Bible, not quoting every passage which speaks of glory, but mentioning a few of the leading ones. This glory has been promised. What said David? In the 73rd Psalm and 24th verse we meet with these remarkable words—“You shall guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.” In the original Hebrew there is a trace of David’s recollection of Enoch’s being translated and, though the royal Psalmist did not expect to be caught away without dying, yet he did expect that after he had followed

the guidance of the Lord here below, the great Father would stoop and raise up His child to be with Himself forever.

He expected to be received into Glory. Even in those dim days, when as yet the light of the Gospel was but in its dawn, this Prophet and king was able to say, "You shall afterward receive me to glory." Did he not mean the same thing when, in the 84th Psalm, verse 11, he said, "The Lord will give Grace and glory: no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly"? Not only no good thing under the name of Grace will God withhold from the upright, but no good thing under the head of Glory. No good of Heaven shall be kept from the saints; no reserve is even set upon the throne of the great King, for our Lord Jesus has graciously promised, "To Him that overcomes will I grant to sit with Me on My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father on His throne." "No good thing," not even among the infinitely good things of Heaven, will God "withhold from them that walk uprightly."

If David had this persuasion, much more may we who walk in the light of the Gospel! Since our Lord Jesus has suffered and entered into His Glory, and we know that we shall be with Him where He is, we are confident that our rest shall be glorious! Brothers and Sisters, it is to this glory that we have been called! The people of God, having been predestinated, have been called with an effectual calling—called so that they have obeyed the call and have run after Him who has drawn them! Now, our text says that He has, "called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus." We are called to repentance, we are called to faith, we are called to holiness, we are called to perseverance—and all this that we may afterwards attain unto glory!

We have another Scripture of like import in 1 Thessalonians 2:12—"Who has called you unto His kingdom and glory." We are called unto His kingdom according to our Lord's words, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom." We are called to be kings, called to wear a crown of life that fades not away, called to reign with Christ in His Glory! If the Lord had not meant us to have the glory, He would not have called us unto it, for His calling is no mockery. He would not, by His Spirit, have fetched us out from the world and separated us unto Himself if He had not intended to keep us from falling and preserve us eternally. Believer, you are called to glory—do not question the certainty of that to which God has called you!

And we are not only called to it, Brothers and Sisters, but glory is especially joined with justification. Let me quote Romans 8:30—"Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified." These various mercies are threaded together like pearls upon a string—there is no breaking the thread, no separating the precious things. They are put in their order by God, Himself, and they are kept there by His eternal and irreversible decree. If you are justified by the righteousness of Christ, you shall be glorified through Christ Jesus, for thus has God purposed, and so must it be! Do you not remember how salvation, itself, is linked with glory? Paul, in 2 Timothy 2:10, speaks of "the salvation which

is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.” The two things are riveted together and cannot be separated! The saved ones must partake of the glory of God, for this are they being prepared every day.

Paul, in the ninth of Romans, where he speaks about the predestinating will of God, says in the 23rd verse—“The vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory.” This is the process which commenced in regeneration and is going on in us every day in the work of sanctification. We cannot be glorified so long as sin remains in us—we must first be pardoned, renewed and sanctified—and then we are fitted to be glorified. By communion with our Lord Jesus we are made like He, as says the Apostle in 2 Corinthians 3:18—“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” It is very wonderful, how, by the wisdom of God, everything is made to work this way.

Look at the blessed text in 2 Corinthians 4:17, where Paul says, “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,” where he represents that all that we can suffer, whether of body or of mind, is producing for us such a mass of glory that he is quite unable to describe it and he uses hyperbolically language in saying, “a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” Oh, blessed men, whose very losses are their gains, whose sorrows produce their joys, whose griefs are big with Heaven! Well may we be content to suffer if so it is that all things are working together for our good and are helping to pile up the excess of our future glory! Thus, then, it seems we are called to glory and we are being prepared for it.

Is it not, also, a sweet thought that our present fellowship with Christ is the guarantee of it? In Romans 8:17 it is said, “If so be that we suffer with Him that we may be also glorified together.” Going to prison with Christ will bring us into the palace with Christ! Smarting with Christ will bring us into reigning with Christ! Being ridiculed, slandered and despised for Christ’s sake will bring us to be sharers of His honor, glory and immortality! Who would not be with Christ in His humiliation if this is the guarantee that we shall be with Him in His Glory? Remember those dear words of the Lord Jesus, “You are they which have continued with Me in My temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father has appointed unto Me.” Let us shoulder the Cross, for it leads to the crown. “No Cross, no crown”—but he that has shared the battle shall partake in the victory.

I have not yet done, for there is a text, in Hebrews 2:10, which is well worthy of our consideration—we are to be brought to Glory. It is said of our Lord that it “became Him, for whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.” See, Beloved, we are called to Heaven, we are being prepared for it and we shall be brought to it. We might despair of ever getting into the glory land if we had not One to bring us there, for the pilgrim’s road is rough and beset with many foes—but there is a “Captain of our salvation”—a greater than Bunyan’s Great-Hearted, who is conducting the pilgrim band through all the treacherous ways and He will bring the “many

sons”—where?—“unto glory!” Nowhere short of that shall be their ultimatum.

Glory, glory shall surely follow upon Grace—for Christ the Lord, who has come into His Glory—has entered into Covenant engagements that He will bring all the “many sons” to be with Him. Mark this and then I will quote no more Scriptures—this glory will be for our entire manhood—for our body as well as for our soul! You know that text in the famous Resurrection chapter in 1 Corinthians 15? Paul speaks of the body as being “sown in dishonor,” but he adds, “it is raised in glory.” And then, in Philippians 3:21, he says of our Divine Lord at His coming, “Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.” What a wonderful change that will be for this frail, feeble, suffering body!

In some respects it is not vile, for it is a wonderful product of Divine skill, power and goodness—but inasmuch as it hampers our spiritual nature by its appetites and infirmities—it may be called a “vile body.” It is an unhandy body for a spirit—it fits a soul well enough, but a spirit needs something more ethereal, less earth-bound, more full of life than this poor flesh and blood and bone can ever be. Well, the body is to be changed. What alteration will it undergo? It will be rendered *perfect*. The body of a child will be fully developed and the dwarf will attain to full stature. The blind shall not be sightless in Heaven, neither shall the lame be halt, nor shall the palsied tremble. The deaf shall hear and the dumb shall sing God’s praises. We shall carry none of our deficiencies or infirmities to Heaven. As good Mr. Ready-to-Halt did not carry his crutches there, neither shall any of us need a staff to lean upon!

There we shall not know an aching brow, or a weak knee, or a failing eye. “The inhabitant shall no more say, I am sick.” And it shall be an impassive body, a body that will be incapable of any kind of suffering—no palpitating heart, no sinking spirit, no aching limbs no lethargic soul shall worry us there! No, we shall be perfectly delivered from every evil of that kind. Moreover, it shall be an immortal body. Our risen bodies shall not be capable of decay, much less of death. There are no graves in Heaven! Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, for their bodies shall rise never to know death and corruption a second time!

No smell or taint of corruption shall remain upon those whom Jesus shall call from the tomb. The risen body shall be greatly increased in power—it is “sown in weakness,” says the Scripture—but it is “raised in power.” I suppose there will be a wonderful agility about our renovated frame. Probably it will be able to move as swiftly as the lightning flash, for so do angels pass from place to place, and we shall in this, as in many other things, be as the angels of God. Anyway, it will be a “glorious body” and it will be “raised in glory,” so that the whole of our manhood shall participate of that wonderful depth of bliss which is summed up in the word—“glory.” Thus I think I have set before you much of what the Word of God says upon this matter.

II. Secondly, may the Holy Spirit help me while I try very hesitatingly and stammeringly to answer the enquiry, WHEREIN DOES THIS DESTINY CONSIST? Do you know how much I expect to do? It will be but little. You remember what the Lord did for Moses when the man of God prayed—"I beseech you show me Your glory!" All that the Lord, Himself, did for Moses was to say, "You shall see My back parts; but My face shall not be seen." How little, then, can we hope to speak of this glory! Its back parts are too bright for us—as for the *face* of that glory, it shall not be seen by any of us here below, though, by-and-by, we shall behold it!

I suppose if one who had been in Heaven could come straight down from there and occupy this platform, he would find that his discoveries could not be communicated because of the insufficiency of language to express such a weight of meaning. The saints' destiny is glory! What is glory, Brothers and Sisters? What is it, I mean, among the sons of men? It is generally understood to be fame, a great reputation, the sound of trumpets, the noise of applause, the sweets of approbation among the crowd and in high places. The Queen of Sheba came from afar to see the glory of Solomon. What was that glory, Brothers and Sisters? It was the glory of a rare *wisdom* excelling all others! It was the glory of immense *riches* expended upon all manner of magnificence and splendor!

As for this last glory, the Lord says of it that a lily of the field had more of it than Solomon. At least, "Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." Yet that is what *men* mean by glory—rank, position, power, conquest—things that make the ears of men to tingle when they hear of them—things extraordinary and rare. All this is but a dim shadow of what *God* means by glory, yet out of the shadow we may obtain a little inkling of what the substance must be. God's people shall be wise and even famous, for they shall "shine as the stars forever and ever." God's people shall be rich—the very streets of their abode are paved with gold exceedingly rich and rare. God's people shall be singularly honored—there shall be an unrivalled glory about them, for they shall be known as a peculiar people, a royal priesthood, a race of beings lifted up to reveal their Maker's Character beyond all the rest of His works.

I reckon that glory to a saint means, first of all, purified character. The brightest glory that really can come to anyone is the glory of character. Thus God's glory among men is His goodness, His mercy, His justice, His truth. But shall such poor creatures as we are ever have perfect characters? Yes, we shall one day be perfectly holy! God's Holy Spirit, when He has finished His work, will leave in us no trace of sin! No temptation shall be able to touch us! There will be in us no relics of our past and fallen state. Oh, will not that be blessed? I was going to say it is all the glory I need—the glory of being perfect in character, never sinning, never judging unjustly, never thinking a vain thought, never wandering away from the perfect Law of God, never vexed with sin which has so long been my worst enemy!

One day we shall be glorious because the devil, himself, will not be able to detect a fault in us—and those eyes of God which burn like fire and read the inmost secrets of the soul will not be able to detect anything

blameworthy in us! Such shall be the character of the saints that they shall be meet to fellowship with Christ Himself! They will be fit company for that thrice Holy Being before whom angels veil their faces. This is glory!

Next, I understand by, “glory,” our perfected manhood. When God made Adam, he was a far superior being to any of us. Man’s place in creation was very remarkable. The Psalmist says, “For You have made him a little lower than the angels and have crowned him with glory and honor. You made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet: all sheep and oxen, yes, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatever passes through the paths of the seas.” No king among men in these days could rival Adam in the Garden of Eden—he was, indeed, monarch of all that he surveyed, and from the lordly lion down to the tiniest insect of all, living creatures paid him *willing* homage. Can we ever rise to this last honor?

Brothers and Sisters, listen—“It does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when Christ shall appear we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is.” Is there any limit to the growth of the mind of a man? Can we tell what he may reach? We read of Solomon that God gave him largeness of heart as the sand of the sea! God will give to His people glory that will include in it more largeness of heart than Solomon ever knew! Then shall we know even as we are known by God. Now we see, but it is, “through a glass darkly.” But then we shall see “face to face.” You have met with men of great intellect and you have looked up to them, but assuredly, the smallest babe in Christ, when he shall reach Heaven, shall have a greater intellect than the most profound philosopher who has ever astounded mankind by his discoveries!

We shall not always be as we are today, contracted and hampered because of our little knowledge, our slender faculties and our dull perceptions. Our ignorance and prejudice shall vanish. What a man will become we can scarcely tell when he is remade in the image of God, and made like unto our Divine Lord who is, “the firstborn among many brethren.” Here we are but in the embryo stage—our minds are but the seeds, or the bulbs out of which shall come the flower and glory of a nobler manhood! Your body is to be developed into something infinitely brighter and better than the bodies of men here below. And as for the *soul*, we cannot guess to what an elevation it shall be raised in Christ Jesus. There is room for the largest expectation, here, as we conjecture what will be the full accomplishment of the vast intent of eternal love—an intent which has involved the sacrifice of the Only-Begotten Son of God! That can be no mean design which has been carried on at the expense of the best that Heaven, itself, possessed!

Further, by “glory” and, “coming to glory,” I think we must understand complete victory. Dwelling in the age of the Romans, men said to themselves, as they read the Scriptures, “What does the Apostle mean by ‘glory’?” And they could scarcely help connecting it with conquest and the return of the warrior in triumph. Men called it, “glory,” in those days when valiant warriors returned from fields of blood with captives and spoil.

Then did the heroes ride through the streets of Rome, enjoying a triumph voted them by the senate. Then, for a while, the men of war were covered with glory and all the city was glorious because of them.

As Christians, we hate the word, “glory,” when it is linked with wholesale murder and symbolized in garments rolled in blood. But yet there is a kind of fighting to which you and I are called, for we are soldiers of the Cross and if we fight valiantly under our great Captain, and rout every sin, and are found faithful even unto death—then we shall enter glory and receive the honor which belongs to men who have fought a good fight, and have kept the faith. It will be no small glory to obtain the crown of life which fades not away. Is not this a full glory if we only place these three things together, a purified character, a perfected nature and a complete victory?

An invaluable ingredient in true glory is the Divine approval. “Glory” among men means approbation—it is a man’s glory when he is honored by his Queen and she hangs a medal on his breast—or when his name is mentioned in the high court of Parliament and he is ennobled for what he has done. If men speak of our actions with approval, it is called fame and glory. Oh, but one drop of the approbation of God has more glory in it than a sea full of human praise! And the Lord will reward His own with this holy favor. He will say, “Well done, good and faithful servant,” and Christ, before the universe, will say, “Come, you blessed of My Father.” Oh, what glory that will be! They were despised and rejected of men; they “wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; destitute, afflicted, tormented”—but now *God* approves them and they take seats among the peers of Heaven, made noble by the approbation of the Judge of All!

This is glory with an emphasis, substantial glory! One approving glance from the eyes of Jesus; one accepting word from the mouth of the Father will be glory enough for any one of us—and this we shall have if we follow the Lamb wherever He goes! But this is not all—children of God will have the glory of reflecting the glory of God. When any of God’s unfallen creatures shall wish to see the greatness of God’s goodness, mercy and love, they that dwell in Heaven will point out a glorified saint. Whenever any spirit from a far off regions desires to know what is meant by faithfulness and Grace, some angel will reply, “Go and talk with those who have been redeemed from among men.”

I believe that you and I will spend much of eternity in making known to principalities and powers the unsearchable riches of the Grace of God. We shall be mirrors reflecting God and in us shall His Glory be revealed. There may be myriads of races of pure and holy beings of whom we have never heard of as yet, and these may come to the New Jerusalem as to the great metropolis of Jehovah’s universe—and when they come, there they will gaze upon the saints as the highest instances of Divine Grace, wisdom, power and love. It will be their highest pleasure to hear how eternal mercy dealt with us unworthy ones. How we shall delight to rehearse to them the fact of the Father’s eternal purpose, the story of the Incarnate God—the God that loved and died and the love of the blessed Spirit who

sought us in the days of our sin, and brought us to the foot of the Cross, renewing us in the spirit of our minds and making us to be sons of God!

Oh, Brothers and Sisters, this shall be our glory, that God shall shine through us to the astonishment of all! Yet I think glory includes somewhat more than this. In certain cases, a man's glory lies in his relationships. If any of the royal family should come to your houses, you would receive them with respect. Yes, and even as they went along the street they would be spied out, and passers-by would say, "That is the prince!" And they would honor the son of our good Queen. But royal descent is a poor business compared with being allied to the King of kings! Many angels are exceedingly bright, but they are only servants to wait upon the sons. I believe that there will be a kind of awe upon the angels at the sight of men—when they see us in our glory, they will rejoice to know our near relation to their Lord—and to fulfill their own destiny as ministering spirits appointed to minister to the heirs of salvation.

No pride will be possible to the perfected, but we shall then realize the exalted position to which, by our new birth, and the Divine adoption we have been raised. "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God." Sons of God! Sons of the Lord God Almighty! Oh what glory this will be! Then there will be connected with this the fact that we shall be connected with Jesus in everything. For do not you see, Brothers and Sisters, it was *because* of our fall that Christ came here to save men? When He worked out a perfect righteousness, it was all for us. When He died, it was all for us. And when He rose again, it was all for us!

And what is more, we lived in Christ, we died in Him, we were buried in Him and rose in Him—and we shall ascend into Heaven to reign with Him! All our glory is by Christ Jesus and in all the glory of Christ Jesus we have a share. We are members of His body. We are one with Him. I say the creatures that God has made, when they shall come to worship in the New Jerusalem, will stand and gaze at glorified men and with bated breath will say one, to another "These are the beings whose nature the Son of God assumed! These are the chosen creatures whom the Prince of Heaven bought with His own blood." They will stand astonished at the Divine Glory which will be manifested in beings emancipated from sin and Hell and made heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ!

Will not even angels be surprised and awed as they look on the Church and say to one another, "This is the bride, the Lamb's wife!" They will marvel how the Lord of Glory should come to this poor earth to seek a spouse and that He should enter into eternal union with such a people! Glory, glory dwells in Immanuel's land! Now we are getting near to the center of it. I feel inclined, like Moses, to take off my shoes, for the place where we stand is holy ground, now that we are getting to see poor bushes like ourselves aglow with the indwelling God and changed from glory unto glory! And yet this is not all, for there in Heaven we shall dwell in the immediate Presence of God. We shall dwell with Him in nearest and dearest fellowship! All the felicity of the Most High will be our felicity. The

blessedness of the Triune Jehovah shall be our blessedness forever and ever.

Did you notice that our text says, “He has called us unto *His* glory”? This outshines everything—the glory which the saints will have is the same glory which God possesses and such as He, alone, can bestow! Listen to this text—“Whom He justified them He also glorified.” He *glorifies* them! I know what it is to glorify God, and so do you, but when we poor creatures glorify God it is in a poor way, for we cannot add anything to Him. But what must it be for God, Himself, to glorify a *man*! The glory which you are to have forever, my dear believing Brothers and Sisters, is a glory which God Himself will put upon you!

Peter, as a Hebrew, perhaps uses a Hebraism when he says, “His glory.” It may be that he means the best of glory that can be, even as the Jews were apt to say—“The trees of God”—when they meant the greatest trees, or, “the mountains of God,” when they intended the highest mountains. So, by the glory of God, Peter may mean the richest, fullest glory that can be. In the original, the word, “glory,” has about it the idea of, “weight,” at which the Apostle Paul hints when he speaks of a “weight of glory.” This is the only glory that has weight in it, all else is light as a feather. Take all the glories of this world and they are outweighed by the small dust of the balance. Place them here in the hollow of my hand, all of them—a child may blow them away as thistledown!

God’s glory has weight! It is solid, true, real—and he that gets it possesses no mere name, or dream, or tinsel—he has that which will abide the rust of ages and the fire of judgment. The glory of God! How shall I describe it? I must set before you a strange Scriptural picture. Mordecai must be made glorious for his fidelity to his king and singular is the honor which his monarch ordains for him. This was the royal order. “Let the royal apparel be brought which the king uses to wear, and the horse that the king rides upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head: and let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king’s most noble princes, that they may array the man with whom the king delights to honor, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, ‘Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor.’”

Can you not imagine the surprise of the Jew when robe and ring were put upon him, and when he found himself placed upon the king’s horse? This may serve as a figure of that which will happen to us—we shall be glorified with the Glory of God! The best robe, the best of Heaven’s array shall be appointed unto us and we shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever! Highest of all our glory will be the enjoyment of God Himself. He will be our exceeding joy—this bliss will swallow up every other—the blessedness of God. “The Lord is my portion,” says my soul. “Whom have I in Heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside You.” Our God shall be our glory! Yet bear with me, I have left out a word again—the text has it, “Unto His *eternal* glory.” Yes, but that is the gem of the ring. The glory which God has in reserve for His chosen will never come to an end—it will stay with us and we shall stay with it forever!

It will always be glory, too. Its brightness will never become dim. We shall never be tired of it, or sated with it. After ten thousand thousand millions of years in Heaven, our happiness shall be as fresh as when it first began! Those are no fading laurels which surround immortal brows. Eternal glory knows no diminution. Can you imagine a man being born at the same time that Adam was created and living all these thousands of years as a king like Solomon, having all he could desire? His would seem to be a glorious life. But, if at the end of 7,000 years that man must necessarily die, what has it profited him? His glory is all over, now—its fires have died out in ashes.

But you and I, when we once enter Glory, shall receive what we can neither lose nor leave. Eternity! Eternity! This is the sweetness of all our future bliss! Rejoice, you saintly ones! Take your harps down from the willows, any of you who are mourning—and if you never sang before, yet sing this morning, “God has called us unto His eternal glory,” and this is to be our portion world without end!

III. I can only find time for a few words upon the concluding head, which is—WHAT INFLUENCE SHOULD ALL THIS HAVE UPON OUR HEARTS? I think, first, it ought to excite desire in many here present that they might attain unto glory by Christ Jesus. Satan, when he took our blessed Lord to the top of an exceedingly high mountain, tempted Him to worship him by offering Him the kingdoms of the world and all the glories thereof. Satan is very clever and I will, at this time, take a leaf out of his book. Will you not fall down and worship the Lord Jesus when He can give you the Kingdom of God and all the glory thereof, and all this, not in pretense, but in reality?

If there was any force in the temptation to worship Satan for the sake of the glory of this world, how much more reason is there for urging you to worship the Son of God that you may obtain His salvation with eternal glory! I pray the Holy Spirit to drop a hot desire into many a poor sinner’s breast, this morning, that he may cry, “If this glory is to be had, I will have it, and I will have it in God’s way, for I will believe in Jesus! I will repent, I will come to God and so obtain His promise.”

Secondly, this ought to move us to the feeling of fear. If there is such a glory as this, let us tremble lest by any means we should come short of it! Oh, my dear Hearers—especially you that are my fellow members, brother Church officers and workers associated with me—what a dreadful thing it will be if any one of us should come short of this glory! Oh, if there were no Hell, it would be Hell enough to miss Heaven! What if there were no Pit that is bottomless, nor undying worm, nor unquenchable fire? It would be boundless misery to have a shadow of a fear of not reaching to God’s eternal glory! Let us, therefore, pass the time of our sojourning here in fear, and let us watch unto prayer and strive to enter in at the strait gate. God grant we may be found of Him, at last, to praise and honor!

If we are right, how this ought to move us to gratitude! Think of this—we are to enjoy “His eternal glory!” What a contrast to our deserts! Shame and everlasting contempt are our righteous due apart from Christ. If we were to receive according to our merits, we should be driven from His

Presence and from the glory of His power. Verily, He has not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities, for, after all our transgressions, He has still reserved us for glory, and reserved Glory for us! What love and zeal should burn in our bosoms because of this!

Last of all, it should move us to a dauntless courage. If this glory is to be had, do we not feel like the heroes in Bunyan's picture? Before the dreamer there stood a fair palace and he saw persons walking upon the top of it, clad in light, and singing. Around the door stood armed men to keep back those who would enter. Then a brave man came up to one who had a writer's inkhorn by his side and said, "Set down my name." And straightway the warrior drew his sword and fought with all his might until he had cut his way to the door. And then he entered and they within were heard to sing—

***"Come in, come in,
Eternal glory you shall win."***

Will you not draw your swords this morning and fight against sin till you have overcome it? Do you not desire to win Christ and to be found in Him? Oh, let us now begin to feel a passion for eternal glory and then, in the strength of the Spirit, and in the name of Jesus, let us press forward till we reach it! Even on earth we may taste enough of this glory to fill us with delight!

The glory which I have described to you dawns on earth though it only comes to its noontide in Heaven—the glory of sanctified character, the glory of victory over sin, the glory of relationship to God, the glory of union with Christ—these are all to be tasted in a measure here below. These glories send their beams down even to these valleys and lowlands. Oh, to enjoy them, today, and thus to have earnest and foretastes of Glory! If we have them, let us go singing on until we reach the place where God's eternal glory shall surround us. Amen.

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A NEW YEAR'S BENECTION

NO. 292

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JANUARY 1, 1860,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.**

***“But the God of all grace, who has called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.”
1 Peter 5:10.***

THE Apostle Peter turns from exhortation to prayer. He knew that if praying is the end of preaching in the hearer, preaching should always be accompanied by prayer in the minister. Having exhorted Believers to walk steadfastly, he bends his knee and commends them to the guardian care of Heaven, imploring upon them one of the largest blessings for which the most affectionate heart ever made supplication. The minister of Christ is intended to execute two offices for the people of his charge. He is to speak for God to them and for them to God. The pastor has not fulfilled the whole of his sacred commission when he has declared the whole counsel of God. He has then done but half.

The other part is that which is to be performed in secret, when he carries upon his breast, like the priest of old, the wants, the sins, the trials of his people and pleads with God for them. The daily duty of the Christian pastor is as much to pray for his people, as to exhort, instruct and console. There are, however, special seasons when the minister of Christ finds himself constrained to pronounce an unusual benediction over his people. When one year of trial has gone and another year of mercy has commenced, we may be allowed to express our sincere congratulations that God has spared us and our earnest invocations of a thousand blessings upon the heads of those whom God has committed to our pastoral charge.

I have this morning taken this text as a new year's blessing. You are aware that a minister of the Church of England always supplies me with the motto for the new year. He prays much before he selects the text and I know that it is his prayer for you all today. He constantly favors me with this motto and I always think it my duty to preach from it and then desire my people to remember it through the year as a staff of support in their time of trouble, as some sweet morsel, a wafer made with honey, a portion of angel's food, which they may roll under their tongue and carry in their memory till the year ends and then begin with another sweet text. What larger benediction could my aged friend have chosen, standing as he is today in his pulpit and lifting up holy hands to preach to the people in a quiet village Church—what larger blessing could he implore for the thousands of Israel than that which in His name I pronounce upon you this day—“But the God of all grace, who has called us unto His eternal

glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.”

In discoursing upon this text, I shall have to remark—first, what the Apostle asks of Heaven. And then, secondly, why he expects to receive it. The reason of his expecting to be answered is contained in the title by which he addresses the Lord his God—“The GOD OF ALL GRACE who has called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus.”

I. First, then, WHAT THE APOSTLE ASKS FOR ALL TO WHOM THIS EPISTLE WAS WRITTEN.

He asks for them four sparkling jewels set in a black foil. The four jewels are these—Perfection, Establishment, Strengthening, Settling. The jet-black setting is this—“After you have suffered awhile.” Worldly compliments are of little worth. For as Chesterfield observes, “They cost nothing but ink and paper.” I must confess, I think even that little expense is often thrown away. Worldly compliments generally omit all idea of sorrow. “A merry Christmas! A happy new year!” There is no supposition of anything like suffering. But Christian benedictions look at the truth of matters.

We know that men must suffer, we believe that men are born to sorrow as the spark flies upwards. And therefore in our benediction we include the sorrow. No, more than that, we believe that the sorrow shall assist in working out the blessing which we invoke upon your heads. We, in the language of Peter, say, “After you have suffered a while, may the God of all grace make you perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.” Understand, then, as I take each of these four jewels, that you are to look upon them and consider that they are only desired for you “After you have suffered awhile.” We must not discard the sufferings. We must take them from the same hand from which we receive the mercy. And the blessing bears date, “After you have suffered a while.”

1. Now the first sparkling jewel in this ring is perfection. The Apostle prays that God would make us perfect. Indeed, though this is a large prayer and the jewel is a diamond of the first water and of the finest size, yet is it absolutely necessary to a Christian that he should ultimately arrive at perfection. Have you ever on your bed dreamed a dream, when your thoughts roamed at large and the bit was taken from the lip of your imagination, when stretching all your wings, your soul floated through the infinite, grouping strange and marvelous things together, so that the dream rolled on in something like supernatural splendor? But on a sudden you were awakened and you have regretted hours afterwards that the dream was never concluded.

And what is a Christian, if he does not arrive at perfection, but an unfinished dream? A majestic dream it is true, full of things that earth had never known if it had not been that they were revealed to flesh and blood by the Spirit. But suppose the voice of sin should startle us before that dream is concluded and if as when one awakes, we should despise the image which began to be formed in our minds—what were we then? Everlasting regrets, a multiplication of eternal torment must be the result of our having begun to be Christians, if we do not arrive at perfection. If

there could be such a thing as a man in whom sanctification began but in whom God the Spirit ceased to work—if there could be a being so unhappy as to be called by grace and to be deserted before he was perfected—there would not be among the damned in Hell a more unhappy wretch.

It were no blessing for God to *begin* to bless if He did not perfect. It were the grandest curse which Omnipotent hatred itself could pronounce, to give a man grace at all, if that grace did not carry him to the end and land him safely in Heaven. I must confess that I would rather endure the pangs of that dread archangel, Satan, throughout eternity, than have to suffer as one whom God once loved, but whom He cast away. But such a thing shall never be. Whom once He has chosen He does not reject. We know that where He has begun a good work He will carry it on and He will complete it until the day of Christ. Grand is the prayer, then, when the Apostle asks that we may be perfected. What were a Christian if he were not perfected?

Have you ever seen a canvas upon which the hand of the painter has sketched with daring pencil some marvelous scene of grandeur? You see where the living color has been laid on with an almost superhuman skill. But the artist was suddenly struck dead and the hand that worked miracles of art was palsied and the pencil dropped. Is it not a source of regret to the world that ever the painting was commenced, since it was never finished? Have you ever seen the human face Divine starting out from the chiseled marble? You have seen the exquisite skill of the sculptor and you have said within yourself, "What a marvelous thing this will be! What a matchless specimen of human skill!"

But, alas, it never was completed, but was left unfinished. And do you imagine, any of you, that God will begin to sculpture out a perfect being and not complete it? Do you think that the hand of Divine wisdom will sketch the Christian and not fill up the details? Has God taken us as unhewn stones out of the quarry and has He begun to work upon us and show His Divine art, His marvelous wisdom and grace and will He afterwards cast us away? Shall God fail? Shall He leave His works imperfect? Point, if you can, my Hearers, to a world which God has cast away unfinished. Is there one speck in His creation where God has begun to build but was not able to complete? Has He made a single angel deficient? Is there one creature over which it cannot be said, "This is very good"?

And shall it be said over the creature twice made—the chosen of God, the blood-bought—shall it be said, "The Spirit began to work in this man's heart, but the man was mightier than the Spirit and sin conquered grace. God was put to rout and Satan triumphed and the man was never perfected"? Oh, my dear Brothers and Sisters, the prayer shall be fulfilled. After you have suffered a while, God shall make you perfect, if he has begun the good work in you.

But, Beloved, it must be After you have suffered awhile. You cannot be perfected except by the fire. There is no way of ridding you of your dross and your tin but by the names of the furnace of affliction. Your folly is so

bound up in your hearts, you children of God, that nothing but the rod can bring it out of you. It is through the blueness of your wounds that your heart is made better. You must pass through tribulation, that through the Spirit it may act as a refining fire to you. That pure, holy, purged and washed, you may stand before the face of your God, rid of every imperfection and delivered from every corruption within.

2. Let us now proceed to the second blessing of the benediction—establishment. It is not enough even if the Christian had received in himself a proportional perfection, if he were not established. You have seen the arch of Heaven as it spans the plain. Glorious are its colors and rare its hues. Though we have seen it many and many a time, it never ceases to be “A thing of beauty and a joy forever.” But alas for the rainbow, it is not established. It passes away and lo it is not. The fair colors give way to the fleecy clouds and the sky is no longer brilliant with the tints of Heaven. It is not established. How can it be? A thing that is made of transitory sunbeams and passing rain-drops, how can it abide? And mark, the more beautiful the vision, the more sorrowful the reflection when that vision vanishes and there is nothing left but darkness. It is, then, a very necessary wish for the Christian, that he should be established.

Of all God's known conceptions, next to His incarnate Son, I do not hesitate to pronounce a Christian man the noblest conception of God. But if this conception is to be but as the rainbow painted on the cloud and is to pass away forever—woe was the day that ever our eyes were tantalized with a sublime conception that is so soon to melt away. What is a Christian man better than the flower of the field, which is here today and which withers when the sun is risen with fervent heat, unless God establish him—what is the difference between the heir of Heaven, the blood-bought child of God and the grass of the field?

Oh, may God fulfill to you this rich benediction, that you may not be as the smoke out of a chimney, which is blown away by the wind—that your goodness may not be as the morning cloud and as the early dew which passes away. But may you be established, may every good thing that you have be an abiding thing. May your character be not a writing upon the sand, but an inscription upon the rock. May your faith be no “baseless fabric of a vision,” but may it be built of stone that shall endure that awful fire which shall consume the wood, hay and stubble of the hypocrite. May you be rooted and grounded in love. May your conviction be deep. May your love be real. May your desires be earnest. May your whole life be so settled, fixed and established, that all the blasts of Hell and all the storms of earth shall never be able to remove you.

You know we talk about some Christian men as being old established Christians. I do fear there are a great many that are old, who are not established. It is one thing to have the hair whitened with years, but I fear it is another thing for us to obtain wisdom. There are some who grow no wiser by all their experience. Though their fingers are well rapped by experience, yet have they not learned in that school. I know there are many aged Christians who can say of themselves and say it sorrowfully

too, they wish they had their opportunities over again, that they might learn more and might be more established. We have heard them sing—

***“I find myself a learner yet,
Unskillful, weak and apt to slide.”***

The benediction however of the Apostle is one which I pray may be fulfilled in us whether we are young or old—but especially in those of you who have long known your Lord and Savior. You ought not now to be the subject of those doubts which vex the babe in grace. Those first principles should not always be laid again by you—but you should be going forward to something higher. You are getting near to Heaven. Oh, how is it that you have not got to the land Beulah yet? To that land which flows with milk and honey? Though they have been whitened with the sunlight of Heaven, how is it that some of the sunlight does not gleam from your eyes?

We who are young look up to you old established Christians. And if we see you doubting and hear you speaking with a trembling lip then we are exceedingly cast down. We pray for our sakes as well as for yours, that this blessing may be fulfilled in you, that you may be established. That you may no longer be exercised with doubt. That you may know your interest in Christ. That you may feel you are secure in Him. That resting upon the Rock of Ages you may know that you cannot perish while your feet are fixed there. We do pray, in fact, for all, of whatever age, that our hope may be fixed upon nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness and that it may be so firmly fixed that it may never shake. That we may be as Mount Zion, which can never be removed and which abides forever.

Thus have I remarked upon the second blessing of this benediction. But mark, we cannot have it until after we have suffered a while. We cannot be established except by suffering. It is of no use our hoping that we shall be well-rooted if no March winds have passed over us. The young oak cannot be expected to strike its roots so deep as the old one. Those old gnarlings on the roots and those strange twisting of the branches, all tell of many storms that have swept over the aged tree. But they are also indicators of the depths into which the roots have dived. And they tell the woodman that he might as soon expect to rend up a mountain as to tear up that oak by the roots. We must suffer a while, then shall we be established.

3. Now for the third blessing, which is strengthening. Ah, Brethren, this is a very necessary blessing, too, for all Christians. There are some whose characters seem to be fixed and established. But still they lack force and vigor. Shall I give you a picture of a Christian without strength? There he is. He has espoused the cause of King Jesus. He has put on his armor. He has enlisted in the heavenly host. Do you observe him? He is perfectly covered from head to foot and he carries with him the shield of faith. Do you notice, too, how firmly he is established? He keeps his ground and he will not be removed.

But notice him. When he uses his sword it falls with feeble force. His shield, though he grasps it as firmly as his weakness will allow him, trembles in his grasp. There he stands, he will not move, but still how

tottering is his position. His knees knock together with fright when he hears the sound and the noise of war and tumult. What does this man need? His will is right, his intention is right and his heart is fully set upon good things. What does he need? Why he needs strength! The poor man is weak and childlike. Either because he has been fed on unsavory and unsubstantial meat—or because of some sin which has straitened him—he has not that force and strength which ought to dwell in the Christian man.

But once let the prayer of Peter be fulfilled to him and how strong the Christian becomes! There is not in all the world a creature so strong as a Christian when God is with him. Talk of Behemoth! He is but as a little thing. His might is weakness when matched with the Believer. Talk of Leviathan that makes the deep to be hoary! He is not the chief of the ways of God. The true Believer is mightier far than even he. Have you ever seen the Christian when God is with him? He smells the battle afar off and he cries in the midst of the tumult, “Aha! Aha! Aha!” He laughs at all the hosts of his enemies. Or if you compare him to the Leviathan—if he is cast into a sea of trouble, he lashes about him and makes the deep hoary with benedictions. He is not overwhelmed by the depths, nor is he afraid of the rocks.

He has the protection of God about him and the floods cannot drown him. No, they become an element of delight to him, while by the grace of God he rejoices in the midst of the billows. If you want a proof of the strength of a Christian you have only to turn to history. There you can see there how Believers have quenched the violence of fire, have shut the mouths of lions, have shaken their fists in the face of grim death, have laughed tyrants to scorn and have put to flight the armies of aliens, by the all-mastering power of faith in God. I pray God, my Brethren, that He may strengthen you this year.

The Christians of this age are very feeble things. It is a remarkable thing that the great mass of children nowadays are born feeble. You ask me for the evidence of it. I can supply it very readily. You are aware that in the Church of England Liturgy it is ordered and ordained that all children should be immersed in Baptism except those that are certified to be of a weakly state. Now, it were uncharitable to imagine that persons would be guilty of falsehood when they come up to what they think to be a sacred ordinance. And, therefore, as nearly all children are now sprinkled and not immersed, I suppose they are born feeble. Whether that accounts for the fact that all Christians are so feeble I will not undertake to say, but certain it is that we have not many gigantic Christians nowadays.

Here and there we hear of one who seems to work all but miracles in these modern times and we are astonished. Oh that you had faith like these men! I do not think there is much more piety in England now than there used to be in the days of the Puritans. I believe there are far more pious men. But while the quantity has been multiplied, I fear the quality has been depreciated. In those days the stream of grace ran very deep indeed. Some of those old Puritans, when we read of their devotion and of

the hours they spent in prayer, seem to have as much grace as any hundred of us. The stream ran deep.

But nowadays the banks are broken down and great meadows have been flooded therewith. So far so good. But while the surface has been enlarged I fear the depth has been frightfully diminished. And this may account for it, that while our piety has become shallow our strength has become weak. Oh, may God strengthen you this year! But remember, if He does do so, you will then have to suffer. "After you have suffered a while," may He strengthen you. There is sometimes an operation performed upon horses which one must consider to be cruel—the firing of them to make their tendons strong. Now, every Christian man before he can be strengthened must be fired. He must have his nerves and tendons braced up with the hot iron of affliction. He will never become strong in grace, unless it is after he has suffered a while.

4. And now I come to the last blessing of the four—"Settling." I will not say that this last blessing is greater than the other three, but it is a stepping-stone to each. And strange to say, it is often the result of a gradual attainment of the three preceding ones. "Settle you!" Oh, how many there are that are never settled. The tree which should be transplanted every week would soon die. No, if it were moved, no matter how skillfully, once every year, no gardener would expect fruit from it. How many Christians there be that are transplanting themselves constantly, even as to their doctrinal sentiments. There be some who generally believe according to the last speaker. And there are others who do not know what they believe, but they believe almost anything that is told them.

The spirit of Christian charity, so much cultivated in these days and which we all love so much, has, I fear, assisted in bringing into the world a species of latitudinarianism. In other words, men have come to believe that it does not matter what they believe. Although one minister says it is so and the other says it is not so—we are both right. Though we contradict each other flatly, yet we are both correct. I know not where men have had their judgments manufactured, but to my mind it always seems impossible to believe a contradiction. I can never understand how contrary sentiments can both of them be in accordance with the Word of God, which is the standard of truth.

But yet there are some who are like the weathercock upon the Church steeple, they will turn just as the wind blows. As good Mr. Whitfield said, "You might as well measure the moon for a suit of clothes as tell their doctrinal sentiments," for they are always shifting and ever changing. Now I pray that this may be taken away from any of you, if this is your weakness and that you may be settled. Far from us be bigotry removed. Yet would I have the Christian know what he believes to be true and then stand to it. Take your time in weighing the controversy, but when you have once decided, be not easily moved. Let God be true though every man be a liar and stand to it—that what is according to God's Word one day cannot be contrary to it another day. That what was true in Luther's day and Calvin's day must be true now.

Falsehoods may shift, for they have a Protean shape. But the Truth of God is one and indivisible and evermore the same. Let others think as they please. Allow the greatest latitude to others, but to yourself allow none. Stand firm and steadfast by that which you have been taught and ever seek the spirit of the Apostle Paul, "If any man preach any other Gospel than that which we have received, let him be accursed." If, however, I wished you to be firm in your doctrines, my prayer would be that you may be especially settled in your faith. You believe in Jesus Christ the Son of God and you rest in Him. But sometimes your faith wavers, then you lose your joy and comfort. I pray that your faith may become so settled that it may never be a matter of question with you, whether Christ is yours or not—that you may say confidently, "I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him."

Then I pray that you may be settled in your aims and designs. There are many Christian people who get a good idea into their heads, but they never carry it out, because they ask some friend what he thinks of it. "Not much," says he. Of course he does not. Whoever did think much of anybody else's idea? And at once the person who conceived it gives it up and the work is never accomplished. How many a man in his ministry has begun to preach the Gospel and he has allowed some member of the Church, some deacon possibly, to pull him by one ear and he has gone a little that way. By-and-by, some other Brother has thought fit to pull him in the other direction. The man has lost his manliness. He has never been settled as to what he ought to do. And now he becomes a mere lackey, waiting upon everybody's opinion, willing to adopt whatever anybody else conceives to be right.

Now I pray you be settled in your aims. See what niche it is that God would have you occupy. Stand in it and don't leave it regardless of all the laughter that comes upon you. If you believe God has called you to a work, do it. If men will help you, thank them. If they will not, tell them to stand out of your road or be run over. Let nothing daunt you. He who will serve his God must expect sometimes to serve him alone. Not always shall we fight in the ranks. There are times when the Lord's David must fight Goliath singly and must take with him three stones out of the brook amid the laughter of his Brethren. But still in his weapons is he confident of victory through faith in God. Be not moved from the work to which God has put you. Be not weary in well-doing, for in due season you shall reap if you faint not. Be you settled. Oh, may God fulfill this rich blessing to you.

But you will not be settled unless you suffer. You will become settled in your faith and settled in your aims by suffering. Men are soft molluscous animals in these days. We have not the tough men that know they are right and stand to it. Even when a man is wrong, one admires his conscientiousness when he stands up believing that he is right and dares to face the frowns of the world. But when a man is right, the worst thing he can have is inconstancy, vacillation, the fear of men. Hurl it from you, O knight of the holy Cross, and be firm if you would be victorious. Faint-

Heart never stormed a city yet and you will never win nor be crowned with honor if your heart is not steeled against every assault and if you are not settled in your intention to honor your Master and to win the crown. Thus have I run through the benediction.

II. I come now, asking your attention for a few minutes more, to observe THE REASONS WHY THE APOSTLE PETER EXPECTED THAT HIS PRAYER WOULD BE HEARD.

He asked that they might be made perfect, established, strengthened, settled. Did not Unbelief whisper in Peter's ear, "Peter, you ask too much. You were always headstrong. You did say 'Bid me come upon the water.' Surely, this is another instance of your presumption. If you had said, 'Lord, make them holy,' had it not been a sufficient prayer? Have you not asked too much?" "No," says Peter. And he replies to Unbelief, "I am sure I shall receive what I have asked for. For I am in the first place asking it of the God of all grace—the God of all grace."

Not the God of the little graces we have received already, but the God of the great boundless grace which is stored up for us in the promise—which as yet we have not received in our experience. "The God of all grace." Of quickening grace, of convincing grace, of pardoning grace, of believing grace—the God of comforting, supporting, sustaining grace. Surely, when we come to Him we cannot come for too much. If He is the God, not of *one* grace, or of *two* graces, but of ALL graces—if in Him there is stored up an infinite, boundless, limitless supply, how can we ask too much, even though we ask that we may be perfect? Believer, when you are on your knees, remember you are going to a king. Let your petitions be large. Imitate the example of Alexander's courtier, who when he was told he might have whatever he chose to ask as a reward for his valor, asked a sum of money so large that Alexander's treasurer refused to pay it until he had first seen the monarch.

When he saw the monarch, he smiled and said, "It is true, it is much for him to ask, but it is not much for Alexander to give. I admire him for his faith in me. Let him have all he asks for." And dare I ask that I may be perfect, that my angry temper may be taken away, my stubbornness removed, my imperfections covered? May I ask that I may be like Adam in the garden—no, more—as pure and perfect as God Himself? May I ask that one day I may tread the golden streets and, "With my Savior's garments on, holy as the Holy One," stand in the mid-blaze of God's glory and cry, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Yes, I may ask it. And I shall have it, for He is the God of all grace.

Look again at the text and you see another reason why Peter expected that his prayer would be heard—"The God of all grace who has called us." Unbelief might have said to Peter, "Ah, Peter, it is true that God is the God of all grace, but He is as a fountain shut up, as waters sealed." "Ah," says Peter, "get you hence Satan, you savor not the things that be of God. It is not a sealed fountain of all grace, for it has begun to flow. The God of all grace has called us." Calling is the first drop of mercy that trickles into the thirsty lip of the dying man. Calling is the first golden link of the endless chain of eternal mercies. Not the first in order of time with God, but the

first in order of time with us. The first thing we know of Christ in His mercy, is that he cries, "Come unto Me all you that are weary and heavy laden." And that by His sweet Spirit He addresses us, so that we obey the call and come to Him.

Now, mark, if God has called me, I may ask Him to establish and keep me. I may ask that as year rolls after year my piety may not die out. I may pray that the bush may burn, but not be consumed—that the barrel of meal may not waste and the cruse of oil may not fail. Dare I ask that to life's latest hour I may be faithful to God, because God is faithful to me? Yes, I may ask it and I shall have it, too—because the God that calls, will give the rest. "For whom He did foreknow, them He did predestinate. And whom He did predestinate, them He also called. And whom He called He also justified. And whom He justified, them He also glorified." Think of your calling, Christian, and take courage, "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." If He has called you He will never repent of what He has done, nor cease to bless or cease to save.

But I think there is yet a stronger reason—"The God of all grace, who has called us unto His eternal glory." Has God called you, my Hearer? Do you know to what He has called you? He called you first into the house of conviction, where He made you feel your sin. Again, He called you to Calvary's summit, where you did see your sin atoned for and your pardon sealed with precious blood. And now He calls you. And to where? I hear a voice today—Unbelief tells me that there is a voice calling me to Jordan's waves. Oh, Unbelief! It is true that through the stormy billows of that sea my soul must wade. But the voice comes not from the depths of the grave, it comes from the eternal glory. There where Jehovah sits resplendent on His Throne, surrounded by cherubim and seraphim, from that brightness into which angels dare not gaze, I hear a voice—"Come unto Me, you blood-washed sinner, come unto My eternal glory."

O Heavens! Is not this a wondrous call?—To be called to Glory? Called to the shining streets and pearly gates? Called to the harps and to the songs of eternal happiness? And better still, called to Jesus' bosom—called to His Father's face—called, not to eternal glory, but to HIS eternal glory—called to that very glory and honor with which God invests Himself forever? And now, Beloved, is any prayer too great after this? Has God called me to Heaven and is there anything on earth He will deny me? If He has called me to dwell in Heaven—is not perfection necessary for me? May I not therefore ask for it? If He has called me to Glory, is it not necessary that I should be strengthened to fight my way there? May I not ask for strengthening? If there is a mercy upon earth too great for me to think of, too large for me to conceive, too heavy for my language to carry it before the Throne in prayer—He will do for me exceeding abundantly above what I can ask, or even I can think. I know He will, because He has called me to His eternal glory.

The last reason why the Apostle expected that his benediction would be fulfilled was this—"Who has called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus." It is a singular fact that no promise is ever so sweet to the Believer as those in which the name of Christ is mentioned. If I have to preach a

comforting sermon to desponding Christians, I would never select a text which did not enable me to lead the desponding one to the Cross. Does it not seem too much to you, Brothers and Sisters, this morning, that the God of all grace should be your God? Does it not surpass your faith that He should actually have called you? Do you not sometimes doubt as to whether you were called at all? And when you think of eternal glory, does not the question arise, "Shall I ever enjoy it? Shall I ever see the face of God with acceptance?"

Oh, Beloved, when you hear of Christ, when you know that this grace comes through Christ and the calling through Christ and the glory through Christ, then you say, "Lord, I can believe it now, if it is through Christ." It is not a hard thing to believe that Christ's blood was sufficient to purchase every blessing for me. If I go to God's treasury without Christ, I am afraid to ask for anything, but when Christ is with me I can then ask for everything. For surely I think He deserves it though I do not. If I can claim His merits then I am not afraid to plead. Is perfection too great a blessing for God to give to Christ? Oh, no. Is the keeping, the stability, the preservation of the blood-bought ones too great a reward for the terrible agonies and sufferings of the Savior? I think not. Then we may with confidence plead, because everything comes through Christ.

I would in concluding make this remark. I wish, my Brothers and Sisters, that during this year you may live nearer to Christ than you have ever done before. Depend upon it, it is when we think much of Christ that we think little of ourselves, little of our troubles and little of the doubts and fears that surround us. Begin from this day and may God help you. Never let a single day pass over your head without a visit to the garden of Gethsemane and the Cross on Calvary. And as for some of you who are not saved and know not the Redeemer, I would to God that this very day you would come to Christ. I dare say you think coming to Christ is some terrible thing—that you need to be prepared before you come. That He is hard and harsh with you. When men have to go to a lawyer they need to tremble. When they have to go to the doctor they may fear—though both those persons, however unwelcome—may be often necessary.

But when you come to Christ, you may come boldly. There is no fee required. There is no preparation necessary. You may come just as you are. It was a brave saying of Martin Luther's, when he said, "I would run into Christ's arms even if He had a drawn sword in His hand." Now, He has not a drawn sword, but He has His wounds in His hands. Run into His arms, poor Sinner. "Oh," you say, "May I come?" How can you ask the question? You are *commanded* to come! The great command of the Gospel is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus." Those who disobey this command disobey God. It is as much a command of God that man should believe on Christ, as that we should love our neighbor.

Now, what is a command I have certainly a right to obey. There can be no question, you see. A sinner has liberty to believe in Christ because he is told to do so. God would not have told him to do a thing which he must not do. You are allowed to believe. "Oh," says one, "that is all I want to know. I do believe that Christ is able to save to the uttermost. May I rest

my soul on Him and say, 'sink or swim, most blessed Jesus, you are my Lord' "? *May* do it, Man? Why you are commanded to do it. Oh that you may be enabled to do it. Remember, this is not a thing which you will do at a risk . The risk is in *not* doing it. Cast yourself on Christ, Sinner. Throw away every other dependence and rest alone on him.

"No," says one, "I am not prepared." Prepared! Sir? Then you do not understand me. There is no preparation needed. It is, just as you are. "Oh, I do not feel my need enough." I know you do not. What has that to do with it? You are commanded to cast yourself on Christ. Be you ever so black, or ever so bad, trust to Him. He that believes on Christ shall be saved, be his sins ever so many. He that believes not must be damned be his sins ever so few. The great command of the Gospel is, "Believe." "Oh," says one, "am I to say I know that Christ died for me?" Ah, I did not say that, you shall learn that by-and-by. You have nothing to do with that question now, your business is to believe on Christ and trust Him. To cast yourself into His hands. And may God the Spirit now sweetly compel you to do it.

Now, Sinner, hands off your own righteousness. Drop all idea of becoming better through your own strength. Cast yourself flat on the promise. Say—

***"Just as I am without one plea,
But that Your blood was shed for me,
And that You bid me come to You.
Oh, Lamb of God! I come, I come."***

You cannot trust in Christ and find Him to deceive you. Now, have I made myself plain? If there were a number of persons here in debt and if I were to say, "If you will simply trust to me your debts, they shall be paid and no creditor shall ever molest you," you would understand me directly. How is it you cannot comprehend that trusting in Christ will remove all your debts, take away all your sins and you shall be saved eternally?

Oh, Spirit of the living God, open the understanding to receive and the heart to obey and may many a soul here present cast itself on Christ. On all such, as on all Believers, do I again pronounce the benediction, with which I shall dismiss you. "May the God of all grace, who has called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, After you have suffered a while, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you"!

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