

# THE FATHER AND THE SON

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A SERMON  
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*“And truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.”*  
*1 John 1:3.*

THE 12 Apostles were favored with the most intimate communion with our blessed Lord, but I can hardly say that they entered into fellowship with Him during His life on earth. Each of them might have been asked the question that our Savior put to one of them—“Have I been so long a time with you and yet have you not known Me, Philip?” But after Christ had ascended to Heaven and the Spirit of God had rested upon His disciples and in proportion as the Spirit did rest upon them, all that they had seen, heard and handled of their Lord became a means of communion between Himself and them. They were then able to realize what a very near, dear, deep and familiar communion had been possible to them through having spent some three years or so with Him in public and in private and having actually seen Him, heard His voice and felt the touch of His hands.

Now, since their literal hearing, seeing and touching Christ did not create communion with Him apart from the work of the Spirit, we need not so much regret, as we might otherwise have done, that we never saw, or heard, or touched the Savior—because we, also, without seeing, or hearing, or touching Him, can believe in Him and rejoice that He said, “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.” And, further, as it is through faith, rather than by sight, or hearing, or feeling that the Spirit of God operates upon us, when we believe the witness of the Apostles concerning Christ, the Spirit of God will bless their message to us and we shall enter into the Apostles’ fellowship! What the Apostles learned, they learned in order that they might tell others. All that John saw, he was prepared to speak of according to his ability, that others might have fellowship with him and, dear Friends, remember that if you ever learn anything of Christ—if you have any enjoyment of His Presence at any time—it is not for you, alone, but for others to share with you! When fellowship is the sweetest, your desire is the strongest that others may have fellowship with you and when, truly, your fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ, you earnestly wish that the whole Christian brotherhood may share the blessing with you. My great

desire, just now, is not so much to preach to you *as to lead you*, by the Holy Spirit's gracious assistance, into the actual enjoyment of that which the Apostles possessed, that, believing, as we do, their testimony, we might thereby enter into their fellowship!

First, I am going to try to answer this question, *What is this fellowship with the Father and with His Son in general?* Secondly, I want to show you how we *can enjoy this fellowship in meeting, as we do, to celebrate the sacred Supper in memory of our ascended Lord.*

**I. First, then, WHAT IS THIS FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FATHER AND WITH HIS SON WHICH THE APOSTLES ENJOYED AND WHICH THEY WISHED US TO SHARE WITH THEM?**

Let me give you an illustration to show you what fellowship is. Yet, while I use it, I regret that it falls so far short of the Truth of God I wish to illustrate, yet I know not of a better one. Suppose that a great plague raged in London, like that which carried off so many of the population in years gone by? And suppose that there lived, in this city, a father and a son whose one care was for the healing of others. Suppose you lived in the same house as they lived in and that you saw the intimate affection existing between them? And suppose that you were in their council chamber when they consulted together as to what was to be done for the perishing citizens? You would mark the resolve of the son to make a sacrifice of himself from day to day by going into the homes of those who were dying with the plague. You would observe him as, with his father's smile resting upon him, he went forth to his work. You were privileged to live in the house while the work of rescue was going on and you saw how the sick ones were being plucked from the grip of the terrible disease, like brands from the burning. You watched the father's love and the son's self-sacrifice—and you were filled with admiration of them.

Now, that being taken as a supposition, feeble as it is, I want to ground upon that my description of what is meant by fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. You must not, however, confuse fatherhood and sonship, as they exist among men, with these relationships as they stand towards God, for it is the eternal Father and the eternal Son with whom we are to be brought into fellowship and the terms that are used in speaking of them are accommodated to our poor understandings—but they are not to be *literally* construed and, they are especially not to be understood in any *carnal* sense, nor to be applied to the *unregenerate*.

Well, suppose we are living in such a house as I have tried to describe to you—the first thing necessary for fellowship with such a father and such a son would be *mutual communication*. To live in the house where they were, yet never to speak to them, or to be spoken to by them, would be no sort of fellowship! Merely to know that there were such persons in the house and to know that they were engaged in such blessed work as that would not make us partakers with them and would not give us communion with them. We must speak to them and they must speak to us. And the speaking, on both sides, must be of a kind, loving sort—not,

on our part, that which would offend them, nor, on their part—that which would imply anger towards us. That is the very beginning of our fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. There must be mutual communication between us. We must have heard the voice of God in our hearts and we must have spoken to God from our hearts. You cannot enjoy this fellowship, my Friend, whatever you say, unless your soul has learned to speak with God in prayer and praise—and unless your ears have learned to listen to whatever He says to you through His Book and by His Spirit, through His ministers and in Creation and Providence. His voice is sounding everywhere and, in order to fellowship with Him you must have the ears that hear and the heart that believes what He says to you. And you also must have a tongue that responds to His voice, for there can be no true communion without mutual communication. Do you not perceive the kinship of the two words, *communion and communication*, communion and conversation? This there must be or there will be no true fellowship.

Now think of our illustration again, but transfer it to the higher sphere. You are living in the house and you are sick with the plague. Yet, suffering in that fashion in the house where the one business carried on is the healing of the sick, I will suppose that *you refuse to put yourself under the care of the son, who is the great physician*. If you despise his remedies, or delay receiving them, you cannot be said to have any true fellowship with him. Evidently you do not appreciate his efforts on behalf of others, or you would be willing to accept his services on your own account. It is his business to save, yet you are not saved. He is quite close to you and he is able, with a single touch of his hand, to heal you, yet you will not permit his skill to be exercised upon you. Then, clearly, you do not believe in him, for you do not desire to submit yourself to him! And it is equally clear that you have no fellowship with him and cannot have any. If we are to have any fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, we must, first of all surrender these poor sinful souls of ours into His dear hands—and we must go to the Father and say to Him, “Father, we have sinned.” And as we gaze, by faith, upon the atoning Sacrifice, we must say, “But although we must confess that we have sinned, there is the blood that makes atonement for sin—therefore, Father, accept us because we put our trust in Your only-begotten Son.”

This is essential to true fellowship and, as you will see, it is a part of it. So here you are, first of all, in communication with the Father and the Son and, secondly, reconciled to God by the death of His Son—healed of the awful, soul-destroying plague of sin. And thus you have taken two steps upon the great highway of fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ! And you can sing with Toplady—

**“For Your free electing favor, You,  
O Father, we adore!  
Jesus, our atoning Savior,  
You we worship evermore!”**

But it is necessary, further, supposing us to be living in the house with this father and son and desiring to have full fellowship with them,

that we should have *an intelligent apprehension of the work they are doing*. Suppose we know as a matter of general knowledge that they are healing the sick, but we are not aware of the self-denials to which that well-beloved son has exposed himself, or of the bountiful heart of that generous father who was willing even to yield up his son to endure all the perils of the plague for the sake of those who were smitten by it? If we do not know as much as this, we cannot have anything like full fellowship with the father and the son, but in proportion as we study the details of their work—and perceive the adaptation of what they are doing to the great end they have in view—we shall be sure to have fellowship with them. So, Beloved, when you are yourselves saved, study to know more and more about both Christ and the Father! Dive deeply into the great mystery of the Divine Purposes of Love and Mercy. See how the Father ordained, before the foundation of the world, that in the race of mankind He would find exponents of His boundless love who will make known to principalities and powers, in the heavenly places, throughout eternity, the manifold riches of His Grace. See, too, how He laid upon His Son the work of healing this sin-smitten world. Study every detail that you can ascertain concerning the Father and the Son—the minutest touch upon the canvas is worthy of a century's study, so full is every point of deep mystery and rich instruction to the soul. And I am persuaded that as you increase in the knowledge of the Father and of His Son Jesus Christ through the Revelation of the Divine Spirit, you will also increase your fellowship with the Father and with His Son!

We advance still further *when this work, which is being done by those whom we are in such close contact, commands our intense approbation and admiration*. Turning, for a minute, simply to our illustration, think of the heroic father and of his self-denying son and say to yourself, “How amazing it is that these plague-stricken people should be allowed to come and howl and rage against him under his very window! Yet all the while he is living for them—how strange it is that these very people who in the madness that follows from their disease, even seek the life of his son, the great physician! Nevertheless they are the objects of that great physician's sedulous care and he is ready to lay down his life for them if he may save them!” You would thus find your heart going out in admiration of that father and son and such undeserved and disinterested love as theirs would bring you into fellowship with them. Now lift the illustration again into the higher sphere, and see, through it, the grand design of God to make His foes His friends, to change rebels into loyal courtiers, to make ingrates into sons and daughters and to lift up the heirs of wrath and cause them to sit with Him as kings and priests upon His Throne! When you see how Christ comes down to raise this world up from the gulf into which it had fallen and, like another Atlas—only far greater—to bear upon His shoulders the weight of the world's sin, you cannot help admiring Him! And as you admire and approve, you enter into a still higher measure of fellowship with the Father and with His Son.

You get on to a further stage when, at last *you are able to enter into sympathy with the Divine Workers*. Suppose (to go back to our illustration), you lived in the house with that father and son and saw this work of mercy going on day after day—poor starving and dying people being picked up, placed in the hospital and healed—and that great physician, the son, perpetually suffering in order that he might heal them, enduring all manner of insults and ignominy at their hands, yet always determining to save them? You would come, at last, to feel such sympathy with both father and son that the plague-stricken people would be almost as much the objective of your care as of theirs! You would be worked up into enthusiasm for the poor sufferers and you would feel that it was such a blessed work to help in caring for them that if it were possible, you would wish to be engaged in it. You begin to take an interest in all the details of the service and you rejoice as you hear of one and another of the sick ones being restored. You feel that you must love the self-denying physician who is giving up comfort, ease, honor—everything—to save the suffering and dying people. You feel such sympathy with him in the work that he is doing that you could kiss his feet. And when you hear of his being despised and rejected, you feel that you could wash his feet with your tears of regret that he should be treated in so shameful a fashion.

You are getting into fellowship with him now! And when I look at my dear Lord and Master and think of the Father and the Son planning and working with heart and soul for the salvation of the chosen. And when I see sinners saved one by one, or even by hundreds delivered from sin and made fit for Heaven, my soul feels a deep sympathy with this glorious work! Do you not also feel it, dear Friends? Do you not wish that sinners may be saved? Do you not pray that they may be? Does not your heart feel intense sympathy with the eternal purpose of the Father and the gracious work of the Savior? If so, you are having fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ!

I can suppose that living in the house with that father and son, *you would want to go still further and share their work*. If you had been cured by the skill of the physician, you would feel so intensely sympathetic with him in the great work that he is carrying on that, somewhat timidly and humbly, you would venture to say, “Can I be of any use? Can I carry the medicine, or put on the bandages, or give a cup of cold water to fevered lips, or wipe a tear from a weeping eye, or sit up at night with the sick who need to be watched and tended? Or can I even clean the floor of the house, or unloose the laces of the physician’s shoes?—

**“My God, I feel the mournful scene,  
My heart yearns over dying men  
And wishes my pity would reclaim  
And snatch the firebrands from the flame.”**

And if, as will be sure to be the case when you are doing something for Christ, some of the patients begin to mock you, as they mocked Him, that will reveal to you another phase of fellowship with Him. Then you will understand why He was so patient, for you will need to ask Him to make you patient. And when your words of warning, or instruction, or

comfort are rejected, as His were, you will go to Him and say, "O Savior, I understand now a little of what Your griefs were when You were despised and rejected of men, for they have rejected Your Word which You did put in my mouth." In struggling to do good to others, you will meet with such rebuffs, misrepresentations, difficulties and direct oppositions that you will go to the Savior and say to Him, "O my Lord, I can now understand You better—not that I am anything like what I ought to be, but even my failures help me to see more of Your Sovereign patience and Your mighty love. O Divine Self-Denier—wondrous Self-Sacrificer—I would never have had such fellowship with You as I now have if You had not permitted me to take some humble part in this, Your great and glorious work!"

So now you see. You have reached a point a long way ahead of where we started. You are now enjoying fellowship with the Father and with the Son because you have become a co-worker with God! We put our puny hands to the great work which He has undertaken and He strengthens our weak hands to do marvels for His name's sake. He works mightily within us and so we are able to work for Him and to have fellowship with Him. To come to the climax of all, I will suppose that you are living in that house of mercy which has been my figure all along and that you throw your whole soul so completely into the work that is carried on there that you say to the father and son, "This work so fully commands my sympathy and so delights my heart that I am quite carried away with enthusiasm for it. I admire the characters and I love the persons of those with whom I dwell—and now I ask that all I am and all I have may be used for the furtherance of this work—that I may not be reckoned merely as a lodger in this house, but be regarded as one of the family and that from henceforth, I, in my poor, humble capacity—for I am less than nothing—may never be personally mentioned again, but may be considered as part and parcel of this great mysterious firm whose existence means nothing but good to the city, and whose influence is all being employed for the health of the inhabitants."

You know what I mean—lifting the illustration to the higher sphere—and it is well if you can say to the Lord, at last, "My Lord, henceforth for me to live shall be to do what You will and to give myself wholly up to seek those for whom Christ lived here below and upon which the Father's heart has always been set. Father, You will that Your Truth should be known wherever lies have, at present, the dominion—then give me Grace, I pray You, to will it, too, and to publish Your Truth everywhere according to the measure of my ability. You will that the nations of the earth should be subdued unto your Son and become His loyal subjects—then, I pray You to put me into the ranks of the legions by whom You will achieve this glorious victory."

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, you will indeed have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ when *you are nothing* and Christ is everything! When you do not live to make money, or to attain to earthly honor, or to gain comfort, or anything else for yourselves, but when each of you can say, "This one thing will I do, for Christ will I live,

and for Christ will I be content even to die so that to the utmost ends of the earth His name and fame may be made known.”—

***“I want to live as one who knows  
Your fellowship of love.  
As one whose eyes can pierce beyond  
The pearl-built gates above.  
As one who daily speaks to You,  
And hears Your voice Divine,  
With depths of tenderness declare,  
‘Beloved, you are Mine!’”***

**II.** Now, in the second place, I have to briefly answer the second question—HOW MAY FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FATHER AND WITH THE SON BE ENJOYED IN THE CELEBRATION OF THE LORD’S SUPPER?

As you all know, the Lord’s Supper is the memorial feast in which we are to show, or proclaim, the Lord’s death “till He comes.” Come He will and our hearts cry to Him, “Even so, come quickly, good Master!” This Supper sets forth His death and the way in which we derive benefit from it, namely, by receiving Him spiritually into our souls even as we take the bread and wine literally into our bodies and assimilate them so that they become part of ourselves. Well, then, how can we have fellowship with God in showing forth the death of Christ by means of this memorial supper?

I think we can do so, first, *by coming to the conclusion that the Sacrifice of Christ was an absolute necessity.* We are fully persuaded that God the Father would never have given up His only-begotten Son to die for human guilt if there had been any other way of saving lost sinners—and also that Jesus Christ would never have taken upon Himself the awful burden of human guilt and agreed to be bruised of the Father if it had not been absolutely essential that He should die, or that man should, or that justice should—it had to be one of the three! God the Father agreed with God the Son that this colossal Sacrifice was necessary. My Soul, do you also agree that it was necessary? Do you see that there was no loophole for your escape except through the bleeding Savior’s wounds? Will you now admit with all your heart that the Father’s wisdom was right and that the Son’s wisdom was right? Has the Spirit of God taught you that this was the best plan of salvation that could possibly have been devised? Looking all around, have you come to the conclusion that there is no salvation by works, no salvation by tears and no salvation anywhere but by the blood of God’s only-begotten and well-beloved Son? If any of you have come to that conclusion, you have thereby entered into fellowship with the Father and with the Son, for they have long ago come to the same conclusion!

Then, next, dear Friends, while you are sitting around the Communion Table, *endeavor to think of the sufferings of Christ so that you will, in your measure, enter into the moods of His mind while He was suffering for you.* As He felt a great horror of sin, pray the Lord to make you feel intense horror of it—and let the very thought of it wound you as it wounded Him. He felt the shame of sin—then ask the Holy Spirit to teach you how

shameful it is. In your mind and heart, crown sin with a crown of thorns like that with which it crowned your Lord. And spit at sin, and scoff at sin, even as sin did scoff and spit at your Lord! Yet further, our Lord Jesus felt that justice must be honored—so feel in your soul, as you come to the Table, that the Justice of God must be honored, magnified and glorified. Have fellowship with Christ in feeling that, cost what it may, God is never unjust. Agree to that in your heart of hearts and you will be having fellowship with the Father and with the Son while you are so agreeing!

Go over in your mind all the griefs and woes that your dear Lord endured and remember how He resolved that for the joy that was set before Him, they were all things to be despised. Do you feel that any losses and cross which you may have to bear for His sake, or any scorn or persecution that may ever come upon you because you belong to Christ are things that are only to be reckoned as the small dust of the balance in comparison with the glory of God? Then you are drinking of Christ's cup and being baptized with His Baptism—and having fellowship with Him in His sufferings. Let your thoughts travel along the road to Gethsemane and from Gethsemane to the accursed gallows on the hill of Calvary. In your meditation follow your Lord and ask Him to let you drink of the brook by the way, as He did, that you also may lift up your head—and in that way you will have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. You may even adopt the rapturous language of Faber and sing—

***“I love to kiss each print where  
Christ did set His pilgrim feet,  
Nor can I fear that blessed path  
Whose traces are so sweet.”***

Then, again, Beloved, I pray the Holy Spirit *to help you and to help me to glorify God concerning the death of Christ while we are at His Table.* As you eat the bread and drink the wine, think of what Christ suffered and of the mysterious way in which His sufferings have brought Glory to the Father's name. I do verily believe that when Christ bore the sins of His people up to the tree—and away from the tree—the Justice of God was more honored than it would have been if all the elect had been sent to Hell forever! If our sins had been punished upon ourselves with the utmost rigor of the Divine Law, that Law would not have been as honored throughout the entire universe of intelligent beings as it now must be when they hear that God, Himself, would sooner pay the penalty of sin than allow His Law to be broken with impunity! O august death of Christ in which God, Himself, becomes the sacrificial Victim and bleeds and dies rather than that on the spotless tablets of His Law, any stain should be made, even though it should be by the finger of His mercy! Glorify God, then! Praise Him and let your whole soul extol Him for this wondrous arrangement of Grace—

***“So just to God, so safe for man”—***

for so you will be having fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. You probably remember that the line I just quoted was writ-



ten by Dr. Watts in praise of the Gospel. And I hope that you can say with him—

***“What if we trace the globe around,  
And search from Britain to Japan,  
There shall be no religion found  
So just to God, so safe for man!  
How well Your blessed Truths agree!  
How wise and holy Your commands!  
Your promises, how firm they be!  
How firm our hope and comfort stands!  
Should all the forms that men devise  
Assault my faith with treacherous art,  
I’d call them vanity and lies,  
And bind the Gospel to my heart.”***

Next, you can enter into fellowship at the Communion Table *by loving Christ, your Mediator, as well as by glorifying God the Father.* You know that God loves Jesus Christ. I mean, the Man Christ Jesus, God and Man in one Person. He loves Him not only in His essential Godhead, as He must always love Him, but He also loves Him for His work’s sake. With what delight do the Father’s eyes rest on His Son! How sweetly does He say to Him, “Well done!” How does He delight to honor and glorify Him! Do you not also feel something of the same sort of love to Christ as you gather around His Table? Ask the Spirit of God to cause you to be enamored of Christ and to make Him to be “altogether lovely” in your eyes. Pray for such a view of Him that your inmost heart shall melt under the Divine passion of love to your dear Lord. Let His wounds be the charm to win you. Let His spotless Character be the beauty to enthrall you. And when you thus love Christ, you will perceive that as God the Father loves Christ even more than that, you will have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ!

We do not invite you to come and *kneel* around the Communion Table, for there is nothing upon it to be worshipped. But when the breaking of bread is being celebrated, we ask you to sit as much at your ease as you can, just as the Last Supper was instituted by our Lord. Those who gathered round that table reclined in the Oriental posture of repose. We cannot do that, nor would it be in harmony with our usual idea of what is reverent and seemly. At the paschal feast they stood with their loins girded and their staves in their hands, for they were about to depart in haste into the wilderness. You have no need to do that, but you may sit at this Table as one who is at rest—and so you may have fellowship with God—for do you not know that this feast celebrates Christ’s rest? His blood has been shed, His body broken—He has become food for our souls! His Redemption work is finished! He has gone His way until He shall come, the second time, to drink the new wine in the Kingdom of His Father. Christ rests, so if you also rest you will be in sympathy with His finished work.

Remember also that God rests. When Noah offered a sacrifice to God, Jehovah smelled a sweet savor of rest—not in Noah’s sacrifice, but in what Noah’s sacrifice typified and symbolized—that is, in the Sacrifice of

Christ. If I may use such an expression concerning You, O blessed God, Your Sabbath was broken by man's sin. It grieved God that He had made man because he so rebelled against Him and dishonored Him. And, therefore, the Lord had no rest. But when He saw Christ on the Cross—a Man who had done all His will, suffering all His will—God, as well as Man, bearing human sin in His own Person—it pleased the Lord to bruise Him and to put Him to grief. But when He had done it and the Son had finished His Sacrifice and come home, then the Father rested! He could rest in His love and rejoice over His Church with singing, for the ransom price for her Redemption was paid, the battle was fought and the victory won forever! Sin was overcome, the old serpent's head was broken, Hell was vanquished and death was doomed to die! And it is now only a matter of time when the gleaming banners of Christ, lit with the light of victory, shall be borne aloft after the final fight of Armageddon—and when that is over there shall go up this mighty shout which every star shall hear—while Heaven's heights shall echo and re-echo the strain and the deeps of Hell are stirred with the wondrous chorus of the redeemed, "Hallelujah, Hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns"—reigns because of the Cross—reigns because Christ was there able to say, "It is finished!"

Come then, Beloved, and rest, for so you will have fellowship with God, Himself! Let no sense of sin disturb you—no distracting thoughts annoy you. Say to yourself, "God is satisfied with Christ's work and so am I. God has said, 'It is enough' and what is enough for the Infinite God is surely enough for me." The Lord bless you, as you come to His Table, for His Son's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
1 JOHN 1; 2:1-6.**

May that Divine Spirit who inspired every Word of this wonderful letter, bless it to all our hearts as we read it!

**1 John 1:1.** *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled, of the Word of life.* You remember how John begins his Gospel—"In the beginning was the Word," and how, a little later, he says, "In Him was life." The Holy Spirit seems to have recalled those expressions to his mind, for He moves him to use them again. Note how clearly, how explicitly John writes concerning the Logos, the eternal Word. He says, "That which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled of the Word of life...that declare we unto you." The facts of Christ's history on earth are recorded by eyewitnesses who could not be deceived concerning them. They exercised their various senses with regard to Christ—hearing, seeing and touching Him again and again. They were veracious witnesses and they died in testimony of their faith in what they asserted. And when anything has been heard, seen, inspected and even touched and handled

by a company of reliable witnesses, the testimony of such witnesses concerning it must be accepted as true.

**2.** *(For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us).* John and his fellow Apostles were eyewitnesses of the coming to earth of God in human flesh—the indwelling of the Word of Life in a body like our own.

**3, 4.** *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.* Hear this, you people of God! The objective of the Revelation of Jesus Christ is that you may have joy—yes, that you may have a heart full of joy and that you may know what full joy means, for here below we get but drops and dashes of joy unless we are brought into fellowship with God through Jesus Christ! But then, we have the very joy of God in our souls! Oh, the delight of it! Oh, that you could all know it to the fullest!

**5.** *This, then, is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.* That is to say, God is knowledge, God is truth, God is purity. “God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.” There is no darkness of sin, or ignorance, or error about God.

**6.** *If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not tell the truth.* He who walks in ignorance and sin is in fellowship with the powers of darkness—he is certainly not in fellowship with God who is light!

**7.** *But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.* So that in the very highest state to which we can attain in this world, namely, walking in the light, as God is in the light and having fellowship with Him, *even then we shall sin and shall still need the blood of Christ to cleanse us from its stain.* So those exceedingly err who say that the Christian can or does live utterly free from sin! Either they have lowered the standard by which they judge the actions of men, or they excuse themselves on some Antinomian principle—or else they must be altogether ignorant of the Truth of God about the matter—for “if we walk in the light, as God is in the light” and have fellowship with Him, still, “the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” And, therefore, there is sin needing to be cleansed, for Christ does no work as a superfluity! But what a mercy it is for us to feel the continual cleansing of the precious blood of Jesus so that if we sin through ignorance, or if we sin by omission or by commission, that precious blood constantly keeps us so pure that we can still walk with God!

**8.** *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.* It does not matter, either, in what sense we say it! We may try to beguile ourselves with the idea that we say it in some peculiar Gospel

sense, but, “we deceive ourselves” if we say it in any sense whatever, *for we have sin and we do sin!*

**9.** *If we confess our sins.* That is the point! And he who says that he has no sins will not confess them! He who believes himself to be perfect cannot enjoy the blessing described in this 9<sup>th</sup> verse. To deny that we have any sin is to walk in darkness and to show we are without the light which would reveal our sin to us! And if we are walking in darkness we cannot be in fellowship with God. But to see sin in ourselves from day to day—humbly to confess it and mourn over it—is to walk in the light. And walking in the light we shall have fellowship with God who is light. “If we confess our sins”—

**9, 10.** *He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His Word is not in us.*

**1 John 2:1.** *My little children, these things I write unto you, that you sin not.* That you may abstain from it, abhor it and not indulge in anything that would lead you towards it.

**1.** *And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous.* We are to seek to live a perfectly holy life, but inasmuch as we constantly fall short of that ideal, here is our comfort—we still have an Advocate—we still have One who undertakes our cause and pleads for us before His Father’s Throne!

**2.** *And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.* Whoever comes to Him shall receive deliverance from sin. Neither Jew nor Gentile is exclusively considered in the offering of the Atonement of Christ—those for whom He died are of every race, color, class and kin.

**3-6.** *And hereby we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He that says, I know Him, and keeps not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him. He that says he abides in Him ought himself also so to walk even as He walked.* May the Holy Spirit graciously lead us all to this extraordinary walk of Grace, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

### **HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—798, 807.**

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

# FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

## NO. 409

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 15, 1861,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“That which we have seen and heard we declare unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.”  
1 John 1:3.***

FELLOWSHIP with God was one of the richest privileges of unfallen man. The Lord God walked in the Garden and talked with Adam as a man talks with his friend. So long as he was willing and obedient, Adam ate the fat of the land. Among the rich dainties and “wines on the lees well refined,” of which his soul was a partaker—we must number first and foremost—unbroken communion with God, his Father and his Friend. Sin, as it banished man from Eden, banished man from God. And from that time *our* face has been turned from the Most High and *His* face has been turned from us—we have hated God and God has been angry with us every day.

Christ came into the world to restore to us our lost patrimony. It was the great object of His wondrous sacrifice to put us into a position which should be equal and even superior to that which we occupied in Adam before the Fall. And as He has already restored to us many things that we lost, so also among the best—fellowship with God. They who have by His grace believed and have by the precious blood been washed, have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord. They are “no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God.” They have access with boldness into this grace wherein we stand. So they who are in the kingdom and under the dispensation of the second Adam have restored to them in all its fullness that fellowship which was lost to them by the sin and disobedience of their first federal head.

The Apostle John was among the number of those who had enjoyed this privilege with Christ in His flesh. He had been Christ’s chosen companion, elect out of the elect to a choice and peculiar privilege. During the incarnation he was one of the favored three who had enjoyed the closest intimacy with the Redeemer. He had seen Christ in His transfiguration, had witnessed the raising of the dead maid, had been with the Lord in the garden and he had lingered with Him even when the thrust was given after death and the blood and water flowed from His pierced heart.

John had the nearest, the dearest, the closest fellowship with Christ in the flesh. As he had laid his head upon Christ’s bosom so had he laid all his thoughts and all the emotions of his mind upon the heart’s love and divine affection of his Lord and Master. But Christ was gone. It was no more possible to hear His voice, to see Him with eyes, or to handle Him with hands. Yet John had not lost His fellowship, though he knew Him no more after the flesh, yet he knew Him after a nobler sort.

Nor was his fellowship less real, less close, less sweet, or less divine than it had been when he had walked and talked with Him and had been privileged to eat and drink with Him at that last sacred feast. John says, "Truly our fellowship *is*"—not *was*—"is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ."

And now my Brothers and Sisters in the common faith of our Lord Jesus, this morning I trust that many of us can say, "Our fellowship *is* with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." Did the Apostle John need to say, "Truly"—as much as though some doubted or denied it? We, too, have sometimes an occasion to make as solemn an affirmation as he has done. There are certain sects who exalt the form of their *church government* into a *sine qua non* of piety and they say of us that it is impossible that we should have a fellowship with Christ because we follow not after *them*.

Because we reject not the ministry which God has appointed—to take up with some newly-devised scheme by which everyone is to instruct his brother—therefore we have not the fellowship which is reserved for their sect and party. We have been led, when they have spoken very bitterly, to question ourselves. But after deep searching of heart, in reply to them we can say, "Brethren, whether you are right, or we are right in the matter of church discipline or organization, yet we can assure you that 'truly our fellowship *is* with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.'"

And oftentimes the man who thinks more of the doctrine of Christ than of the Person of Christ—and couples therewith the conceit that he himself must be right and all others wrong. Because we may not be able to endorse all the heights of *his* doctrine, or, on the other hand, may not be able to join with him in his legal statements—he says, "O these people! There are many of them, but they can have no fellowship with God, because they do not sound our Shibboleth. They do not join with us in every separate dogma which we teach and therefore the Lord is not with them."

Ah, but we can say to them, "Brethren, we are content to leave these doctrinal disputes to the Great Arbitrator of right and wrong. We have formed our opinion of Scripture. We hope, as in the sight of God and as before the Most High, we can say we have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. But whether this is so or not, we protest to you, 'Truly,' yes, 'truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.'" And perhaps the experimentalist—the man who attaches undue importance to his own particular form of experience—may cry out that this minister has not had the same experience of human depravity as himself.

He may condemn us utterly because we do not give prominence to a certain favorite but unhealthy standard of spiritual conviction. Well, we can say to him, "We have preached what we know, we have testified what we have seen and if we cannot go to all the heights and depths and lengths and breadths, as yet—we hope to grow. But we can say, even should you doubt our declaration, 'Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.'"

This brings me immediately and directly to the text. You will perceive that there is suggested by the text *a quiet investigation leading to a most solemn affirmation*. "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His

Son Jesus Christ.” And then there is, secondly, in the former part of the text, *a most affectionate desire leading to appropriate action*. Our desire is that you may have fellowship with us and, therefore, “that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you.”

I. First, then, let us in all quietude and stillness of heart talk this matter over with one another and see if it is not so that we have had and do have real FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FATHER AND WITH HIS SON JESUS CHRIST.

Now, Brethren, we *have* had fellowship with the FATHER. In order to have fellowship with any man there must be a *concord of heart*. “Can two walk together unless they are agreed?” At the very bottom of fellowship there must be a likeness. We must have like wishes, like desires. We must have espoused like ends and our spirits must be welded together in the intention to effect like purposes. Now I think we can avow, this morning, in the first place, that we do feel a sweet concord with God in *His eternal purposes*. I read the Book of God and I find that He has ordained Christ to be the Head of His Church and that He has chosen unto Himself “a number that no man can number.”

I find it revealed in the Word of God that He is a God of distinguishing and discriminating grace. That He “will have mercy on whom He will have mercy and will have compassion on whom He will have compassion.” That He will bring many sons unto glory, “to the praise of the glory of His grace wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved.” Brethren, cannot you and I say, as in the sight of a heart-searching God, we have full accord with God in His purposes? Why, we love them, we delight in them! The decrees of God are satisfactory to us. If it were possible for us to alter the roll in which His divine intentions are written we would not do it.

We feel that whatever He has ordained must be right and as for His ordination of His people unto eternal life and His loving them above all people that are on the face of the earth—why this is one of the richest joys that we know! The *doctrine of election* is a sweet cordial to the child of God. I can cry, “My Father, You are King, You have chosen the base things of this world and things that are not to bring to nothing the things that are. And in this I have fellowship with You, for I can exclaim, ‘I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth that You have hid these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seems good in Your sight.’”

Again, we have fellowship with God in the object for which the purpose was first formed, namely, His own glory. Ah, the deeds of the Most High tend to manifest His majesty and glorify His Godhead. O Brethren, do not we sympathize with God in this object? Give glory unto Him, give glory unto Him, O creatures that His hand has made! The highest aspiration of our spirit, when it is most enlarged and most inflamed is that He in all things may be glorified. *He* knows, for He can read the heart, that oftentimes, when we have ourselves been bowed down and we have been made as the very dust of the earth, we have said, “This is still my comfort, that He is exalted, that *He* still reigns and does as He wills among the armies of Heaven and among the people of this lower world.”

Do you not desire *His* glory as He desires it? He has purposed to stain the pride of all human boasting and to make the world know that Jehovah is God and “that beside Him there is none else.” Do you not also desire the same? Do you not daily pray, “Let Him be magnified from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof? Let all creatures call Him blessed, let all that have breath praise, laud and magnify His name?” In this, then—in His purpose and in the object of His purpose, we have “fellowship with the Father.”

And now have we not fellowship with Him in *the plan by which He effects that purpose*? It pleased Him that in “the fullness of time, He should send forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” He laid one foundation and one only and He said concerning it, that “other foundation shall no man lay but that which is laid.” God has chosen “the Stone which the builders refused,” that it might be made the “Headstone of the corner.” This is the Lord’s doing and cannot we say, “It is wondrous in our eyes”? As He is unto God “the chief corner stone, elect, precious,” so “unto you that believe *He* is precious.”

Looking at all the plan from the beginning to the end, do you not agree with it? Does it not strike you as being the wisest, the most gracious, the most glorious scheme that could have been devised? And as from its first fountain in predestination onward to the ocean of glory, you traverse the ever-flowing stream—do you not say of it in all matchless course, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has chosen us in Him from before the foundation of the world and who having, chosen us, will glorify us and bring us to Himself at the last”?

Yes, there is not a single word that we would alter. There is not a line in this Divine Scheme that we would wish to change. If it approves itself to Him, it certainly approves itself to us. If He chose it as the plan of Divine Operation, we adore His choice, we reverence both the wisdom and the love which planned and carried out the design.

And yet more I think we may add we have fellowship with God in the most prominent *characteristics of that plan*. Throughout the whole way of salvation we have seen displayed the justice and the mercy of God, each with undimmed luster. We have seen His grace in forgiving the sinner but we have seen His holiness in avenging sin upon the Substitute. We have seen His truthfulness acting in two ways, His Truth in threat—by no means sparing the guilty. His Truth in the promise—“passing by transgression, iniquity and sin.”

Throughout the whole Divine Plan of salvation there is not a single blot upon any of the attributes of the Most High. “Holy! holy! holy! Lord God of Sabbath,” is still the song of angels—even when they see sinners who were once the vilest of the vile brought to share their joys and sing their songs. And, Brethren, do not you and I feel we have fellowship with God in this? Would you have Him unjust that you might be saved? I think you would say, “Never! Never! Not even for my sake let Him be unjust.” Would you have Him unloving to others, that He might make *you* His favorite? No! And there is no trace of anything like this.



You would not have him retract His threat, for then you might fear that He would forget His promise. I am sure as you look upon the character of God as He manifests it in the face of Jesus Christ—your soul is filled with ineffable and delightful adoration. You can sing unto Him, “Great are You, O God. Your mercy endures forever.” And taking up the words of David, you can say, “I will sing of mercy and of judgment. Unto You, O God, will I sing!” In the purpose, then, in the object of that purpose, in the plan by which the purpose is achieved and in the characteristics of that plan, the believer in Christ has fellowship or sweet concord with the Father.

But to proceed a step further—we have a most divine and precious communion with the Father in the objects of His love. When two persons love the same thing their affection becomes a tie between them. The two may love each other but when in the course of Providence children are brought into the house, their children become another bond between their parents. Each parent mutually gives their hearts to their little ones and feels that their hearts are yet more fully given the one to the other. Now there is a tie between God the Father and our souls, for did not He say, “This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”? And cannot you and I add, “Yes, He is our Beloved Savior, in whom we are well pleased”?

Is it not written, “It pleased the Father to bruise Him”? And do we not feel that we have found a divine pleasure and satisfaction in looking into His wounds, His agonies and His death? And has not the Father determined to glorify His Son Jesus? And is not the fondest thought of our heart that we may help to glorify Him here on earth and may spread His glories even in Heaven by telling to the angels and principalities and powers, the height and depth of His loving kindness? Does the Father love the Son?—even so do we love Him—not to the same infinite extent, for we are finite beings—yet with sincerity, even as the Father loves Jesus, so sincerely do we love Him—

**“A very wretch, Lord! I should prove,  
Had I no love for You;  
Rather than not my Savior love,  
O may I cease to be!”**

So in this, then, we have fellowship with the Father, seeing that we are both agreed in loving the Son. Does the Father love the *saints*?—even so do we. Does He declare that precious shall their blood be in His sight? Does He bear and carry them and show His interest for them? Has He not said that “His delight is in His people” and that “they are His peculiar portion” and his “choice heritage”? My Soul, can you not say, in the midst of all your doubts and fears—“I know that I have passed from death unto life, because I love the Brethren”? Can you not protest, “O my Heart! The excellent of the earth are all your delight. Where they dwell, I would dwell. Where they die, I would die—their portion shall be my portion, their God shall be my God forever and ever”? In this, too, we have fellowship with the Father.

But you know, Brethren, the word “fellowship” not only signifies concord of heart but it implies *a carrying out of that concord a little further, in converse or mutual communication*. May the Holy Spirit grant that we may not say a word which is not strictly verified by our experience. And I hope

we can say we have had converse with the Divine Father. We have not seen Him at any time nor have we beheld His shape. It has not been given to us, like Moses, to be put in the cleft of the rock and to see the back parts, or the train of the invisible Jehovah.

But yet we have spoken to Him. We have said to Him, "Abba, Father." We have saluted Him in that title which came from our very heart, "Our Father, who are in Heaven." We have had access to Him in such a way that we cannot have been deceived. We have found Him and through the precious blood of Christ we have come even unto His feet. We have ordered our cause before Him and we have filled our mouth with arguments. Nor has the speaking been all on our side—for He has been pleased to shed abroad—by His Spirit, His love in our hearts.

While we have felt the spirit of adoption, He, on the other hand, has showed to us the loving kindness of a tender Father. We have felt, though no sound was heard. We have known, though no angelic messenger gave us witness—that His Spirit did "bear witness with our spirits that we were born of God." We were embraced of Him—no more at a distance. We were "brought near by the blood of Christ." I trust, my Brothers and Sisters, you can each of you say—though you wish it could be more intense than it is—"I have in all these things had fellowship with the Father, for I have conversed with Him and He has spoken to me."

You can join in the words of that hymn —

***"If in my Father's love  
I share a filial part,  
Send down Your Spirit like a dove,  
To rest upon my heart."***

Furthermore and to conclude upon this point of fellowship with the Father, we can, I think, refer ourselves to the All-wise One and we can say we have had fellowship with God in this respect—that *the very thing which is His happiness has been our happiness*. That which has been the delight of His Holy Being has been a delight to us. "And what is that?" you say. Why, Brethren, does not God delight in holiness, in goodness, in mercy and in loving kindness?

And has not that been our delight, too? I am sure our greatest miseries here have been our sins. We do not murmur at our afflictions. O, if we could but get rid of those sins which bind us down and hamper us when we would mount towards Heaven. Holiness is our pleasure, purity is our delight. O, if we could but be perfect even as He is perfect and freed from sin, even as God our Father is freed from everything like iniquity—then we should be in Heaven—for this is our happiness. The same happiness which God finds in purity and righteousness, we find in it, too.

And if it is the happiness of the Father to have communion with the Persons of the Trinity—if the Father delights in His Son, even so do we delight in Him. And such a delight that if we told it to the stranger he would not believe us. And if we spoke it in the worldling's ear he would think us mad. Jesus, You are the sun of our soul. You are to us the river of which we drink, the bread of which we eat, the air we breathe. You are the basis of our life and You are the summit of it. You are the prop, the mainstay, the pillar, the beauty, the joy of our being! If we have but You, we can ask

nothing besides—for You are All in All—and if we have You not, we are wretched and undone.

So, then, we have fellowship with the Father because that which is His happiness is most certainly our happiness. And so, also, that which is the Father's *employment* is our employment. I speak not of you all, He knows whom He has chosen. We cannot join with the Father in upholding all worlds. We cannot send forth floods of light at the rising of the sun. We cannot feed the cattle on a thousand hills, nor can we give food and life to all creatures that have breath. But there is something which we can do which He does. He does good to all His creatures and we can do good also. He bears witness to His Son Jesus and we can bear witness, too.

“The Father works hitherto” that His Son may be glorified and we work, too. O You Eternal Worker! It is Yours to save souls and we are co-workers with You. We are His husbandry, we are His building. He scatters the seed of Truth, we scatter it, too. His words speak comfort and our words comfort the weary, too, when God the Spirit is with us. We hope we can say, “For us to live is Christ,,” and is not this what God lives for, too? We desire nothing so much as to glorify Him and this is the Father's will, as well as Jesus Christ's prayer, “Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You.”

Do you not see, Brethren, we stand on the same scaffold with the eternal God? When we lift our hand, He lifts up His eternal arm. When we speak, He speaks, too and speaks the same thing. When we purpose Christ's glory, He purposes that glory, too. When we long to bring home the wandering sheep and to recall the prodigal sons, He longs to do the same. In that respect we can say, “Truly we have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.”

**2.** And now I must turn with some brevity to announce also and to affirm the fact, that we have fellowship with the Son as well as with the Father. In both these matters we are like little children that have begun to speak or learn their letters. We have not yet attained. O Brethren, though I say we have fellowship with the Father, yet how little we have of it compared with what we hope to have! This fellowship is like the river in Ezekiel—at the first it is up to the ankles—afterwards it is up to the knees. And then up to the loins and then it becomes a river to swim in.

There are, I fear, few of us who have waded where there is a river to swim in. But, blessed be God, though it IS only up to the ankles, yet we have fellowship and if we have but a little of it, that little is the seed of more and the certain pledge of greater joys to come.

Well now, we have fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, I think we can say—for our hearts are united to Him—we cannot speak of this but I think we can weep about it—

***“Jesus, we love your charming name,  
‘Tis music to our ears.”***

We may sometimes have to sing—

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

But I think we can come back after all and answer, "Yes, Lord, You know all things, You know that I love You." At any rate, it is strange that I should never be happy without You. It is singular that I can find no peace anywhere but in You. If I did not love You, should I have such longings after You? Would I have such mourning and such sorrow when You are gone? Would it be so dark without You if I still were blind and would it be so bright with You if I did not see a glimmering of Your light and some rays of Your beauties? Brethren, Satan may say what he will and our sense may seem to contradict the statements but still our soul follows hard after Him. He is to us all our salvation and all our desire. We have, then, fellowship with Christ since His heart is set in us and our heart is knit to Him.

Further, we have had some small degree of fellowship with Him in His sufferings. We have not yet "resisted unto blood striving against sin," but we have carried His Cross and we have suffered His reproach. There have been some who could say—

***"Jesus, I my cross have taken  
All to leave and follow You."***

And others of us, whose path has been somewhat smoother, have nevertheless felt the cross within us—for the new spirit within us has had to contend with all that once we loved. There have been wars and fights and a perpetual conflict—not only from without—but what is far more severe, from within also. Yet if it should cause more sorrow we still would follow *Him*, for we count it as our riches that we may bear the reproach of Christ as He bore reproach for us.

I trust, my Brothers and Sisters, you that profess to be His followers do not blush to own His name. I hope you do not turn your backs in the day of battle. If you do, you may question whether your fellowship is with the Son Jesus Christ. But if you can welcome shame and hail reproach because He remembers you, then in this you have been conformed unto His death and have been made partakers of His sufferings.

I have sometimes thought it were worth all the bitterness if we might drink of His cup and be baptized with His baptism. We can have no Gethsemane with all its bloody sweat, yet we have had our Gethsemanes, too. We cannot die on Calvary, but I hope we have been crucified with Him and the world is crucified to us and we unto the world. We cannot go into the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, yet we have been buried with Him in baptism unto death, that like as Jesus Christ rose from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also might rise to newness of life.

And I hope, inasmuch as He has risen and ascended up on high—though our bodies are still here—yet we have set our affection on things above and not on things on the earth. And as He has been raised up and made to sit together with His Father, I hope we know the meaning of that passage, "He has raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." And as He is to come and reign, I hope we know also something of that—for He has made us kings and priests unto our God—and we shall reign with Him forever and ever.

From the manger to the Cross and from the Cross to the millennium, there should be in the Christian's experience a blessed fellowship. We ought to know Christ in His obscurity and littleness—the babe Christ be-

ing in our hearts. We ought to know Him in His wilderness temptations—ourselves being tempted in all points. We ought to know Him in His blasphemies and slanders—ourselves being accounted by man to be as Beelzebub and as the offscouring of all things.

We must know Him in His passion, in His agony and in His death. Then, “Thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ,” we may know Him in His triumphs, in His ascension upon high, in His seating at the right hand of God and in His coming to judge the quick and the dead. For we, too, shall judge angels through Jesus Christ our Lord. We have, I hope in some humble measure in these respects, fellowship with the Son Jesus Christ.

But our fellowship has assumed also a practical form, in that the same desires and aspirations which were in Christ when He was on the earth are in us now. Oh, we have uttered feelingly the very words of Christ, “Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” And when we could not do all we would—when there seemed to be some insuperable obstacle in the path of our usefulness—we have nevertheless said, “My meat and my drink is to do the will of Him that sent me.” And when at any time we have been wearied in the Master’s service, we have yet found such good cheer therein that we could say with Him, “I have meat to eat that you know not of.” “The zeal of Your house has eaten me up.”

And at times, in the thoughts of serving God and even of suffering for Him we have said, “I have a baptism to be baptized with and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!” For we have desired with desire to eat that Passover, that we, too might say of our humble work, “It is finished,” and commend our spirit into the eternal hand. Oh, have you ever wept with Christ as He did over poor Jerusalem? Did London’s vices ever bring the tears into your eyes? Did you ever weep over hard-hearted souls, perhaps in your own family?

Have you ever cried as He did, “How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but you would not”? Oh, I hope, without egotism, without saying more than we have really felt, we have thirsted and panted to bring others up out of their degradation and their fall till we have felt that if we might be offered ourselves, if by our sacrifice souls might be saved, we would be willing to have it said, “He saved others, himself he cannot save.” In this, then, we have had fellowship with Christ.

And yet, further—as I have said, fellowship requires converse. Oh, you daughters of Jerusalem, have we not had converse with Him? Tell of that happy day when we went forth to meet king Solomon and crowned him “with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals. And in the day of the gladness of his heart.” When he took us up into his chariot, the bottom whereof was of silver and the sides thereof lined with love for the daughters of Jerusalem and we rode in covenant safety and in royal pomp with him.

When the king came into his palace and he said, “Let the fatlings be killed, eat,” You ate abundantly and drank abundantly, O Beloved! And we ate of all His sweet wines and of all His luscious fruits which He had laid up in store for His Beloved till we said, “Stay me with flagons, comfort

me with apples, for I am sick with love, His left hand is under my head and His right arm does embrace me.” Brethren, we have leaped right out of the body to embrace Him—at least so we have thought—from excessive joy and that, too, when there was nothing in the world to give us contentment! When our prospects were blighted, when our health has failed us, when the sun of this world was quenched. Then He came forth, even He who is All in All and lifted the light of His countenance upon us.

You have had, I hope, some few of these in-flowings of love when you have eaten angels’ food, when you have forgotten the dry bread and moldy crusts that you had in the wallet of your experience and did eat the new corn of the kingdom and did drink the new wine with your Blessed and Divine Master. You no longer traveled in rumbling chariots but your soul was like the swiftly-speeding chariots of Amminadib. You flew after your Beloved in transport so divine that tongue can never tell and lips can never describe the sacred rapture. Yes, “Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.”

We have but a few minutes remaining for the second head which might very well demand an entire discourse.

**II.** There was, secondly, AN AFFECTIONATE DESIRE LEADING TO APPROPRIATE EFFORT. This affectionate desire was that others might have fellowship with us. Having found the honey, we cannot eat it alone. Having tasted that the Lord is gracious, it is one of the first instincts of the new-born nature to send us out crying, “So everyone that thirsts, come to the waters and he that has no money come, buy and eat. You all come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” We would that others had fellowship with us in all respects except our sins. For we can say with the Apostle, “I would to God that you were not only almost, but altogether such as I am, except these bonds!”

But these bonds of sin we would not wish that any should bear. Brethren, we would that you had fellowship with us in the peace we feel with God our Father, in the access which we have to His Throne, in the confidence which we have in the Truth of His promise, in the overflowing joys we experience when He manifests Himself to us! We would that you had our hopes—that you could look forward to death and the grave with the same delight as we can—expecting to be transformed into His image and to see Him as He is! We wish you had our faith, only more of it—that you might have the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen!

We wish that you had fellowship with us in prevailing prayer, that you knew how to cast your burdens upon the Lord—that you understood how to bring every blessing from on high by pleading the merits of the Savior! We wish to gather up all in one, that in everything which is lovely and of good repute, in everything which is happy, ennobling, divine and everlasting you might be made partakers and have fellowship with us!

And this desire leads the child of God to make use of an appropriate effort—and what is that? It is to tell to others what he has seen and what he has heard. Now I shall try to use that means this morning, for I think, perhaps, the illustration of fact may be better than any illustration of words. Do I not address many here who never had any fellowship with the

Father and with His Son Jesus Christ? Perhaps you hardly know what it means and when you hear what it means, you attach no importance to it. It is nothing to you to talk with God. You never dream of such a thing as speaking to Christ and Christ speaking to you. Ah, if you knew its sweetness you would never, never be content till you had it—you would thirst with such a thirst that you would never cease—but thirst till you drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem which is by the gate.

Well now, Soul, that you may have fellowship with us in these things, let me tell you what I have heard and known and seen—for this is what the text tells me to speak of. I have known and seen that Christ is One who is ready to forgive you—able to forgive you. Oh, shall I never forget when I first went to Him, laden with iniquity and black with sin. I was bowed down by five years of conviction, which had rendered my fears despair and my doubts had gathered till they seemed impenetrable to the light! I went to Him and I thought He would reject me.

I thought Him to be hard and unwilling to forgive. But I only looked on Him, only *looked* at Him—one glimpse of a tearful eye at a crucified Savior and at that moment without a pause the burden rolled away. The guilt was gone, peace of mind took the place of despair and I could sing, “I’m forgiven, I’m forgiven!” I had many sins, but He took them all away. Some of those sins were deeply aggravated. I would not tell them in a human ear but they were gone, in one instant, too—not because of any merit, but gone freely and graciously of His own abundant mercy—according to the riches of His loving kindness in Christ Jesus the Lord.

Now what we have seen and heard we do testify—that you also may have fellowship with us, for, “Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” Still He is willing to receive you, He is able to forgive you. Laden with guilt and full of woe, come to that full relief! Make no tarrying! “Linger not in all the plain!” Let not your heavy heart tempt you to refrain yourself from Him! He stands with open arms ready to pardon—with open heart, willing to receive. No, He runs! Methinks I see Him. Though you are yet far off He runs and meets you. He falls upon your neck. He kisses you. He says, “Take off his rags, clothe him in the best robe. Put shoes on his feet and a ring upon his hand and let us eat and be merry, for the dead is alive and the lost is found.”

But I testify yet again, Soul, that after you have once believed in Christ and received your pardon, you will find Him to be willing to keep your soul from sin. I thought that even if Christ forgave me, it would be impossible for me to break off evil habits and the lusts of the flesh. And I have known many scores of men who were swearers and they said they should never be able to rinse their mouths of their oaths. They were drunkards, too and they said that drink would get the upper hand of them yet.

But we have seen and we have testified that when we believe in Christ, He changes the heart. He renews the nature, makes us hate the things we loved before and love the things we once despised. We have seen it and we testify it. O drunkard, He can make you sober! Unchaste man, He can make you virtuous! There is no lust which His arm cannot subdue, no mighty sin which He cannot drive out. He shall make you run in the way

of His commandments with delight—you shall neither turn aside to the right hand nor to the left.

“But” says another, “if He did uphold for awhile I should never be able to hold on.” What I have seen and heard, that I do declare unto you. Blessed be His name, I am yet young in grace but He has been faithful to me. The child believed and the child now testifies that God is faithful and has not once forsaken nor left him, but preserved him. I half wish this morning that gray hairs were on my head that I might give force to this testimony of “what I have seen and heard.” I remember well, when declaring that God was a faithful God, my good old grandfather who was sitting behind me in the pulpit. He came forward and said, “My grandson can tell you that, but I can bear witness to it. I have passed my three score years and ten but still He has been faithful and true”—

***“Even down to old age, all His people shall prove  
His sovereign, eternal, unchangeable love;  
And when hoary hairs shall their temples adorn,  
Like lambs they shall still in His bosom be borne.”***

We testify this to you that you may have fellowship with us, for “our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” I have this much to say and if I should never preach again and if this might be the last discourse I should ever deliver in this world, I would wish to make this my final testimony. There is that joy in religion that I never dreamed of. He is a good Master whom I have served. That is a blessed faith which He has bestowed upon me and yields such blessed hope, that—

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

And if I had to die like a dog and there were no hereafter, I would still prefer to be a Christian and the humblest Christian minister—to being a king or an emperor. For I am persuaded there are more delights in Christ—more joy in one glimpse of His face than is to be found in all the praises of this harlot-world and in all the delights which it can yield to us in its sunniest and brightest days. And I am persuaded that what He has been till now He will be to the end. And where He has begun a good work He will carry it on.

Yes, Sinners, Christ’s Cross is a hope that we can die by—which can take us down to the grave without a fear—which can make us short in the midst of the swelling waters of Jordan—can make us transported with delight even when we are bowed down with physical pain or nervous distress. There is that in Christ, I say, which can make us triumph over the gloomiest terrors of grim death and make us rejoice in the darkest of tempests which can blacken the grave.

Trust! Trust in the Lord, for our testimony and that of all His people is that He is worthy to be trusted. “Wait on the Lord—be of good courage and He shall strengthen your heart—wait, I say, on the Lord.”

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# HOW TO BECOME FULL OF JOY

## NO. 3272

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 19, 1911.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 17, 1865.

*“And these things write we unto you that your joy may be full.”*  
*1 John 1:4.*

IT is a wonderful proof of our Savior's deep attachment to His people that having made their salvation sure, He is also anxious concerning their present state of mind. He wishes that His people should be not only safe, but happy—that they should not be merely saved, but that they should rejoice in His salvation! It does not delight your Master for you to bow your heads as does the bulrush, or for you to go mourning all your days. He would have you rejoice, for again and again by His Apostles does He exhort you to rejoice in Him. We will go at once to our text. Let our first point be—

**I. A CHRISTIAN'S JOY NEEDS LOOKING AFTER.** If it were not so, our text would not have been written, for we would not have had John writing to promote what would stand and progress well enough of itself. John seems to put the whole of the Apostolic band with himself into the verse when he says, “These things write we unto you that your joy may be full,” as if their joy would not be full unless Inspired Apostles should be commissioned of God to write in order to promote it. The Christian's joy needs looking after.

I do not doubt but that you have the proofs of this in yourselves, in your *eternal circumstances*. You cannot always rejoice, because although your treasure is not of this world, yet sometimes your affliction is here. Poverty is sometimes too heavy a cross for you to sing under it. Sickness casts you on a bed upon which you have not as yet learned to rejoice. There will be losses in business, disappointment of fond hopes. The forsaking of friends, the cruelty of foes and any of these may prove the winter nights and nip the green leaves of your joys and make them fade and fall from your bough. You cannot always rejoice, but sometimes there is a necessity that you should be, “in heaviness through manifold temptations.” None of us, I suppose, are so perfectly happy as to be without some external trials and our joy will, therefore, need to be looked after lest these floods should come in and quench it. We shall need, indeed, to

cry to Him who alone can keep the flame burning, to trim our lamps and supply them with fresh oil.

I suppose, too, that you have *that within* which makes you feel that it is no easy matter to maintain perpetual joy. If you have not, I have. Sometimes there will come deep depressions of heart—you can scarcely tell why. That strong wing on which once you could mount as an eagle, will seem to flap the air in vain. That heart of yours which once flew upwards as the lark rising from amidst the dew will lie cold and heavy as a stone on the earth. You will find it hard, indeed, to rejoice. Besetting sins, too, will cripple your holy mirth so that when, like David before the Ark, you, too, would dance for very joy, internal corruptions will make it almost impossible! Beloved, it is not easy to fight evil in our own souls and to sing at the same time. Christian soldiers we know, ought to do it and march to battle with songs of triumph, nerving their spirits to deeds of desperate valor, but oh, how often the garment rolled in dust and blood compels them to stay for a while the shout of certain victory. Trials from within—from Satan’s suggestions, from the uprising of the black fountains of corruption—are not easy to bear and we have reason enough, if our joy is to remain full, to be guarded and strengthened by a power not our own, even from God Himself!

And yet, have we not learned, Beloved in Jesus Christ, how exceedingly necessary it is that our joy should be full? When that joy is full, we are more than a match for all the devils of Hell! But when it is weak and low, then we tremble and, like Peter, can be vanquished by a pert little maid! When our joy in the Lord is at its fullest, we can bear that the fig tree should not blossom, and that the herd should be cut off from the stall, and the flocks from the fields—but how heavy our trials become when that joy has fled! When we can see the Savior’s face without a veil between, then temptation has no power over us, for all the glittering gems that sin can offer by way of pleasure are eclipsed in tender brilliance and Divine attraction by the heavenly Pearl of Joy in the dear Savior which we possess! Then we can sing with intense truthfulness—

***“I would not change my blest estate  
For all the world calls good or great!  
And while my faith can keep her hold  
I envy not the sinners gold.”***

Thus the Christian, by his holy joy out-braves temptation and is strong to endure. Why, Christian, you can do *anything* when the joy of the Lord is within you! Like a roe, or a young hart, you leap over mountains and make them as stepping stones across the brook! The heaviest tempest that can lower over you cannot chill or dismay your courage, for your strong wings pierce it and mount above it all into the clear blue sky of fellowship with your God! But when this joy is gone, then we grow weak, and—

***“Like Samson when his hair was lost***

***Meet the Philistines to our cost.”***

We become victims to temptation and if we do not yield to it, yet it harasses us and robs us of the power with which we once glorified God. The Christian's joy, then, needs looking after. If any of you have lost that joy of the Lord, I pray you do not think that your loss is a small one. I have heard of a minister who once said that a Christian lost nothing by his sin—and then he added—“except his joy.” Well, what else would you have him lose? Is not that quite enough? To lose the light of my Father's Countenance, to lose my full assurance of my interest in Christ—is to lose my best and purest delight—and is this not a loss quite great enough? Let us walk prayerfully, let us walk carefully so that we may possess unbroken peace and joy to the fullest. Let none of us sit down in misery and be content to be there! There is such a thing as becoming habituated to melancholy. My own tendency is sometimes to get into that state of mind, but, by the Grace of God, I shake it off, for I know it will not do. If we once begin to give way to this foolishness, we shall soon forge chains for ourselves that we cannot easily break. Take down your harp from the willow, Believer! Do not let your fingers neglect the well-known strings. Come, let us be happy and joyful! If we have looked sad for a while, let us now be brightened by thoughts of Christ! At any rate, let us not be satisfied until we have shaken off this lethargy and misery, and have once again come into the proper and healthy state in which a child of God should always be found, namely, a state of spiritual joy!

**II.** Again, A CHRISTIAN'S JOY LIES MAINLY IN REVEALED THINGS. If this were not so, it would not find its fitting sustenance in Inspired Words. If the Christian's joy consisted in the wine vat, the feast, or his riches, John would not have written as he does—then it would only be necessary that the vineyard should yield plenteous clusters, that the harvest should be crowned with abundance and that God should prosper trade and send to the merchant all that his heart could wish. But the Christian's deepest and best joy does not depend on these things. They cannot satisfy his nobler nature. He thanks God for all earthly joys, but he cannot feast his soul upon them—he needs something better. When John writes, “These things write we unto you that your joy may be full,” there is nothing about prosperity in this world, but all about fellowship with Christ, from which I infer that everything revealed to us in the Scriptures has for its supreme purpose the filling up of the Believer's joy!

But what is the Scripture's great theme? Is it not, first and foremost, concerning Christ Jesus? Take this Book and distil it into one word—and that one word will be Jesus! The Book, itself, is but the body of Christ and we may look upon all its pages as the swaddling bands of the infant Savior, for if we unroll the Scripture, we come upon Jesus Christ Himself. Now, Beloved, does not Jesus Christ make your joy full? I trust we do not sing a lie when we sometimes say in our song—

***“Jesus, the very thought of You  
With sweetness fills my breast,  
But sweeter far Your face to see,  
And in Your Presence rest.”***

Jesus—Man, yet God. Jesus—allied to us in ties of blood—oh, here is a reason for holy mirth! Here is Christmas all the year round! There is great joy to us in His nativity, for by it man has been taken by God into union with Himself! Jesus the Savior! Here is death to the groans of pain—an end to the moans of despair! He comes to break the bars of brass and to cut the gates of iron in sunder—

***“Jesus, the name that charms our fears,  
That bids our sorrows cease,  
‘Tis music in the sinner’s ears:  
‘Tis life, ‘tis health, ‘tis peace!”***

Scripture, surely, has well taken its cue, for it makes us joyful! It has done well to make Christ its head and front.

The same is true of all that is written in this Book. Let me divide it into three parts—doctrinal, experimental and practical. All these are written that our joy may be full.

I think I could prove, if there were time, that all the Doctrines have a tendency, when properly understood and received, to foster Christian joy. Let me mention one or two of them. There is that ancient, much-abused, but most delightful Doctrine of Election—that before all worlds Jesus chose His people and looked with eyes of Infinite Love upon them, as He saw them in the glass of futurity. What? Christian! Can you believe yourself “loved with an everlasting love” and not rejoice?

Surely it was the Doctrine of Election that made David dance before the Ark. He told Michal when she sneered at him, “I danced before the Lord that chose me before your father Saul.” Surely to be chosen of God, to be selected from the mass of mankind and made the favorites of the heart of Deity—surely this ought to make us, in our very worst and dullest moments, sing for joy! Then there are the other Doctrines which, like living waters, flow from this sacred and hidden fountain. Take, for instance, that of *Redemption*—bought with a price, a price whose efficacy is not questionable—bought so that now we are Jesus’ property, never to be lost! Bought not with that general redemption which holds before the sinner’s eyes something, somewhere in the clouds, which may or may not be—but bought with an *effectual* Redemption which saves every blood-bought soul because He has power to save to the uttermost all who come to Him! Oh, here is an occasion for song!—

***“Jesus bought me when a stranger  
Wandering from the fold of God!  
He to save my soul from danger  
Bought me with His precious blood!”***

Can you see the blood-mark on yourself, and not, rejoice, O Christian? Surely your joy ought to be full, indeed!

Once again, think of the Doctrine of Justification, namely that through faith in Christ's Redemption every Believer is "accepted in the Beloved," and stands, clad in Jesus' righteousness, as fair in God's sight as if he had never sinned—why, surely, here is a theme again for overflowing joy!

Take the Doctrine of Communion—that we are one with Jesus Christ—

***"By eternal union one!"***

Members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones—what? Not sing after this? How sweet the music ought to be where this is the theme! And then to mention but one where there are so many handfuls of pearls—there is the Doctrine of Eternal Preservation and Glory. You are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation"! You shall be with Him where He is, you shall behold His Glory! "Whom He justified, them He also glorified." Ah, can you think of this and go up in spirit to the Throne where Christ has made you sit in His own Person and not begin the song that shall have no end? Truly, I need but remind you of these Truths of God! You can think them out for yourselves—every Doctrine to the Christian is a source of joy!

Again, the Scripture is given to us to produce in us experiences, every one of which is meant to promote our joy. "Why," says one, "all Christian experience is not joyful!" I grant you that, but remember that all a Christian's experience is not *Christian* experience. Christians experience a great deal because they are not such Christians as they ought to be. Beloved, there is a mourning which comes from the Spirit of God, but it is a joyous mourning, if I may use so strange a phrase.

Sorrow for sin is a sweet sorrow, do not desire to escape it! I think Rowland Hill was right when he said that his only regret in going to Heaven would be that he could no more repent. True evangelical repentance is food to the saintly soul! I do not know, Beloved, when I am more perfectly happy than when I am weeping for sin at the foot of the Cross, for that is the safest place in which I can stand. I like that verse—

***"Dissolved by Your goodness,  
I fall to the ground  
And weep to the praise of the mercy  
I've found."***

Remember, too, that though with regard to things of this world you may have sore trial, in every drop of bitterness your Father puts in your cup there is a whole sea of sweetness beneath. Trials wean us from the world and surely that is a most blessed thing! Oh, to come to Christ and find my all in Him! If we had no idols in children, friends, wealth, ourselves, we would not need half the trials we have! Foolish loves make rods for foolish backs! God save us from this, and when He does, though the means may seem to be severe, they are intended to intensify our joy by destroying the cause of our worst sorrows. But beyond all this, there is much of a true Christian's experience that is, and must be, all joy. To

have faith in Christ, to rest in Him, is not that joy? To stand here and sing from one's heart—

***“I know that safe with Him remains,  
Protected by His power  
What I've committed to His hands,  
‘Till the decisive hour.”***

Is not that joy? Or even that humble note—

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

Why that has the germ of Heaven in it!

Hope, too, is part of the Christian's experience, and what a fountain of joy is there!—

***“The hope when days and years are past,  
We all shall meet in Heaven at last.”***

This is an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, entering into that which is within the veil. But above all things, and this is what is chiefly meant in the text, the experience of Christian fellowship is greatly promotive of Christian joy. John truly says, “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you that you, also, may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.” This is the golden center of the target. Fellowship with Christ is the fountain of joy. Other joys may help to fill it, but this fills of itself, alone, up to the very brim, of fullness of joy. Have you not felt it? I know you have—when you could have had no more joy, for you were full. A fullness of joy is all sorts of blessing. If I were to so fill a glass with water that the gentlest touch would make it run over, that would be a picture of the joy the Christian sometimes has and should more constantly possess. When such is known, He is—

***“Rich to all intents of bliss  
Since you O God, are mine!”***

It is not every man who can go home tonight and say, “Whom have I in Heaven but You? And there is none that I desire on earth compared with You! I have You and, therefore, I need no more.” Go you, who crave for joy, and traverse the wide world round in the vain search for it—my soul shall sit down at the foot of the Cross and say, “I have found it here!” Go you, like the swallows that cross the purple seas to find another summer, now that yours is over, but my soul shall abide where it is and find no chilling winter her joys to mar! At the Cross our sun is at its solstice and stands still forever, never moving, without parallax, or shadows of a tropic—always the same—bright, full and glorious!

But I said that the Bible was also full of practicality. I can only say a brief word or two on that point. Every precept and command of the Word of God is meant to help our happiness. “Do yourself no harm,” is the very essence and law of all the Ten Commandments. It is love speaking in the imperative mood, saying “You shall not”—but all for our good. It is God's

way of saying, “Don’t touch the fire or you will be burned. Don’t do that which will injure, hurt or destroy your joy of soul!” God never denies His children anything that is really for their good. His commands are freedom’s rules, never fetters to the loving Christian. Let us think of one or two. “Love one another,” that is the first. Well now, when are you happiest? When you feel bitter, spiteful and resentful towards others, or when you feel charity towards the sinful and unworthy, and deep love towards your fellow servants? I know, at any rate, when I feel happiest. There are some persons who seem to have been reared on vinegar—who wherever they go, see some defeat—and where this cannot be discovered will insinuate, “Ah, well, but we do not know what they do in secret.” Or, “we do not know their motives.” But those who love one another can see much to rejoice in everywhere.

Again, we are told in the Scripture to serve the Lord with diligence, and is it not the diligent soul that is made fat? It is the do-nothing people, generally, who say—

**“Lord, what a wretched land is this!  
That yields us no supplies.”**

Indeed it ought to be a wretched land to lazy people! “They who will not work, neither should they eat.” And this refers even more to spiritual sustenance than to material food! If in the winter you complain of the cold, get to the plow and you will soon glow with warmth! But sit down to moan and complain and blow on your blue fingers, you shall feel the cold more and more! Holy activity is the mother of holy joy!

Growth in Grace, too, is a fountain of true delight. Never is a Believer happier than when he grows in Grace. To stand still, to contract one’s self—it is like forcing a Chinese foot into a Chinese shoe—it is torture to the understanding! But to have a mind capable of always learning. To sometimes be able to admit, “I was wrong.” To know you know more today than yesterday because the Spirit has been teaching you, why this is joy! This is pure delight and such as God would have us know! So I venture to repeat that all the writings of Scripture—doctrinal, experimental, or practical—all have for their objective that which John declares in these words, “that your joy may be full.”

Upon the next point we must be very brief, but strive to be very practical. We have shown that the Christian’s joy needs looking after, and that it is chiefly fed and maintained upon the things revealed in the Scriptures. If this is so, then—

**III. LET US CONSTANTLY READ THE SCRIPTURES!** Let us read them, I would say, *in preference to other books*. There is a great deal of reading, nowadays, and a great deal of that is a kind of chaff-cutting and nothing more. Why, even in religious newspapers and magazines they cannot command readers and make them pay, so they say, unless they include a religious novel! People’s minds must be in a strange state when they can

relish nothing but these whipped creams and juvenile syllabubs. If they were robust and healthy, with a good appetite for Divine things, they would demand something far more solid and satisfying. You will never grow sturdy men and women on such poor stuff as that—you may rear lackadaisical imitations, but the thinking soul with something in it, the Christian woman who serves God and is a true helper to the Christian ministry, the young man who is fired with the longing to proclaim Christ and win souls to Him—must have stronger nutriments than that which modern religious journalism ladles out so plentifully! Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, read the Bible! Read the Bible and these things that enfeeble will lose all their attraction for you!

If the worldling must have these things, let him. But if you have a soul that is above rubbish and has been accustomed to live on great, solid and substantial Truths of God, you scarcely need that I should say, “Search the Scriptures diligently and your joy shall spread and deepen!” Be this your happy confession—

**“Lord, I have made Your Word my choice,  
My lasting heritage.  
There shall my noblest powers rejoice  
My warmest thoughts engage.”**

We say further, *prefer the Scriptures even to all religious books*. We say this of the best book and sermons. We do our best to teach you God’s Truth, but we are like gold-beaters—we get a little bit of the Truth of God and we hammer it out so thin. Some of us are mighty hands at this and can make a tiny fragment of the golden Truth of God cover an acre of talk! But the best of us—those who really do seek to bring out the Doctrines of Grace and love, are but poor workers at it. Read the Bible more and do not care so much about us. If my sermons kept people from reading the Bible for themselves, I would like to see the whole stock in a blaze and burned to ashes! But if they serve as finger-posts, pointing to the Scriptures and saying, “Read this, and this, and this,” then I am thankful to have printed them. But if they keep you from your Bibles, burn them, burn them, burn them! Do not let them overlay the Scriptures, but lie beneath them, for that is their proper place. Keep you first to God’s revealed Word.

Let me here say that when you read the Bible, remember there are several ways of doing it. There is the superficial reading—being satisfied with the mere letter of it. There is, however, a diving into it, a going deep down into the soul of it! Read it in *natural sections*. What would Milton’s *Paradise Lost* be if you only read one line a day and began at the middle and went back to the first line? You would never understand His meaning! Read the Bible through. Read John’s Gospel—not a bit of John and then a snippet of Mark—but read John through and find out what John is at. Remember that Matthew—though he speaks of the same Savior as Mark—yet he does it not in the same style, nor for the same purpose as



he. There is a very distinct purpose in each Gospel. Matthew tells of Jesus, the King—the parables he records all hold references to the King. “Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened.” Mark shows us Christ as the Servant devoted and tireless in His activity of loving toil. Luke as the Man Christ Jesus, full of human tenderness and sympathy, and his parables begin, “A certain Man.” John reveals to us Christ in His true Deity and Godhead—and gloriously does he preface it, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Get hold of what the Books mean and may the Holy Spirit show you the aim of each writer—the one Book, and that studied, not scampered through—and you shall stand firm where others fall. And now, lastly, if the Scriptures are intended to bring joy to Believers, the question comes up—

**IV. ARE WE ALL BELIEVERS? IS THE BOOK A SOURCE OF JOY TO US?** There are significant pronouns—“we”—“you”—“your.” Who is that? Is that you? Does it come to you and make your joy full? If you do not know or much care about it, then it does not speak to you. If you find plenty of joy elsewhere and it does not speak to you, it will not force itself and intrude upon you. It gives you no joy because you have enough elsewhere. “They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.” But others of you long for this joy! You are uneasy, unsatisfied, cannot find a tree in which to build your nest. Oh, dear Friend! I am so glad! May you grow weary and heavy-laden of spirit, for then I have a whisper for you—Jesus Christ came to call such to Him! Yes, the world may have spurned and scorned you, but Jesus will receive you! Your companions say you are mopish and miserable—come to Him and He will warmly welcome you! He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax—

***“Weary souls that wander wide  
From the central source of bliss,  
Turn to Jesus Crucified—  
Look to His dear wounds and live!”***

Oh, if you are sick of the world, come to my Master! May God the Holy Spirit sanctify this sickness and bring you to Jesus because you have nowhere else to go. Jesus will not spurn even the devil’s castaways! The sweepings of humanity who have gone so far that their friends reject them, Jesus Christ will accept and bless!

May He accept me! May He accept you! And then in Him our joy shall be full!

The Lord bless you evermore! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
JOHN 14:15-31.**

**Verse 15.** *If you love Me, keep My commandments.* We cannot expect the Holy Spirit to dwell with us unless we are obedient to the commands

of Christ. Our Savior here tells us much about the Spirit of Truth, but He begins with this test of our love to Him, "If you love Me, keep My commandments."

**16.** *And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever.* Not a different Comforter, but *the* Comforter who is now with us, is of the same Nature and works after the same manner as the Lord Jesus, Himself, who was our first Advocate, Helper, Paraclete, Comforter! I give you these four words instead of one because they are all wrapped up in the original word, "Paraclete"—that He may abide with you forever and ever. The Lord Jesus could not abide with us forever—it was expedient for Him that He should go to Heaven to prepare a place for us. But the Holy Spirit will not go. He will remain in this dispensation even to the end of it—"That He may abide with you forever."

**17.** *Even the Spirit of Truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it sees Him not, neither knows Him; but you know Him; for He dwells with you, and shall be in you.* The world knows nothing about the Holy Spirit—it can hear the Gospel, it can hear the outward Word of God—but the living, mystic, inward Spirit, the world knows nothing of.

**18, 19.** *I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world sees Me no more; but you see Me: because I live, you shall live also.* "While I am away, the Holy Spirit shall be your Comforter. You shall not be like orphans without father or friend." Jesus will come a second time. This is our joyful hope, but meanwhile, while He is away, we are not without a Comforter. "Yet a little while, and the world sees Me no more." What a wonderful thing! The children of God always see Jesus spiritually. "But you see Me: because I live, you shall live also." There is life in a look and our continued sight of Christ brings us continued life through Christ! Because He lives, there is a loving, living, lasting union between us and Christ.

**20.** *At that day you shall know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.* Three wonderful unions! Christ in the Father, His people in Christ, Christ in His people! If you are instructed of the Lord, you will understand this text. This is such knowledge as the Universities cannot teach! It is such knowledge as the most learned doctors cannot attain to by themselves. Only the Spirit of God can teach us these things.

**21.** *He that has My commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves Me and he that loves Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him.* He must have obedience. Christ cannot come and comfortably manifest Himself to those who are living out of order and disregarding His words. Take heed, children of God, of disobedience! It is a discipline of the Divine family that if we disobey, we shall lose the comfortable Presence of our Lord. "I will manifest Myself to him."

**22, 23.** *Judas said unto Him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man loves Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make our abode with him.* Christ and His Father dwell with obedient people! “We will dwell with him, and make our abode with him.” Oh, that we might carefully watch our thoughts, our words, our acts, lest we grieve our Lord! He will manifest Himself to us when we yield ourselves to Him. When we obey His will, it will be His will to honor us with His constant Presence!

**24.** *He that loves Me not keeps not My sayings.* There is much talk of loyalty to Christ, but the teachings of Christ are despised. The teachings of His Apostles are the teachings of Christ. They are but a prolongation and exposition of what Christ taught. In rejecting them we reject Christ. He will not have it that we can be loyal to Him and yet refuse His teaching.

**24.** *And the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father’s who sent Me.* It is a wonderful denial of originality on the part of Christ. If anybody could have spoken his own word, it was surely the Christ of God! But He was a Messenger, and He delivered His message. Now, if it is so with Christ, how much more so with us who are very inferior messengers? We ought to be very careful that we do not deliver our own thoughts, or suggestions, excogitations and philosophies. “The word which you hear is not Mine,” (that I can most emphatically say), “but the Father’s who sent Me.” You see, when we deliver a message which is not ours, but the Father’s, we feel safe about it. We feel sure of its success, whereas, if we were the makers of it, we would often question whether we had not told you falsely—but if we can fall back upon the Word of God, and prove it from what the Father has said, then do we feel we are no longer responsible.

**25, 26.** *These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatever I have said unto you.* That is the teaching. The Holy Spirit does not reveal anything fresh to us. He brings to our remembrance what has already been said and written in the Inspired Word. Whereas the Book conveys to us the outward sense, the Holy Spirit conveys to us the inner meaning. Not the embodiment of the Truth of God you have in this Book, but the Truth, itself, dealing with the conscience, and heart, and spirit must be laid home by the Author of the Book, by the Holy Spirit, Himself!

**27.** *Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you.* Have you got it, Brothers and Sisters? Are you at peace at this moment? “I am very much troubled,” says one. Well, you are to have tribulation here, but you are to have peace with it. In the world you shall have tribulation, but in Christ

you shall have peace. If you have got the bitter herbs, do not be satisfied with bitter herbs—ask for the Paschal Lamb.

**27.** *Not as the world gives, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.* Come, tell your trouble to your Lord. Ask the Holy Spirit to exercise the office of Comforter upon you now at this very moment.

**28.** *You have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, I go unto the Father: for My Father is greater than I.* The Lord Jesus had taken a subordinate place. He had become the Servant of the Father, the Messenger for the Father, but He was going back to reassume His Glory. That ought to be a subject of joy to us! Let us bless Jesus that He is not here. If He were here in His former state He would be in His humiliation—but now He has gone to His Glory. Let us rejoice in this!

**29.** *And now I have told you before it came to pass, that when it is come to pass, you might believe.* Jesus warned His disciples of all that was to happen in His death and in His departure. I believe that the Spirit of God often gives inward warnings to God's people of troubles that are to come—monitions so that they may be prepared for the trouble when it comes and may feel as if He had told them before it came to pass.

**30.** *Hereafter I will not talk much with you, for the Prince of this world comes, and has nothing in Me.* He would have very few words for He was going to the bloody sweat and scourging and death—His words might well be few, for His actions would speak more loudly than words!

**31.** *But that the world may know that I love the Father and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do. Arise, Let us go from here.* And they left the supper table to go to the garden, the garden of His agony! Let us be willing to go wherever God calls us.

—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.**

# FULLNESS OF JOY OUR PRIVILEGE

## NO. 3406

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 14, 1914.

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

*“And these things we write unto you, that your joy may be full.”*  
*1 John 1:4.*

VERY closely does the Apostle John resemble his Lord in the motive that prompted him to write this Epistle! You remember how Christ said in His last discourse to His disciples on the eve of His passion, “These things have I spoken unto you that your joy may be full”—and how He counseled them, “Ask and receive that your joy may be full”—and how He prayed to the Father for them, “that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves.” Here, then, the beloved disciple, moved by the Spirit of God, reflects and follows out the same gracious purpose—“These things we write unto you, that your joy may be full.” What an evidence of our Savior’s deep attachment to His people that He is not content with having made their ultimate salvation sure, but He is anxious concerning their present state of mind! He delights that His people should not only be safe, but happy! Not merely saved, but rejoicing in their salvation! It does not please your Savior for you to hang your head as the bulrush and go mourning all your days. He would have you rejoice in Him always and for this end He has made provision and to this end He has given us precepts. Therefore it appears—

### I. THAT THE CHRISTIAN’S JOY NEEDS LOOKING AFTER.

We should not find the Apostle John writing to promote that which, in the natural order of things, would be sure to occur. In this object of pastoral anxiety, he seems to include the whole of the Apostolic College with himself when he says, “These things we write unto you that your joy might be full,” as if your joy would not be full unless Inspired Apostles should be commissioned of God to further it. Your joy then, I say, needs looking after. I do not doubt but you have very suggestive proofs of this, yourselves, *in your external circumstances*. You cannot always rejoice because, although your treasure is not in this world, your affliction is. Poverty will sometimes be too heavy a cross for you to sing under. Sickness sometimes casts you upon a bed on which you have not, as yet, learned to rejoice. Losses befall you in business, failures of hope, forsaking of friends and cruelty of foes—and any of these may prove like winter nights which nip the green leaves of your joy and make them fade and fall off

your branches. You cannot always rejoice, but sometimes there is a necessity that you should be in heaviness through manifold temptations. I suppose none of you are so perfectly happy as to be without some trial. Your joy will need to be looked after, then, lest floods should come in and quench it. You will need to cry to Him who alone can keep its flame burning, to trim it with fresh oil.

I suppose, too, that *you have moods and susceptibilities* which make it no easy matter to maintain perpetual joy. If you have not, I have. Sometimes there will be deep depression of spirit—you can scarcely tell why. That strong wing with which you mounted like an eagle will seem to flap the air in vain. That heart of yours, which once flew upwards like the lark rising from amidst the dew, will lie cold and heavy like a stone upon the earth, and you will find it hard to rejoice.

Besides, *sin* will stop the beginning of your holy mirth, and when you would dance for joy, like David before the Ark, some internal corruption will come to hamper your delight. Ah, Beloved, it is not easy to sing while you fight. Christian soldiers ought to do it—they should march to battle with songs of triumph, that their spirits may be nerved to desperate valor against their inbred corruptions, but sometimes the garment rolled in blood and the dust, and the turmoil will stop for awhile the looked for shout of victory. With trials many and manifold—trials from the thorns and briars of this fallen world, trials from Satanic suggestions, trials from the uprisings of black fountains of corruption within your own polluted hearts—you have, indeed, need that your joy, to keep it full and flowing at high tide, should be guarded and supplied by an influence above your own—and fed from a celestial spring!

I dare say you have learned by this time, my Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, how exceedingly necessary it is that this joy of ours should be abundant. When full of joy, we are more than a match for the adversary of souls, but when our joy is gone, fear slackens our sinews, and, like Peter, we may be vanquished by a little maid! When our joy in the Lord is at its fullest, we can bear that the fig tree should not blossom, that the herd should be cut off from the stall and the flocks from the field, but how heavy our sorrows are to bear, how impatient we become when the chains that link Heaven and earth are disarranged, or the communication in any way intercepted. If we can see the Savior's face without a cloud between, then temptation has no power over us, and all the glittering shams that sin can offer us are eclipsed in their brilliance by the true gold of spiritual joy which we have in our possession. Oh, what rapture!—

***“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.”***

Thus the Christian, by his holy joy, outbraves temptation and is strong to endure a martyrdom of vice. Why, you can do anything when the joy of the Lord is within you! Like a roe or a young hart, you leapt over the mountains of Bether. The mountains cannot appall you—you make a stepping-stone across the brook. The heaviest tempests which lower over you cannot chill nor dampen your courage, for your song pierces it, and your soul mounts above it all into the clear blue of fellowship with your God! But when this joy is gone, then are we weak, like Samson when his hair was shorn. We become the slaves of temptation and if we do not yield to its treacherous enticements, at any rate, it harasses us, and so enervates the power with which we were known to glorify our God. The Christian's joy needs looking to. If any of you have lost the joy of the Lord, I pray you do not think it a small loss. I have heard of a minister who said that a Christian lost nothing by sin—and then he added—"except his joy." And one replied, "Well, and what else would you have him lose?" That is quite enough! To lose the light of my Father's Countenance. To lose my full assurance of interest in Christ. To lose my Heaven below—oh, this is a loss great enough! Let us walk carefully, let us walk prayerfully so that we may realize perpetual joy and peace even to the fullest! Let none of us be content to sit down in misery. There is such a thing as getting habituated to melancholy. My bias is toward that state of mind, but, by the Grace of God, I resist it. If we begin to give way to this foolishness, we shall soon weave forged chains for ourselves which we cannot readily snap. Take your harp from the willows, Believers. Do not let your fingers forget the well-known strings. Come, let us praise Him. If we have looked black in the face for awhile, let us brighten up with the thoughts of Christ! At any rate, let us not be easy till we have shaken off this lethargic distemper and once again come into the normal state of health in which a child of God should be found—that of spiritual joy!

**II. THE CHRISTIAN'S JOY LIES MAINLY IN THINGS REVEALED**, otherwise it would not find its fitting sustenance in Inspired Words.

If the Christian's joy lay in the wine vat and in the barn, in the landed estate, or the hoarded purse, it would only be necessary that the vineyard should yield plenteous clusters, that the harvest should be crowned with abundance, that peace should prevail and trade should prosper—and forthwith the heritor and the merchant have all that heart could wish. But the Christian's joy is not touched by these vulgar things. These commonplace satisfactions do not suit the noble mind of the Believer! He thanks God for all the bounties of the basket and the barn, but he cannot feast his soul upon stocks or fruits that perish with the using. He needs something better! The Apostle John seems to tell us this when he says, "And *these* things write I unto you"—nothing about prosperity in this world, but all about fellowship with Christ—"And *these* things we

write unto you, that your joy may be full.” From which I infer that *everything which is revealed to us in Scripture has for its intention the filling up of the Christian’s joy.*

What is Scripture all about, then? Is it not, first and foremost, *concerning Jesus Christ?* Take this Book and distil it into one word, and I will tell you what it is—it is JESUS! All this is but the body of Christ. I may look upon all these pages as the swaddling-bands of the infant Savior, and if you unroll Scripture, you come to Jesus Christ, Himself. Now, Beloved, is not Jesus Christ the sum and summit of your joy? I hope we do not utter a falsehood when we sing, as it is our custom—

***“Jesus the very thought of Thee,  
With rapture fills my breast,  
Tho’ sweeter far Your face to see,  
And in Your bosom rest.”***

Jesus—Man yet God—allied to us in ties of blood. Why, here is mirth! Here is Christmas all the year round! In the Nativity of the Savior there is joy for us—the Babe born in Bethlehem—God has taken Man into communion with Himself! Jesus the Savior—here is release from the groans of sin! Here is an end to the means of despair! He comes to break the bars of brass and to cut the gates of iron in sunder—

***“Jesus, the name that charms our fears,  
That bids our sorrows cease!  
‘Tis music in the sinner’s ears,  
‘Tis life, ‘tis health, ‘tis peace!”***

Scripture, surely, has well taken its cue! Would it make us joyful, it has done well to make Christ its head and front.

*All the doctrines* of the Bible have a tendency, when properly understood and received, to foster the Christian’s joy. Let us mention one or two of them. There is that ancient, much-abused, but most delightful Doctrine of Election, that “all worlds before,” Jesus elected His people and looked with eyes of Infinite Love upon them as He saw them in the glass of futurity. What? Christian, can you believe yourself “loved with an everlasting love,” and not rejoice? Was it not the Doctrine of Election that made David dance before the Ark? When Michel sneered at him for dancing, he said, “It was before the Lord who had chosen me before your father (Saul), and all his house.” Surely to be chosen of God, to be selected from the mass of mankind and made favorites of the heart of Deity—this ought to make us, in our worst moments, sing with joy of heart! Oh, that Doctrine of Election! I wish some of you would acquaint yourselves with it in the Psalmody of the Church, rather than in the wrangling of the schools! It is a tree that puts forth its luxuriance in the tropical climate of Divine Love—but it looks dwarfed and barren in the arctic regions of human logic! Then there are the Doctrines which like living waters, drop from this sacred and hidden fountain. Take, for instance, that of Redemption. To be bought with a price—a price whose efficacy is not questionable—bought so that we are now the property of Jesus, never to be



lost! Bought not with that general redemption which holds to the sinner's eye a precarious contingency, but bought with an effectual ransom which saves every blood-bought sinner because he was redeemed—his own proper self, of God's own good will! Oh, here is occasion for song!—

***“Jesus sought me when a stranger,  
Wandering from the fold of God—  
He to rescue me from danger,  
Interposed His precious blood.”***

Can you see the blood-mark on yourself, and not rejoice? Oh, Christian, surely your joy ought to be full! Or turn to the Doctrine of Justification and consider how, through faith, every Believer is “accepted in the Beloved,” and stands, wrapped in Jesus' righteousness, as fair in God's sight as if he had never sinned. Why, here is a theme for joy! Know and acknowledge your union with Christ—

***“One with Jesus,  
By eternal union one!”***

Members of His body, “of His flesh, and of His bones,” and what?—not a song after this? How sweet the music ought to be where this is the theme! Then, too, to mention no more, there is one Doctrine which is like a handful of pearls—that of Eternal Preservation unto Glory which is to be revealed at the appearing of Jesus Christ. You are “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.” You shall be with Him where He is. You shall behold His Glory. “Whom He justified, them He also glorified.” Oh, can you put on this robe of splendor and go up to the Throne where Christ has already made you sit representatively in His own Person, and can you not begin, tonight, your song which shall never end? Truly we have but to mention a Truth of God and you can think it over for yourselves—every Doctrine of Revelation is to the Christian a source of joy!

Well, and *every part of Christian experience is to further our joy.* “Why,” says one, “all a Christian's experience is not joyful.” I grant you that, but remember that all a Christian's experience is not Christian experience! Christians experience a great deal which they do not experience as Christians—but experience it because they are not such Christians as they ought to be! I believe that much of that groaning which some people think such a deal of, is rather of the devil than of the Spirit of God. Certainly that unbelief which some people seem to look upon as such a precious flower, is rank herbage, never sown in us by the hand of God the Holy Spirit! Beloved, there is a mourning which comes from the Spirit of God that is a joyful mourning, if I may use such a strange expression. Sorrow for sin is sweet sorrow. I would never wish to miss it. I think Rowland Hill was right when he said that it would be his only regret in going to Heaven that he could not repent any more. Oh, repentance, true evangelical repentance, is not that half-bitter thing which comes from the Law! It is a sweet genial thing. I do not know, Beloved, when I am more perfectly happy than when I am weeping for sin at the foot of the Cross! I

find that to be one of the safest and best places where I can stand. I have sometimes thought that the raptures of Communion I have known are not altogether so deep—though they may be higher—not, I say, so deep as the pensive joy of weeping over pardoned sin, when—

***“Dissolved by His goodness, I fall to the ground  
And weep to the praise of the mercy I’ve found!”***

Yes, sorrow for sin is a part of the Christian’s experience which helps to fill his joy. And though your cares and anxieties, dear Friends, with regard to the things of this world may be very distressing, yet remember, in every drop of gall which your Father gives you to drink, there is, if you can find it, a whole sea of sweetness! God sends you trials to wean you from the world—a happy result, however grievous the process! Oh, that I might never desire to suck of the breasts of *her* consolation anymore! Oh, to come to Christ, and find my all in Him! Believe me, Beloved, our joy ends where the love of the world begins. If we had no idols on earth—if we made neither our children, nor our friends, nor our wealth, nor ourselves our idols—we should not have half the trials that we have. Foolish loves make rods for foolish backs. God save us from these, and when He does, though the means may seem severe, they are intended to promote our joys by destroying the eggs of our sorrows. But there is much of a Christian’s experience that is all joy, and must be all joy. For instance, to have faith in Christ, to rest in Him—is not that joy? To sing from one’s heart—

***“I know that safe with Him remains,  
Protected by His power,  
What I’ve committed to His hands,  
Till the decisive hour.”***

Is not that joy? And even that humbler note—

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

has the germ of Heaven in it! Truly, there can be no more delightful place for the soul to stand than close to the Cross, covered with the crimson drops of blood and clasping Christ Himself! And then hope is another part of the Christian’s experience. What a fountain of joy it is! We are saved by hope. Sweetly does the Psalmist express himself, “My soul faints for Your salvation, but I hope in Your Word.” To the followers of Christ there is a full assurance of hope—“which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters into that within the veil.” Above all things, Christian fellowship is the chief auxiliary of Christian joy. Read the verse that immediately precedes our text, “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ.” Ah, now we hit the mark! This is the center of the target. Fellowship with Christ is the summum bonum—it fills up the measure of joy! All other graces and gifts may help to fill our cup of blessedness but fellowship with saints in their fellowship with the Father

and the Son—surely this, of itself, must suffice to fill our vessels to the very brim! Fullness of joy! Did you ever prove it, my Beloved? I think some of you have. No, I know you have! You could not have contained more joy—you were full to overflowing! Do you know that a little joy is healthful? Be it relief from anxiety, pleasure after pain, or even a cheerful thought in breasts to sorrow prone. But to have a fullness of joy, joy that pulsates through our every nerve and paints the entire universe of God's goodness before our eyes in a meridian glow, this is a myriad of blessings in one! If I held in my hand a glass, and poured water into it till it were full, right to the very brim, till it seemed as if the least touch would make it run over—well, that is how the Christian sometimes is. "Why," he says, "I could not feel more happy! If anyone should make me rich, if I could have all that the worldling craves, I could not be any happier! I am rich to all the intents of bliss since You, God, are mine." It is not every man that can go home and say, "There is nothing on earth I want, and there is nothing in Heaven that I yearn after beyond the endowments my God has already bestowed on me! "Whom have I in Heaven but You, and who is there upon earth I desire beside You?" Go, you that pine for joy, and traverse the wide earth round in fruitless search—my soul sits down at the foot of the Cross and says, "I have found it here!" Go, like the swallow. Fly across the purple seas to find another summer now that this is over—my soul would stop just where she is—living at the foot of the Cross, my sun is in its solstice, and stands still forever—never stirring, never moving—without parallax or shadow of a tropic! Evermore the same—bright and full and glorious! Oh, Christian, this is a blessed experience! May you know it all your life!

Never doubt, my dear Friends, *that every precept in the Word of God is intended to further the Christian's happiness.* When I read the Ten Commandments, I understand them to be just and salutary directions not to do myself any harm. The spirit of the Law seems to be benevolent in its warnings. If I were commanded not to put my finger into the fire, and did not know that fire would burn, I ought to be thankful for the prohibition. If I were commanded not to plunge into the sea, not having known before that the sea would drown me, I should be thankful for the interdict. God's precepts are designed to enlighten our eyes and preserve our feet from falling. They forbid what is dangerous, hurtful. God never denies His servants anything that is really for their good. His laws are freedmen's rules—they are never fetters to the Christian. And as for the precepts of our blessed Christianity, they, every one of them, promote our happiness! Let me take one or two of them. "Love one another." That is the first. Well, now, when are you happiest? When you feel spiteful and bitter towards everybody else, or when you feel charity towards the faulty, and love towards your fellow servants? I know when I feel best. There are some people who seem to have been suckled upon vinegar—wherever

they go, they always see some defect. Were there to be men on earth again such as Chrysostom and others of his day, who have been portrayed in history, or like the Nazarites of Jeremiah's plaintive hymn, "Purer than snow and whiter than milk," they would say, "Ah, well, though their reputation is unsullied, we do not know what they do in secret!—we cannot scan their motives!" Some people are always in a cynical, suspicious humor, but they who "love one another" can see much to rejoice in everywhere. We are told in Scripture to "serve the Lord with diligence," and I am sure it is "the diligent soul" that is made fat. The do-nothing people are generally those who say—

***"Lord, what a wretched land is this,  
That yields us no supplies."***

It ought to be a wretched land to lazy people! Those that will not work, neither shall they eat, neither in spiritual things or in temporal shall they be fed. If, in the winter, you complain of cold, get to the plow and you will soon be full of warmth! Sit you down, groan, and complain, and blow on your blue fingers and you shall soon find the cold will starve you yet more and more. Holy activity is the mother of holy joy! And growth in Grace, again—why, when is a man happier than when He grows in Grace? To be at a standstill, to contract one's self—why, this is misery! To force one's understanding, like a Chinese foot into a Chinese shoe, is torture! But to have a mind that is capable of learning, to be able to sometimes say, "There, I was wrong"—to be able to feel that you know a little more today than you did yesterday because God, the Holy Spirit has been teaching you, why, this is joy! This is happiness! This is such as God would have us know!

All the writings of Scripture, whether they are doctrinal, experimental, or practical, have the drift which John indicates in these words, "That your joy may be full!" Having thus shown that the Christian's joy needs looking after and that it is mainly fed upon things revealed in Scripture, the inference clearly must be that—

### III. WE SHOULD CONSTANTLY READ THE SCRIPTURES.

Read the Scriptures *in preference to any other book*. What a deal of reading there is now-a-days! But how large a proportion of what you call, "popular literature," is mere chaff-cutting—nothing more! Why, I am really ashamed to state the fact that I am bound, as a Christian minister, to denounce. You cannot publish a religious newspaper, or a religious magazine, as a rule, to make it pay, without a religious novel in it—and these religious novels are a disgrace to the Christianity of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century! People's minds must be in an odd state when they can eat nothing but these whipped-creams and syllabubs—for people who would be healthy, should sit down to something solid, and their stimulants should be consistent with sobriety. You will never attain the mental growth of men and women by feeding on such stuff as that! You may make lackadaisical people in the shape of men and women, but the thinking soul with some-

thing in it, the woman who would serve her God as a true helper to the Christian ministry, the young man who would proclaim Christ and win souls need some better nutriment than the poor stuff that modern literature deals out so plentifully. Oh, my dear Friends, read the Bible in preference to all such books! They only deprave your taste. If you want these books, have them. We would not deny pigs their proper food and I would not deny any person living that which his taste goes after, provided it does not shock decent morals. I lament the taste rather than the indulgence of it! If you have a soul that can appreciate the pleasures of wisdom, eschew the trifles of folly. And if you have been taught to love verities, and substantial truths, you scarcely need that I should say, "Search the Scriptures." Search them diligently and frequently!

*Prefer the Scriptures to all religious books.* In our books and our sermons—we will say it of all of them—we do our best to give you the Truth of God, but we are like the gold-beaters whose brazen arms you can see out over their doors—we get a little bit of gold and we hammer it out. Some of my Brothers are mighty hands at the craft. They can hammer out a very small piece of gold so as to cover a whole acre of talk. But the best of us, those who would seek to bring out the Doctrines of Grace in love, are poor, poor things. Read the Bible for yourselves more, and confide less in your glossaries. I would rather see the whole stock of my sermons in a blaze, all burned to ashes, than that they should keep anybody from reading the Bible. If they may act as a finger pointing to certain chapters—"Read this! Read this!"—I am thankful to have printed them. But if they keep you away from your Bibles—burn them! Burn them! Do not let them lie on the top of the Scriptures—put them somewhere at the bottom, for that is their proper place. So with all sorts of religious books—they are a sort of mixture—their human thinking dilutes Divine Revelation. Keep to the Revelation of God, pure and simple.

And, *when you read your Bible, read it in earnest.* There are several ways of reading the Bible. There is a skimming over the surface of it—content with the letter. There is also diving into it and praying yourselves down deep into the soul of it—that is the way to read the Bible! Do not always read it one verse at a time. How would Milton's *Paradise Lost* be understood if read by little snatches selected at random? You would never scan the purpose or design of the poem. Read one book through. Read John's Gospel. Do not read a bit of John and then a bit of Mark, but read John through, and get at John's drift. Remember that Matthew, though he wrote of the same Savior as Luke, is not more various in his style than he is distinct in his aim and, in a certain sense, independent of the testimony he bears. The four Evangelists are four separate witnesses, each giving a special contribution to the Doctrine as well as the history of Christ. Matthew, for instance, shows you Jesus as a King. You will notice that most of his parables begin with "a king." "Then shall the Kingdom of

Heaven be likened.” Mark shows you Christ as the Servant. Luke shows you Christ as Man, giving sketches of His childhood. And His parables begin with, “A certain man,” while John teaches you Christ in His Godhead, with a starting point far different from the other three, which have been styled the Synoptical Gospels. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Try, if you can, to get a hold of what the books mean, and pray God the Holy Spirit to lead you into the drift and aim of the sacred writers in so writing. I would like to see my Church members, all of them, good, hard, solid Bible students. Beloved, I would not be afraid of all the errors of Popery, Infidelity, Socinianism, Plymouth Brethrenism, or any other “ism” if you were to read your Bibles! You will thus keep clear of the whole lot. There is no doubt about your standing firm to the good old faith which we seek to teach you, if you do but keep to Scripture—the Book, the one Book, the Book of books, the Bible! That studied, not hurriedly, but with a determination to compare spiritual things with spiritual, and to observe the analogy of faith, you shall find a well-spring of delight and holy joy which men of letters who dabble in the proudest classics might envy, for Isaiah is better than Homer, and David is richer than Horace. But better still, you shall stand while others fall!

**IV. BUT ARE WE ALL BELIEVERS? IS THIS BOOK JOY TO ALL OF US?**

That is a significant pronoun in the text, “These things we write unto you that *your* joy may be full.” To whom writes he? Is it to *you*? Young woman, does the Scripture write to *you* that *your* joy may be full? Young man, does the Scripture speak to you to fill *you* with holy joy? You do not know whether it does or not—you do not care about it. Then, it does *not* speak to you. You get plenty of joy elsewhere. Well, it does *not* speak to you. It does not intrude upon you. It leaves you alone. It offers you no joy. You have enough. “The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick.”

But there are some of you here who need a joy, and you have not found it. You are uneasy. You cannot find a tree to build your nest. You are like the needle, when it is turned away from its pole—you cannot be quiet. You have got a horseleech in you, that is always crying, “Give! Give!” You are uneasy. Oh, dear Friend, I am glad to hear it! May that uneasiness go on increasing. May you become weary of heart, and heavy-laden of spirit, for I have a whisper for you. Jesus Christ has come into the world to call to Himself all those who labor and are heavy-laden! And when you are sick and weary with the world, come to Him, come to Him! What? You have been turned out, have you? The world has got all it could out of you and thrust you away? Now, Jesus Christ will have you. Come to Him! Come to Him! He will receive you. So you are burnt out, are you? All the goodness that was in you is burned up and you have now become nothing but smoking flax—a stench in the estimation of

your once flattering companions? You are nowhere. They do not like you. You are mopish and miserable. Oh come to Him! Come to Him, come to Him! He will not quench you. Your music is all over, is it? You were like a reed, like one of Pan's pipes. You could give out some music, once, but you got bruised and you cannot make one sound or note of joy. Well, poor Soul, come to Him! Come to Him! He will not break you. He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax—

***“Weary souls that wander wide  
From the central source of bliss,  
Turn to Jesus' wounded side  
Look to that dear blood of His.”***

Here is peace, here is joy in Christ Jesus! Oh, if you are sick of the world, come to my Master! May God the Holy Spirit bless this sickness and make you come because you have nowhere else to go! Jesus Christ will receive the devil's castaways. The very sweepings of pleasure, the dregs of the intoxicating cup, those who have gone so far that now their friends reject them, Jesus Christ accepts! May He accept me, and accept you—and then in Him our joy shall be full! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
PSALM 66:1-15.**

**Verse 1.** *Make a joyful noise unto God, all you lands.* Let not Israel alone do it. Take up the strain, you nations. He is the God of all the nations of the earth. “Make a joyful noise unto God, all you lands.”

**2-4.** *Sing forth the honor of His name: make His praise glorious. Say unto God, How terrible are You in Your works! Through the greatness of Your power shall Your enemies submit themselves unto You. All the earth shall worship You and shall sing unto You. They shall sing to Your name. Selah.* I still must always cling to the belief that this whole world is to be converted to God, and to lie captive at the feet of Christ in glorious liberty! Do not fall into that lethargic, apathetic belief of some that this is never to be accomplished—that the battle is not to be fought out on the present lines, but that there is to be a defeat—and then Christ is to come. No, foot to foot with the old enemy will He stand, till He has worsted him and until the nations of the earth shall worship and bow before Him!

**5, 6.** *Come and see the works of God: He is terrible in His doing toward the children of men. He turned the sea into dry land: they went through the flood on foot: there did we rejoice in Him.* Where God is most terrible to His enemies, He is most gracious to His friends! As Pharaoh and his hosts went down beneath the terrible hand of God, the children of Israel lifted up their loudest hallelujahs and sang unto the Lord, who triumphed gloriously! And so shall it be to the end of the chapter. God will

lay bare His terrible arm against His adversaries but His children shall, meanwhile, make music! “There did we rejoice in Him.”

**7-9.** *He rules by His power forever: His eyes behold the nations: let not the rebellious exalt themselves. Selah. O bless our God, you people, and make the voice of His praise to be heard. Who holds our soul in life and allows not our feet to be moved.* Loudest among the singers should God’s people be! If others can restrain their praise, yet let the love of Christ so compel us that we must give it a tongue and tell forth the majesty of our God! It is He alone who keeps us from Hell—which holds our soul in life! It is He alone who keeps us from falling foully. Yes, and falling finally, “and allows not our feet to be moved.”

**10.** *For You, O God, have proved us.* All God’s people can say this. It is the heritage of the elect of God. “You have proved us.”

**10-11.** *You have tried us, as silver is tried. You brought us into the net.* Entangled, surrounded, captive, held fast. Many of God’s people are in this condition.

**11.** *You laid affliction upon our loins.* It was no affliction of hand or foot, but it laid upon our loins—a heavy, crushing burden.

**12.** *You have caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water.* It was the full ordeal. One was not enough. Fire destroys some, but water is the test for others—but God’s people must be tried both ways. “We went through fire and through water, but”—Blessed “*but.*”

**12.** *But You brought us out into a wealthy place.* Out of the fire and out of the water they came because God brought them! And when He brought them, it was not to a stinted, barren heritage, but into a wealthy place. Oh, Beloved, when we think of where the Covenant of Grace has placed every Believer, it is a wealthy place, indeed!

**13-15.** *I will go into Your house with burnt offerings: I will pay You my vows which my lips have uttered, and my mouth has spoken when I was in trouble. I will offer unto You burnt sacrifices of fatlings, with the incense of rams. I will offer bullocks with goats. Selah.* The best, I think. “The best of the best will I bring You, O my God. I will bring You my heart. I will bring You my tongue. I will bring you my entire being!”

—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 CHILD OF LIGHT WALKING IN LIGHT NO. 1986

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 2, 1887,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness,  
we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the Light, as  
He is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another,  
and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”  
1 John 1:6, 7.*

THE Apostle warns us against *saying* more than we have made our own by experience. He hints at the solemn difference between empty profession and gracious reality. To have fellowship with God is a great matter—but merely to *say* that we have fellowship with Him is a totally different thing. John warns us that if we say that which our characters do not support, we lie. He leaves it just so, without a word of softening or excuse. Between saying and being—between saying and *doing*—there may be all the difference in the world. There is a tendency among men, if there is a good experience, to say that they possess it; if there is a high privilege of Grace, to say that they are enjoying it. What a folly this is! It is akin to madness! To unsound minds, a precious original suggests a desire to fashion an imitation. To the untruthful mind, the genuine is an invitation to be the counterfeit. Let us be upon our guard that we do not flatter ourselves into saying more than is true. Let us not stretch our arm beyond our sleeve, nor boast beyond our line. Every profession will be tried with fire—let us, therefore, see to it that we put in no claim which will not endure the severest test.

There were certain in John's day who said, “We have fellowship with God.” How they had come by it they did not explain. Perhaps they claimed to have reached it by philosophical speculation, by exact reasoning, or by long-continued meditation. Whatever the road, they said that they had reached the City of God and were in communion with the Great Being. John saw that they walked in darkness, rejecting the Light of Divine Revelation from above and the pure Light of the Holy Spirit within. He also saw that they, themselves, were not true, and that their lives were not pure and, therefore, he warned them that they were speaking and acting a lie. Their life was a lie, for they were not walking in the truth. And their profession that they had fellowship with God was another lie, for God can have no fellowship with falsehood. “God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all” and, therefore, He cannot hold any communion with darkness.

John draws the lines very tightly and judges with unflinching fidelity—he is not inclined to the boasted charity of latitudinarianism, but he curtly dismisses false claims with that plain word, “lie.” The disciple whom Jesus loved spoke like the Son of Thunder that he was when he had to deal with shams. It is the part of true love to be honest and to expose that which would be injurious to those it loves. He who will gloss over a falsehood loves but in word, only. Learn, then, that if men boast of fellowship with God and do not receive the Revelation of His Word, they lie, and know not the Truth of God.

Let us now speak of the real thing, the fellowship with God which comes of walking in the Light of God. The Christian life is described as walking, which implies *activity*. Christian life feeds upon contemplation, but it displays itself in action. Fellowship with God necessitates action, since to be with God, we must “walk with God.” The living God is not inactive, motionless, aimless. “My Father,” says Jesus, “works hitherto, and I work.” Chiefly in the character of active workers or in that of willing sufferers we must maintain fellowship with God. Walking implies activity, but it must be *of a continuous kind*. Neither this step, nor that, nor the next, can make a walk. We must be moving onward and onward and remain in that exercise, or we cease from walking. Holy walking includes perseverance in obedience and continuance in service. Not he that begins, but he that *continues* is the true Christian. Final perseverance enters into the very essence of the Believer’s life—the true pilgrims of Zion go from strength to strength.

From strength to strength, did I say? This suggests that walking implies *progress*. He that takes one step and another step, but still stands where he was, has not walked! There is such a thing as the goose-step and I am afraid many Christians are wonderfully familiar with it—they are where they used to be—and are half inclined to congratulate themselves upon that fact, since they might have backslidden! They have not advanced in the heavenly pilgrimage—so how can they be said to walk? My Hearer, is your life a walk *with* God and *towards* God? If so, our subject has to do with you. May the Spirit of all Grace lead us into the heart of it!

The things we shall consider this morning will arise out of the text in the following order—First, *the light of our walk*. “If we walk in the Light, as He is in the Light.” Secondly, *the communion of our walk*. “We have fellowship with one another.” Thirdly, *the glory of that communion*. “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”

**I.** Consider, first, THE LIGHT OF OUR WALK. True Believers do not walk in darkness. They have found the road and they see it before them. They know whom they have believed and why they have believed—and so they go forward intelligently. How unhappy are those who are sure of nothing but a groping for the way—and wander in endless circles of hope and fear! True Believers walk onward because the Light of God shows them their path and makes them sure of safety and progress. What is meant by walking in the Light? It is somewhat singular that last Sunday morning our subject was, “The Child of Light Walking in *Darkness*.” [Sermon #1985.] That darkness is very different from the darkness with which

we deal this morning. Children of Light may, for a time, walk in the darkness of *sorrow*, but from the darkness of *untruthfulness, ignorance, sin* and *unbelief* they have been delivered! In these respects the darkness is past and the true Light of God now shines. Moral darkness is contrary to their new-born nature—they cannot endure it. We must distinguish between things that differ, between the darkness of sorrow and the darkness of sin. A metaphor may be used for many purposes—and that of darkness has a wide range of meaning.

What is this light, then, in which the Christian walks? I answer, first, *it is the Light of Grace*. In our natural state we are in darkness and under the dominion of the Prince of Darkness. The Apostle says of us Gentiles, “Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.” When the Grace of God comes, the Day-Spring from on high visits us. The Holy Spirit brings us out from under the dominion of the old nature by creating within us a new life. And He brings us out from under the tyranny of the Prince of Darkness by opening our eyes to see and our minds to understand celestial Truths of God. The opening of our blind eyes and the pouring in of the Light of Truth are from the Lord. This is a work in which He is as fully seen in the glory of His Godhead as when in the natural creation He said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.

The entrance of God’s Word into the mind by the power of the Holy Spirit gives us light as to ourselves, our sin and our danger. With this comes light as to the way of salvation through Jesus Christ and light as to the mind of God concerning our sanctification. True knowledge takes the place of ignorance and a desire for purity becomes supreme over the love of sin. Paul says, “You were sometime darkness, but now are you light in the Lord.” We accept the Revelation of God in the Inspired Book—by the attending witness of the Holy Spirit it becomes a Revelation of God to our own hearts and thus all our position—our past, present and future—is set in a new light. With the driving out of our natural darkness old things pass away and, with the coming in of the Divine Light, all things become new. Blessed is that man to whom the Eternal Light has come by the effectual working of the Spirit of God who brings to us the Light of God wherein we see God, Christ and life everlasting! This is the secret beginning of all our light—“God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

The result of this Light of God is seen in various ways. It causes deep sorrow in the beginning, for its first discoveries are grievous to the conscience. Light is painful to eyes long accustomed to darkness. But soon the Light brings great joy, for the soul perceives deliverance from the evils which it mourned. Thus the Light of God and gladness in the end go together, as it is written, “Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.” Always, in each condition, you observe conspicuously that the Light of Grace is seen as *the light of sincerity*. Until Grace comes into our souls we have no heart for the things of God. We may be fussily religious so far as to be attentive to every outward form of worship,

but there is no heart-work, no light of the Truth of God in all our devotion. But when once the Divine Light comes in, then we become intensely real in our dealings with God. Hypocrisy and pretence fly before sincere belief and feeling. "Lord, have mercy upon us miserable sinners," no longer passes our lips flippantly and thoughtlessly, but we are, indeed, miserable on account of sin!

When we seek for mercy we mean it, and do not play at confession and repentance. Our eyes look to God and our whole body is full of the Light of God—we see what we are doing and awake ourselves to do it in earnest. We know what we are praying about and there is no question as to the deep sincerity of our cries and tears. We desire with the whole force of our nature to find pardon and acceptance through the precious blood of Christ. We do not merely *say* that we desire salvation and eternal life, but we *feel* that we must have them and cannot be denied! We cease from playing fast and loose with God. We no longer hesitate between two opinions, but one thing we seek after, desiring it of the Lord—we would be right with God in all respects. The man that is walking in the Light of God is thoroughly sincere. The shadows of pretence have been chased away—he is downright earnest in all that he does.

O my Hearers, many of you have never come so far as this, though this, alone, is not far! By being in a place of worship you show an outward respect to Divine things, but are you worshipping God? Did you worship Him just now in the prayer and in the praise? You are listening to me while I talk of the highest things that ever occupied the human mind, but do you long to be a partaker of these things? Do you hunger and thirst after righteousness? Those who are walking in the Light of God are free from pretence and are living in real earnest—is it so with you? Contentment with unreality is a sign of dwelling in *darkness*! Careful keeping up of shams, diligent puffing out of wind-bags and constant creation of make-believes—all this is of the night and its dreams! But to be what you seem to be, to be true in all the phases of your life—this is surely seen in those who walk in the Light of God! What can God have to do with shams? What cares He for empty professions? Everything must be true which is to come under His eyes.

Next to sincerity I regard *a willingness to know and to be known* as an early result of walking in the Light of God. The ungodly come not to the Light, lest their deeds should be reprov'd. There are matters about which they desire no Light, but rather say, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of Your ways." Where ignorance affords them a present peace, they count it folly to be wise. Alas, it is too commonly the case that men have no inclination to obtain a knowledge which might involve humiliation, repentance and a retracing of steps. "Let well enough alone," they cry. How many will say, "Well, we have been Christians after our own way for a good many years—why need we question ourselves?" They look upon a faithful preacher with suspicion—he comes a deal too close to home. When he begins to deal with the heart and conscience, they look at him as if he were a dog hunting about for a rat! Truly the emblem is not so very

unlike, for wherever there is a self-satisfaction which is afraid of the Light of God, we suspect that *the rat of hypocrisy* is not far off!

Beloved, we must not rest content with anything which will not bear the light of day. A religion which we will not submit to the test of self-examination cannot be worth much. No one is afraid to have a genuine sovereign submitted to any test—it is the coiner who is afraid. “Look!” says a man, “I hold a certain creed. My grandmother held it. It has come down to me as an heirloom. You invite me to examine that creed by the Word of God, but I would rather not. I am not disposed to learn anything which might cause me to change. If you speak too strongly, I shall go and hear somebody else, for I cannot bear to be disturbed.” This is a foolish prejudice, is it not? Yes, and it may prove the man’s ruin! This is the kind of thing that makes a man go out angrily from a sermon and say, “I will not listen to that man again! He is too personal and too severe.”

No, Friend, can anyone who loves your soul be too severe? Do you wish to be flattered? Do you not know that plain-dealing is more precious than rubies? Would you not say to your physician, “Put me under the severest examination and let me know the truth”? Would you pay him a fee that he might deceive you? As to your soul, do you not desire to know the very worst of your case? If you would rather be comfortable than be safe, then you and I are not of one mind, for I want to walk in the Light of God, free from deception, knowing truly and thoroughly my own place before the heart-searching God. I would rather not cry, “Peace, peace,” where there is no peace. The comfort which grows out of delusion I do not desire. Brothers and Sisters, we must build on the Truth of God and nothing else but the Truth of God!

When men walk in the Light of God, they cease to take things for granted, and look below the surface. Certain things have been labeled with the mark of truth and have passed current. But men who are in the Light of God disregard the labels and look at the goods, themselves. We cannot afford to risk our souls on hearsays—we need personal knowledge. For one, I desire a salvation which will bear the test of the closest examination. I would be saved in such a way that I am neither afraid of conscience, nor of death, nor of the Judgment Seat of God! I would be saved in the Light of God. I would be known and read of all men and I would know, even as I am known. We wish to conceal nothing. We can conceal nothing, “for all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.” We would lay bare our bosoms and sincerely cry, “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.”

A still surer evidence of Grace is the *mind’s perception of revealed Truth and its obedience to it*. Then has true light shone on a man’s walk when he perceives the Truth revealed by the Holy Spirit in sacred Scripture—and receives it into his heart with a child-like spirit. He that receives Christ, also receives Christ’s Words and the doctrine which we believe is by no means a matter of indifference. Whatever may be said, Brothers and Sisters, we have received a Revelation from God which we know to be “the faith once for all delivered to the saints.” The Lord God has broken

through the veil of silence and has manifested Himself to the sons of men! Through the darkness of their minds, the carnal cannot see what God has revealed, neither will they believe His Truth. The Truth of God is *spiritual* and the natural man is carnal and, therefore, the natural man will not receive the teaching which comes from God. By this test shall you know whether the true Light of God is shining upon you—Do you believe what God has revealed in His Word? Or are you your own teacher—maker of your own faith? He cannot be a disciple who does not learn, but invents. Do you hear the teaching of the Lord Jesus and believe it? I repeat it—you must not only *say* that you believe it—but you must, indeed, and without a doubt, *believe* the things which God has revealed. By this shall you know whether you are a child of Light, or a child of darkness. Are the Doctrines of Grace essential Truths of God with you? Whatever God has said about sin, righteousness, judgment to come—are you ready to accept it at once? Whatever He has revealed concerning Himself, His Son, His Holy Spirit, the Cross, life, death, Hell and the eternal future—do you believe it unfeignedly? This is to walk in the Light of God! All other teaching is darkness.

How many correct and amend—and so betray the Gospel! They take the garment of the Truth of God and dip it in the blood of their own thought till it is so stained that they might almost say unto God, Himself, “Do You know whether this is Your Son’s coat or not?” If you are one of those who would twist the Scriptures and force your own meaning on them, you are *not* in the Light! If you would make them mean other than what God intended them to mean, you are in the darkness, however learned a philosopher you may be! He only is in the Light of God who distrusts his own wisdom and bows before the Wisdom which comes from above! If you will sit at Jesus’ feet like a child—and hear His Words and learn of Him—then has the true Light of God shone upon you, for He is the Light that lights every man that comes into the world. The Holy Spirit comes not to help us to think out a system of belief of our own, but to lead us into all the Truths of God by taking of the things of Christ and showing them to us.

Brothers and Sisters, there is a Truth and there is a lie, and no lie is of the Truth! Can light commune with darkness, or truth with falsehood? I make no claim of implicit faith for what I say. God forbid that I should ever become so presumptuous, for that were a sort of blasphemy! But I claim implicit faith for what *God* says. Believing the Gospel to be the Revelation of God, I claim for it implicit faith! Believing the Lord Jesus to be an Infallible Teacher, I claim immediate faith in all that He has said! If this implicit faith is refused, it is because there is no Light of God in you! To walk in the Light of God is to know, to love and to live the Truth of God! To walk in the Light of God is to receive our instruction from God! To me, the end of all controversy is, “Thus says the Lord.” Only let me know that the Lord has said this or that, and though the Revelation should seem impossible to believe, and though it should come into conflict with all my previous notions, I will bow before it without a question! “The Lord has said it,” stands to us instead of all reason, argument and evidence! Yes, we believe God in the teeth of supposed evidence and reason, saying, “Let

God be true, but every man a liar.” God will not have fellowship with us if we reject His Light—but on the ground of absolute Truth He can and will meet us. If we come unto the Light and believe His witness to the Truth, then are we where God can walk with us and where the precious blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin.

This, beloved Brothers and Sisters, leads to *a transparency and simplicity of character*. Walking in the Light of God produces Israelites, indeed, in whom is no guile! Those who are full of deceit and craftiness upon any subject are not walking in the Light of God. God will not have fellowship with any whose minds are crooked and deceitful. Some persons are so warped that nothing is straight to them—their minds seem to see things crookedly—long practice in untruthfulness has given them an evil bias. This is not the case with the man in whom the Light of Grace is shining. The man who does in reality what he seems to do. The man who says what he means and means what he says. The man who is truthful, artless and sincere in all his general dealings both before God and man—he it is whose conduct leads us to hope that the Light of Grace shines within!

This is very evident in the *man’s cessation from all guile towards himself*. Remember how David pronounces him blessed “in whose spirit there is no guile.” He knew painfully what it was to be full of guile. Look at him! He has gone astray most grievously. His mind is in the dark. What does David do? There is a foul sin committed—he tries to make himself believe that it is not so very horrible—he labors to hoodwink his conscience! His sin is likely to be seen and he tries to cover it. He brings back Bathsheba’s husband. When Uriah declines to go to his house, he must be made drunk. The design has failed. David is afraid, but he is not penitent. On the contrary, he hastens to still greater crime! Uriah is in the wars and there he is wantonly exposed to death and is slain in battle! His death is ascribed to the fortune of war. David did not see that it was *murder*, for he was not walking in the Light of God. He was still in darkness and, therefore, he kept all this while acting a deceitful part with his God and his own conscience. His conduct could not bear the Light and so his one idea was to keep it out.

How changed was all this after Nathan had said to him, “You are the man”! When the light of heavenly conviction had penetrated the night of his soul, he made no more excuses, He practiced no more subterfuges. He stood in the Light, ashamed and confounded. Amazed at the sight of his sin, he abandoned all idea of covering it and fled at once to the mercy of God crying, “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving kindness.” In the sobbing and sighing of the 51<sup>st</sup> Psalm he lays bare his heart and in the most plain terms, he cries, “Deliver me from the guilt of blood shed, O God, God of my salvation.” He is in the Light of God now, for deceit has gone and now God can speak comfortably to him—and wash him and make him whiter than snow!

The man who is walking in the Light, as God is in the Light, is full of *abhorrence of sin*. Sin is practical falsehood. It is moral darkness. The man that abhors evil and injustice. The man that would do good if it cost him his earthly all. The man that would not do wrong though the world

should be his reward for doing it—this is the man that walks in the Light of God—and he is the man that shall have fellowship with God and a sense of cleansing from sin. We cannot attach too great importance to the condition of our minds in reference to sin, for if we wink at it, or take pleasure in it, or persistently practice it, we are abiding in the darkness—and we are under the wrath of God. John says, “Little children, let no man deceive you: he that does righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous.” Forget not this practical Truth of God!

I fear I have scarcely brought out the fullness of the meaning. They that are in the Light will know what I mean. Those who are in darkness cannot imagine what life in the Light of God must be.

**II.** I come, secondly, to THE COMMUNION OF OUR WALK. Those who are in the Light shall not be alone. God Himself will be with them and be their God. The words, “we have fellowship with one another,” constitute a wonderfully condescending expression. John would not have dared to coin such an expression—it must have been minted for him by the Spirit from above. Think of God and His people having mutual communion! What honor! What joy is this! Thus is the mischief of the Fall removed and Paradise is restored!

God in the Light and man in the Light have much in common. Now are they abiding in one element, for they are dwelling in one Light. Now are they both concerned about the same thing and their aims are undivided—God loves Truth and so do those who are renewed in heart. It has come to pass that the great Lord and His enlightened ones see things in the same Light. God, with His great vision, beholds more than we can, yet He does not see more than the Truth. And we, with our narrow perceptions, see the Truth and we cannot tolerate falsehood. Now we can speak with God, seeing we speak Truth, and He can converse with us, seeing we are ready to hear the Truth. In prayer and praise we are no longer false and, therefore, the Lord can hear us! His Word also falls upon an honest mind and so its meaning is perceived. Now we can also act together—the great God and His poor feeble children are striving together for truth and righteousness! Our poor little work He might overlook if He were not so good, but being infinitely condescending, He works through us whenever He sees that our work is done in truth. If our works were works of darkness, He could not co-operate with us. But now that we walk and work in His Light, He is able to make us laborers together with Himself.

Now we partake with God in sympathy, having a fellow-feeling with Him. Does the great Father mourn His prodigal child? So do we mourn over sinners! Do we see Jesus weeping over Jerusalem? So do we mourn for the perishing who will not be saved! Again, as God rejoices over sinners that repent, so do we rejoice in sympathy with Him. By coming into the Light of love as well as into the Light of knowledge we have received power to enter into sympathy with God. Is not this a very wonderful thing? But it is as clear and true as it is wonderful! We would gladly bring the whole world into the Light of God! We daily pray, “Your kingdom come, Your will be done.” Our will has grown to be like God’s will, according to



its measure, seeing we have come into the same Light as that in which God dwells.

Do you know, dear Brothers and Sisters, by experience, what it is to be honestly dealing with eternal things, to be no longer playing, toying and counterfeiting, but to be in real and blessed earnest with God and spiritual facts? Then you have come into fellowship with the great God, for He is in earnest and in Him there is no trifling nor make-believe! He is acting with intense reality, acting with His whole heart in His contention against sin, His desire for the glory of His Son, His purpose for the salvation of His people.

**III.** But now I come, in the third place, to that which strikes me most in the text, and it is this—THE GLORY OF THIS COMMUNION—“We have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” Here am I a poor creature reading this text. I find that it is possible for men to walk in fellowship with the great and ever-blessed God! I rejoice to learn this and my heart responds, “If there is any fellowship with God to be known, I will know it. If I can be reconciled to God and be at friendship with Him, I desire it beyond everything. But how can these things be? I see that a great stone lies at the door. I cannot get out of my prison to begin this walk because this great stone of *sin* shuts me in.”

Then the Lord comes in and He says, “I saw that this hindrance was in your road and so, in this very verse, I have shown you how I have taken it away.” Precious words! The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. I gather from the way in which this sentence grows out of the text that this very thing which looks as if it were the death of all communion with God, is made, by Infinite Grace, to be a wide and open channel of communion with Him! This stone is rolled away from the door of the sepulcher and the angel of communion sits down upon it as on a throne. God justifies His people in broad daylight—in a way which defies inspection—and then, by the very method of clearing away their sin, He enters into the nearest and dearest fellowship with them!

To begin with, *here is sin!* What an evil thing it is! How our soul hates it! It is uncleanness to us—a loathsome and abominable evil. You that are in the Light know how every beam of light makes you see more of the heinousness, blackness and accursed nature of sin. Even to feel a tendency towards it in your members makes you groan out, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me?” Listen! You are having fellowship with God in this. In Him is no sin, but in Him is great abhorrence of sin! If you hate sin, God hates it, also, and herein you are agreed. The very thought of iniquity, uncleanness, or falsehood is abhorred of God. His holy Nature detests it and in proportion as you feel the same loathing and detestation, you have fellowship with God. This comes to you by walking in the Light, as God is in the Light. “Horror has taken hold upon me,” says David, “because of the wicked that forsake Your Law.” David was as much in fellowship with God in that horror of sin as he was another day when he could speak of God as his exceeding joy and rejoice in the mercy which endures forever! Yes, Beloved, our horror for sin drives us into fellowship with the

great Father in that loathing of sin which made Him hide His face from His Only-Begotten because the sin of man had been made to meet upon Him!

Let us go a step further. Sin, being once perceived, the next step is that it should *be gotten rid of*. “Ah,” you say, “I wish I could be cleansed from it; cleansed from all of it, but how can this be? It is not possible for me to purge away my sin.” I thought I heard you singing just now—

**“Could my tears forever flow.  
Could my zeal no respite show.  
All for sin could not atone—  
You must save, and You alone.”**

This, also, is God’s thought about sin—He knows how hard it is to remove its pollution. He saw that nothing of ours could remove the horrible blot. Brethren, I know for a fact that all the waters of all the seas might be used to wash my scarlet sin and yet they could not wash out the fatal stain. Not even the fires of Hell could burn out the defilement of sin! In this persuasion we have fellowship with the pure and holy God who saw that there was no means of removing sin but one—He must deliver up His own Son to death—or the sin of man could never be purged away. The Sacrifice of the Only-Begotten is the unique hope of sinners. The laying of our iniquity upon Him who deigned to be the great Scapegoat of His people, is the only means for the taking away of the sins of the world! That inward persuasion of the impossibility of the purgation of sin by any doings or feelings of our own—and the consequent perception that only in Christ lies the help of men—has brought us through the Light of Truth to walk in fellowship with the thrice holy God!

Now go a step further. *The glorious Son of God condescends to become the Atonement for sin*. He is taken to the tree. Our sins are made to meet upon His blessed head and there He *dies*—the Just for the unjust! He was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Standing by the tree of doom, we look up to that blessed Savior with all-absorbing admiration and love. We admire Him as the masterpiece of Divine Wisdom, Grace, Power and Truth—and, admiring, we love Him—we pledge ourselves to Him. Herein we have entered into fellowship with the great Father, indeed, and without a doubt, for the Father infinitely loves His Son! He greatly delights in Him. No thought of Christ that the most rapturous enthusiast ever had can reach half way to God’s thoughts of Christ. See how holy Bernard seems to go into a delirium of love when he talks about his Divine Master! O Bernard, you cannot tell how the Father loves Jesus; how He delights in His Sacrifice; how He takes pleasure in His exaltation!

In the putting away of sin by the blood of Jesus, the Father has an infinite content and so have we. Beloved, we rejoice in the Divine satisfaction for sin—it is a well of Divine delight to us. This satisfaction is not accomplished by anything being hushed up and concealed, but, walking in the Light, as God is in the Light, we have fellowship with God in the one glorious Sacrifice! Suppose I could persuade myself that sin is a trifle? I would not be walking in the Light and I would have no fellowship with God. Suppose I said, “Pooh, pooh. Sin can easily be forgiven! I am sure it re-

quires no atonement”? I would not be walking in the Light and I would have no fellowship with God! Suppose I said, “Though Jesus died, His death was only the close of His life and no special reference need be made to it as a Sacrifice for sin”? I would not be walking in the Light of God and I would have no fellowship with God.

A step further. Beloved, many of us have come to Jesus Christ by faith. We have looked to Him and have accepted Him as our Savior *cleansing us from all sin*. Joy, joy, joy forever—the brightest day that ever dawned on us was that day when we saw all our sins numbered on our blessed Scapegoat and carried away into the wilderness of forgetfulness! When God saw the blood of old, He passed over Israel, for His justice was satisfied. And it is so with Jesus. How glad and content we are to see how Jesus finished transgression, made an end of sin and brought in everlasting righteousness! Brothers and Sisters, the death of Jesus is a cleansing from sin which will bear the Light of God—it is no hole and corner business, no winking at evil, no suspension of law—no making out that sin is no sin! No, the debt is acknowledged, and what is far better, it is *paid*! The guilty are punished in their Substitute—and in Him are thus justly set free!

We shall all appear before the Judgment Seat and I am glad it is so, for the stain of our sin is so effectually removed by the blood of Jesus that we are clean every whit—and even the eyes of Divine Justice will see no spot in us! We rejoice in perfect whiteness, for the Lord has made us whiter than snow. Yes, we have fellowship with God in this cleansing, for God accepts us in the Beloved. God who made Him to be the Lord, our Righteousness—God Himself justifies us in His Son! He will, in the Last Great Day, make the whole universe a witness to the righteousness of the salvation of Believers. All intelligences shall see that in Christ all who are in Him are truly justified and most justly saved! How the Lord God and His people will have fellowship in their common joy in the work and Person of Jesus, as they see the perfection of it, and the way in which all sin is removed by it! Our salvation in Christ is, in the Light of God, in the most eminent degree—it will bear the full, fierce light of Sinai to be turned upon it—“yet no flaw will be found in it.” This is wonderful! This is glorious! Do you wonder that God is well pleased in Him! And are not *we* well pleased? Blessed be His name! Do you not see how we thus have fellowship with one another? Oh, that I had strength to set forth before you the thoughts which fill my soul!

Brothers and Sisters, we are now at one with God in His master purpose. Was it not in His heart to create beings with whom He might have fellowship? He made the heavens and the earth. He made the angels. He made all things—but He could find no companionship in all these things. Our Lord, like Adam, found no help-meet for Himself in any of the creatures He had made. He desired to produce and bring to Himself an order of beings who could be glorified without danger of pride. Who could think and feel as the First-Born would do. In fact, would become the friends of the Son of God! How were these creatures to be produced? Not by an immediate fiat of creation. Angels He could speak into being by a word. But

in the constitution of these beings there would need to be an experience and a discipline to fit them for their lofty position. Their model was to be the Son of Jehovah's love. He was to be the First-Born among many brethren. It was necessary for these creatures to know sin and yet to hate it more fully than if they had never known it—to know the love of God—and to be forever bound by it to an unsinning obedience which would fill them with boundless happiness.

Behold the process by which this new creation, this new order of creatures should come forth! Consider the processes by which the Fall, the Incarnation, the Cross, and the new birth work out the sacred result! When you have read the past in this light, then gaze into the future. Now we see how throughout eternity we shall walk in the Light, as God is in the Light, and have fellowship with one another—fellowship culminating in Jesus Christ the Only-Begotten—and the cleansing from all sin by His blood. The blood-washed are to be the friends of God, with whom He shall speak face to face, as He speaks with no angel or seraph! With these He will dwell and He will be their God, and they shall be His people. And in them and through them He will make known the glories of His Son to wondering worlds. This great purpose has been worked out to a considerable extent by the Lord's having already made us to walk in the Light, as He is in the Light, and by washing us in the precious blood. But it does not even yet appear what we shall be. This much we practically seek after—therefore we live for Christ! Therefore our chief glory is the Cross! Therefore our ideal of glory for ourselves is to see Jesus glorified! The torrents have swept us away! We are no longer bound to this earth! We are borne along by the irresistible force of Eternal Love! God has achieved His purpose in our blood-washed souls—walking in the Light of God, we are now in harmony with His master purpose and we cry—"Father, glorify Your Son!"

I am done, but oh, I wish that all your hearts were brought into the Light of God at this moment! Oh, that you would quit the dark ways of self-righteousness, carelessness, thoughtlessness and sin—and come into the Light of Truth! Oh, that the Light may come to you as to Saul of Tarsus and at once transform you! May the Spirit of God bring you to know God and His Son Jesus Christ, whom to know is life eternal.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 John 1, 2.  
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—425, 484, 289.**

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# THE EVIL AND ITS REMEDY

## NO. 223

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, NOVEMBER 14, 1858,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

*“The Iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great.”  
Ezekiel 9:9.*

*“The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleans us from all sin.”  
1 John 1:7.*

I SHALL have two texts this morning—the evil and its remedy. “The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great.” And “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleans us from all sin.”

We can learn nothing of the Gospel except by feeling its Truths—no one Truth of the Gospel is ever truly known and really learned until we have tested and tried and proved it and its power has been exercised upon us. I have heard of a naturalist who thought himself exceedingly wise with regard to the natural history of birds and yet he had learned all he knew in his study and had never so much as seen a bird either flying through the air or sitting upon its perch. He was but a fool although he thought himself exceeding wise. And there are some men who think themselves great theologians. They might even pretend to take a doctor’s degree in divinity. And yet, if we came to the root of the matter and asked them whether they ever saw or felt any of these things of which they talked, they would have to say, “No. I know these things in the letter, but not in the spirit. I understand them as a matter of theory, but not as things of my own consciousness and experience.”

Be assured that as the naturalist who was merely the student of other men’s observations knew nothing, so the man who pretends to religion but has never entered into the depths and power of its doctrines—or felt the influence of them upon his heart—knows nothing whatever and all the knowledge he pretends to is but varnished ignorance. There are some sciences that may be learned by the head, but the science of Christ crucified can only be learned by the *heart*.

I have made use of this remark as the preface to my sermon because I think it will be forced from each of our hearts before we have done, if the two truths which I shall consider this morning shall come at all home to us with power. The first truth is the greatness of our sin. No man can know the greatness of sin till he has felt it, for there is no measuring rod

for sin except its condemnation in our own conscience when the Law of God speaks to us with a terror that may be felt. And as for the richness of the blood of Christ and its ability to wash us—of that also we can know nothing till we have ourselves been washed and have ourselves proved that the blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God *has* cleansed us from all sin.

I. I shall begin, then, with the first doctrine as it is contained in the ninth chapter of Ezekiel, the ninth verse—“The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great.” There are two great lessons which every man must learn and learn by experience, before he can be a Christian. First, he must learn that sin is an exceeding great and evil thing. And he must learn also that the blood of Christ is an exceedingly precious thing and is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto it. The former lesson we have before us. O may God, by His infinite Spirit and by His great wisdom teach it to some of us who never knew it before!

Some men imagine that the Gospel was devised, in some way or other, to soften down the harshness of God towards sin. Ah, how mistaken the idea! There is no more harsh condemnation of sin anywhere than in the Gospel. You shall go to Sinai and you shall there hear its thunders rolling. You shall behold the flashing of its terrible lightning, till, like Moses, you shall exceedingly fear and quake and come away declaring that sin must be a terrible thing otherwise the Holy One had never come upon Mount Paran with all these terrors round about Him. But after that you shall go to Calvary. There you shall see no lightning and you shall hear no thunder, but instead thereof you shall hear the groans of an expiring God and you shall behold the contortions and agonies of One who bore—

**“All that Incarnate God could bear,  
With strength enough and none to spare.”**

And then you shall say, “Now, though I never fear nor quake, I know how exceedingly great a thing sin must be since such a Sacrifice was required to make an atonement for it.” Oh, Sinners! If you come to the Gospel imagining that there you shall find an apology for your sin, you have indeed mistaken your way. Moses charges you with sin and tells you that you are without excuse. But as for the Gospel, it rends away from you every shadow of a covering. It leaves you without a cloak for your sin. It tells you that you have sinned willfully against the Most High God—that you have not an apology that you can possibly make for all the iniquities that you have committed against Him. And so far from smoothing over your sin and telling you that you are a weak creature and therefore could not help your sin, it charges upon you the very weakness of your nature and makes *that* itself the most damning sin of all. If you seek apologies you better look into the face of Moses, when it is clothed with all the maj-

esty of the terrors of the Law, than into the face of the Gospel—for that is more terrible by far to him who seeks to cloak his sin.

Nor does the Gospel in any way whatever give man a hope that the claims of the Law will be in any way loosened. Some imagine that under the old dispensation God demanded great things of man—that He did bind upon man heavy burdens that were grievous to be borne—and they suppose that Christ came into the world to put upon the shoulders of men a lighter Law—something which would be more easy for them to obey—a Law which they can more readily keep, or which if they break, would not come upon them with such terrible threats. Ah, not so. The Gospel came not into the world to soften down the Law. Till Heaven and earth shall pass away, not one jot or tittle of the Law shall fail. What God has said to the sinner in the Law, He says to the sinner in the Gospel. If He declares that, “the soul that sins it shall die,” the testimony of the Gospel is not contrary to the testimony of the Law. If He declares that whosoever breaks the sacred Law shall most assuredly be punished, the Gospel also demands blood for blood and eye for eye and tooth for tooth and does not relax a solitary jot or tittle of its demands. It is as severe and as terribly just as even the Law itself. Do you reply to this, that Christ has certainly softened down the Law? I reply that you know not, then, the mission of Christ.

What said He Himself? The Lord has said in the Law “You shall not commit adultery”—has Christ softened the Law? No. Says He, “I say unto you that whosoever looks upon a woman to lust after her, has committed adultery with her already in his heart.” That is no softening of the Law. It is, as it were, the grinding of the edge of the terrible sword of Divine Justice to make it sharper far than it seemed before. Christ has not put out the furnace. He rather seems to heat it seven times hotter. Before Christ came sin seemed unto me to be but little. But when He came sin became exceeding sinful and all its dread heinousness started out before the light.

“But,” says one, “Surely the Gospel does in some degree remove the greatness of our sin. Does it not soften the punishment of sin?” Ah, no. You shall appeal to Moses. Let him ascend the pulpit and preach to you. He says, “The soul that sins, it shall die.” And his sermon is dread and terrible. He sits down—and now comes Jesus Christ, the man of a loving countenance. What says He with regard to the punishment of sin? Ah, Sirs, there was never such a preacher of the fires of Hell as Christ was. Our Lord Jesus Christ was all love but He was all honesty, too. “Never man spoke like that man,” when He came to speak of the punishment of the lost. What other Prophet was the author of such dread expressions as these?—“He shall burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire”—“These shall

go away into everlasting punishment”? Or this—“Where their worm dies not and their fire is not quenched”?

Stand at the feet of Jesus when He tells you of the punishment of sin and the effect of iniquity and you may tremble there far more than you would have done if Moses had been the preacher and if Sinai had been in the background to conclude the sermon. No, Brethren, the Gospel of Christ in no sense whatever helps to make sin less. The proclamation of Christ today by His minister is the same as the utterance of Ezekiel of old—“The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great.”

And now let us endeavor to deal with hearts and consciences a moment. My Brethren, there are some here who have never felt this truth. There are many of you who start back frightened from it. You will go home and represent me as one who delights to dwell on certain dark and terrible things that I suppose to be true—you say within yourselves, “I cannot, I will not receive that doctrine of sin. I know I am a frail weak creature. I have made a great many mistakes in my life—that I will admit. But still such is my nature and I therefore could not help it. I am not going to be arraigned before a pulpit and condemned as the chief of criminals. I may be a sinner—I confess I am with all the rest of mankind—but as to my sin being anything so great as that man attempts to describe, I do not believe it. I reject the doctrine.”

And do you think, my Friend, that I am surprised at your doing so? I know who you are. It is because as yet the grace of God has never touched your soul that therefore you say this. And here comes the proof of the doctrine with which I started. You do not know this truth because you have never felt it. But if you had felt it, as every true-born child of God has felt it, you would say, “The man cannot describe its terrors as they are. They must be *felt* before they can be known and when felt they are not to be expressed in all their fullness of terror.”

But come, let me reason with you for a moment. Your sin is great, although you think it small. Remember, Brothers and Sisters, I am not about to make out that your sin is greater than mine. I speak to you and I speak to myself also—your sin *is* great. Follow me in these few thoughts and perhaps you will better understand it. How great a thing is one sin, when according to the Word of God *one* sin could suffice to damn the soul? One sin, remember, destroyed the whole human race. Adam did but take of the forbidden fruit and that one sin blasted Eden and made all of us inheritors of the curse and caused the earth to bring forth thorns and thistles, even unto this day. But it may be asked, could one sin destroy the soul? Is it possible that one solitary sin could open the gates of Hell and then close them upon the guilty soul forever and that God should refuse His mercy and shut out that soul forever from the presence of His



face? Yes, if I believe my Bible, I must believe that. Oh, how great must my sins be if this is the terrible effect of *one* transgression. Sin cannot be the little thing that my pride has helped me to imagine it to be. It must be an awful thing if but one sin could ruin my soul forever!

Think again my Friend, for a moment, what an imprudent and impertinent thing sin is. Behold, there is one God who fills all in all and He is the Infinite Creator. He makes me and I am nothing more in His sight than an animated grain of dust. And I, that animated grain of dust, with a mere ephemeral existence, have the impertinence and imprudence to set up my will against His will! I dare to proclaim war against the Infinite Majesty of Heaven! It is a thing so audacious—so infernally full of pride—that one need not marvel that even a sin in the little eye of man, should, when it is looked upon by the conscience in the light of Heaven, appear to be great indeed.

But think again, how great does your sin and mine seem if we will but think of the ingratitude which has marked it? The Lord our God has fed us from our youth up to this day. He has put the breath into our nostrils and has held our souls in life. He has clothed the earth with mercies and He has permitted us to walk across these fair fields. And He has given us bread to eat and raiment to put on and mercies so precious that their full value can never be known until they are taken from us. And yet you and I have persevered in breaking all His laws willfully and wantonly—we have gone contrary to His will. It has been sufficient for us to know that a thing has been God's will and we have at once run contrary to it. Oh, if we set our secret sins in the light of His mercy, if our transgressions are set side by side with His favors, we must each of us say our sins, indeed, are exceedingly great!

Mark, I am not now addressing myself solely and wholly to those whom the Word itself condemns of great sin. We of course do not hesitate for a moment to speak of the drunkard, the whoremonger, the adulterer and the thief as being great sinners. We should not spare to say that their iniquity is exceedingly great, for it exceeds even the bounds of man's morality and the laws of our civil government. But I am speaking this day to *you who have been the most moral*. To you whose outward carriage is everything that could be desired. To you who have kept the Sabbath. To you who have frequented God's house and outwardly worshipped. Your sins and mine are exceeding great. They seem but little to the outward eye—but if we came to dig into the heart and see their iniquity, their hideous blackness, we must say of them they are exceeding great.

And again—I repeat it, this is a doctrine that no man can rightly know and receive until he has felt it. My Hearer, have you ever felt this doctrine to be true?—"My sin is exceeding great." Sickness is a terrible thing, more

especially when it is accompanied with pain, when the poor body is racked to an extreme so that the spirit fails within us and we are dried up like a potsherd. But I bear witness in this place this morning that sickness, however agonizing, is nothing like the discovery of the evil of *sin*. I had rather pass through seven years of the most wearisome pain and the most languishing sickness than I would ever again pass through the terrible discovery of the terrors of sin. There be some of you who will understand what I mean, for you have felt the same. Once you were playing with your lusts and dallying with your sin and it pleased God to open your eyes to see that sin is exceeding sinful. You remember the horror of that state—it seemed as if all hideous things were gathered into one dread and awful spectacle. You had before loved your iniquities, but now you loathed them—and you loathed yourselves.

Before, you had thought that your transgressions might easily be gotten rid of—they were matters that might be speedily washed out by repentance or purged away by amendment of your life. But now sin seemed an alarming thing and knowing that you had committed all this iniquity—life seemed to you a curse and death. If it had not been for that dreary something after death, it would have been to you the highest blessing if you could have escaped the lashings of your conscience, which seemed to be perpetually whipping you with whips of burning wire. Some of you, perhaps, passed through but a little of this. God was graciously pleased to give you deliverance in a few hours. But you must confess that those hours were hours into which it seemed as if years of misery had been compressed.

It was my sad lot for three or four years to feel the greatness of my sin without a discovery of the greatness of God's mercy. I had to walk through this world with more than a world upon my shoulders and sustain a grief that so far exceeds all other griefs, as a mountain exceeds a mole hill. And I often wonder to this day how it was that my hand was kept from rending my own body into pieces through the terrible agony which I felt, when I discovered the greatness of my transgression. Yet I had not been a greater sinner than anyone of you here present, openly and publicly, but heart sins were laid bare, sins of lip and tongue were discovered and then I knew—oh, that I may never have to learn over again in such a dreadful school this terrible lesson—"The iniquity of Judah and of Israel is exceeding great." This is the first part of the discourse.

**II.** "Well," cries one, turning on his heel, "there is very little comfort in that. It is enough to drive one to despair, if not to madness itself." Ah, Friend, such is the very design of this text. If I may have the pleasure of driving you to despair, if it is a despair of your self-righteousness and a despair of saving your own soul, I shall be thrice happy.

We turn therefore from that terrible text to the second one—the first of John, the first chapter and the seventh verse—“The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleans us from all sin.” There lies the blackness—here stands the Lord Jesus Christ. What will He do with it? Will He go and speak to it and say, “This is no great evil. This blackness is but a little spot?” Oh, no—He looks at it and He says, “This is terrible blackness, darkness that may be felt. This is an exceeding great evil.” Will He cover it up then? Will He weave a mantle of excuses and then wrap it round about the iniquity?

No—whatever covering there may have been He lifts it off and He declares that when the Spirit of Truth is come He will convict the world of sin and lay the sinner’s conscience bare and probe the wound to the bottom. What then will He do? He will do a far better thing than make an excuse or than to pretend in any way to speak lightly of it. He will cleanse it all away, remove it entirely by the power and meritorious virtue of His own blood which is able to save unto the uttermost! The Gospel does not consist in making a man’s sin appear little. The way Christians get their peace is not by seeing their sins shriveled and shrinking until they seem small to them. On the contrary—they, first of all, see their sins expanding and then—after that—they obtain their peace by seeing those sins entirely swept away—far as the east is from the west.

Now, carrying in mind the remarks I made upon the first text, I call your attention for a few moments to the greatness and beauty of the second one. Note here, “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleans us from ALL sin.” Dwell on the word “all” for a moment. Our sins are great. Every sin is great. But there are some that in our apprehension seem to be greater than others. There are crimes that the lip of modesty could not mention. I might go far in this pulpit this morning in describing the degradation of human nature in the sins which it has invented. It is amazing how the ingenuity of man seems to have exhausted itself in inventing fresh crimes. Surely there is not the possibility of the invention of a new sin. But if there is, before long man will invent it—for man seems exceedingly cunning and full of wisdom in the discovery of means of destroying himself and the endeavor to injure His Maker.

But there are some sins that show a diabolical extent of degraded ingenuity—some sins of which it were a shame to speak—of which it were disgraceful to think. But note here—“The blood of Jesus Christ cleans from *all* sin.” There may be some sins of which a man cannot speak, but there is no sin which the blood of Christ cannot wash away. Blasphemy, however profane. Lust, however bestial. Covetousness, however far it may have gone into theft and plunder. Breach of the Commandments of God, however much of riot it may have run—all this may be pardoned and washed away through the blood of Jesus Christ.

In all the long lists of human sins, though they are long as time, there stands but one sin that is unpardonable and that one no sinner has committed if he feels within himself a longing for mercy. For that sin once committed, the soul becomes hardened, dead and seared and never desires afterwards to find peace with God. I therefore declare to you, O trembling Sinner, that however great your iniquity may be, whatever sin you may have committed in all the lists of guilt, however far you may have exceeded all your fellow-creatures, though you may have distanced the Pauls and Magdalenes and every one of the most heinous culprits in the black race of sin—the blood of Christ is able to wash your sin away.

Mark—I speak not lightly of your sins, they are exceedingly great. But I speak still more loftily of the blood of Christ. Great as your sins are, the blood of Christ is greater still. Your sins are like great mountains—but the blood of Christ is like Noah's Flood—twenty cubits upwards shall this blood prevail and the top of the mountains of your sin shall be covered.

Take the word “all” in another sense. Not only as taking in all sorts of sin, but as comprehending the great aggregate *mass* of sin. Come here Sinner, you with the gray head. What are we to understand in your case by this word “all”? Bring here the tremendous load of the sins of your youth Those sins are still in your bones and your tottering knees sometimes testify against the iniquities of your early youth. But all these sins Christ can remove. Now bring here the sins of your riper manhood, your transgressions in the family, your failures in business—all the mistakes and all the errors you have committed in the thoughts of your heart. Bring them all here. And then add the iniquities of your frail and trembling age. What a mass is there! What a mass of sin! Stir up that putrid mass—but put your finger to your nostrils first—for you can not bear the stench if you are a man with a living and quickened conscience. Could you bear to read your own diary if you had written there all your acts? No. Though you are the purest of mankind, your thoughts—if they could have been recorded—would now if you could read them, make you startle and wonder that you are demon enough to have had such imaginations within your soul. But put them all here and all these sins the blood of Christ can wash away.

No, more than that. Come here you thousands who are gathered together this morning to listen to the Word of God. What is the aggregate of your guilt? Here you have come, men of every grade and class and women of every age and order—what is the mass of all your united guilt? Could you put it so that mortal observation could comprehend the whole? Even if it were as a mountain with a base, broad as eternity and a summit lofty almost as the throne of the great archangel? But, remember, the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleans from *all* sin. Let but the blood be applied to

our consciences and all our guilt is removed and cast away forever—all—not one left, not one solitary stain remaining—all gone, like Israel's enemies—all drowned in the Red Sea so that there was not one of them left. All swept away, not so much as the remembrance of them remaining. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleans from *all* sin."

Yet, once more—in the praise of this blood we must notice one further feature. There are some of you here who are saying, "Ah, that shall be my hope when I come to die, that in the last hour of my extremity the blood of Christ will take my sins away. It is now my comfort to think that the blood of Christ *shall* wash and purge and purify the transgressions of life." But, mark—my text doesn't say that! It does not say the blood of Christ *shall* cleanse—that is true—but it says something greater than that—it says, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son *cleans*"—cleans *now*. And is it possible that *now* a man may be forgiven? Can a harlot *now* have all her sins blotted out of the Book of God? And can she know it? Can the thief this day have all his transgressions cast into the sea. And can he know it?

Can I, the chief of sinners, this day be cleansed from all my sins and know it? Can I know that I stand accepted before the Throne of God, a holy creature because washed from every sin? Yes! Tell the wide world over that the blood of Christ can not only wash you in the last dying article, but can wash you NOW. And let it be known, moreover, that to this there are a thousand witnesses, who, rising in this very place from their seats, could sing—

***"Oh, how sweet to view the flowing  
Of my Savior's precious blood,  
With Divine assurance knowing,  
He has made my peace with God."***

What would you not give to have all your sins blotted out *now*? Would you not give yourself away to become the servant of God forever, if *now* your sins should be washed away? Ah, then, say not in your hearts, "What shall I do to obtain this mercy?" Imagine not there is any difficulty in your way. Suppose not there is some hard thing to be done before you can come to Christ to be washed. O Beloved! To the man that knows himself to be guilty, there is not one barrier between himself and Christ. Come, Soul, this moment come to Him that hung upon the Cross of Calvary! Come now and be washed!

But what do I mean by coming? I mean this—come and put your trust in Christ and you shall be saved. What is meant by believing in Christ? Some say, that "to believe in Christ is to believe that Christ died for me." That is not a satisfactory definition of faith. An Arminian believes that Christ died for everybody. He must, therefore, necessarily believe that

Christ died for him. His believing *that* will not save him, for he will still remain an unconverted man and yet believe that.

To believe in Christ is to *trust* Him. The way I believe in Christ and I know not how to speak of it except as I feel it myself, is simply this—I know it is written that “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.” I do firmly believe that those He came to save He will save. The only question I ask myself is, “Can I put myself among that number whom He has declared He came to save?” Am I a sinner? Not one that utters the word in a complimentary sense, but do I feel the deep compunction in my inmost soul? Do I stand and feel convicted, guilty and condemned? I do. I know I do. Whatever I may not be, one thing I know I am—a sinner—guilty, consciously guilty and often miserable on account of that guilt.

Well, then, the Scripture says, “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners”—

***“And when your eye of faith is dim,  
Still trust in Jesus, sink or swim.;  
Thus, at His footstool, bow the knee  
And Israel’s God your peace shall be.”***

Let me put my entire trust in the bloody sacrifice which He offered upon my behalf. No dependence will I have in my prayers, my works, my feelings, my weeping, my preaching, my thinking, my Bible readings, nor all that. I would desire to have good works and yet in my good works I will not put a shadow of trust.

***“Nothing in my hands I bring,  
Simply to your Cross I cling.”***

And if there is any power in Christ to save I am saved. If there is an everlasting arm extended by Christ and if that Savior who hung there was “God over all, blessed forever,” and if His blood is still exhibited before the Throne of God as the sacrifice for sin, then I cannot perish till the Throne of God shall break and till the pillars of God’s justice shall crumble.

Now, Sinner, what have you to do this morning? If you feel your guilt to be great, cast yourself entirely upon this sacrifice by blood. “But no,” says one, “I have not felt enough.” Your feelings are not Christ. “No, but I have not prayed enough.” Your prayers are not Christ and your prayers cannot save you. “No, but I have not repented enough.” Your repentance may destroy you, if you put that in the place of Christ. All that you have, I repeat this morning, is this—do you feel yourself to be a lost, ruined, guilty sinner? Then simply cast yourself on the fact that Christ is able to save sinners and rest there. What? Do you say you cannot do it? Oh may God enable you, may He give you faith, sink or swim, to cast yourself on that. “Well, but,” you say, “I may not—being such a sinner.” You may—and God never yet rejected a sinner that sought salvation by Jesus. Such a thing never happened, though the sinner sometimes thought it had.

Come, the crumb is under the table. Though you are but a dog, come and pick it up. It is a privilege even for the dog to take it. And mercy that is great to you is but a crumb to Him that gives it freely—come and take it. Christ will not reject you. And if you are the worst sinner that ever lived, only simply trust yourself upon Him and perish you cannot, if God is God and if this Bible is the book of His Truth. The Lord now help each one of us to come afresh to Christ and to His name be glory. Amen.

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# **WALKING IN THE LIGHT AND WASHED IN THE BLOOD**

## **NO. 663**

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 3, 1865,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have  
fellowship one with another and the blood of  
Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.”  
1 John 1:7.*

THERE are two great powers in conflict in this world. One is the power of good, of which God is the King and the other is the power of evil, which is represented by the Prince of the power of the air, Satan. The first principle is set forth by John under the figure of light. God himself is essential Light and everything which is good in the world is an emanation from Himself. “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of Lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.”

The light is the evident emblem of the Truth of God. Darkness is the symbol of error. Light represents holiness. Darkness is the appropriate figure for sin. Light represents knowledge, especially of spiritual things, since light reveals. Darkness is the fit token of the ignorance under which the natural mind labors perpetually. By nature we are all born under the dominion of darkness—we grope our way like blind men and when we knew God by the light of His works, we glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in our imaginations and our foolish heart was darkened.

Naturally, spiritual things are not discernible by man—they are spiritual and spiritually discerned and the carnal mind cannot perceive them—for it walks in darkness. The guilt of sin is a thing too high for the carnal mind to understand. The glory of the eternal sacrifice it cannot perceive. The excellence of God, the faithfulness of His promise and the validity of His Covenant—all such things as these are swathed in mist—the carnal mind sees them not. As soon as ever the Grace of God comes into the heart, it makes as great a difference as did the eternal fiat of Jehovah, when He said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.

As soon as God the Holy Spirit begins to work upon the soul of man to illuminate him, he perceives at once his own sinfulness. He abhors that sinfulness, he labors to escape from it, he cries out for a remedy—he finds it in Christ—therefore he no longer loves sin, he is not guided any longer by the darkness of policy and selfishness and error, but he walks after the light of the Truth of God, of righteousness, of holiness, of true knowledge. God has brought him into light—he sees now what he never saw before!



He knows, feels, believes, recognizes what he never had known anything of before—he is in the light.

Therefore you constantly find the Christian called a child of light and he is warned that he is of the light and of the day. He is told, “You are not of the night nor of darkness.” “You were sometime darkness, but now are you light in the Lord: walk as children of light.” You perceive in the text, then, that the Christian is spoken of as a man who is in the light. But there is something more said of him than this. He is practically in the light, “if we walk in the light.” It is of no use to pretend to have light in the brain—so as to comprehend all knowledge, so as to be sound and orthodox in one’s doctrinal opinions—this will be of no vital service so far as the great point of salvation is concerned.

A man may think he has much light, but if it is only notional and doctrinal and is not the light which enlightens his nature and develops itself in his practical walk, he lies when he talks of being in the light, for he is in darkness altogether. Nor is it truthful to pretend or profess that we have light within in the form of experience if we do not walk in it, for where the light is true, it is quite certain to show itself abroad.

If there is a candle within the lantern, its light will stream forth into the surrounding darkness and those who have eyes will be able to see it. I have no right to say I have light unless I walk in it. The Apostle is very peremptory with those who so speak. He says, “He that says I know Him and keeps not His Commandments is a liar and the truth is not in him.” The Christian, then, is in the light and he is practically in it—his walk and conversation are regulated by the Truth of God, by holiness—and by that Divine knowledge which God has been pleased to bestow upon him. He walks in the light of faith, in another path than that which is trod by men who have nothing but the light of sense. He sees Him who is invisible and the sight of the invisible God operates upon his soul.

He looks into eternity, he marks the dread reward of sin and the blessed gift of God to those who trust in Jesus and eternal realities have an effect upon his whole manner and conversation—from now on he is a man in the light, walking in that light. There is a very strong description given here—“If we walk in the light as He is in the light.” Beloved, the thought of that dazzles me! I have tried to look it in the face, but I cannot endure it. If we walk in the light as God is in the light! Can we ever attain to this? Shall poor flesh and blood ever be able to walk as clearly in the light as He is whom we call “Our Father,” of whom it is written, “God is light and in Him is no darkness at all”?

Let us say this much and then commend this wonderful expression to your meditations. Certainly this is the model which is set before us, for the Savior Himself said, “Be you perfect, even as your Father who is in Heaven is perfect.” And if we take anything short of absolute perfection as our model of life we shall certainly, even if we should attain to our ideal, fall short of the Glory of God! Beloved, when a schoolmaster writes the copy at the head of the page, he does not expect that the boy will come up to the copy—but then, if the copy is not a perfect one, it is not fit to be imitated by a child.

And so our God gives us Himself as the pattern and copy, “Be you imitators of God as dear children,” for nothing short of Himself would be a worthy model. Though we, as life sculptors, may feel that we can never rival the perfection of God, yet we are to seek after it and never to be satisfied until we attain it. The youthful artist, as he grasps his early pencil, can hardly hope to equal Raphael or Michelangelo! But still, if he did not have a noble ideal before his mind, he would only attain to something very mean and ordinary. Heavenly fingers point us to the Lord Jesus as the great Exemplar of His people and the Holy Spirit works in us a likeness to Him.

But what does it mean that the Christian is to walk in light as God is in the light? We conceive it to import likeness, but not *degree*. We are as truly in the light. We are as heartily in the light. We are as sincerely in the light, as honestly in the light, though we cannot be there in the same degree. I cannot dwell in the sun—it is too bright a place for my residence—unless I shall be transformed, like Uriel, Milton’s angel who could dwell in the midst of the blaze of its excessive glory. But I can *walk* in the light of the sun though I cannot dwell in it. And so God is the Light, He is Himself the Sun and I can walk in the light as He is in the light, though I cannot attain to the same degree of perfection and excellence and purity and truth in which the Lord, Himself, resides.

Trapp is always giving us the Truth of God in a way in which we can remember it—so he says we are to be in the light as God is in the light for *quality*, but not for *equality*. We are to have the same light and as truly to have it and walk in it as God does, though as for *equality* with God in His holiness and perfection—that must be left until we cross the Jordan and enter into the perfection of the Most High.

Having thus briefly sketched the character of the genuine Christian, observe, Beloved, that he is the possessor of two privileges. The first is fellowship with God. “We have fellowship one with another.” And the second is complete cleansing from sin—“and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.” The first privilege we will have but a word upon—it is fellowship with *God*. As you read this verse in our translation, it looks very much as if all that was meant was fellowship with your brother Christians. But this, according to able critics, would not convey the sense of the original.

The Arabic version renders it, “God with us and we with Him,” and several copies read, “we have fellowship with Him.” Our version almost compels you to think of fellowship with other Believers, but such is not the intention of the Spirit. “We have mutual fellowship—between God and our souls there is communion.” This is the sense of the passage. God is Light—we walk in light—we agree. “Can two walk together unless they are agreed?” It is clear we are agreed as to the principles which we shall advance—God is the champion of Truth, so are we. God is the promoter of holiness, so are we. God seeks that love may reign instead of selfishness, so does the Christian. God hates error and spares no arrows to destroy it. The Christian also contends earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.

God is pure, and the pure in heart shall see God. God is holiness and those who are holy are attracted to God from an affinity of nature, even as the needle is attracted to its pole. If the Lord has visited you and made you to walk in light, you shall surely have fellowship with God your Father. He that is in darkness cannot have fellowship with God. Veiled in ignorance, guided by passion, controlled by error, led astray by falsehood—how can you aspire to talk with your God? Your prayer is but a chattering sound! Your song is the clang of a sounding brass, the noise of a tinkling cymbal! Your devotion bears you no further than the letter which kills!

But oh, poor Soul, if God should take you out of your darkness and make you to see yourself, to see Him and follow after Truth and righteousness and holiness, why then your prayer would be heard in Heaven, your song would mingle with the sweet notes of celestial harps and even your groans and tears would reach your Father's heart, for you would enjoy fellowship with Him! If we walk with God as God is in the light, the secret of God is with us and our secret is with God. He opens His heart to us and we open our heart to Him—we become friends! We are bound and knit together so that being made partakers of the Divine Nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust, we live like Enoch, having our conversation above the skies.

Upon the second privilege we intend to dwell. I have been driven to this text and yet I have been afraid of it. This text has been handled, the latter part of it, I mean, very often out of its context. Yet it has had such a comforting influence on many souls that I have been half afraid to discourse upon it in its true context. And yet I have felt, "Well, if anything I should say should take away any comfort from any seeking soul, I shall be very sorry, but I cannot help it." I do feel that it is essential to the Christian ministry not to pick passages out of God's Word and rend them away from the context, but to take them as they stand.

As this text stands, it does not seem to me to gleam with the particular ray of comfort which others see in it, but it has another beam of joy even more radiant! God's Word must be taken as God speaks it—we have no right to divide the living child of Divine Truth, or wrest it to make it mean other than it does. According to the text, special pardon of sin is the peculiar privilege of those who walk in the light as God is in the light and it is not the privilege of anyone else. Only those who have been brought by Divine Grace from a state of nature into a state of Grace and walk in the light may claim the possession of perfect cleansing through the blood of Jesus Christ.

In dwelling upon this latter part of the verse, there seemed to me to be seven things in it which any thoughtful reader would be struck with. Considered as the privilege of every man who, however limpingly, is walking in the light, this word, which tells of pardon bought with blood, is very precious—a crown set with jewels! To seven choice pearls I invite your loving gaze.

**1.** The first thing that struck me was THE GREATNESS of everything in the text. In some places everything is little. You talk with some men—their

thoughts, their ideas are all little. Almost everything is drawn to a scale and aspiring minds generally draw their matters to as great a scale as they can find, but that is necessarily a little one. See to what a magnificent scale everything is drawn in our text! Think, Beloved, how great the sin of God's people is! Will you try and get that thought into your minds? How great is your own sin—your sin before conversion—think that over! Your sin while seeking the Lord in putting confidence in your own works and looking after refuges of lies. Your sins since conversion—turn them over.

Beloved, *one* sin towers up like an Alp! But we have *many* sins heaped upon each other, as in the old fable of the giants who piled Pelion upon Ossa, mountain upon mountain! O God, what an aggregate of sin is there in the life of one of Your most pure and most sanctified children! Multiply this. All the sin of one child of God—multiply it by the number of those contained in that word “us.” “Cleanses *us* from all sin! How many are God's children? God's Word shall answer. “A multitude that no man can number, out of all kindreds and peoples and tongues, stood before the Throne.” Can you imagine—deep as Hell's bottomless pit! High as Heaven's own Glory—for sin sought to pluck even God out of His Throne! Wide as the east is from the west! Long as eternity is this great mass of the guilt of the people for whom Christ shed His blood! And yet all this is taken away! “The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.”

Then observe the greatness of the Atonement offered. Will you inwardly digest those words, “the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son”? Blood is at all times precious, but this is no blood of a mere *man*—it is the blood of an *innocent* Man! Better still, it is the blood of Man in union with Deity—“His Son!” God's Son! Why, angels cast their crowns before Him! All the choral symphonies of Heaven surround His glorious Throne. “God over all, blessed forever. Amen.” And yet He yields His *blood*! He takes upon Himself the form of a *servant* and then is scourged and pierced, bruised and torn and at last *slain*—for nothing but the blood of Deity could make atonement for human sin!

The Atonement must be no man, merely—He must be the God-Man Mediator, the Fellow of Jehovah, co-equal and co-eternal with Him—He must bear the pangs and bitterness of Divine wrath which was due to sin. Think of this—a sacrifice which no human mind can ever properly estimate in the infinity of its value! Here, indeed, we have greatness—great sin, but a great Atonement! Think again—we have here great love which provided such a Sacrifice. Oh, how He must have loved, to have descended from Heaven to earth and from earth to the grave! How He must have loved, to have chosen us, when we were hating Him—when we were enemies! He has reconciled us unto God by His own death!

Dead in trespasses and sins, corrupt—wrapped up in the cerements of evil habits, hateful and hating one another, full of sin and every abomination—yet He loved us so as to yield up His soul unto death for us. We are dealing with great things here, indeed, and we must not forget the greatness of the influence which such an Atonement, the result of such love, must have upon the Christian's heart. Oh, the greatness of the peace

which passes all understanding, which flows from this great Atonement! Oh, the greatness of the gratitude which must blaze forth from such a sacred fire as this! Oh, the greatness of the hatred of sin, of the revenge against iniquity which must spring from a sense of such love, when it is shed abroad in the heart!

You are citizens enjoying no mean privilege, oh, you blood-bought citizens of a blood-bought city! God has loved you. You cannot, though I should allot you a whole lifetime—you cannot get to the depth of that love God has loved you and to prove His love He has died in the Person of man for you. He loves you and has overcome the dread result of all your fearful sin! And now, by the love which God has manifested, we do pray you let your holiness, your truthfulness and your zeal prove that you understand the greatness of those things. If your heart can really conceive the greatness of the things here revealed—the great sin, the great Savior offering Himself out of great love that He might make you to be greatly privileged—I am sure your hearts will rejoice!

**2.** The next thing which sparkles in the text is its SIMPLE SOLITARINESS—“We have fellowship one with another.” And then it is added as a simple, gloriously simple statement, “the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.” Observe there is nothing said about rites and ceremonies. It does not begin by saying, “and the waters of Baptism, together with the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us.” Not a word, whether it shall be the sprinkling in infancy, or immersion of Believers—nothing is said about it—it is the blood, the *blood* only, without a drop of baptismal water!

Nothing is here said about sacraments—what some call “the blessed Eucharist,” is not dragged in here—nothing about eating bread and drinking wine! It is the blood, nothing but the *blood*—“the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son.” And if nothing is said of *rites* that God has given, rites that *man* has invented are equally excluded. Not a syllable is uttered concerning celibacy or monasticism! Not a breath about vows of perpetual chastity and poverty! Not a hint about confession to a priest and human absolution! Not an allusion to penance or extreme unction! “The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.”

It was well done by a poor woman who, as she lay sick, heard for the first time the precious Gospel of her salvation. She was told that the blood alone cleansed from sin. She believed, and then, putting her hand into her bosom, she took out a little crucifix which she had always worn, hanging from a chain about her neck, and said to the preacher, “Then I don’t want this, Sir.” Ah, truly so! And so may we say of *everything* that *man* has devised as a consolation to a poor wounded spirit. “I have found Jesus and I do not want that, Sir.” You who want it, keep it—but as for us, if we walk in the light as He is in the light—the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, so completely purges us from all sin that we dare not look to anything else lest we come into the bondage of the beggarly elements of this world!

You will perceive, too, that nothing is said about Christian experience as a means of cleansing. “What?” says one. “Does not the first sentences of the verse imply that?” Assuredly not, for you perceive that the first

sentence of the verse does not interfere, though it is linked, with the other. If I walk in the light as God is in the light, what then? Does my walking in the light take away my sins? Not at all! I am as much a sinner in the light as in the darkness if it were possible for me to be in the light without being washed in the blood.

Well, but we have fellowship with God, and does not having fellowship with God take away sin? Beloved, do not misunderstand me! No man can have fellowship with God unless sin is taken away—but his fellowship with God and his walking in light, does not take away his sin—not at all. The whole process of the removal of sin is here, “And the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.” I beg to repeat it—the text does not say that our walking in the light cleanses us from sin! It does not say that our having fellowship with God cleanses us from sin—these are the *result* of cleansing, but they have no connection as *cause*—it is the *blood* and the *blood alone* which purges us from sin!

The dying thief looked to Christ and sin was taken away by the blood. And there is a Brother in Christ here who has had such an experience of Christ’s love for sixty years that his heart is now like a shock of corn, ripe for Heaven. He lives in his Master’s Presence, he spends the most of his time in his Master’s service! But, Beloved, there is not a single atom of difference between him and the dying thief so far as the cleansing away of sin is concerned! The blood cleansed the thief and the same blood washes this advanced and full-grown Christian, or otherwise he is still unclean.

Observe, yet again, that in the verse there is no hint given of any emotions, feelings, or attainments as co-operating with the blood to take away sin. Christ took the sins of His people and was punished for those sins as if He had been Himself a sinner, and so sin is taken away from us. But in no sense, degree, shape or form is sin removed by attainments, emotions, feelings or experiences! The blood is the *only* Atonement—the blood, without any mixture of anything else, completes and finishes the work! “For you are complete in Him.”

Now I could enlarge for a very long time on this point, but I do not think I shall. I will rather throw in a sentence or two and observe that whereas there are some who urge you to look to your *doctrinal intelligence* as a ground of comfort. I beseech you Beloved, look only to the blood! Whereas there are others who would set up a standard of Christian *experience* and urge that this is to be the channel of your consolation. I pray you, while you prize both doctrine and experience, rest not your soul’s weight but in the precious blood! Some would lead you to high degrees of *fellowship*—follow them, but not when they would lead you away from the simple position of a sinner resting upon the blood! There are those who could teach you mysticism and would have you rejoice in the light within. Follow them as far as they have the warrant of God’s Word, but never take your foot from that Rock of Ages where the only safe standing can be found!

Certain of my Brethren are very fond of preaching Christ in His Second Coming—I rejoice that they preach the truth concerning Christ Glorified, but, my Beloved, I do beseech you do not place your hope on Christ

Glorified, nor on Christ to come, but on “Christ Crucified.” Remember that in the matter of taking away sin, the *first* thing is not the Throne, but the Cross—not the *reigning* Savior—but the *bleeding* Savior! Not the King in His Glory, but the Redeemer in His shame. Care not to be studying dates of prophecies if burdened with sin, but seek your chief, your best comfort in the blood of Jesus Christ which cleanses us from all sin—here is the pole star of your salvation—sail by *it* and you shall reach the port of peace.

**3.** A third brilliant flash in the light, viz., THE COMPLETENESS of the cleansing. “The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from *all* sin”—not from *some* sin, but “from *all* sin.” Beloved, I cannot tell you the exceeding sweetness of this Word, but I pray God the Holy Spirit to give you a taste of it. There is *original* sin, by which we fell in Adam before we were born, and there is *inherited* sin through which we were born in sin and shaped in iniquity. There is *actual* sin—the sin of my youth and my former transgressions, the sins of my riper years, the sins which defile the hoary head and make that which should be a crown of Glory to be a crown of grief—and all these sins, original and actual, are all gone! All gone!

Sins against the Law, though it is exceedingly broad so that it makes me a sinner in thought, in word, in deed, in heart—they are all gone! Sins against the Gospel when I kicked against the pricks, when I stifled conscience, when I resisted the Holy Spirit as did also my fathers—when I hated the Truth of God and would not have it because my deeds were evil and I would not come to the light lest my deeds might be reproved. Sins when I would regard none of the sweet invitations of the Gospel—all cleansed away! Sins against Christ Jesus since my conversion when I have backslidden and my heart has been cold towards Him! Sins against the Holy Spirit when I have followed my own impulses instead of the indwelling Deity—all gone!

The Roman Catholic divides sin into venial sins and mortal sins. Be it so—the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin, mortal or venial, deadly or pardonable. Sins of commission—here is a long catalogue—think it over! Sins of omission—that is still a larger list! The things which we have left undone which we ought to have done are probably more numerous than the things which we have done which we ought not to have done—all are gone! Some sins are greater than others. There is no doubt whatever that adultery, fornication, murder, blasphemy and such like are greater than the sins of daily life—but whether they are great sins or little sins—they are all gone! That same God who took away the plague of flies from Egypt also took away the plague of thunder and of lightning. All are gone—gone at once!

Pharaoh’s chariot is drowned in the Red Sea and the mean Egyptian is drowned in the same way. The depths have covered them. There is not one of them left. There are sins against God—how many there are! Sins of breaking His Day and despising His Word—profaning His name, forgetting Him and not loving Him—but He blots out all! Sins against my friends and my enemies, against my neighbor, against my father, my child, my wife—

sins in all relationships—yet all are gone! Then, too, remember there are sins of presumption and sins of ignorance—sins done willfully and unknown sins—the blood cleanses us from ALL sin!

Shall I go on? Surely I need not! But you see the purging is complete. Whether the bill is little or the bill is great, the same receipt can discharge one as the other. The blood of Jesus Christ is as blessed and Divine a payment for the sin of blaspheming Peter as it is for the sin of loving John! Our iniquity is gone, all gone at once and all gone forever. Blessed completeness! What a sweet theme to dwell upon!

**4.** The next gem that studs the text is the thought of PRESENTNESS. “Cleanses” says the text—not, “*shall* cleanse.” There are multitudes who think that as a dying hope they may look forward to pardon, and perhaps within a few hours of their dissolution they may be able to say, “My sins are pardoned.” Such can never have read God’s Word, or, if they have read it, they have read it with unbelieving eyes. Beloved, I would not give the snap of my finger for the bare possibility of cleansing when I come to die!

Oh how infinitely better to have cleansing *now*! Some imagine that a sense of pardon is an attainment after many years of Christian experience. For a young Christian to say, “My sins are forgiven,” seems to them to be an untimely fig, ripe too soon. But, Beloved, it is not so. The moment a sinner trusts Jesus, that sinner is as fully forgiven as he will be when the light of the Glory of God shall shine upon his resurrection countenance. Beloved, forgiveness of sin is a *present* thing—a privilege for this day, a joy for this very hour! And whoever walks in the light as God is in the light has fellowship with God and has at this moment the perfect pardon of sin.

You perceive that it is written in the present tense as if to indicate continuance—it will always be so with you, Christian. It was so *yesterday*—it was “cleanses” yesterday, it is “cleanses” *today*—it will be “cleanses” *tomorrow*. It will be “cleanses” until you cross the river—every day you may come to this fountain for it “cleanses!” Every hour you may stand by its brim, for it “cleanses.” I think there is sanctification here as well as justification. I am inclined to believe that this text has been too much limited in its interpretation and that it signifies that the blood of Jesus is constantly operating upon the man who walks in the light so as to cleanse him from the indwelling power of sin.

And the Spirit of God applies the doctrine of the Atonement to the production of purity till the soul becomes completely pure from sin at the last. I desire to feel every day the constantly purifying effect of the sacrifice of my Lord and Master. Look at the foot of the Cross and I am sure you will feel that the precious drops cleanse from all sin.

**5.** Now in the fifth place, the text presents to us very blessedly the thought of CERTAINTY. It is not, “perhaps the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from sin.” The text speaks of it as a *fact* not to be disputed—it does do so. To the Believer this is matter of certainty, for the Spirit of God bears witness with our spirits that we are born of God. Our spirit in the joy and peace which it receives through believing becomes assured of its



being cleansed, and then the Spirit of God comes in as a second Witness and bears witness with our spirit that we are born of God!

My being cleansed from all sin today is to me as much a matter of consciousness as my being better in health. I was conscious of pain when I lay on my sick bed and so, when I was living in sin, as soon as God gave me spiritual life I was conscious that guilt lay heavily upon me. I am conscious now of *pain* removed and so I am equally conscious of *sin* removed—I do not hesitate to say it here, that my consciousness of pardoned sin is at this moment as clear and as distinct as my consciousness of removed pain while I look at Jesus Christ, my Lord, by faith.

So is it often with the Christian. It is frequently with him a matter of consciousness most positive and infallible that he is truly and really cleansed from all sin by the blood of Jesus Christ! It is not merely a matter of consciousness, but if you think of it, it is a matter of *reasoning*. If Jesus Christ did, indeed, take the sins of all who believe, then it follows, necessarily, that I, trusting in Christ, have no longer any sin—for if Christ took my sin—sin cannot be in two places at once! If Christ bears it, then I do not bear it. And if Christ was punished for it, then the punishment of my sin has been endured and I cannot be punished for the sin for which Jesus has been punished—unless God should sovereignly punish men—which would be such an insult to the honesty and justice of God that it must not be tolerated for a moment in our thoughts!

If Jesus Christ has paid the debt it is paid and—

***“Justice can demand no more,  
Christ has paid the dreadful score.”***

So the Christian's being cleansed from sin becomes to him a matter of spiritual *argument*—he can see it clearly and manifestly. Yet more, he is so certain of it that it begins to operate upon him in blessed effect. He is so sure that there is no sin laid to his door that he draws nearer to God than a sinner, defiled with sin, may do. He enters into that which is within the veil—he talks with God as his Father—he claims familiar communion with the Most High God! And though God is so great that the Heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, yet he believes that that same God lives in his heart as in a temple! Now this he could not feel if he did not know that sin is put away. Beloved, no man is capable of virtue in the highest sense of the term till it is a matter of certainty to him that his sin is cleansed.

You say, “That is a strong assertion,” but I do assert it—all of you who are doing good works with the view to saving yourselves are missing the mark of pure virtue. You say, “Why?” The *goodness* of an action depends upon its *motive*. Your motive is to save yourselves—that is selfish—your action is selfish and the virtue of it has evaporated. But the Christian, when he performs good works, does not perform them with any view whatever of merit or self-salvation. “I am saved,” he says—“perfectly saved. I have not a sin in God's Book against me—I am clean. Great God, before Your bar I am clean through Jesus Christ—

***‘Loved of my God, for Him again  
With love intense I burn.’***

What can I do to prove to all mankind how much, how truly I love my God?" You see, then, that this must be a matter of certainty or else it will never have its right effect upon you. And I pray God that you may suck the certainty out of this text and taste its sweetness to your own soul's inward contentment and be able to say, "Yes, without a doubt, the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin."

**6.** I hope I shall not weary you, but a few words upon the sixth gem which adorns the text, namely, the DIVINITY of it. "Where?" asks one. Does not divinity gleam in this text? Does it not strike you that the verse is written in a God-like style? The God-like style is very peculiar. You can tell the style of Milton from the style of Wordsworth, or the style of Byron. Read a verse and an educated person knows the author by the ring of the sentences. The God-like style is unique in its excellence. You need never put the name at the bottom when the writing is of the Lord. You know it by the very style of it. "Light be! Light was."

Who speaks like that but Deity? Now there is a Divine ring about this sentence—"The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin." Why, if *man* were talking of so great an Atonement he would fetch a compass! He would have to go round about! We cannot afford to say such great things as these in a few words. We must adopt some form of speech that would allow us to extol the truth and indicate its beauties. God seems to put away His pearls as if they were but common pebbles. "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin"—as if it were as much a matter of every-day work as for a man to wash his hands!

Notice the simplicity of the whole process. It does not seem to take weeks or months—it is done at once! Slowly and by degrees is man's action—we must lay the thing to soak, to fetch the color from it, subject it to many processes and expose it to the wind and rain and frost and sun before it can be cleansed. But here God speaks and it is done! The blood comes into contact with the guilty conscience and it is all over with sin. As if it were but a handful that moves a mountain of sin, He takes up the isles as a very little thing. He counts great oceans of our sin as though they were but a drop in a bucket. Believing in Christ in a moment, by the Divine and majestic process which God has ordained, we get the perfect cleansing of sin.

**7.** In the last place, just a hint upon the WISDOM of the text. What a wise way of cleansing from sin the text speaks of! Beloved, suppose God had devised a plan for pardoning sin which did not turn the sinner's face to God? Then you would have a very singular spectacle—you would have a sinner pardoned by a process which enabled him to do without his God—and it strikes me he would be worse off than he was before! But here, before ever the sinner can receive pardon he must say, "I will arise and go unto my Father." And he must come closer into contact with God than he ever came before. He must see God in the flesh of Christ and must look to Him if he would be saved.

I do bless God that I have not to turn my face to Hell to get pardon, but I have to turn my face towards Heaven! That seems to me to be the wise way, for while it takes away the sin which was like a disease, it takes

away the distance from God which was the true root of that disease. It turns the sinner's face in the direction of holiness and bliss. Observe the benefit of this plan of salvation in the fact that it makes the sinner feel the *evil* of sin. If we were pardoned in a way which did not involve pain to someone, we should say, "Oh, it is easy for God to forgive it." But when I see the streaming veins of Jesus and mark the sweat of His blood fall to the ground and hear Him cry, "They have pierced My hands and My feet," then I understand that sin is a dreadful evil!

If a man should be pardoned without being made to feel that sin is bitter, I do not know that he would be really any the better off—perhaps better unpardoned than pardoned—unless he is led to hate sin. Our gracious God has also chosen this plan of salvation with the wise design of making man glorify God. I cannot see sin pardoned by the substitutionary Atonement of the Lord Jesus without dedicating myself to the praise and glory of the great God of redeeming love. It would be a pity if man could be pardoned and afterwards could live a selfish, thankless life, would it not? If God had devised a scheme by which sin could be pardoned and yet the sinner live to himself, I do not know that the world or the man would be advantaged.

But here are many birds killed with one stone, as the Proverb puts it. Now therefore, at the foot of the Cross, the bands which bound our soul to earth are loosened. We are strangers in the land and therefore, "God forbid that we should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto us and we are crucified to the world."

I leave this text with the Believer, only adding, if any of you would have it, and joy in it, you must walk in the light. I pray God the Holy Spirit to bring you to see the light of the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ! Then you will trust Him and then you shall have fellowship with Him! And by His blood you shall be cleansed from all sin. God bless you for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON. —1 John 1, 2:1-11.**

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# HONEST DEALING WITH GOD

## NO. 1241

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 20, 1875,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

***“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.  
If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins,  
and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.  
If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar,  
and His word is not in us.”  
1 John 1:8, 9, 10.***

“GOD is light, and in Him is no darkness at all,” and consequently He cannot have fellowship with darkness. God is light, that is, *purity*, and as the thrice Holy One He can hold no communion with iniquity. God is light, that is *knowledge*, for all things are known unto the Lord, and with ignorance He has no affinity. God is light, that is, *truth*, for He can neither err, nor break His word and, therefore, He cannot smile on anything that is false. We are constantly erring, first on this side and then on that, for there is *darkness* in us. God is essentially light and it is not possible for His Nature to be affected by either impurity or error.

Out of this attribute of His Nature arises the fact that the Lord always deals with things as they are. Man invents fictions, but God creates facts. We conceive of things as they *appear*, but God sees them as they exist. “Man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart.” The looks of things impresses us, but all things are naked and open before Him. The Lord never misrepresents, nor has fellowship with misrepresentation. We are forever hurrying about with our paint and varnish and tinsel—laboring to make the meaner thing appear equal to the more precious—and spending our skill in making the sham seem as brilliant as the reality. But all this is contrary to the way of the Lord.

Everything is true in God, and everything is seen in its reality by His all-discerning eyes. Because He is light, He deals with things in the light, treating them as they are. If God is to deal graciously with us, we must, each one, stand in the light, and present ourselves before Him as we are. If there is on our lips a false word, or in our heart a false thought, or in our mind a knowingly false judgment—we are out of the sphere in which God can have fellowship with us.

“If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.” Yet, dear Friends, the natural tendency of our heart is to try and appear to be what we are not! We all have, more or less, to struggle against this tendency, for it assails the most truthful. That love of approval, which, rightly checked and kept in order, has its uses, very often pushes men on to pretend to be better than they are. Fear of censure is an equally powerful means of producing hypocrisy. We must, by all means, strive against the very beginnings of this frightful evil, for if it should ever get the mastery over us it will make us altogether untruthful

and, consequently, we shall be far removed from all power to walk with God.

The Lord cannot stand with us on the platform of seeming and appearance, but only on the ground of what we really are! Therefore in proportion as we are untrue we cut ourselves off from God. Our tendency to be false is illustrated in the chapter before us, for we find three grades of it there. There is first *the man who lies*—"If we say we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth" (v. 6). We say and do that which is untrue if, while abiding under the influence of sin and falsehood, we claim to have fellowship with God. If this tendency is left alone and unchecked, you will find the man growing worse and doing according to the 8<sup>th</sup> verse, in which it is written, "We deceive ourselves."

Here the utterer of the falsehood has come to *believe his own lie*. He has blinded his understanding and befouled his conscience till he has become his own dupe! Falsehood has saturated his nature so that he puts darkness for light and light for darkness. This is, at once, his sin *and* his punishment! He closed his eyes so long that, at length, he has become stone blind! He will soon reach the complete development of his sin which is described in the 10<sup>th</sup> verse, when the man, who first lied and, then, secondly, deceived himself, becomes so audacious in his falseness as to *blaspheme the Most Holy by making Him a liar*.

It is impossible to say where sin will end! The beginning of it is as a little water in which a bird may wash and scatter half the pool in drops. But in its progress, sin, like the brook, swells into a torrent deep and broad. We must, therefore, judge ourselves very severely. If we do not, our natural tendency to falseness will lead us to false assertion as to ourselves and urge us on till we delude ourselves into the foolish belief that we are what we proudly represent ourselves to be! And then our sin escalates, in the desperation of our pride, to a point where we think God, Himself, is untrue. Our only safe course—and may the Spirit of God grant us Grace to follow it—is to come to God as we actually are and ask Him to deal with us, in Christ Jesus, according to our actual condition.

If we are to walk with God at all, it must be in the light. And if we once walk in the light with Him, our condition will tally with the description of verse seven—we shall see sin in ourselves and daily feel the blood of Jesus Christ cleansing us. Only on the footing of sin *daily* confessed and pardoned can there be any fellowship between us and the eternal God this side of Heaven, for that footing is the only one consistent with the facts of the case. Let us daily ask the Lord to keep us in a truthful spirit, admitting the truth, both concerning ourselves and our Lord, feeling its power, and desiring to He taught still more of it.

Let us pray Him to deal with us, not according to our suppositions, but according to the facts, and let us entreat Him never to allow us to rejoice in fancied blessings, such as might satisfy our proud, half-stupefied conscience, but to give to us the real blessings of genuine forgiveness and effectual cleansing from all unrighteousness. I intend at this time, as God may help us, first, to *consider the three courses* which lie open before us in the text. Then, secondly, to *consider how to follow in the right course*. And

thirdly, it shall be my endeavor to lead you to *consider why you should do so*.

**I. LET US CONSIDER THE THREE COURSES** laid open before us in the text. I will suppose that we are all earnestly anxious to be in fellowship with God. We cannot bear to be His enemies any longer. Distance from Him has become distasteful to us. We long, like the prodigal son, to arise and go to our Father, that we may hereafter dwell in our Father's house. Our deceitful heart suggests to us, first, that we should *deny our present sinfulness*, and so claim fellowship with God on the grounds that we are holy and so may draw near to the Holy God. It is suggested to our hearts that we should say that, "we have no sin," and are neither guilty by act nor defiled in nature.

This is a bold assertion and he who makes it has no truth in him, but at different times and by very different persons it has been made and stoutly maintained. There are many ways in which this proud saying has been justified. Some have arrived at it by denying, altogether, the doctrine of original sin, "as the Pelagians do vainly talk." They will not admit that there is a fault and natural corruption in the nature of every man whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness and, therefore, is, of his own nature, inclined to evil.

Now we, I trust, will always be clear from this doctrinal error, for we know, as David did, that we were shaped in iniquity, and are—

***"Sprung from the man whose desperate fall  
Corrupts the blood, and taints us all."***

I do not suppose that many of you are likely to say you have no sin on the ground of a disbelief of natural depravity, for many of you *know* this Truth of God, not merely as a matter of creed, but as a terrible fact which has come home to you and caused you great sorrow. If, however, any of you should venture to plead that you have no sin on the ground that your nature is not evil, I do beseech you to rid your heart of that lie, for a lie it is, through and through! I don't care how honest your parents are, or how noble your ancestry was—there is in you a bias towards *evil*. Your animal passions, no, more—your *mental* faculties are unhinged and out of order—and unless some power beyond your own shall keep your desires in check, you will soon prove, by overt acts of transgression, the depravity of your nature!

It is not uncommon for others to arrive at the same conclusion by another road. They have the audacity to say that they have no sin by feelings and beliefs which they, as a rule, ascribe to the Holy Spirit. Now, if any man says that all tendency to sin is gone from him, that his heart is at all times perfect and his desires always pure, so that he has no sin in him, whatever, he may have traveled a very different road from the character we just now warned you about, but he has reached the same conclusion and we have but one word for both boasters, it is the word of our text—"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

Some, however, have reached this position by another route. They plead that though it may be they have sin, yet they are not bad at *heart*. They look upon sin as a *technical* term and though they admit, in words, that they have sin, yet they practically deny it by saying, "I have a good

heart at bottom. I always was well-intentioned from the very first. True, what I have done does not appear to be right according to the very severe judgement of the Law of God, but I cannot help that. I only followed my nature and cannot be blamed, for I never meant to do anything wrong, either to God or man. I have always been kind to the poor and have done the right thing all round. I know I have erred—of course we all have—here and there, but you cannot expect a fellow to be perfect! I can't say I see anything to find fault with in men."

Thus you, in effect, say you have no sin! Though you compliment God by saying with the Church service, "We are miserable sinners," you do not mean it at all! You mean that if you have sinned it has been your *misfortune* and you are to be *pitied* rather than blamed. In so saying, or feeling, you prove that the truth is not in you—you are either deplorably ignorant as to what holiness is, or else you are willfully uttering a lie! In either case the Truth of God is not in you. A fourth sort of persons say the same thing, for albeit they confess that they have sinned, they think themselves now to be in a proper and fit condition to receive pardon. "We have prayed," they say. "We have repented, we have read the Scriptures, we have attended public worship and are as right as we can be. We have tenderness, contrition and every right and proper feeling—our wonder is that we do not receive salvation."

It would be a very great wonder to me if you did! It does not matter how you got there, you have virtually come to the same place as the others of whom I have spoken, for you believe that there is nothing about you which can operate against your salvation. You think you are ripe for mercy, fit for pardon—and what is this but declaring that you are not in a sinful state? All things are ready with you and you half insinuate that *God* is *not* ready—this is casting the blame of your unbelief upon God and disowning it yourself! According to your ideas, you are a poor innocent whom God delays to bless! You are willing and earnest enough, and yet He passes you by—do you really believe this?

Then let me tell you that if any man dreams that he has a fitness or preparation for Divine Grace, he knows not what he speaks, for in the very *nature* of things, the only fitness for Grace is the *need* of it. The idea of fitness is only another form of the vain notion of *merit* and it cannot find an inch of foothold in the Gospel. True penitents can see nothing in themselves to commend them to mercy and, therefore, they cast themselves upon undeserved favor, feeling both unworthy and unfit, but hoping to receive forgiveness freely. Whatever shape our denial of our sinful nature and state may take, please remember that that denial is a mere talk, and nothing more—"If we *say* we have no sin."

You know how little value we attach to evidence of the nature of, "I say," and, "they say." There may be no truth whatever in such evidence, and in the present case there is nothing whatever to warrant the proud saying—"We have no sin." There will come a day when the righteous will have no sin, as a matter of fact, but now, whether saint or sinner, if you say, "I have no sin," you *say* it and that is all! The words sound very pretty, but there is no fact to correspond with them. Moreover, the idea of having no sin is a delusion—you are altogether deceived if you say so—the

truth is not in you and you have not seen things in the true light. You must have shut your eyes to the high requirements of the Law! You must be a stranger to your own heart! You must be blind to your own conduct and you must have forgotten to search your thoughts and to weigh your motives, or you would have detected the presence of sin!

He who cannot find water in the sea is no more foolish than the man who cannot perceive sin in his members! As the salt flavors every drop of the Atlantic, so does sin affect every atom of our nature. It is so sadly there, so abundantly there, that if you cannot detect it you are deceived. This self-deceit has arrived by a good deal of persuading and ingenious trickery. To deceive another requires a measure of cunning, but to deceive *yourself* needs far more! Our deceitful heart reveals an almost Satanic shrewdness in self-deception—it readily enough makes the worse reason to appear to be the best reason—and it states a lie so that it wears the fashion of truth.

If you say you have no sin you have achieved a fearful success—you have put out your own eyes and perverted your own reason! You have fed upon falsehood till it has entered into your very being and rendered you incapable of truth. I know you claim to be very sincere in your belief of your own rightness. And I know it would be very hard to persuade you differently—and this makes it all the worse—for so much the more completely have you deceived yourself! Now that you call darkness, light, and *boast* that your blindness is true sight, we mourn over you as all but hopeless! And we fear lest the Lord should leave you to perish because you cling so fast to your lie.

In how many ways men manage to deceive themselves! They can do it by irreligion and by religion, too! They do it by outrageous sin and by boastful sanctity. They can mislead themselves by precious hymns—which rightly understood speak the Truth of God, but wrongly turned, speak desperate falsehoods by dwelling upon the work of the Spirit of God—which rightly taken is greatly for our consolation, but taken after the Pharisaic manner may, itself, be misconstrued and made to furnish wind for the bubble of vainglory. O Friends, it is not without effort that men pervert the best things into excuses for pride, yes, turn even their meat into poison!

It is not an easy thing to get up to sinlessness, nor is it an easy matter to keep the cheat from collapsing. The baseless fabric must be deftly put together and it will need much propping up and buttressing—it is almost as hard to *seem* to be as to *be*—perhaps I might say it is harder. Pity that men should be at such pains to make fools of themselves! Let it be remembered, however, that while the man who has deceived himself says, “I have no sin,” he has not deceived the Lord! God sees sin in us, if we do not. The ostrich is reported to bury her head in the sand and then to suppose herself safe, but she is the more speedily taken. And we may shut our eyes and say, “I have no sin,” but in so doing, instead of securing eternal salvation, we shall as practically give ourselves up to the destroyer as the bird of the desert is fabled to do.

Let a man say, “I have no sin,” and he has condemned himself out of his own mouth, for the text says of such a man the truth is not in him—



and he who has not truth in him is not saved! The absence of confession of present sin means the absence of the light of truth and sincerity. God saves all sorts of people, however black their sins, but the man of a false spirit, the Pharisaic washer of the outside of the cup, while the inside is foul, is the last person who is likely to be saved. A main point in conversion consists in a man's being *honest*—for it is the honest and good ground which receives the seed.

If you preach the Gospel among the roughest and most profane of men, there is more hope of success among them than among hypocritical professors. Open enmity and opposition are better than that pretended friendship which begins and ends with the shallow compliments of empty formalism. Outward religiousness, unattended by *heart* piety, does a man serious injury by rendering him superficial and unreal in all that he does in reference to God—and as God desires truth in the inward parts, He will not parley with dishonest men. Pretend and profess and boast how you will, but understand this—the living God abhors everything which is not according to the strictest truth.

Now, all this may serve for our guidance when seeking the Lord. Awakened sinners often say, "If I could feel my heart was right towards God, then I could believe that He would look upon me in mercy." How wrong is this! If you felt that all was right, it would be an untruthful feeling, for by nature all is wrong! "Oh, Sir," you say, "if I could but feel that now, at last, I am as I ought to be before God, as tender and as penitent as He would have me to be, then I could have hope." No, my dear Friend, such a feeling would not be according to truth, for no man is as tender and as penitent as he ought to be. And if you felt you were, you would be feeling a *lie*, and so the truth would not be in you.

I do not want you to feel that you are what you ought to be! I pray that you may admit that you are *not* what you ought to be! I would have you feel unrest and absence of anything like satisfaction, for such feelings will be according to the truth. I beseech you never claim to experience feelings which you do not feel, nor make hypocritical confessions of sin which you have never committed, nor pretend to a repentance which is not in you, for the Lord hates all shams and will only deal with you according to truth. If you are conscious of impenitence, go to the Lord and tell Him you have a hard heart which will not feel either the terrors of His Law or the warmth of His love. In other words, go to Him just as you are and confess what you are, and ask Him to deal with you in Christ Jesus as He sees you to be. That is the only way—the plan of pretending that we are now free from sin will not work and bring us blessing, for, "we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us."

The second course which is open to us is the one which I trust the Divine Spirit may lead us to follow, *to lay bare our case before God exactly as it stands*. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all iniquity." Please observe that John does not say, "If we confess our *sin*." He had been speaking of that in the 8<sup>th</sup> verse, but here he uses the *plural*, to include both sin in its essence and in its actual development in our life. We are to confess both the *inward* sin and the outward *fruit* of it. We must say, "Lord, I admit with shame

that as my nature is corrupt, such has my life been. I am a sinner both by nature and by practice.”

Make the confession of the *two* things, of the cause and the effect, of the original depravity—the foul source—and then of the actual sin which is the polluted stream. And if you say, “How am I to confess it?” I would say this—To confess sin does not mean merely on some, one occasion, to repeat a catalog of sins before God in private, nor at certain set seasons to rehearse a list of our faults—it means a life-long acknowledgment of our sin. We must take our places as they who have sinned and never attempt to occupy the position of innocent beings. We are to look towards God as a man ought to look who has transgressed.

Do you understand me? The Pharisee took up the posture and spirit of a man who had no sin in him and said, “God, I thank You.” He was not confessing sin, but claiming righteousness—and he was not accepted because he was out of the light—that is to say, he was not speaking and feeling according to truth. But the publican, though he said little and made no confession of sin in detail, yet by his posture—by his striking his breast, by his not daring to look up, by the sigh which he heaved—was virtually confessing sin. When a man prayerfully begs that he may feel the power of the blood of Jesus, he is confessing sin, for is not the blood of Jesus necessary because of our sin?

The daily exercise of faith in Jesus Christ is a confession of sin, for nobody would need to believe in a Savior unless he had sin. Baptism is a confession of sin—who needs to be buried with Christ if he is alive by a righteousness of his own? To come to the Communion Table and remember, there, the atoning Sacrifice, is a confession of sin—we would need no remembrance of our blessed Substitute if we were not sinners! Confession of sin is best carried out when we deal with God as those who have offended Him, not as those who feel that they are innocent. We are to act before the Lord as those who know that sin is in them.

And how ought such to behave? They will walk with God very humbly and watchfully. They will be jealous lest inbred corruption should get the mastery of them. Such persons will daily cry to the Strong for strength, and what is prayer for strength but a confession of weakness caused by sin? What is watchfulness but a confession that our nature still needs holding in check? So ought we to watch as those who feel that the battle is not fought and, therefore, we cannot lay down our armor or our sword. We should so live as those who know that the race is not run and, therefore, they press forward. We ought to be prayerfully dependent upon God, as those who know that if they were left by Divine Grace they would go back unto perdition.

When a sinner feels he has no natural fitness for receiving the Grace of God, a broken spirit is confessing that sin is in him when he cries, “Oh, what a wretch I am! Not only my past sin but my present feelings disqualify me for the love of God! I seem to be made of Hell-hardened steel.” I think I hear him sighing—

***“The rocks can rend; the earth can quake;  
The seas can roar; the mountains shake—  
Of feeling, all things show some sign,  
But this unfeeling heart of mine!*”**

**To hear the sorrow You have felt,  
 Dear Lord, an adamant would melt.  
 But I can read each moving line  
 And nothing moves this heart of mine!  
 Your judgments, too, unmoved I hear,  
 Amazing thought! which devils fear:  
 Goodness and wrath in vain combine  
 To stir this stupid heart of mine.”**

Now, this piteous outcry because all is wrong within is virtually a confession of sin and a truthful one, too, for *all is wrong*. If you feel you are desperately bad, remember you are worse than you think you are! Your case is, in itself, desperate, hopeless, damnable! If you feel that you are lost, you do not feel too strongly, you are in the true light where God will meet with you.

The Lord will not consent to meet with you on the ground that you are not much of a sinner and, that, after all, your sin is not a great evil. No, He will meet you where the truth is and nowhere else. When you confess that you are unworthy of His pity, you are acknowledging the truth. And when you feel guilty, you feel what is really a fact. On this footing of truth, sad truth though it is, the Lord will meet with you through the atoning blood of my Master, Jesus Christ. It is in your vileness that Sovereign Grace over sin abounding will come to you and cleanse you. Therefore, the sooner you come to the honest truth, the better for you, for the sooner you will obtain joy and peace through believing in Christ.

The text means just this—Treat God truthfully and He will treat *you* truthfully. Make no pretensions before God, but lay bare your soul. Let Him see it as it is and then He will be faithful and just to forgive you your sins and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness. Mark the beauty of that expression—God will deal with you in *faithfulness*. His Nature is mercy and you, naturally, expect that if you confess your sin to a merciful God, He will deal mercifully with you and be faithful to His Nature. And He will be so.

But He has also given a promise that if the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts and turn unto the Lord, He will have mercy upon them—depend upon it—He will be faithful to His promise. The blood of Jesus Christ has made a full atonement and God will be faithful to that Atonement. He will deal with you on the grounds of the Covenant of Grace, of which the Sacrifice of Jesus is the seal and, therein, also, He will be true to you. What a blessing it is that the Lord will be faithful and just in the cleansing of you from all the sinfulness of your nature. I pray you deal honestly with God and say to Him, “Cleanse me, O God, from secret faults. You desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden parts You will make me know wisdom. Purge me, therefore, O Lord, and I shall be clean.”

Suppose you go to a surgeon because you have some deadly polyp or cancer growing in you? You need to have it removed and you know there are a great many physicians who will profess to cure such things, but in reality only give temporary ease. From all these you keep clear. You are well aware that if only a little root of the growth should be left it will grow again. So you say outright to the surgeon, “Sir, here is my disease. I will tell you all the symptoms of it—I only ask to have a thorough cure, cost

me what it may in money or pain. I make no reserve, do just whatever you think is best in the case, but make clean work of it. If you have the knife in your hand, do not spare it out of pity for my pain, but be just with me, cut out the disease, roots and all, so that it may be a complete cure.”

Even in the same manner, go to the Lord, and say, “Lord, here is my sin, I confess it all. Do not suffer me to have any peace unless it is true peace. Do not let me have any comfort unless I get it from Christ. And if there must be more conviction of sin and more alarm of conscience—if there must be deeper gashes and sterner cuts into my soul, Lord, do not spare me—be pleased to purge me from the secret depravity of my nature and make me pure. Your holiness is what I crave after and I cannot be satisfied till You make me holy, even as You are holy.” This is the way to plead with God and the only way! Confess the sin and then He will be faithful and just to give you the double cure, namely, first, the forgiveness, and next, the cleansing from all unrighteousness.

Now, there are still some who say, “Well, yes, I think I could go to God in that way, Sir, but oh, my past sins prevent me. I could tell Him I am sinful, I could ask Him to renew my nature, I could lay myself bare before Him, but oh, my past sins! All might yet be well if I had not so sinned.” Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, that brings out a third course which lies before you, which I hope you will not follow, namely, *to deny actual sin*. The very thing which I bless God *you* cannot do would seal your doom, for it would lead you to make God a liar, and so His Word could not abide in you.

If you felt able to say, “I have not sinned,” in proportion as you said, that would put yourself out of the light in which God, alone, can walk with you. Some get to that point by saying that what they did was not really sin to any extent, or, at any rate, if it would have been sin in other people, it was not sin in them. Considering their strong passions, they wonder they were not worse! And considering the circumstances of their case, they do not see how they could have done otherwise. In a word, they have not sinned at all.

There is another class who say, “All these commandments have I kept from my youth up, What do I lack?” This self-justification clearly makes God a liar. For what does the Cross of Calvary mean? What do those streams of blood mean? What do those agonies to the death mean? God has acted out a gigantic lie if we have no sin, for He has provided a propitiation for a thing which does not exist! O hideous profanity! O vile blasphemy, thus to insinuate that the great Sacrifice of Divine Love was an acted falsehood! Brethren, we have sinned, sinned far beyond anything we know—and the only wise and true way is to confess it before God. I find the first part of my subject has occupied much more time than I thought and, therefore, I will be exceedingly brief upon the second head.

**II. LET US NOW CONSIDER HOW WE CAN FOLLOW THIS COURSE,** which is the only right and acceptable one, namely, *to confess our sin*. I suppose I am speaking to those who are in earnest about their salvation. O my Friends, lay bare your consciences before the Law of God. Go and open the 20<sup>th</sup> chapter of Exodus and read the Ten Commandments. Think of their *spirituality*—remember how he that looks on a woman to lust after

her commits adultery with her in his heart—and let the Law, with all its blaze of light, flash flame into your soul. Do not shirk the facts or shrink from knowing their full force, but feel the power of the condemning Law.

Then recollect your individual sins. Recall them one by one—those greater sins, those huge blots upon your character—do not try to forget them. If you have forgotten them, raise them from the grave and think them over and feel them as your own sins. Do not lay them at the door of anyone else. Do not look at circumstances in order to find an alleviation for your guilt, but set them in the light of God's Countenance. Remember, the sins of your holy things, your Sabbath sins, your sanctuary sins, your sins against the Bible, your sins against prayer, your sins against the love of the Father, the blood of Christ and the strivings of the Spirit. Oh, how many are these? Think of your sins of omission, your failures in duty, your shortcomings in spirit.

Repent of what you have done and what you have not done. How both these forms of iniquity may stagger and humble you! Think of your sins of heart. How cold has that heart been towards your Savior! Your sins of thought, how wrongly your mind has often judged! Your sins of imagination, what filthy creatures your imagination has portrayed in lively colors on the wall! Think of all the sins of your desires and delights, and hopes and fears! What faculty is there that has not been defined? "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint." We are bound to confess the aggravations of our sin, how we sinned against light and against knowledge, against conscience, and against Divine Love, against the monitions of the Holy Spirit, against tender warnings which came from His gentle voice. Oh, when some of us err, every ounce of our sin has as much evil in it as a ton of other men's sins. Let us take care that we confess all.

And then let us try to see the heinousness of all sin as an offense against a kind, good, loving God—as sin against a perfect Law intended for our good. Let us remember our wanton sins, our mischievous sins, sins which hurt ourselves, foolish sins, despicable sins into which our spirits have descended even though we have known the nobility of holiness, and had some fellowship with God. I beseech you, dear Hearer, try to fix your eyes on Jesus Christ and His atoning Sacrifice and live as a believer in Him, and this will make you live as a constant confessor of sin! For when the wounds of Jesus speak peace they also preach penitence.

And when the Atonement gives us rest it also makes us meek and lowly in heart under a sense of abiding faultiness. As you see what Jesus suffered, you will see how you sinned. And as you observe the glory of His merit, you will see the horror of your own demerit. Thus may you daily, as long as you live, confess sin and find cleansing from all unrighteousness.

**III. LET US CONSIDER WHY WE SHOULD CONFESS SIN.** I shall say, first, do so because *it is right*. Religious lie-telling is a dreadful thing and there is plenty of it. If I could be saved by masking my condition before God, I would not like to be saved in that way. The man whose heart is in the light loves to do right. It would be a great dishonor to God to suppose it possible that He will save us in any manner which would not accord with truth. It is right that we should come before God, as we are, and plead for mercy through Jesus Christ. Therefore let us do it.

Moreover, upon some of us it is imperative, because *we cannot do anything else*. There may, possibly, be a person here who could say, "I have no sin." But I could not. Why, if I were to claim innocence either of nature or practice the words would choke me. Say I have no sin?! I should expect to turn black in the face and fall down dead, it would be so gross a lie! To say I have no sin, why there is not one part of my whole nature but what would protest against such an assertion! I have to come to God as a sinner, I cannot help it. And I would to God that everyone in this place felt they had to, too, for it is the intent and design of the Law to convict the sinner in order that he may be compelled to accept salvation on Free Grace terms through Jesus Christ.

You can never catch a fish in a net while there is one mesh through which he can escape, but when all the meshes are so small that the fish cannot get out, then we have taken him. When you are such a sinner that you cannot plead that you have no sin, nor yet that you have not sinned, but are quite convicted to be saved by Grace, then you are in Christ's net and He will lift you out—and the Fisher of Men shall have cause to rejoice. Besides, beloved Friends, suppose we have tried to appear before God what we are not, *God has not been deceived*, for He is not mocked. We may set up a very respectable character to please ourselves and give it a few touches every now and then, just to set it off and improve it.

And we may even find a number of people to join with us to form a mutual admiration society and our friends may cheerfully hear us talk about what wonderful beings we are, provided we will sit and hear *them* glorify themselves in return—but neither with one witness nor a thousand witnesses will our boasts be one jot more true, or likely to be believed in Heaven. God is not misled! He looks at all boasters of their own purity, and says, "When you say you have no sin you make Me a liar, and My word is not in you, for if the truth were in you, you would know that sin is in you. And if My word were in you, you would also confess that you have sinned and humble yourselves before Me."

I exhort you, Sinner, to give up all your attempts to feel right and to be right before coming to God in Christ Jesus. Have you not made a great failure of it, already? You thought you were getting right for Christ, but just then you fell in the worst possible way. You have been trying to repair your old clothes and make yourself respectable before coming to Christ, but every time you have touched the garment the tear has grown worse. Give up all attempts to *prepare* for Grace, and come to Jesus Christ just as you are! When you have been trying to make yourself feel that you are right and proper for Christ, you have been sinning against God, for you have been flying in the teeth of His witness, which is that Jesus Christ came, not to save the righteous, but sinners.

In proportion as you try to make yourself out to be righteous, you have denied the testimony of God. May the Spirit of God help you to come to your heavenly Father on the ground of truth, confessing that you have sinned—that is the truth for you! And on the ground that Christ died for sinners—that is the truth on God's side which enables Him to smile on sinners. Now, what is your state this morning? Cold as an iceberg as to Divine things? Come and tell the Lord you are an iceberg and let Him

thaw you! What is your state—hard as a rock, or like a nether millstone? Is there no feeling? Come and tell the Lord that you do not feel.

Oh, is there no trace of any good feeling in you? Come to my Lord without a trace of feeling, and tell Him just what you are! And oh, if you can dare to say, over the head of all your sin and sinfulness, “Nevertheless, I rest myself on the blood that cleanses from all sin and I beseech You, O Lord, seeing I confess my sin, to cleanse me from all unrighteousness,” you will find Him faithful and just to do it! Come as the citizens of Calais did to King Edward III when the city was captured—come with ropes about your neck, admitting that if sentence were executed upon you, you deserve it! Come at once in all your filthiness and nakedness—come with no jewels in your ears, with no ornaments upon your necks and with no recommendation whatever—come as sinners by nature and as sinners by practice!

Plead nothing that looks like goodness, but come in your sin. Do not try to put one touch of paint on those cheeks of yours, nor imitate the flush of health upon that consumptive countenance. Come as you are, and say, “Lord, look at me as I am, a worse sinner than even I think myself to be, and then show the Infinity of Your Free Grace, and the power of Jesus’ dying love in saving me, even me.”

Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, you will not be long without peace if you draw near to God in that fashion! Fling away any preparations, fitness, commendations and hopefulness, and take my Lord Jesus! As empty-handed sinners take Him! Meet Him just as He is and just as you are. God will deal with you truthfully. He will never cast away a sinner that comes to Him according to truth. For my own part, I mean to come to Him as a sinner always. I know I am saved, but I never hope to get one inch beyond that verse—“The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son cleanses me from all sin,” for only so can I walk in the light as He is in the light!

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 JOHN 1, 2:1-11.  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—176, 51, 551.**

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# JUSTICE SATISFIED

## NO. 255

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MAY 29, 1859,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“Just and the justifier of him which believes in Jesus.”  
Romans 3:26.***

***“Just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse  
us from all unrighteousness.”  
1 John 1:9.***

WHEN the soul is seriously impressed with the conviction of its guilt, when terror and alarm get hold upon it concerning the inevitable consequences of its sin, the soul is afraid of God. It dreads at that time every attribute of Divinity. But most of all the sinner is afraid of God's justice. “Ah,” said he to himself, “God is a just God. And if so, how can He pardon my sins? My iniquities cry aloud for punishment and my transgressions demand that His right hand should smite me low. How can I be saved? Were God unjust, He might forgive—but, alas, He is not so, He is severely just. ‘He lays justice to the line and righteousness to the plummet.’ He is the judge of all the earth and He must do right. How, then, can I escape from His righteous wrath which must be stirred up against me?” Let us be assured that the sinner is quite right in the conviction that there is here a great difficulty.

The justice of God is in itself a great barrier to the salvation of sinners. There is no possibility for that barrier to be surmounted, nor even for it to be removed except by one means, which shall this day be proclaimed unto you through the Gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord. It is true that God is just. Let old Sodom tell you how God rained fire and brimstone out of Heaven upon man's iniquity. Let a drowning world tell you how God lifted the sluices of the fountains of the great deep and bade the bubbling waters spring up and swallow man alive. Let the earth tell you how she opened her mouth when Korah, Dathan and Abiram rebelled against God. Let the buried cities of Nineveh and the tattered relics of Tyre and Sidon tell you that God is just and will by no means spare the guilty. And direst of all, let Hell's bottomless lake declare what is the awful vengeance of God against the sins of man. Let the sighs and groans and moans and shrieks of spirits condemned of God rise in your ears and bear witness that He is a God who will not spare the guilty, who will not wink at iniquity.



uity, transgression and sin—but who will have vengeance upon every rebel and will give justice its full satisfaction for every offense.

The sinner is right in his conviction that God is just and he is moreover right in the inference which follows from it, that because God is just his sin must be punished. Ah, Sinner, if God punishes not your sins, He has ceased to be what He has always been—the severely just, the inflexibly righteous. Never has there been a sin pardoned, absolutely and without atonement, since the world began. There has never been an offense yet remitted by the great Judge of Heaven. Until the law has received the fullest vindication, you are right, O convicted Sinner, that such shall be the case even to the end. Every transgression shall have its just recompense of reward. For every offense there shall be its stroke and for every iniquity there shall be its doom. “Ah,” says the Sinner, “then I am shut out of Heaven. If God is just and He must punish sin, then what can I do? Justice, like some dark angel, strides across the road of mercy and with his sword drawn, thirsty for blood and winged to slay, he strides across my path and threatens to drive me backwards over the precipice of death into the ever-burning lake.”

Sinner, you are right. It is even so. Except through the Gospel which I am about to preach to you, justice is your antagonist, your lawful, irresistible and insatiable enemy. It cannot suffer you to enter Heaven, for you have sinned. And punished that sin must be, avenged that transgression must be, as long as God is God—the holy and the Just.

Is it possible, then, that the sinner can be saved? This is the great riddle of the Law and the grand discovery of the Gospel. Wonder, you heavens! Be astonished, O earth! That very justice which stood in the sinner's way and prevented his being pardoned, has been by the Gospel of Christ appeased. By the rich atonement offered upon Calvary, Justice is satisfied, has sheathed its sword and has now not a word to say against the pardon of the penitent. No, more—that Justice once so angry, whose brow was lightning and whose voice was thunder, has now become the sinner's advocate and itself with its mighty voice pleads with God, that whosoever confesses his sin should be pardoned and be cleansed from all unrighteousness!

The business of this morning shall be to show, in the first place, according to the first text, how justice is no longer the sinner's enemy—“God is just and yet the justifier of him that believes.” And then, in the second place, that justice has become the sinner's advocate and that, “God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

But here let me utter a caution. I shall speak this morning only to those who feel their guilt and who are ready to confess their sin. For to those who still love sin and will not acknowledge their guilt, there is no promise of mercy or pardon. For them there remains nothing but the fearful look-

ing for of judgment. “He that being often reprov’d hardens his heart shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy.” The soul that neglects this great salvation cannot escape. There is no door of escape provided for it. Unless the Lord has now brought us to feel our need of mercy, has compelled us to confess that unless He gives us mercy we must righteously perish and unless, moreover, He has made us willing now to be saved on any terms, so that we may be saved at all, this Gospel which I am about to preach is not ours. But if we are convicted of sin and are now trembling before the thunders of God’s wrath, every word that I am now about to speak will be full of encouragement and consolation to you.

**I. First, then, HOW HAS JUSTICE BEEN PUT ASIDE? or rather, HOW HAS IT BEEN SO SATISFIED THAT IT NO LONGER STANDS IN THE WAY OF GOD’S JUSTIFYING THE SINNER?**

The one answer to that is Justice has been satisfied through the substitution of our blessed Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. When man sinned, the Law demanded that man must be punished. The first offense of man was committed by Adam who was the representative of the entire race. When God would punish sin, in His own infinite mind He thought of the blessed expedient, not of punishing His people, but of punishing their representative, the covenant Head, the *second* Adam. It was by one man, the first man, that sin entered into the world and death by sin. It was by another Man, the second Adam, who is the Lord from Heaven—it was by Him that this sin was borne. By Him its punishment was endured.

By Him the whole wrath was suffered. And through that second representative of manhood, Jesus, the second Adam, God is now able and willing to forgive the vilest of the vile and justify even the ungodly—and He is able to do so without the slightest violation of His justice. For, mark, when Jesus Christ, the Son of God, suffered on the tree, He did not suffer for Himself—He had no sin, either natural or actual. He had done nothing whatever that could bring Him under the ban of Heaven, or subject His holy soul and His perfect body to grief and pain. When He suffered it was as a Substitute. He died—“the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” Had His sorrows been personally deserved they would have had no efficacy in them. But inasmuch as for sins not His own He died to atone—inasmuch as He was punished, not for any guilt that *He* had done or could do—but for the guilt incurred by *others*, there was a merit and an efficacy in all that He suffered, by which the Law was satisfied and God is able to forgive.

Let us show very briefly how fully the law is satisfied. **1.** Note first the dignity of the victim who offered Himself up to Divine justice. Man had sinned. The Law required the punishment of manhood. But Jesus, the eternal Son of God, “very God of very God, “who had been hymned through eternal ages by joyous angels—who had been the favorite of His Father’s court, exalted high above principalities and powers and every

name that is named—He Himself condescended to become man. He was born of the Virgin Mary. He was cradled in a manger. He lived a life of suffering and at last died a death of agony. If you will but think of the wondrous Person whom Jesus was—as very God of very God, king of angels, creator, preserver, Lord of all—I think you will see that in His sufferings, the Law received a greater vindication than it could have done even in the sufferings of all the men that have ever lived or ever could live.

If God had consumed the whole human race, if all the worlds that float in ether had been sacrificed as one mighty holocaust to the vengeance of the Law, it would not have been so well vindicated as when Jesus died. For the deaths of all men and all angels would have been but the deaths and sufferings of *creatures*. But when Jesus died, the Creator Himself underwent the pang—it was the Divine preserver of the world hanging on the Cross. There is such dignity in the Godhead, that all it does is marvelous and infinite in its merit. And when He stooped to suffer, when He bowed His awful head, cast aside His diadem of stars to have His brow girt about with thorns. When His hands that once swayed the scepter of all worlds were nailed to the tree—when His feet that before had pressed the clouds—when these were fastened to the wood—then did the Law receive an honor such as it never could have received if a whole universe in one devouring conflagration had blazed and burned forever.

**2.** In the next place, just pause and think of the relationship which Jesus Christ had towards the great Judge of all the earth and then you will see again that the Law must have been fully satisfied. We hear of Brutus that he was the most inflexible of lawgivers. That when he sat upon the bench he knew no distinction of persons. Imagine dragged before Brutus many of the noblest Roman senators, convicted of crime—he condemns them—and without mercy they are rent away by the lectors to their doom. You would admire certainly all this justice of Brutus. But suppose Brutus' own son was brought before him—and such was the case—imagine the father sitting on the judgment bench and declaring that he knew no distinction whatever, even of his own children. Conceive that son tried and condemned out of his father's own mouth. See him tied up before his father's own eyes, while, as the inflexible judge, that father bids the lector lay on the rod and afterwards cries, "Take him away and use the axe!" See you not here how he loves his country better than his son and he loves justice better than either. "Now," says the world, "Brutus is just, indeed."

Now, if God had condemned each of us one by one, or the whole race at once, there would certainly have been a vindication of His justice. But lo, His own Son takes upon Him the sins of the world and He comes before His Father's presence. He is not guilty in Himself, but the sins of man are laid upon His shoulders. The Father condemns His Son. He gives Him up to the Roman rod. He gives Him up to Jewish mockery, to military scorn and to priestly arrogance. He delivers up His Son to the executioner and

bids him nail Him to the tree. And as if that were not enough, since the creature had not power of itself to give forth all the vengeance of God upon its own Substitute, God Himself smites His Son.

Are you staggered at such an expression? It is Scriptural. Read in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah and there you have the proof—"It pleased the Lord to bruise Him—He has put Him to grief." When the whip had gone round to every hand when the betrayer had smitten him, when Pilate and Herod and Jew and Gentile had each laid on the stroke, it was seen that human arm was not powerful enough to execute the full vengeance—then did the Father take His sword and cry, "Awake! O sword, against My Shepherd, against the Man that is My Fellow," and He smote Him sternly, as if He had been His enemy, as if He were a common culprit, as if He were the worst of criminals—He smote Him again and again, till that awful shriek was forced from the lips of the dying Substitute, "Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabachthani"—"My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?" Surely when God smites His Son and such a Son, when God smites His only begotten and well beloved Son, then Justice has more than its due, more than itself could ask. Christ Himself did freely give!

**3.** Furthermore, if you will please, for a moment, consider how terrible were the agonies of Christ, which, mark you, He endured in the place, the stead of all poor penitent sinners, of all those who confess their sins and believe in Him. I say, when you mark these agonies, you will readily see why Justice does not stand in the sinner's way. Does Justice come to you this morning and say, "Sinner, you have sinned, I will punish you"? Answer thus—"Justice, you have punished all my sins. All I ought to have suffered has been suffered by my Substitute, Jesus. It is true that in myself I owe you a debt greater than I can pay, but it is also true that in Christ I owe you nothing, for all I did owe is paid, every farthing of it. The utmost drachma has been counted down, not a dolt remains that is due from me to you, O you avenging Justice of God." But if Justice still accuses and conscience clamors, go and take Justice with you to Gethsemane and stand there with it. See that Man so oppressed with grief, that all His head, His hair, His garments are bloody? Sin was a press—a vice which forced His blood from every vein and wrapped Him in a sheet of His own blood. Do you see that Man there? Can you hear His groans, His cries, His earnest intercessions, His strong crying and tears? Can you mark that clotted sweat as it crimsones the frozen soil, strong enough to unloose the curse? Do you see Him in the desperate agony of His spirit, crushed, broken, bruised beneath the feet of Justice in the olive press of God? Justice, is not that enough? Will not that content you?

In a whole Hell there is not so much dignity of vengeance as there is in the garden of Gethsemane. Are you not yet satisfied? Come, Justice, to the hall of Pilate. Do you see that Man arraigned, accused, charged with

sedition and with blasphemy? See Him taken to the guard room, spat upon, buffeted with hands, crowned with thorns, robed in mockery and insulted with a reed for a scepter? I say, Justice, see that Man and do you know that He is “God over all blessed forever” and yet He endures all this to satisfy your demands? Are you not content with that? Do you still frown? Let me show you this Man on the pavement. He is stripped. Stand, Justice and listen to those stripes, those bloody scourges, and as they fall upon His devoted back and plow deep furrows there, do you see thong-full after thong-full of His quivering flesh torn from His poor bare back? Are you not content yet, Justice? Then what will satisfy you? “Nothing,” says Justice, “but His death.”

Come with me, then, so you can see that feeble Man hurried through the streets! Do you see Him driven to the top of Calvary, hurled on His back, nailed to the transverse wood? Oh, Justice, can you see His dislocated bones, now that His Cross is lifted up? Stand with me, O Justice, see Him as He weeps and sighs and cries—see His soul-agonies! Can you read that tale of terror which is veiled in that flesh and blood? Come, listen, Justice, while you hear Him cry, “I thirst,” and while you see the burning fever devouring Him, till He is dried up like a potsherd and His tongue cleaves to the roof of His mouth for thirst! And lastly, O Justice, do you see Him bow His head and die? “Yes,” said Justice, “and I am satisfied. I have nothing more that I can ask. I am fully content. My uttermost demands are more than satisfied.”

And am I not content, too? Guilty though I am, and vile, can I not plead that this bloody Sacrifice is enough to satisfy God’s demands against me? Oh, yes, I trust I can—

***“My faith does lay its hand,  
On that dear head of Yours  
While like a penitent I stand  
And here confess my sin.”***

Jesus, I believe that Your sufferings were for me. And I believe that they are more than enough to satisfy all my sins. By faith I cast myself at the foot of Your Cross and cling to it. This is my only hope, my shelter and my shield. It cannot be that God can smite me now. Justice itself prevents, for when Justice once is satisfied it were injustice if it should ask for more. Now, is it not clear enough to the eye of everyone, whose soul has been aroused, that Justice stands no longer in the way of the sinner’s pardon?

God *can* be just and yet the Justifier. He has punished Christ, why should He punish twice for one offense? Christ has died for all His people’s sins and if you are in the Covenant, you are one of Christ’s people. Damned you cannot be. Suffer for your sins you cannot. Until God can be unjust and demand two payments for one debt, He cannot destroy the soul for whom Jesus died. “Away goes universal redemption,” says one. Yes, away it goes, indeed. I am sure there is nothing about that in the

Word of God. A redemption that does not redeem is not worth my preaching, or your hearing. Christ redeemed every soul that is saved—no more and no less. Every spirit that shall be seen in Heaven Christ bought. If he had redeemed those in Hell, they never would have gone there. He has bought His people with His blood and they alone shall He bring with Him.

“But who are they?” says one. You are one, if you believe. You are one, if you repent of your sin. If you will now take Christ to be your All in All, then you are one of His. For the covenant must prove a lie and God must be unjust and justice must become unrighteousness and love must become cruelty and the Cross must become a fiction, before you can be condemned if you trust in Jesus. This is the way in which Justice ceases to be the enemy of souls.

**II.** The second text says that not only can God be just, but it says something more—it says, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. “Now, if I understand this text, it means this—that IT IS AN ACT OF JUSTICE ON GOD’S PART TO FORGIVE THE SINNER WHO ADMITS CONFESSION OF HIS SIN TO GOD. Mark—not that the sinner *deserves* forgiveness—that can never be. Sin can never merit anything but punishment, and repentance is no atonement for sin. Not that God is bound from any necessity of His nature to forgive everyone that repents, because repentance has not in itself sufficient efficacy and power to merit forgiveness at the hand of God. Yet, nevertheless, it is a Truth of God that because God is just, He must forgive every sinner who confesses his sin. And if He did not—and mark, it is a bold thing to say, but it is warranted by the text—if a sinner should be led truly and solemnly to make confession of his sins and cast himself on Christ, if God did not forgive him, then He were not the God that He is represented to be in the Word of God. He were a God unjust and that, God forbid, must not, cannot be.

But how, then, is it that Justice itself actually demands that every soul that repents should be pardoned? It is so. The same Justice that just now stood with a fiery sword in his hand, like the cherubim of old keeping the way of the tree of life, now goes hand in hand with the sinner. “Sinner,” he says, “I will go with you. When you go to plead for pardon I will go and plead for you. Once I spoke against you. But now I am so satisfied with what Christ has done that I will go with you and plead for you. I will change my language. I will not say a word to oppose your pardon, but I will go with you and demand it. It is but an act of justice that God should now forgive.” And the sinner goes up with Justice and what has Justice got to say? Why, it says this—“God must forgive the repenting sinner, if He is just, according to His promise.” A God who could break His promise were unjust. We do not believe in men who tell us lies. I have known some of so gentle a disposition that they could never say, “No.” If they were

asked to do a thing they have said, "Yes." But they have never earned a character for it, when they have said "Yes," and afterwards did not fulfill.

It is not so with God. He is no tender-hearted Being who promises more than He can perform and no forgetful one who promises what afterwards shall slip from His memory. Every word which God utters shall be fulfilled, whether it is decree, threat, or promise. Sinner! Go to God with a promise in your hand—"Lord You have said, 'He that confesses his sin and forsakes it, shall find mercy.' I confess my sin and I forsake it—Lord, give me mercy!" Don't doubt but that God will give it you. You have His own pledge in your hand, you have His own bond in your keeping. Take that pledge and that bond before His Throne of Mercy and that bond never shall be cancelled till it has been honored. You shall see that promise fulfilled to the uttermost, though your sin is ever so black.

Suppose the promise you take should be this. "He that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." "But," says the Law, "you are one of the greatest sinners that ever lived." "Yes, but the promise says, 'He that comes,' and I come and I claim the fulfillment of it." "No, but you have been a blasphemer." "I know it, but the promise says, 'He that comes,' and I come and blasphemer though I am, I claim the promise." "But you have been a thief, you have deceived your neighbor and you have robbed men." "I have, but the promise says, 'He that comes to Me I will in no wise case out.' I come and I claim the promise. It does not say anything at all about character in the promise—it says, 'He that comes,' and I come and if I am black as the devil, nevertheless God is true and I claim the promise. I confess all that can be said against me. Will God be untrue and send a seeking soul away with a promise unfulfilled? Never!"

"But," says one, "you have lived many years in this way. Your conscience has often checked you and you have resisted conscience often—it is too late now." "But I have the promise, 'He that comes'—there is no time stipulated in it—'He that comes.' I come and O God, You cannot break the promise!" Challenge God by faith and you will see that He will be as good as His Word to you. Though you are worse than words can tell, God, I repeat it, as long as He is just, must honor His own promise. Go and confess your sin, trust in Christ and you shall find pardon. But, again, not only did God make the promise, but according to the text, man has been induced to act upon it. And, therefore, this becomes a double bond upon the justice of God.

Suppose you made a promise to any man, that if such a thing were done, you would do something else and suppose that man were to do something quite contrary to his own nature, quite abhorrent to himself. But he did it nevertheless, because he expected to get great blessings thereby—do you mean to say you would tempt a man to do that and put him to vast expense and care and trouble and then turn round and say, "There, I shall have nothing to do with that promise—I only promised to

make you do so-and-so. Now, I will not fulfill my engagement”? Why the man would turn about and call you base to make a promise to lead him to do something and then not fulfill your promise. Now, God has said, “If we confess our sins and trust in Christ, we shall have mercy.” You have done it. You have made the most abject and sincere confession and you do declare that you have no trust but the blood and righteousness of Christ. On the faith of the promise you have been led into this state. Do you imagine when God has brought you through much pain and agony of mind to repent of sin, to give up self-righteousness and rely on Christ, He will afterwards turn round and tell you He did not mean what He said?

It cannot be—it cannot be. Suppose, now, you were about to engage a man to be your servant and you say to him, “Renounce such a situation—give that up—come and take a house in the neighborhood where I live and I will take you to be my servant.” Suppose he does it and you then say, “I am glad for your own sake that you have left your master, still I will not take you.” What would he say to you? He would say, “I gave up my situation on the faith of your promise and now you break it.” Ah, but it never can be said of Almighty God that if a sinner acted on the faith of His promise then that promise was not kept. God ceases to be God when he ceases to have mercy upon the soul who seeks pardon through the blood of Christ. No, He is a just God, “Faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

One more aspect of this case. God’s justice demands that the sinner should be forgiven if he seeks mercy for this reason—Christ died on purpose to secure pardon for every seeking soul. Now, I hold it to be an axiom, a self-evident Truth of God, that whatever Christ died for He will have. I cannot believe that when He paid to His Father the price of blood and groans and tears, He bought something which the Father will not give Him. Now, Christ died to purchase the pardon of sin for all those who believe on Him and do you suppose that the Father will rob Him of that which He has bought so dearly? No, God were untrue to His own Son—He would break His oath to His well-beloved and only begotten Son—if He were not to give pardon, peace, and purity to every soul that comes to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Oh, I would that I could preach it as with a tongue of thunder everywhere—God is just and yet the Justifier of him that believes. God is just to forgive us our sins, if we confess them. Just to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

**III.** Now, to close. I must just enter into some little EXPLANATION OF THE TWO GREAT DUTIES THAT ARE TAUGHT IN THE TWO TEXTS. The first duty is faith—“believe in Christ, “the second text is confession—“if we confess our sins.”

I will begin with confession first. Expect not that God will forgive you until you confess. Not in the general confession of a Prayer Book, but in the particular confession of your own inmost heart. You are not to confess



to a priest or a man unless you have offended him. In that respect, if you have been an offender against any man, be at peace with him and ask his pardon for anything you have done against him. It is a proof of a noble mind when you can ask pardon of another for having done amiss. Whenever grace comes into the heart it will lead you to make amends for any injury which you have done either by word or deed to any of your fellow men. And you cannot expect that you shall be forgiven of God until you have forgiven men and have been ready to make peace with those who are now your enemies.

That is a beautiful trait in the character of a true Christian. I have heard of Mr. John Wesley, that he was attended in most of his journeying by one who loved him very much and was willing, I believe, to have died for him. Still he was a man of a very stubborn and obstinate disposition and Mr. Wesley was not perhaps the very kindest man at all times. Upon one occasion he said to this man, "Joseph, take these letters to the post." "I will take them after preaching, Sir." "Take them now, Joseph," said Mr. Wesley. "I wish to hear you preach, Sir. And there will be sufficient time for the post after service." "I insist upon your going now, Joseph." "I will not go at present." "You won't!" "No, Sir." "Then you and I must part," said Mr. Wesley. "Very good, Sir." The good men slept over it. Both were early risers. At four o'clock the next morning, the refractory helper was accosted with, "Joseph, have you considered what I said—that we must part?" "Yes, Sir." "And must we part?" "Please yourself, Sir." "Will you ask my pardon, Joseph?" "No, Sir." "You won't?" "No Sir." "Then I will ask yours, Joseph!" Poor Joseph was instantly melted and they were at once reconciled.

When once the Grace of God has entered the heart, a man ought to be ready to seek forgiveness for an injury done to another. There is nothing wrong in a man confessing an offense against a fellow man and asking pardon for the wrong he has done him. If you have done anything, then, against any man, leave your gift before the altar and go and make peace with him and then come and make peace with God. You are to make confession of your sin to God. Let that be humble and sincere. You cannot mention every offense, but do not hide one. If you hide one it will be a millstone round your neck to sink you into the lowest Hell. Confess that you are vile in your nature, evil in your practice, that in you there is no good thing. Lay as low as ever you can at the footstool of Divine Grace and confess that you are a wretch undone unless God has mercy upon you.

Then, the next duty is faith. While you are laying there in the dust turn your eyes to Christ and say, "Black as I am and Hell-deserving as I confess myself to be, I believe that Jesus Christ died for the penitent. And inasmuch as He died, He died that the penitent might not die. I believe Your merits to be great. I believe Your blood to be efficacious. And more than that, I risk my eternal salvation—and yet it is no risk—I venture my eternal salvation upon the merit of Your blood, Jesus. I cannot save myself.

Cast the garments of Your blood-red atonement over me. Come, take me in Your arms. Come, wrap me in Your crimson vest and tell me I am Yours. I will trust in nothing else but You. Nothing I can do or ever did shall be my dependence. I rely simply and entirely upon Your mighty Cross, upon which you did die for sinners.”

My dear Hearers, as to any probability of your being lost after such a confession and such a faith, I assure you there is neither possibility nor probability thereof. You are saved. You are saved in time, you are saved in eternity. Your sins are forgiven. Your iniquities are all put away. In this life you shall be fed and blessed and kept. Remaining sin within you shall be overcome and conquered. And you shall see His face at the last in glory everlasting, when He shall come in the glory of His Father and all His holy angels with Him. “Whosoever believes on the Son of God has eternal life and shall never come into condemnation.” “He that believes on the Lord Jesus and is baptized, shall be saved. And he that believes not shall be damned.”

And now in conclusion, I have tried to tell out simply and plainly the story of how God’s justice is satisfied and has become the sinner’s friend and I look for fruit—for where the Gospel is simply preached it is never preached in vain. Only let us go home and pray now that we may know the Savior. Let us pray that others may know Him, too. If you are convicted of sin, my dear Friends, do not lose a moment. Go to your chamber as soon as you get home, shut your door, go alone to Jesus and there repeat your confession and once more affirm your faith in Christ. And you shall have that peace with God which the world cannot give and which the world cannot take away. Your troubled conscience shall find rest—your feet shall be on a Rock. And a new song shall be in your mouth, even praise for evermore—

***“From where this fear and unbelief?  
Have You, O Father, put to grief  
Your spotless Son for me?  
And will the righteous Judge of men  
Condemn me for that debt of sin,  
Which, Lord, was charged on You?  
Complete atonement You have made,  
And to the utmost farthing paid  
Whatever Your people owed.  
How then can wrath on me take place  
If sheltered in Your righteousness,  
And sprinkled with Your blood?  
If You have my discharge procured,  
And freely, in my place, endured  
The whole of wrath Divine,  
Payment God cannot twice demand—  
First, at my bleeding Surety’s hand,***

***And then again at mine.***

***Turn, then, my Soul unto your Rest!  
The merits of your great High Priest  
Speak peace and liberty—  
Trust in His efficacious blood,  
Nor fear your banishment from God,  
Since Jesus died for thee.”***

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# THE SINNER'S ADVOCATE

## NO. 515

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 21, 1863,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“My little children, these things write I unto you, that you sin not.  
And if any man sins, we have an Advocate with the Father,  
Jesus Christ the righteous.  
1 John 2:1.***

THE Apostle John presents us with a very clear and emphatic testimony to the doctrine of full and free forgiveness of sin. He declares that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleans us from all sin, and that if any man sins, we have an Advocate. It is most evident that he is not afraid of doing mischief by stating this Truth of God too broadly. On the contrary, he makes this statement with the view of promoting the sanctity of his “little children.” The object of this bold declaration of the love of the Father to His sinning children is, “that you sin not.” This is a triumphant answer to that grossly untruthful objection which is so often urged by the adversaries of the Gospel against the doctrines of Free Grace—that they lead men to licentiousness.

It does not appear that the Apostle John thought so, for in order that these “little children” should not sin, he actually declares unto them the very doctrine which our opponents call licentious. Those men who think that God's Grace, when fully, fairly, and plainly preached, will lead men into sin, know not what they say, nor what they affirm. It is neither according to nature nor to Grace for men to find an argument for sin in the goodness of God. Human nature is bad enough—and far be it from me to flatter that leprous criminal, that reeking mass of corruption—even a natural conscience revolts at the baseness of sinning because Divine Grace abounds!

Shall I hate God because He is kind to me? Shall I curse Him because He blesses me? I venture to affirm that very few men reason thus. Man has found out many inventions, but such arguments are so transparently abominable that few consciences are so dead as to tolerate them. Bad as human *nature* is, it seldom turns the goodness of God into an argument for rebelling against Him. As for souls renewed by Divine Grace, they never can be guilty of such infamy. The Believer in Jesus reasons in quite another fashion. Is God so good?—then I will not grieve Him. Is He so ready to forgive my transgressions?—then I will love Him, by His Grace, and offend no more. Gratitude has bands which are stronger than iron, although softer than silk.

Think not, Sirs, that the Christian needs to be flogged to virtue by the whip of the Law! Dream not that we hate sin merely because of the Hell which follows it! If there were no Heaven for the righteous, the sons of God would follow after goodness because their regenerated spirit pants for it.

And if there were no Hell for the wicked, from the necessity of his new-born nature, the true Christian would strive to escape from all iniquity. Loved of God, we feel we must love Him in return. Richly, yes, Divinely forgiven, we feel that we cannot live any longer in sin. Since Jesus died to rid us from all uncleanness, we feel that we cannot crucify our Lord afresh, and put Him to an open shame.

We need no nobler or more cogent arguments to lead a man to thorough consecration to God's cause and detestation of all evil than those fetched from the Free Grace of God. And what if some men do pervert the doctrine? Do not wicked minds corrupt everything? What Truth is there in Scripture with which a man may not ruin himself if he wills? Did not the prophetic eye of our Lord anticipate this when it was written that to some the Word of God is, "a savor of death unto death?" Have there not been in all ages men who hold the Truth of God in licentiousness? When were there not evil men to wrest Scripture to their own destruction? Shall we keep back the children's bread lest the dogs should steal the crumbs?

Shall we destroy health-restoring drugs because fools may poison themselves with them? Shall all the trees be cut down for fear the owls should build their nests in them? Shall the sea be dried up because sharks swim in it? Shall the pure virgin Truth be condemned because gross villains have forged her name and abused her character? God forbid! Let us never blush to preach the whole Gospel and to preach its full forgiveness of sin in the boldest and baldest manner, believing that the naked breasts of Truth are her best armor, and that she is least protected when she is encumbered with a coat of mail of human reasoning and prudence.

As God shall help me, then, believing that the doctrine of Free Grace and of God's infinite love to His people is a doctrine which will lead the "little children of God" to avoid all sin, I intend this morning to preach that doctrine. May God grant that the result may be according to His mind and will.

**I.** We commence our exposition of the text with the remark that THE SAINT IS STILL A SINNER. Our Apostle says—"If any man sins." The "if" may be written in as small letters as you will, for the supposition is a matter of certainty. "If any man sins"? Although the gentle hand of the beloved disciple uses such mild and tender terms, putting it as a supposition—as though it were an astonishing thing after so much love and mercy and kindness, that we should sin—yet John very well knew that all the saints *do* sin, for he has himself declared that if any man says that he does not sin he is a liar, and the Truth is not in him.

Saints are, without exception, still sinners. Far be it from us to deny that Divine Grace has worked a wondrous change—it were not Grace at all if it had not. It will be well to note this change. *The Christian no longer loves sin.* It is the object of his sternest horror. He no longer regards it as a mere trifle, plays with it, or talks of it with unconcern. He looks upon it as a deadly serpent whose very shadow is to be avoided. He would no more venture voluntarily to put its cup to his lip than a man would drink poison who had once almost lost his life through it. Sin is dejected in the

Christian's heart, though it is not ejected. Sin may enter the heart and fight for dominion, but it cannot sit upon the throne. It haunts the town of Mansoul and lurks in dens and corners to do mischief, but it is no longer honored in the streets, nor pampered in the palace. The head and the hands of Dagon are broken, although the stump remains.

The Christian *never sins with that enormity of boasting of which the unregenerate are guilty*. Others wallow in transgressions and make their shame their glory, but if the Believer falls he is very quiet, mournful and vexed. Sinners go to their sins as children to their own father's orchard, but Believers slink away like thieves when they have been stealing forbidden fruit. Shame and sin are always in close company in a Christian. If he is drunken with evil he will be ashamed of himself and go to his bed like a whipped cur. He cannot proclaim his transgressions as some do in the midst of a ribald crowd, boasting of their exploits of evil. His heart is broken within him, and when he has sinned he goes with sore bones for many and many a day.

Nor does he sin *with the fullness of deliberation* that belongs to other men. The sinner can sit down by the months together and think over the iniquity that he means to perpetrate, till he gets his plans well organized and has matured his project. But the Christian cannot do this. He may put the sin into his mouth and swallow it in a moment, but he cannot continue to roll it under his tongue. He who can carefully arrange and plot a transgression is still a true child of the old serpent.

And again, *the Believer never chews the cud of his sin*. For after he has sinned, however sweet it may have been in his mouth, it becomes bitterness in his heart—and glad enough is he to be rid of it altogether. The retrospect of sin to a converted man is nothing but blackness and darkness in his heart. The Christian, unlike other men, *never finds enjoyment in his sin*. He is out of his element in it. Conscience pricks him. He cannot, even if he would, sin like others. There is a refined taste within him which all the while revolts at the apparently dainty morsel of sin. The finger of Divine Grace, with its secret and mysterious touch, turns all the honey into gall, and all the sweetness into wormwood.

If the Christian shall sin, and sin, I grant he will, yet it shall always be with half-heartedness—still he clings to the right. The evil that he would not, he does, while the good that he would do, he fails to perform. You will notice, too, how different the Christian is *as to the habit of sin*. The ungodly man is frequent in overt deeds of rebellion, but the Christian, at least in open acts of crime and folly, rather falls into them rather than abides in them. The swallow dips with his wing the brook and then he is up again into the skies, soaring toward the sun. But the duck can swim in the pool or dive under the water—it is in its element. So the Christian just touches sometimes with his wing—alas, for him—the streams of earth, but then he is up again where he should be.

It is only the sinner that can swim in sin and delight therein. You may drive the swine and the sheep together side by side. They come to some mire and they both fall into it, and both stain themselves. But you soon detect the difference in nature between them—for while the swine lies and

wallows with intense gusto—the sheep is up again, escaping as soon as possible from the filth. So with the Christian. He falls, God knows how many times, but by His Grace, he rises up again—it is not his nature to lie in sin. He abhors himself that ever he should fall to the ground at all—while the ungodly goes on in his wicked way till sin becomes a habit and habit like an iron net has entangled him in its meshes.

There are all these degrees of difference between the Christian and the ungodly man and far more, for the Believer is a new creature—he belongs to a holy generation and a peculiar people. The Spirit of God is in him and in all respects he is far removed from the natural man. But for all that we must come back to that with which we started—that the Christian is still a sinner. He is so from the *imperfection of his nature*. His nature is such that he cannot but sin until the old Adam shall die in him—and that will not be till the funeral knell is tolled for himself.

Sin, by reason of his imperfection, pollutes the best thing the Believer does. Sin mars his repentance. There is filth in our tears and unbelief in our faith. The best thing we ever did apart from the merit of Jesus only swelled the number of our sins, for when we have been most pure in our own sight, yet, like the heavens, we are not pure in God's sight. And as He charged His angels with folly, much more must He charge us with it, even in our most angelic frame of mind. The song that thrills to Heaven and seeks to emulate seraphic strains has still mortal infirmity in it. The prayer which moves the arm of God is still a sinful prayer, and only moves that arm because the Sinless One, the great Mediator, has stepped in to take away the sin of our supplication.

I dare to say it—the best faith or the highest degree of sanctification to which a Christian ever attained on earth, has still so much of the creature's infirmity in it as to be worthy of God's eternal wrath. In itself considered, there is so much sin about the highest and loftiest thing to which the creature can attain, that we mournfully confess—"We are altogether as an unclean thing and all our righteousnesses are but as filthy rags."

As the Christian thus sins in his devout performances, so *he constantly errs in the everyday tenor of his life*. Sins of omission to wit—how many of these may be compressed into a single hour? Oh, what multitudes of things we have left undone! Remember that these make up a very great part of the sins which brings the curse. "I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink, sick and in prison and you visited Me not." Have we no sins of commission? Our thoughts, our imaginations, our words, and must I not say our deeds—have these been what they should be? If any man dare to tell me that he lives for a single day without a sinful deed, I will dare to tell him that he never knew himself.

Do but look at your own chamber. If you disturb it I see but little dust floating about in it, but if a stray sunbeam shall enter through the window I see millions upon millions of little motes dancing up and down! And I discover that the whole of what I supposed to be clear, pure air, is filled with innumerable atoms of all sorts of things, and that I am breathing these even in the purest atmosphere. So is it with our heart and life. When the Spirit shines into us, we see that the atmosphere of life is as full

of sin as it can hold. A man may sooner count the hairs of his head, or the sands upon the seashore, or the drops of the dew of the morning upon the grass, than count the sins of a single day.

O Lord, You know us, but we know not ourselves. Yet this much we know, that we are a people full of sin and laden with iniquity. You will tell me these are little sins, but I remind you that a multitude of grains of sand may overload a vessel quite as surely as bars of iron—and therefore these daily iniquities should be confessed with care and repented of with sincerity. The Christian, then, from the imperfection of his nature, sins. The old unchanged fountain of Harah must send forth bitter water. The old Adam can do nothing else but sin.

Fire can do nothing but burn. Water can do nothing but quench fire. Everything acts according to its nature. The new nature that is in us cannot sin, because it is born of God. It is so heavenly and Divine that it never stoops to anything like sin. There is a spark of the celestial and of the perfect within every Believer which never can be quenched. But the old Adam, that which made Paul cry out—"O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"—must sin and as certainly as sparks fly upward, so certainly the old nature will commit iniquity.

Moreover, many *Christian people sin from certain peculiar infirmities*. You know, each of you, what your own infirmity may be, at least I hope you have been watchful enough to discover it. Some sin *through shortness of temper*. They are not long-winded in patience with their fellow creatures. They are vexed. They grow hot—perhaps they imagine some cause for anger where there is none—and they wax warm and speak unadvisedly with their tongue. This gives much trouble to many of the most gracious of men. A hasty temper is a perpetual temptation.

There are others *who have a high and proud spirit* and if they fancy they are a little snubbed or put into the back ground, at once they feel inclined to resent it. There—listen to him—I am not to be thus trod upon! Who dares to treat me thus?" Many who have done good service for Christ have had to carry that thorn in their flesh even down to their graves. Sensitiveness, a high spirit, a suspicious temperament—these are like blisters to the feet of a pilgrim—he will always walk painfully, if not slowly. Some of us have to contend with *sloth*. Perhaps we are afflicted with a torpid liver, and the physician has never been able to touch the complaint.

God help the man thus afflicted, for he will need to whip himself every day to his duty. And often he will feel so dull and sleepy, that he will wish for Cowper's "lodge in a vast wilderness, some boundless contiguity of shade," that he might hide himself in quiet from the toil of the spiritual harvest. How many we know, dear Friends, who have to contend with *constant unbelief brought on through depression of spirits*. Their nerves, perhaps, have experienced a great shock at some period in life and, constitutionally, they look always at the black side of affairs. If they see a grassy knoll they suspect it to be an extinct volcano. And if they happen to be in a green valley where the mountains frown like the battlements of Heaven,



they are dreadfully afraid that an avalanche must certainly come down and destroy them.

They cannot help it. It is a peculiarity of their constitution, but it leads them into much sin, and should cause them much repentance before the face of the living God. So I might go on to mention the peculiarity of some who *are suffering from bashfulness*. They will often be tempted to hold back where they ought to go forward—and if not to disavow their Master—yet not to proclaim their love for Him as boldly as they should do. The Christian, when he reads this verse, “If any man sins,” may well say—“Ah, indeed I do. Through these infirmities I constantly commit iniquity.”

And then, dear Friends, we all sin from *the assaults of evil*. There are times when we are not watchful, and as Satan is always on his watchtower he is sure to attack us just then. We wear our visor up, and then in flies the stone from the infernal sling. We have forgotten a piece of our armor and the enemy spies our nakedness and cuts us deep, leaving a scar for years. The temptations *of the world*, when we are thrust into ungodly company, and *the trials of business, and even of the household—all these* in unguarded moments may take the Christian off his feet.

Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, Paul, who was not a whit behind the very chief of the Apostles, yet called himself the chief of sinners. And we with far inferior graces must take the lowest place, acknowledging that in us, that is in our flesh, there dwells no good thing. Sinner is my name, sinner my nature, but thanks be to Him who came to save sinners, I am a sinner *saved by Free Grace*.

**II.** I now leave that point for a second one full of comfort. OUR SINS DO NOT DEPRIVE US OF OUR INTEREST IN CHRIST. Note the text. “If any man sins we *have* an Advocate.” Yes, we have Him though we sin. We have Him still. It does not say, “If any man sins he has forfeited his Advocate,” but, “we have an Advocate.” Sinners though we are, all the sin that a Believer ever did or can be allowed to commit, cannot destroy his interest in the Lord Jesus Christ. Into whatever he may be suffered to fall, yet none of these things can by any possibility touch his title deeds. Indeed, in some characters Jesus is only mine when I can claim the name of sinner.

I cannot have an Advocate unless I do sin, otherwise I do not need one. Who wants an advocate to plead his cause in a court of law if there is no suit against him? Sin is a charge against me. I am a sinner. I have an Advocate. I have today a Brother in Christ. “Go, tell my Brothers and Sisters,” said He. And yet they had all forsaken Him, and therefore were all sinners—but He was their Brother still. I have a Husband in Christ too, though I sin. “Israel has forsaken Me,” says God, “and played the harlot. She has gone whoring from Me, but return, return, for I am married unto you.” She is His wife still, you see, though she had gone into adultery.

The Christian, even when he has stained and fouled himself, is the spouse of Christ still for all that. We are members of His Body, and if so, the members cannot be removed or taken off and on—limbs are not so easily removed. Did not Christ wash Peter? Peter was a member of Christ's own Body, and yet Peter wanted washing. O blessed picture, the

Head washing the feet. So at this day, stained though we are, we are claimants of Christ as Head of our body. And, Beloved, we know that notwithstanding all our sin we are perfectly justified in Christ, for He justifies the ungodly. We know, too, that we are perfectly accepted, for we are accepted in the Beloved, and not in ourselves.

Notwithstanding all our iniquities we are pardoned, for the fountain is opened for sin and for all uncleanness—not for righteousness and purity—but for sin and for uncleanness. Therefore we conclude that all our sins do not deprive us of that which Christ is to us, namely, the Fountain of Life and light and purity and safety. Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, if our first title to Christ had depended on our good works, then it would fall when our works grew bad, but He loved us when we were as bad as we could be—

***“He saw us ruined in the Fall,  
Yet loved us notwithstanding all.”***

He chose us when we were sinners. He bought us when we were sinners. He loved us when we were dead in trespasses and sins. And if we are as bad as that today, He loves us still.

If our right to Heaven rested on the Covenant of Works, that unstable tenure, it would soon fail us. But seeing it rests on the Covenant of Grace, which has no conditions in it, but which is of pure Immutable Grace from first to last, therefore be it known unto you, O sons of God, that notwithstanding all your faults and failings, wanderings and backslidings, He is your God and you are His children. He will be your God to all eternity and you shall be His children world without end. “What a bold thing to say!” says one. Yes, and did I not tell you that I meant to say it to the little children, that they sin not?

I believe that the bold open statement of the fact that all the sin that a Believer can commit cannot mar his interest in Christ, though it may mar his enjoyment of that interest for the present. Believing, I say, that this doctrine, instead of driving men to sin, will draw them to love that gracious and immutable God, who notwithstanding all our sins and cares and woe, will never suffer us to perish.

**III.** Now let us change the note a little. Our third point is THAT THE ADVOCATE IS PROVIDED ON PURPOSE TO MEET THE FACT THAT WE ARE STILL SINNERS.

If I am a sinner, then there is a court. And there is one who sits as Judge—the Father. There is a charge against me, otherwise I should not want an Advocate to meet it—and this implies that I have sinned. There is an adversary to press his suit against me, and he would hardly venture to do this if there were no sin. There must be a right of reply on my part. I must have the right to put in a disclaimer in court, and to stand up and plead before the bar of justice. He who has a right to plead in court is the man who is accused—the man who has some offense. If I were neither accused nor had been a sinner, then I should have no right to occupy the time of the court. But being a sinner, and being brought up upon that charge and having one who presses the charge against me, I have a right

to reply and that reply, through God's good Grace, I have a right to make through my Advocate.

Let us say, concerning our Advocate, that He is ordained with a special view to sinners. All His names and attributes prove Him to be a suitable Advocate for such. You and I, who though saved, are still sinners, may safely put our case into His hands, for look who He is—"Jesus Christ *the righteous*." "Jesus." Ah, then He is an Advocate such as I want, for He loves me and takes an interest in me. Jesus is the name of one who became Man for my sake. He knows what sore temptations mean, He understands what trials mean, what afflictions mean. I am glad I have One who will be interested in my welfare, and will plead for me as a Friend for a friend, and as a Brother for a brother.

I thank God, that though I sin, I still have Jesus who is my, "Brother born for adversity," the Friend of sinners, and will, therefore, plead the sinner's part. Is His name Jesus? Then He is sure to succeed, because, "they shall call His name Jesus, for *He* shall save His people from their sins." His very name implies His success. Is His name Jesus? Then if He does not succeed in my case, His honor is compromised. He is called Jesus because He does save sinners—if He does not save me—He is not Jesus. If I, a sinner, trusting in Him, give Him my cause to plead as my Advocate, and I am tried, and the verdict is against me, He is not Jesus. He may lay down His claim to be Jesus, for He does not, and cannot save His people from their sins.

Beloved Friends, do you not see how the saint is regarded as a sinner because He who is his Advocate is the appointed Savior of sinners? He is put down as their Advocate, I say, because He is the *sinner's Friend*. I never heard of His pleading for the righteous. I never dreamed of His being the Friend of the *sinless*. I find Him always on the side of publicans and sinners—offenders, and those who have gone out of the way. And therefore I conclude, that sinner though I am, continually sinning as I am, I may leave my case with Jesus, for He is just the advocate the sinner wants.

Notice, next, it is "Jesus Christ"—Christos—the Anointed. This shows His authority to plead. There are only certain gentlemen who can plead in the Court of Chancery. And only certain others that can enter the Common Pleas, or the King's Bench. Jesus Christ has a right to plead, for He is the Father's own Appointed, the Father's own Anointed. My Soul, you have a good Pleader, One whom God Himself has chosen to plead the sinner's cause. If he were of your choosing, he might fail. But if God has laid help upon One that is mighty, feel safe to put your trouble where God has laid His help. He is Christ, and therefore authorized.

But I add, He is Christ and therefore *qualified*, for the anointing has also qualified Him for His work. He can plead better than Jacob pleaded when he spoke for Benjamin. He can plead so as to move the heart of God and prevail. What words of tenderness, what sentences of persuasion will He use when He stands up to plead for me! But more, He is Christ—that is, He is God's Messiah. Therefore God would not send Him unless He *guaranteed Him*. If God should send into this world a Savior who could

not save, then God would have no mercy. God's appointing and sending Christ is a guarantee of Christ's success. Oh, my Soul, you have One well fitted to be your Advocate and One that cannot but succeed! Leave yourself entirely in His hands.

Notice next, it is "Jesus Christ *the righteous*." This is not only His Character, but it is His plea. It is His Character, and if my Advocate is righteous, then I am sure He would not take up a bad cause. I do not know, it may be right for a lawyer to plead for a villain when he knows him to be a villain. But this I think, the greater villain the lawyer is the better qualified would he be to do it. But my Lord and Master, the great Advocate, would not plead a bad cause, for He is Jesus Christ *the righteous*. Therefore if I sin, if I am put down among the many men that sin—if He pleads for me, my case must be good—for He would not take up a bad one.

But how can He do this? Why, because He meets the charge of unrighteousness against me by this plea on His part—that *He* is righteous. He seems to say to the great Father in the day when the sinner stands arraigned—"Yes, my Father, that sinner was unrighteous, but remember that I was accepted as His Substitute. I stood to keep the Law for him, and gave My active obedience. I went up to the Cross and bled, and so gave My passive obedience. I have covered him from head to foot with My doing and My dying. I have so arrayed him that not even the angels are adorned as he is, for though they may be clothed with the perfect righteousness of a creature, I have given him the righteousness of God Himself. I am become unto My people the Lord their righteousness.

"Look, I have taken the jewels out of My crown to bedeck them. I have taken the garments from My own back to cover them, and the blood from My own veins to make the dye in which I have dipped their garments, till they are purpled with imperial glory." What can there be asked more for the sinner than this? Jesus Christ the righteous stands up to plead for me, and pleads His righteousness. And mark, He does this not if I do *not* sin, but if I *do* sin. There is the beauty of my text. It does not say, "If any man does not sin we have an Advocate." But, "if any man sins we have an Advocate." So that when I have sinned and come creeping up to my closet with a guilty conscience and an aching heart, and feel that I am not worthy to be called God's son, I still have an Advocate, because I am one of the many men that sin. I sin and I have an Advocate.

Oh, I know not how to express the joy I feel in my soul to be able to put it so! It is not, "If any man is righteous, we have an Advocate." It is not, "If any man is prayerful, and careful, and godly, and walks rightly and in the light," and so on, but, "If any man SINS we have an Advocate." Oh, my Soul, there is the music of God's heart in those words! Music such as the prodigal heard at the festival which welcomed his return. "If any man sins we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

**IV.** And now we turn to our fourth point which is that THIS TRUTH, SO EVANGELICAL AND SO DIVINE, SHOULD BE PRACTICALLY REMEMBERED. It should be practically remembered, dear Friends, *at all times*. Every day I find it most healthy to my own soul to try and walk as a saint, but in order to do so, I must continually come to Christ as a *sinner*. I

would seek to be perfect. I would strain after every virtue, and forsake every false way. But still, as to my standing before God, I find it happiest to sit where I sat when first I looked to Jesus, on the rock of His works, having nothing to do with my own righteousness, but only with His.

Depend on it, dear Friends, the happiest way of living is to live as a poor sinner, and as nothing at all—having Jesus Christ as All in All. You may have all your growths in sanctification, all your progress in graces, all the development of your virtues that you will. But still I do earnestly pray you never to put any of these where Christ should be. If you have begun in Christ, then finish in Christ. If you have begun in the flesh, and then go on in the flesh, we know what the sure result will be. But if you have begun with Jesus Christ as your Alpha, let Him be your Omega. I pray you never think you are rising when you get above this, for it is not rising, but slipping downwards to your ruin. Stand still to this—

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

Still a sinner. But still having an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous—let this be the spirit of your everyday life.

Make this essentially the rule of your life *on particular occasions*. Here let me say a word that may at once comfort and enlighten some here who are in darkness. When the Spirit of God gives you a clearer view of your own depravity, mind that you hold to this—“If any man sins we have an Advocate with the Father.” Perhaps when you were first converted you did not suspect the depth of wickedness that lay in your heart. Perhaps you did not believe that you could be so unutterably bad as you really were. But lately the fountains of the great deep have been broken up and you have been horrified. You are almost driven mad, or else into despondency and despair by this discovery of your innate corruption, until you fly to this—“Sinner as I am and never more consciously so than I am now that God’s Spirit has enlightened me, I yet know that if any man sins we have an Advocate with the Father and I, black, foul and filthy—more foul and filthy than I ever thought myself to be— put my case into the hands of my Advocate and leave it there forever.”

When after this you have fallen into sin, and oh, I may address some member of this Church who has done this though the pastor knows it not—you have fallen into some sin that pricks your conscience. You carry about with you a something that will not let you sleep at night. There is a sin that disturbs you, and you wish you could forget that you had committed it. You have gone before God as David did. You have used the language of the fifty-first Psalm, but you cannot get rid of that sin. You believe you are a child of God sometimes, but that sin has got into your conscience and, like a cancer, is eating into your comfort.

My Brother, now is your time—“If any man sins, we have an Advocate with the Father.” Jesus Christ is of no use to you if He will only save you when you have no sin. Let me repeat it—now you are a *sinner*. Now you are condemned by the verdict of your own conscience. Now you have sinned, sinned willfully and foully—and God forbid that I should extenuate your sin. Yet, let your sin be as gross, and black, and hellish as it

may be, if you believe in Jesus Christ you have an Advocate with the Father. And through that Advocate your cause shall rest and your sin shall be put away.

Perhaps you will tell me that your sin has had some gross aggravation about it. If you are a Christian it has, for a Christian always sins worse than other men. If the sin is not in itself so bad as other men's, it is worse in you. For a king's favorite to play the traitor is villainy, indeed. For one that has been highly favored, as you have been, with visits of love from Jesus—to be false to Him—oh, this is shame, double shame to Him! For you who have been washed in His blood to crucify Him afresh, what shall I say to that? You deserve the hottest wrath of God and the deepest Hell. But thus says the Lord unto you—I have blotted out your sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud your iniquities. Return unto Me.” “If any man sins, we have an Advocate with the Father.”

It does not say, “If some men sin we have no advocate.” Or, “If some men sin in an aggravated way.” No, it is not put so. It says, “If *any* man sins, we have an Advocate with the Father.” So that though you have heaped aggravations one upon another, and your crime has been as foul as any that could have been committed, still you can say, “we have an Advocate.” Fly with a humble, contrite heart, and throw yourself at the feet of that Advocate, and by His blood, and by His wounds He will plead for you, and you shall prevail.

What if I add to all this that you have so sinned as to bring a scandal upon the name of God, upon His Church, and upon His cause? Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, you may well weep in secret. You may weep tears of blood for having done this. But still, for all that, I cannot shut the gate where God sets it wide open. I have not a thunderbolt for you. If you are a child of God, mercy is still free, and still it is preached to you—“If any man sins,” publicly, like David, so as to make God's enemies to blaspheme, yet still, “we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” Oh, what splendid mercy is this! Archangel never dreamed of such mercy as this to sinners, to real sinners, to hugely vile sinners, to black, hellish sinners, to devilish sinners, to such as no adjective can be found to describe them! Yet, if they believe in Jesus, sin as they may, they still have, “an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”

I wish I could meet the case of that Brother yonder, who has long given up all hope of ever being restored. He has been excommunicated. He has been driven away from the society of the godly. He thinks, though he is in this house this morning, he has no business here. And sometimes the devil has tempted him to make away with himself, and he has said, if I must be lost I may as well be lost at once. Ah, but, my Brother, you dare not do it with such a text of Scripture as this before your eyes! The Lord loves you still, and if He ever loved you, all your sin cannot wean His heart from you. You may have gone to the utmost length of your tether, but He has so tied you that you can never go beyond it! You may have gotten to the very extremity and edge of the precipice, but over that edge you must not, and you shall not go!

This day He sends me to stop you. Return! Return! Return! A Father bids you return! You are feeding swine today, and all foul and filthy as you are, you would desire fill your belly with their husks. But you cannot—you have a hunger that husks can never satisfy. Your Father waits to receive you. Come, He will meet you. He will fall upon your neck and kiss you. He will set you at His own table and there shall be music and dancing for you. The best robe awaits you, Prodigal! The fatted calf is killed for you! Come! O believe it! Believe that God is able to do this great thing for you. “As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are His thoughts above your thoughts, and His ways above your ways.”—

***“What though your numerous sins exceed  
The stars that fill the skies,  
And, aiming at the Eternal Throne,  
Like pointed mountains rise,”***

yet still the red sea of Jesus' blood shall cover the tops of the mountains of your sins, till, like Noah's ark, that floated twenty cubits upwards, the tops of the mountains shall be covered. “If any man sins”—here, you see, there is nothing said about goodness, nothing about virtue, or tenderness of heart—it is only put, “If any man sins, we have an Advocate.”

O you that believe in Jesus, pray for those who believe not, that they, too, may have an Advocate. If you and I have come and put our trust in Him, and found a shelter in His wounds, let us never be satisfied till we see our children, our brothers, our sisters, our friends, our kinsfolk brought to this Advocate. Go and tell it wherever your voices can be heard, that Jesus Christ receives SINNERS, and that He eats with them. Go and say that He is the sinner's Friend, and that He is willing to take them as they are and wash them and make them whiter than snow.

Since you have proved it yourself, and need to prove it every day, try and bring others to the conviction of it, that they, with you, may sing to the praise of that Divine love which has given the Advocate to every Believer, whatever his guilt and condemnation may have been. The Lord bless you now, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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# SINCERITY AND DUPLICITY

## NO. 922

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 6, 1870,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

***“Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He that says, I know Him, and keeps not His commandments, is a liar, and the Truth is not in him.”***  
**1 John 2:3, 4.**

THE Epistles of John possess and combine certain qualities which seem, at the first blush, to stand opposite as the poles to one another. Their style of expression is simple, chaste, and unadorned. Short words are used. For the most part words of one syllable—such little homely words as a young child might easily spell. And the sense is so clear and obvious, that the captious critic or the astute reasoner must be puzzled to distort it. Yet there is no lack of dignity in the language, and as for the matter of these Epistles, it is grand and sublime. Where would you turn in the pages of the New Testament, save only to the book of the Revelation, given by the pen of the same writer, for more notable mystery?

The language charms our ears, while the Truth it expresses holds us in awe. There are deep meanings and veiled mysteries here. Albeit the hidden wisdom which baffles finite thought is not couched in strange terms, but declared in such plain speech as trips lightly off the tongue, and yet sinks deeply into the heart. Again, the spirit of John is love, all love. Every line he writes is perfumed with charity. And yet to what close self-examination, to what a severe testing does he put us! How truly may it be said that these Epistles are a touchstone by which we may discern between the true gold and the counterfeit!

Generous but discriminating, glowing with affection but rigid in fidelity, the Apostle mingles caution with caress, and qualifies the most soothing consolations with such stern warnings, that in well-near every sentence he constrains us to deep searching of heart. The text is a case in point. With a wise discrimination he draws a contrast between him who *knows* that he knows Christ, and him who *says* that he knows Christ. The one he acknowledges, but the other he brands with that hard word, that ignominious title, “a liar,” and sends him away as unworthy of further consideration.

Not only in this case, but all through his Epistles, John continues to unravel the tangled web of hypocrisy. Ah, that deceit should steal such gentle shapes and seem like Truth! To show the diverging point between facts and sayings, between realities and professions, between those who have, and those who only *say* that they have, was his constant aim. It may interest you just to open your Bibles and turn to one or two of the passages that illustrate this. In his first chapter, at the sixth verse, he has been speaking of those who walk in the light and have fellowship with God, and he adds, “If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.”



Then in the text he speaks of those who know Christ, and he adds, "He that says, I know Him, and keeps not His commandments, is a liar, and the Truth is not in him." And further on, in the ninth verse, speaking of those who have the light, he says, "He that says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness even until now." Not to multiply the instances, there is a notable one in the fourth chapter, at the twentieth verse, "If a man says I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar: for he that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God Whom he has not seen?"

So to have a thing, or to boast that you have it—to be, or to pretend to be such-and-such a character—are as opposite as white and black, as light and darkness. Indeed, we scarcely need Revelation to tell us this, for it is so in things secular, and it must be certainly applicable to religion. We meet in common life with persons who say that they are rich, but this does not make them so. They apply for credit and say that they are wealthy when they are worth nothing. Companies will ask for your money with which they may speculate, and they say that they are sound, but they are oftentimes found to be rotten. Though some of them make a very fair show in the prospectus, the result appears very foul in the winding-up of the association.

Persons have been known to say that they were of distinguished rank, but when they have had to prove their title before the House of Lords, oftentimes has it been discovered that they have made a mistake. Lunatics in Bethlehem Hospital, near here, have been found by scores to say that they were kings or queens. In the old houses, where madmen were confined, it often happened that some poor creature twisted a crown of straw, put it on his head, and said that he was a monarch. But that did not make him so. No armies arose at his bidding. No fleets crossed the ocean to do his will. No tribute was brought to his feet. He remained a poor pauper madman still, though he said that he was a king.

Many a time you have found the difference, in your commercial transactions, between blank saying and positive truth. A man has said that he would meet that bill, or that he would discharge that debt. He has said that the rent should be paid when it was due. He has said a thousand things—and you have found out that it was easy enough for him to say, but it was not quite so easy for you to obtain the doing of it. And when the engagement has been turned to writing, registered, and made as fast as black and white can make it, you have not found it thoroughly reliable, for to say by subscribing a contract or covenant does not always make it certain that a man will fulfill it. To say is not necessarily a pledge of good faith, or a warrant against treachery.

Rest assured, then, that if in these temporal matters to say is not the same thing as to be or to do, neither is it so in spiritual things. A minister may say that he is sent of God, and yet be a wolf in sheep's clothing. A man may say that he unites himself to the Church of God, but he may be no better than a hypocrite and an alien who has no part in her fellowship. We may say that we pray, and yet never a prayer may come from our hearts. We may say to our fellow men that we are Christians, and yet we may never have been born again—never have obtained the precious faith of God's elect—never have been washed in the blood of Jesus Christ.

And, Sirs, as you would not be satisfied with merely saying that you are rich. As you want the title-deeds of the broad acres. As you want to hear the coins chink in your box. As you want the real thing, and not the mere saying of it—so, I pray you, be not put off with the mere profession of religion. Be not content with a bare assertion, or think that is enough. Seek to have your own profession verified by the witness of Heaven, as well as by that of your own conscience. It is not written, “He that says he believes shall be saved.” But “he that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” It is not said that he who says he has confessed shall be forgiven. But “He that confesses and forsakes his sins shall find mercy.” Your mere sayers, though they say, “Lord, open to us,” and aver that Christ did eat in their streets, shall have for an answer, “I never knew you! Depart from Me, you workers of iniquity.”

Let us not be gulled and deceived. Let us not be duped and taken in by any notion that saying so makes it so! Take heed, lest with a flattering tongue you do impose on your own soul. Standing in view of that Eye which penetrates the inmost heart, may we learn to distinguish between the mere profession and the full possession of real Grace and vital godliness.

The matter in hand tonight, in which this distinction is to be made, is the knowing of Christ. Let us speak first about what it is to know Him, then about knowing that we know Him. And after that, solemnly expostulate with those who merely say that they know Him.

I. The matter to be considered and judged tonight by each man for himself is THE KNOWING OF CHRIST. What, then, is it to know Christ? Of course we have never seen Him. Many years ago He left this world and ascended to His Father. Still we can know Him. It is possible. There have been thousands, and even millions, who have had a personal acquaintance with Him, Whom, though they have not seen, they loved, and in Whom they have rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

To “know” is a word used in Scripture in several senses. Sometimes it means to acknowledge. As when we read of a certain Pharaoh, that “he knew not Joseph.” That is, he did not acknowledge any obligation of the state or kingdom to Joseph. He remembered not what had been done by that great man. So, too, Christ says that His sheep “know” His voice. They acknowledge His voice as being the voice of their Shepherd, and cheerfully follow where their Shepherd leads. Now, it is a matter of the first necessity to acknowledge Christ—that He is God, that He is the Son of the Father, that He is the Savior of His people, and the rightful Monarch of the world—to acknowledge more--that you accept Him as your Savior, as your King, as your Prophet, as your Priest.

This is, in a certain sense, to know Christ. That is, to own and confess in your heart that He is God, in the glory of God the Father. That He is your Redeemer. That His blood has washed you, and His righteousness covers you. That He is your salvation, your only hope, and your fondest desire.

The word “know” means, in the next place, to believe. As in that passage, “By His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many”—where it is evidently meant that by the knowledge of Him, that is to say, by faith in Christ Jesus, He would justify many. To “know” and to “believe” are sometimes used in Scripture as convertible terms. Now, in this sense we

must know Christ. We must believe Him, we must trust Him, we must accept the reports of the Prophets and Apostles respecting Him. And we must subscribe to them, practically, with all our heart, and soul, and strength, and lean the whole burden of our everlasting destiny upon His finished work. To know Him, then, is to acknowledge Him, and to believe in Him.

This is not all. The word to “know” often means experience. It is said of our Lord that, “He knew no sin.” That is to say, He never experienced sin. He never became a sinner. To know Christ, then, we must feel and prove His power, His pardoning power, His power of love over the heart, His reigning power in subduing our passions, His comforting power, His enlightening power, His elevating power, and all those other blessed influences which, through the Holy Spirit, proceed from Christ. This is to experience Him. And once more, to “know” in Scripture often means to commune. Eliphaz says, “Acquaint yourself with God, be at peace with Him.” That is to say, commune with Him, get into friendship and fellowship with Him.

So it is necessary that every Believer should know Christ by having an acquaintance with Him, by speaking with Him in prayer and praise—by laying bare one’s heart to His heart—receiving from Him the Divine secret, and imparting to Him the full confession of all our sins and griefs. In a word, dear Brethren, to know Christ is very much the same as to know any other person. When you know a man, if he is your intimate friend, you trust him, you love him, you esteem him, you are on speaking terms with him. You not only bow to him in the street, but you go to his house. You sit down with him at his table. At other times you hold counsel with him, or you ask his assistance. And he comes to your house, and you hold familiar association, the one with the other. There is a good understanding between you and the man of whom it may be truly said that you know him.

On such terms must the soul be with Christ. He must not be merely an historic personage of whom we read in the pages of Scripture. But He must be a real Person with Whom we can speak in spirit, commune in heart, and be united in the bonds of love. We must know Him, His very Person, so as to love and to trust Him as a real Lord to us. Judge, then, each one, yourselves—whether you really and indeed, in this sense, “know” Christ.

Do distinguish, however, between knowing *about* Christ and knowing Christ. We may know very much about many of our great men, though we do not know them. Now it will never save a soul to know *about* Christ. The only saving knowledge is to know Him, His very Self, and to trust Him, the living Savior, who is now at the right hand of God. To Him it is we speak. With Him in very deed we commune.

Nor does it say that if we are able to *speak* about Him, therefore we are saved. Lest the music of your own tongue beguile you, remember how easy some people find it to talk fluently, eloquently, properly, and persuasively of persons they never knew. They had read it. They had stored it up in their memories, and they told it out again. They may vindicate the reputation of some hero or statesman in company where it is disgraced though they never knew any more of him than the fame that has reached their ears. Ah, but this is not enough here.

You may be as fluent as Whitefield. Yes, you may be eloquent and mighty in the Scriptures as was Apollos. But if you do not know Christ by your own individual, personal acquaintance with His Person, with His righteousness, and with His blood, you will not be saved by all your fine speeches. Rather are you in imminent peril, that out of your own mouth you will be condemned. Such knowledge as we now refer to is inestimably precious. Get knowledge, classical or mathematical—apply yourself to literature, or study the sciences, enjoy the vast hoard of knowledge bequeathed to us by antiquity, or endeavor to augment that hoard, and transmit it to future ages—but after all, there is no knowledge that can ever match that of the Christ once crucified, now risen and exalted, and expected soon to return in Glory.

Such knowledge as this is incomparable. It dives deep into the mine of God's eternal purpose. It soars high into the Heaven of God's everlasting love. It enlarges the soul by filling it with the inexhaustible fullness of Christ—Christ the wisdom of God—Whom THE LORD possessed in the beginning of His way before His works of old. O Sirs, he that gets such knowledge need not seek for degrees at the universities. He who has Christ has the highest imaginable degree. And, blessed forever be the name of my God, such knowledge can never be lost. If you know Christ, you have that written on the tablet of your heart which Satan shall never erase, which time shall never dim, which the iron hand of death shall never be able to blot out. There shall it stand forever.

You know Him, and you are known of Him, “and they shall be Mine, says the Lord, in the day when I make up My jewels.” “The Lord knows them that are His.” They that know Him He knows, and He will confess them to be His own in the day when He comes in the glory of His Father, and all His holy angels with Him. I speak but simply, though I feel intensely the importance of this subject. A great solemnity surrounds it. Life and death, Heaven and Hell, are here clearly legible. For if you know Christ, it is well with you, but if you know Him not, you are ignorant of the one thing which can save your soul.

**II.** Having laid down the matter that is propounded, we shall advance to speak OF THE TWO CHARACTERS THAT ARE PORTRAYED IN THE TEXT. With respect to the one—those who know that they know Him. We are told how they know that they know Him—“We know that we do know Him, if we keep His commandments.”

Some Christians who do know Christ are in great doubt as to whether they know Him. This ought not to be. It is too solemn a matter to be left to chance or conjecture. I believe there are saved ones who do not know of a surety that they are saved. They are raising the question often that never ought to be a question. No man ought to be content to leave that unsettled, for mark you, my Hearer or Reader, if you are not a saved man, you are a condemned man. If you are not forgiven, your sins lie on you. You are now in danger of Hell if you are not now secure of Heaven, for there is no place between these two. You are either a child of God, or not. Why do you say, “I hope I am a child of God, yet I do not know. I hope, yet I do not know that I am forgiven”? In such suspense you ought not to be. You are either one or the other—either a saint or a sinner—either saved or lost, either walking in the light or walking in the dark.

Oh, it is very urgent that we should know that we know Him! Though, as I have already said, to know Him is the paramount matter—next to that there is nothing so important as to *know* that we know Him. Do you ask what service it would render you? It would give you such comfort as nothing else could. To know that you know Christ is a perennial joy, and an unfailing consolation under the heaviest trial. This is a candle that will shine in the dark night, and give you all the light that you shall want between here and Heaven. If I know that I know Christ, then all things are mine. Things present and things to come are alike in the Covenant of Grace. I am rich to all the intents of bliss, and the knowledge thereof is comfort indeed!

You who are living on “perhaps” and “maybe,” are living on dust and ashes. A piece of bread that is full of grit and dirt will break your teeth if you try to eat it. But, oh, if you can but get to know, to be persuaded, to be assured, to be confident, then shall you eat bread that is better than that which angels eat, and like Jonathan, when he touched the honey with his rod, and put it to his lips, you shall find your eyes enlightened!

Nor is it joy alone you would find from this knowledge. It would no less certainly bring you confidence. When a man knows that he knows Christ, what confidence he has in meeting temptations! “Shall such a man as I flee?” What confidence in prayer! He asks believingly, as children beloved ask of a generous parent. And what a confident air this assurance before God would give us with the sons of men! We should not stammer in the presence of their philosophers, or look abashed in the presence of their nobles. But knowing that we knew Him, Whom to know is life eternal, we should not mind though they called us ignorant, or frowned at us as ignoble and presumptuous. We should not blush to confess our faith with an elevated self-possession. Our courage would no more fail us in the pestilential swamps of the world, than our enthusiasm would subside in the fertile garden of the Church, knowing that we shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.

And this certainty that you know Christ would kindle in you the very highest degree of love. Knowing that I am saved, knowing that I am His, and He is mine, I cannot but feel the flames of affection towards Him glowing like coals of juniper. That love leads me to *obedience*, and that obedience develops in me fervor and zeal. Knowing that you know Him, you will be ready to cry out with a holy passion, “What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits towards me?” You will sing with ecstasy of His free Grace that made you know Him, and of His sovereign, distinguishing love, that embraced you—

**“Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing  
My dear Redeemer’s praise!”**

You cannot tell, dear Christians, you who are exercised with faint misgivings or with tormenting fears, what a great and infinite blessing this assurance would be to you—how it would make life seem young and like a thing Divine! To you who are converted, it would be like a second conversion. You are now bedridden with sick thoughts. Could you once *know* that you know Christ, you would leave that sick bed and pant no more to return to it, but enjoy the air, walk abroad, and fulfill joyfully your allotted tasks. I pray that the Master may say to many of you who are bowed with

a spirit of infirmity, "Be made straight." And to others who have long lain on this bed of doubts and fears, "Take up your bed, and walk."

Do you desire this sweet balm for an uneasy conscience? Observe the prescription, "Hereby we know that we do know Him if we keep His commandments." It is in the keeping of His commandments that this sound state of the soul's health is enjoyed. Do you ask for further explanation? It means to keep His commandments in our minds, and hold them fast in our memory with devout reverence. It should be the object of every Christian to find out what Christ's command is. And, this done, never to ask another question, but receive it with meekness, meditate upon its holy sanction, and venerate it as the Law of the Lord's House.

If Christ has said it, I dare not cavil, argue, or question, much less rebel. It is mine to keep His commandments in my heart as a sacred trust. As precious treasures more to be desired than gold, and with a yet increasing relish, as luxuries to the taste, sweeter than honey or the honeycomb. But to keep them in our hearts, we must earnestly desire to *fulfill* them. By reason of the Fall we cannot perfectly keep the commands of Christ, but the heart keeps them as the standard of purity, and it would be perfect if it could. The Christian's only desire is to be exactly like Christ. It pains him that he falls short of His image. It gives him great joy if he can feel that the Holy Spirit is working in him anything like conformity to the Divine will.

His heart is right towards God, sincerely so. This is not enough unless there is a constant, persevering aim to fulfill His commandments in our lives. Depend upon it, Brethren, that the want of practical obedience to Christ is the root of nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand of our doubts and fears. The roots of our fears are in our sins. Search there, and you shall find the cause of soul trouble. I believe many a child of God walks in darkness because he does not obey the Word of the Lord. Take that sentence for your motto which the mother of Jesus addressed to the servants at the marriage in Cana of Galilee—"Whatever He says unto you, do it."

Is it so that you often hear the precept with never a thought of heeding it? Then beware lest you "suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." Or does your conscience smart with sore rebuke as often as it is mentioned? Then it is with you as with one who gets a wound in battle, and the sword that made it plunges through the wound again and pricks it deeper. Good cause is there, my Friend, for your unrest. If so be, you have an open wound left to fester. Christ commands you, for instance, to be baptized, and do you resist His will? Seek you some frivolous pretext, saying, "I pray you have me excused"?

"He that knows his Master's will and does it not, the same shall be beaten with many stripes." Many a stripe has fallen upon a professed Believer because he has not been obedient to that injunction. The command that we should love each other is far too lightly esteemed by many. Now, if you do not love your fellow Christians fervently with a pure heart, can you wonder that you fall into doubts? It is natural that it should be so. Only in proportion as Divine Grace makes you obedient will Divine Grace make you an assured Christian. Your holiness and your confidence will keep pace together if your confidence is worth having.

Presumption outruns holiness, but confidence never does. It is little matter of surprise to me when some men doubt whether they are saved. There are grave reasons why they should, since their lives are so little saturated with the Spirit of their Master. Well may you and I bemoan ourselves before God in the silent watches of the night, because, having experienced so much mercy we do so little in His service, and having seen so much of His Character we are so little like our Lord. Depend upon it, if you want to kill your doubts and fears, you must kill your sins, by God's Grace, by exterminating disobedience. We shall also exterminate the mass of our despondency, if not the whole of it.

Although, my dear Brethren, I never said, nor thought that you must be *perfect* before you could be assured that you were a Christian, I tell you that you will never be altogether beyond doubts and fears till you are altogether beyond sin. And that will not be, I think, till you reach the other shore. A dear Friend in Christ wanted to debate this question with me some time ago—whether perfection was possible in this world. I told him I would rather not, but if he and I both tried to attain it, it would be the best way to settle the controversy. I only trust that my friend may reach it. I am half afraid I never shall, but I will leave no stone unturned to try. Who knows how far God may enable any single, watchful, prayerful soul to go? At any rate, take it as a rule, that as God gives you holiness, so God will give you assurance. And in proportion as you mar the fidelity of your obedience, in that proportion you will mar your evidences and weaken your knowledge that you know Him.

Let me just give you an illustration of this point before I leave it. When our Lord met the disciples at Emmaus, and talked with them, they did not know Him while He talked with them. When do you think they did know that they knew Him? Why, not until they performed an act of obedience by offering hospitality to a stranger. Then He was known to them in the breaking of bread. Yes, there is a blessed eye-clearing to many and many a child of God when he comes to give of his bread to the poor and needy, and when he comes to the Table of the Lord, in remembrance of His death. He shall then know that he knows Him.

We are told that the cherubim have wings, but they also have hands under their wings. True children of God have knowledge, but they have under their knowledge *practice*. And you have no good proof that you are a child of God because you have the wings of knowledge, unless you have also the hands of practice. Would one ascertain how much a sheep had eaten? It could be seen in no better way than by showing how much fat, and flesh, and wool it had gathered. So with a Christian. If you want to know how much he has lived on Christ, see how much of zeal, how much of obedience, how much of holiness he has gathered. For “hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.”

**III.** We now come to the last consideration. It hurls a momentous charge against dissemblers. There is such a thing as saying that we know Christ—but if any man say that he knows Christ, and keeps not His commandments, such a man is a liar—plain speech is this—he is a *liar*, and the Truth is not in him.

I would have you, my dear Friends, give earnest heed to these words, because, while it is an easy thing to say that you know Him, there are many temptations so to do in a Church like this. When many are im-

pressed, and a great number of your friends and acquaintances profess that they know Christ, you may easily fall into the current. Indeed, it may be hard to resist the tide, and perhaps without really knowing Him in your souls, you may be led, for the sake of companionship, to say that you know Him. Oh, I beseech you, never do this! If you know that you know Him, confess that knowledge at once. But never, never, never be induced to say anything beyond what you know.

To let the tongue outrun the witness of the conscience is to betray guile in the heart. And the man whose sin is forgiven is one in whose spirit there is no guile. No, no! As you love your souls, keep your hands off all profession unless you have true possession. A man may tell a story so often, that though it is not true, he may at last come to believe it. I can think of one or two notable stories of good old friends that one always listens to without raising a question—though never without suspecting that they have gradually accumulated attritions of exaggeration. We may smile at the fiction whose tangled threads were woven thus to please the ear and tickle the fancy. But we tremble at the slow, almost imperceptible growth of a dire falsehood which beguiles a man's own soul.

He may first of all say he hopes that he loves Christ. Then he may say, "Others think I do, and therefore I feel assured I do." And soon he may say this and that, with an air that satisfies his friends and gratifies himself, until he makes his poor deluded heart believe a lie. Yes, and I know he may go on the dupe of his own credulity to his grave, and perhaps even at the Judgment Seat of Christ he may say that he knows Christ, only then to awaken from his treacherous dream, when he shall hear Christ say—"I never knew you. Depart from Me, you worker of iniquity." O God, save us from this! Let us never say we know Him, unless in very deed and truth we know Christ and are found in Him.

Now, John says that to say we know Christ, and not to keep His commandments is a lie. It is a verbal lie. The man who utters it speaks a lie. He says, "I know Christ." But it is a falsehood. He does not know Him. He knows *about* Him—but his heart knows nothing of Jesus. It is a doctrinal lie, for it would be an awful heresy to say that a man who lived in sin knew Christ—that one who was a drunkard, or a thief, or unchaste—had acquaintance with the Savior. Does Christ keep such company? Does He call these His friends? The men who set the taproom on a roar? Your merry-makers, who can sing lascivious songs—are these Christ's friends? I know Christ keeps better company than this. He is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. It is a lie against the doctrines of the Gospel.

And it is a practical lie. The man who says, "I know Him," and then goes and breaks the commands of Christ—every time he sins tells a lie. People can tell lies when they hold their tongues, as I pointed out to the little children when addressing them last Sunday afternoon. There was a little girl at school who always held her hand up when the boys and girls were asked to show in this manner that they knew the answer to any question that had been put to them. One afternoon she held her hand up when she did not know the answer, and a little school fellow said to her, "Jane, you did not know that." And she said, "No. But I thought teacher would think better of me if she thought I know it." "Ah," said the other, "but that is telling a lie with your hand."



Yes, and you may equally act a lie. A man who professes to be a Christian when he is not hangs out false colors on Sunday, and all through the week he plays the liar's part. Were his profession true, surely his conduct would be consistent with it! It is a corrosive lie, a lie that eats into the man's soul, corrupts and cankers it, so that, as John says, "The Truth is not in him." The man that begins by lying about his relation to God soon becomes hardened to lying in the community of his fellow men. Some of the greatest rogueries and robberies ever committed have been perpetrated by professing Christian men.

How often, when we have heard of a gigantic fraud, has there been some canting hypocrite or other connected with it! This is very natural, it is scarcely surprising. For when the man had come to deceive himself, to dissemble in things sacred, and to lie to God, he was such a practiced hand that the devil could not find a fitter vassal to lie to men. O take care of trifling with your convictions! You may flatter yourself with the vain conceit that you will never cheat anybody. I am not so sure. If a man would rob God, he would rob his mother. If he once gives the lie to God by making a false profession, I know not where he may stay his hand. Who, who would have sold Christ for thirty pieces of silver? Who, but Judas, he that professed to be His follower, His disciple, His private secretary, and His treasurer. Though all the while his heart was false to his Lord! It is a traitorous profession that breeds gigantic sins.

Once again, it is a damning lie. The man that says, "I know Christ," and does not keep His commandments, is making his own damnation sure. He signs, seals, and stamps it every day. By his profession of being a follower of Christ he confesses that he knows what he ought to be, yet by his actions he proves that he is not what he ought to be. And so he is bearing witness against himself, judging himself, condemning his own soul, and challenging the dread sentence of everlasting perdition. God save us from such a lie as this!

Before I conclude now, it behooves me to point out some of those characters upon which the brand must be fixed—they are liars. If there are any such here, may their consciences be pricked. There have been persons who have professed their faith in Christ, but who have been in the habit of acting dishonestly. They have been negotiating fictitious bills. They have been stealing small articles out of shops. They have taken little sums of money out of tills. They have been dealing with short weights, and selling wares with wrong marks—and all this time they have said that they knew Christ.

Now, one of His commandments is, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," and another one is, "You shall not steal." And in not keeping these they have proved themselves to be liars, though they called themselves Christians. Some who have professed faith in Christ have been drunkards. Present here tonight—I do not say they are now members of the Church, but they have been—are those who have fallen into habits of intemperance. I am afraid there are some who, though they escape the odium of detection, as they have not to go home at night from the public house, manage to drink pretty hard at home.

Depend upon it, you who secretly indulge this vicious propensity are not less guilty, and shall not be more lightly judged by God than those who sin openly—who are locked up for being drunk on the Saturday

night—and have to pay five shillings and costs on the Monday morning. You may be respectable in the eyes of your fellow men, but you are disreputable and scandalous hypocrites in the sight of Heaven. Some, too, there are of good standing in society—young men who have made a profession of faith—who can take pleasure in haunts that are something more than dubious. It is a shameful thing for a professor of Christianity to be found in those music halls, saloons, and places of revelry in London where you cannot go without your morals being polluted. You can neither open your eyes nor your ears without knowing at once that you are in the outskirts of Satan's domain.

I charge you by the living God, if you cannot keep good company and avoid the circle of dissipation, do not profess to be followers of Christ! He bids you come out from among them! Be you separate, touch not the unclean thing. If you can find pleasure in lewd society and lascivious songs, what right have you to mingle with the fellowship of saints, or to join in the singing of Psalms? You do not keep the commandments, you violate them. The Truth is not in you, you betray it.

And what shall we say of those who, while making a profession of religion, have been addicted to uncleanness? Sins that ought not to be spoken of among us lest the cheek of modesty should be made to blush, have been committed in secret by such as would be accounted Christian men. God have mercy upon unchaste professors, for whoredom is a deep ditch, and the abhorred of the Lord do fall into it. If any here have so fallen, may they lay aside their profession, for they bear the marks of God's abhorrence. Let them not come into His holy place, let them not gather to His Table, neither let them from this day on count themselves His children. Such they cannot be—their profession is a lie.

The covetous! The greedy! The grasping! Those who see their Brethren have needs and shut up the heart of their compassion! To each of you the Master's words are very strong—"How dwells the love of God in him?" Covetousness is idolatry! If you are eaten up of the world. If money is your God, you are as surely condemned as if you had been dishonest or unchaste. And are there not others whose tongue is perverse and unruly, and their conversation often far from pure? Alas, when it comes to this—that men should presume to the Supper of the Lord who can hurl out an oath! That men who have been known, when excited, to blaspheme and use profane language should yet with the same mouth draw near to feed upon the emblems of the Savior's passion! O Sirs, if you had a conscience, surely you would not dare to come! If your hearts had any feeling left in them, you would tremble to be found among the people of God while your speech blasphemes the Most High.

Is there one virtue of superlative excellence, peculiarly Christian, supported by the frequent precept and the unparalleled example of our Lord Jesus—surely it is that of forgiving injuries. Yet I have known some of His disciples, as they would have us believe, who have been unforgiving. Christians they called themselves, yet they could not forgive a trespass, were it even of their own children! A resentful, malicious Christian—what an anomaly! Did you not lately hear of a man, great and high in station—was he not a bishop?—who cut his daughter off with a shilling, or rather without a shilling, because she had married against his will? Ah, these

things are not fit to be whispered about, nor is it possible for them to be kept in secret.

I tell you, if you love not your Brethren, if you love not your own child, if you cannot forgive your child—there is nothing more certain in the book of God than this—that you will never enter Heaven. An unforgiving spirit is an unforgiven spirit. First, go and forgive your Brother before you bring your sacrifice, or God will neither accept you nor your offering. Are we not taught to pray, “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us”?

It has been hard work for me thus to mention these inconsistencies. I cannot venture farther, though I might have stated more. The labor of my lips is a burden to my heart. If any man’s conscience smite him—well, let it smite him hard, let it smite him till it drives him from his sin—let it smite him till he falls at the feet of Jesus, a contrite suppliant for pardon. O be thorough, be thorough! If you wish to be washed from sin, eschew the sin, the penalties of which you dread. If you profess to know Christ, have nothing to do with a sinful world. Shake off the viper into the fire, for it will poison you and destroy you. God grant that you may renounce sin, if you profess in very deed to be the servants of Christ.

My last word is this. If any man now feels himself troubled on account of sin, let me read these words to him, and I have done. Hear them in faith. They are the words that come before the text. “And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” O come, you guilty ones, you guilty professors, you that have been false to your Lord and to His love! Come to Him notwithstanding all your bitter provocations. “And He is the Mercy Seat: the Propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”

Look you, then, look and live! Whether saints or sinners, whatever your past lives may have been, look to the Propitiatory Sacrifice offered on Calvary’s bloody tree! Look and live! The Lord grant it for His dear Son’s sake. Amen.

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

# IN HIM—LIKE HE IS

## NO. 1732

**DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 17, 1883,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“He that says he abides in Him ought, himself,  
also to walk, even as He walked.”  
1 John 2:6.*

“He that says he abides in Him”—that is exactly what *every* Christian says. He cannot be a Christian unless this is true of him and he cannot fully enjoy his religion unless he knows for sure that he is in Christ and can boldly say as much. We must be in Christ and abidingly in Christ, or else we are not saved in the Lord. It is our union with the Christ that makes us Christians! By union with Him in our life we truly live—live in the favor of God. We are in Christ, dear Brothers and Sisters, as the man-slayer was in the City of Refuge—I hope that we can say we abide in Him as our sanctuary and shelter. We have fled for refuge to Him who is the hope set before us in the Gospel! Even as David and his men sheltered themselves in the caves of Engedi, so we hide ourselves in Christ. We each one sing and our heart goes with the words—

*“Rock of ages, cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in Thee.”*

We have entered into Christ as into the shadow of a great rock in a weary land, as guests into a banquet hall, as returning travelers into their homes. And now we abide in Christ in this sense, that we are joined to Him—as the stone is in the wall, as the wave is in the sea, as the branch is in the vine—so are we in Christ! As the branch receives all its sap from the stem, so all the sap of spiritual life flows from Christ into us. If we were separated from Him, we should be as branches cut off from the vine, only fit to be gathered up for the fire and to be burned. We abide in Christ as our shelter, our home and our life. Today we remain in Christ and hope forever to remain in Him as our Head.

Ours is no transient union. While He lives as our Head, we shall remain His members. We are nothing apart from Him. As a finger is nothing without the head—as the whole body is nothing without the head—so should we be nothing without our Lord Jesus Christ. We are in Him vitally and, therefore, we dare ask the question, “Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?” Beloved, since we, then, are the people who say that we abide in Him, it is upon *us* that the obligation of the text falls—we ought, ourselves, also to walk, even as He walked.

A Bible ought to have great weight with a conscientious man, ought it not? Then it shall be so, God helping me. If we say so, we must! If we talk, we must walk, or it will be mere talk. If we make the profession of abiding *in* Christ, we must prove it by our practice of walking *with* Christ. If we say that we are in Christ and abide in Him, we must take care that our life and character are conformed to Christ or else we shall be making an

empty boast. This is true of every man who says he is in Christ, for the text is put in the most general and absolute manner—be the man old or young, rich or poor, learned or simple, pastor or hearer—it is incumbent upon him to live *like* Christ if he professes to live *in* Christ!

The first thing about a Christian is initiation—initiation *into* Christ. The next thing is imitation—imitation *of* Christ. We cannot be Christians unless we are in Christ and we are not truly in Christ unless in Him we live, move and have our being—and the life of Christ is lived over again by us according to our measure. “Be you imitators of God, as dear children.” It is the nature of children to imitate their parents. Be you imitators of Christ as good soldiers who cannot have a better model for their soldierly life than their Captain and Lord!

Ought we not to be very grateful to Christ that He deigns to be our example? If He were not perfectly able to meet all our other needs. If He were an expiation and nothing else, we should glory in Him as our atoning Sacrifice, for we always put that to the front and magnify the virtue of His precious blood beyond everything! But at the same time we need an example and it is delightful to find it where we find our pardon and justification. They that are saved from the death of *sin* need to be guided in the life of *holiness*—and it is infinitely condescending on the part of Christ that He becomes an example to such poor creatures as we are!

It is said to have been the distinguishing mark of Caesar as a soldier that he never said to his followers, “Go!”—he always said, “Come!” Of Alexander, also, it was noted that in weary marches he was sure to be on foot with his warriors and, in fierce attacks, he always was in the front. The most persuasive sermon is the example which leads the way! This certainly is one trait in the Good Shepherd’s Character, “when He puts forth His own sheep, He goes before them.” If Jesus bids us do anything, He first does it Himself. He would have us wash one another’s feet and this is the argument—“You call Me, Master and Lord, and you say well; for so I am. If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you, also, ought to wash one another’s feet.”

Shall we not do as He does whom we profess to follow? He has left His footprints that we may set our feet in them. Will we not joyfully fix our feet upon this royal road? That is our theme at this time. We do, many of us, say that we are in Christ—let us hear how obliged we are, by this, to walk even as He walked. Oh, Holy Spirit, let us feel the weight of the sacred obligation! But I stop a minute. I know that there are some here who *cannot* say that they are in Christ. If you are not *in* Christ, then you are *out* of Christ—and out of Christ your position is dangerous, terrible, ruinous! If we saw a man hanging over a deep pit. If we saw a man exposed to a sea of fire and likely to perish in it, all our tender emotions would begin to flow and we should pray in an agony of spirit, “Oh, God, save this man from danger!”

My Brothers and Sisters, there are some among us, tonight, who are in the utmost danger! In a most emphatic sense they are already lost, for they are without God and without Christ—strangers to the commonwealth of Israel! Oh, my Hearers, how shall I speak of you without tears? Poor souls abiding under the wrath of God! Poor souls! The mercy is that you

are not past hope! There is an arm that can reach you! There is a voice that calls you—calls you even now! Listen to it—“Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and besides Me there is none else.”

Can you not, even now, give one look to Him who died for you? Will you not turn the eyes of faith that way and trust Him who was nailed to the Cross on your behalf? God grant that you may, and then I may include you, also, in the blessed instruction of the text—“He that says he abides in Him ought, himself, also to walk, even as He walked.”

I. I shall first of all ask you to CONSIDER HOW THIS OBLIGATION IS PROVED. Let us spend a few minutes on the question, “Why ought we to walk as Jesus did?” When we read the word, “ought,” if we are honest men, we begin to look about us and to make enquiries as to the reason and the measure of this obligation. An, “ought,” is a compulsion to a true heart. There is a, “needs be,” to every godly man that he should do what he ought. What, then, is the ground upon which this, “ought,” is fixed? First, it is the design of *God* that those who are in Christ should walk as Christ walked. It is a part of the original Covenant purpose for, “whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son.” That is the drift of the plan of Grace, the aim of the Covenant.

Grace looks towards holiness, that there should be a people called forth to whom Christ should be the elder Brother, the first-born among many brethren. You certainly have not had the purpose of God fulfilled in you, dear Friend, unless you have been conformed to the image of His dear Son. “He has chosen us in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.” This is the aim of election; this is the objective of redemption; this is the fruit of calling; this is the reason of justification; this is the evidence of adoption; this is the earnest of Heaven—that we should be holy, even as Christ is holy—and in this respect should wear the features of the Son of God. He has given His own Son to die for us, that we may die to sin! He has given Him to live that we may live like He lives. In every one of us the Father desires to see Christ, so that Christ may be glorified in every one of us. Do you not feel this to be an imperative necessity to be laid upon you? Would you have the Lord miss His purpose? You are chosen of God to this end, that you should be, “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, zealous of good works,” and what is this but that you should walk even as He walked?

Observe, again, another point of this necessity—it is necessary to the mystical Christ that we should walk as He walked, for we are joined unto the Lord Jesus in one body. Now, Christ cannot be made a monster—that would be a blasphemous notion! And yet if any man had eyes, ears, hands, or other members that were not conformable to the head, he would be a strange being. The mouth of a lion, the eye of an ox, the feathers of a bird—these things would have no consistency with the head of a man! We read of the image in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, that it had a head of fine gold, but legs of iron and feet part of iron and part of clay. Surely, Christ’s spiritual body is not compounded of such discordant elements. No, no! He must be all of one piece. The mystical body must be the most beautiful

and precious production of God, for the Church is Christ's body, "the fullness of Him that fills all in all."

And shall that mysterious fullness be something defiled, deformed, full of sin, subject to Satan? God forbid! "As He which has called you is holy, so be you holy," and as your HEAD is holy, so be you, as members of His body, holy, too! Ought it not to be so? Does anybody raise a question? Does not every member of Christ, by the very fact that he is joined to Him by living union, feel at once that he must walk even as Christ walked? And this, Beloved, again, must all be the fruit of the one Spirit that is in Christ and in us! The Father anointed Christ of old with the same anointing which rests on us in our measure. The Holy Spirit descended upon Him and rested upon Him—and we have an unction from the same Holy One! The Spirit of God has anointed all the chosen of God who are regenerated—He dwells *with* them and *in* them!

Now, the Spirit of God in every case works to the same result. It cannot be supposed that the Spirit of God in any case produces unholiness—the thought were blasphemy! The fruit of the Spirit is everything that is delightful, right and good towards God, and generous towards man. The Spirit of God, wherever He works, works according to the mind of God, and God is hymned as, "Holy, holy, holy," by those pure spirits who know Him best! He is altogether without spot or trace of sin—and so shall *we* be when the Spirit's work is done! If, then, the Spirit of God dwells in you, (and if it does not, you are not in Christ), it must work in you, conformity to Christ, that you should walk even as He walked!

Perhaps further argument is not needed, but I would have true Christians remember that this is one article of the agreement which we make with Christ when we become His disciples. It is taken for granted that when we enter the service of Jesus we, by that act and deed, undertake by His help to follow His example. "Whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me, cannot be My disciple." "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, and you shall find rest unto your souls." You know if any man loves Christ, he must follow Him—"If you love Me, keep My commandments." When we took Christ's Cross to be our salvation, we took it, also, to be our heavenly burden.

When we yielded ourselves up to Christ to be saved by Him, we, in spirit, renounced every sin. We felt that we had come out from under the yoke of Satan and that we made no reserve for the lusts of the flesh that we might obey them, but bowed our necks to the yoke of the Lord Jesus. We put ourselves into Christ's hands unreservedly and we said, "Lord, sanctify me and then use me. Take my body and all its members; take my mind and all its faculties; take my spirit and all the new powers which You have bestowed upon me and let all these be Yours. Reign in me; always rule me absolutely, sovereignly! I do not ask to be my own, for I am not my own, I am bought with a price." After we have learned the grand Truth of God that, "if One died for all, then all died," we infer that, "*Christ* died for all, that we that live might not live unto ourselves, but unto Him that died for us and rose again."

Are we not, then, to be true to this blessed compact? "I remember my faults this day," says one. Yes, but remember, also, the vows that still en-

gage you. Do not desire to escape from the sacred bond. This day remember the Lord to whom you dedicated yourself in the days of your youth, perhaps many years ago, and entreat Him, again, to take full possession of the purchased possession—and hold it against all comers forever. So it ought to be. He that says, “I am in Him” ought also to walk even as He walked. Obey the sacrifice of Jesus! Yield yourselves as living sacrifices—by your hope of being saved by Him, put your whole being into His hands to love and serve Him all your days. For, once more, inasmuch as we are in Christ, we are now bound to live to Christ’s Glory and this is a great means of glorifying Christ.

What can we do to glorify Christ if we do not walk even as He walked? If I came and preached to you, and if I had the tongues of men and of angels, yet if I did not seek to do as my Master did, what use to you is any that I can say? It is but “sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal!” You know what men say to unholy preachers—they bid them be silent or be consistent. Unholy ministers are a derision, a scoff and a by-word. And so it is with unholy Christians, too! You may teach your children at home, or teach them in the Sunday school class—but if they see your lives to be Christless, prayerless, godless—they will not learn any good from you. They will rather learn from what you do amiss, than from what you say that is right. Do you blame them that it is so?

Are not actions far more forcible than words? Suppose you Church members are unjust in your trade? Suppose that in your common conversation you are loose? Suppose that in your acts you are licentious or untrue—what does the world say of your Christianity? Why, it becomes to them a thing of contempt! They sniff at it. It is so much dung and sweepings of the street to them and so it ought to be! In the early ages some of the worst opponents of Christianity used to wing their shafts with the inconsistencies of Christian professors—and they were wise in their generation. One of them said, “Where is that catholic holiness of which we have often heard so much?” And another said, “We heard of these people, that they love their Christ and love other men so that they would even die for love of their brethren—but many of them do not love as well as the heathen whom they despise.”

I dare say there was a good deal of slander and scandal in what they said, but I am also afraid that if it were said *today*, there would be a vast deal of sorrowful truth in it! Christian love is by no means so plentiful as it might be, nor holy living, either. Is not this the thing that weakens the preaching of the Gospel—the lack of *living* the Gospel? If all the professed Christians who live in London really walked as Christ walked, would not the salt have more effect upon the corrupt mass than the stuff which is now called, “salt,” seems to have? We preach here in the pulpit, but what can we do unless you preach at home? It is *you* preaching in your *shops*, in your *kitchens*, in your *nurseries*, in your *parlors*, in the *streets* which will inform the masses of Christ! This is the preaching—the best preaching in the world—for it is *seen* as well as *heard*. I heard one say he liked to see men preach with their feet. And this is it, “they ought also to walk even as Christ walked.” No testimony excels that which is borne in ordinary life! Christ ought to be glorified by us and, therefore, we ought to be



like He is, for if we are not, we cannot glorify Him, but must dishonor Him.

Now, that is my first point. Consider how this obligation is proved and when you have weighed the argument, pray the Holy Spirit to make you yield to its gentle pressure.

**II.** Now, secondly, CONSIDER WHEREIN THIS WALKING WITH CHRIST AS HE WALKED CONSISTS. Here is a wide subject. I have a sea before me with as much sailing room as Noah in the ark! I can only just point out the direction in which you should sail if you would make a prosperous voyage. First, Brothers and Sisters, to put it all together in one word, the first thing that every Christian has to see to is *holiness*. I will not try at any great length to explain what that word means because it always sounds to me as if it explains itself.

You know what *wholeness* is—a thing without a crack, or flaw, or break—complete, entire, uninjured, whole. Well, that is the main meaning of *holy*. The Character of God is perfectly holy. In it nothing is lacking; nothing is redundant. When a thing is complete, it is whole, and this, applied to moral and spiritual things, gives you the inner meaning of, “holy.” When a man is healthy, perfectly healthy in spirit, soul and body, then he is perfectly holy, for sin is a moral disorder and righteousness is the right state of every faculty. The man whose spiritual health is altogether right is right towards God, right towards himself, right towards men, right towards time, right towards eternity! He is right towards the first table of the Law and right towards the second table. He is an all-around man! He is a *whole* man, a *holy* man!

The Truth of God is within him; the Truth of God is spoken by him; the Truth of God is acted by him. Righteousness is in him—he thinks the right thing and chooses that which is according to the law of uprightness. There is justice in him. He abhors that which is evil. There is goodness in him; he follows after that which will benefit his fellow men. I cannot spare the time to tell you all that the word, “holy,” means, but if you wish to see holiness, look at Christ! In Him you see a perfect Character, an all-around Character. He is the perfect One—be you like He in all holiness!

We must go a little into detail, so I say, next, one main point in which we ought to walk according to the walk of our great Exemplar is *obedience*. Our Lord Jesus Christ took upon Himself the form of a Servant—and what service it was that He rendered! “He was a Son; yet learned He obedience by the things that He suffered.” And what obedience that dear Son of God rendered to the Father! He did not come to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him. He yielded Himself up to come under the Law to God and to do the Father’s will. Now in this respect we ought to walk even as He walked. We have not come into the world to do what *we* like, to possess what we choose, or to say, “That is my notion and, therefore, so shall it be.” Sin promised freedom and brought us bondage! Grace now binds us and ensures us liberty!

Obedience is the law of every spiritual nature. It is the Lord’s will that in His house His Word should be the supreme Law, for so only can our fallen natures be restored to their original glory. Set the wandering stars in their spheres and rule them by the majestic sway of the sun—and then

they will keep their happy estate! Understanding, heart, life—everything—is now to enter into the service of God, even the Father, and it is to be ours to say, “Lord, show me what You would have me to do.” Surely, beyond any other quality, we see in the career of the Son of God the perfection of self-abnegation! No man was ever so truly free as Jesus and yet no man was so fully subservient to the heavenly will! There was never a pilot so able to steer these seas according to his own judgment and never one so carefully to follow the channel as marked down in the chart. Christ’s obedience was the unique originality of *absolute* obedience.

Dear Friends, you see how it ought to be with you, also. It is ours to walk in cheerful subservience to the mind of the Father, even as Jesus did. Does this strike you as an easy thing? It is child’s work, certainly, but assuredly it is not child’s play. Such a life would necessarily be one of great activity, for the life of Jesus was intensely energetic. The life of Christ was as full as it could be. After He had been developed and disciplined by 30 years of seclusion, He showed Himself among men as one moved to vehemence with love—“He was clad with zeal as with a cloak.” From the day of His Baptism till His death, He went about doing good. It is amazing what was packed into about three years—each action had a world of meaning within itself—and there were thousands of such acts!

Each sermon was a complete revelation and every day heard Him pour forth such sermons! His biography is made up of the essence of life. Someone remarks that it is amazing that He did not begin His active life when He was younger. We reply that it is beautiful that He did not, because He was not called to it—and He was best obeying the Father by living in obscurity. Those 30 years at Nazareth were 30 wonderful years of *obedience*—obedience tested by obscurity, patience, restraint and, perhaps, dullness. Who among us would find such obedience easy? Would we not far rather rush into action and make ourselves a name? Some of us, perhaps, never learned the obedience of being quiet—but it is a wonderful one. Oh, for more of it! Do we know the obedience of being hidden when our light seems needed?—the obedience of going into the desert for 40 years, like Moses, with nothing to do but wait upon God till God shall put us in commission? There is a wonderful service in waiting till the order comes for us actively to be at it. Samuel said, “To obey is better than sacrifice.” It is, in fact, better than *anything* which we can possibly present to God.

But when our Lord was, at length, loosed from His obscurity, with what force He sped along His life-way! How He spent Himself! It was a candle burning not only at both ends, but altogether. He not only had zeal burning in His heart, but, like a sheet of flame, it covered Him from head to foot! There is never an idle hour in the life of Christ. It is wonderful how He sustained the toil. Perhaps He measured out His zeal and His open industry by the fact that He was only to be here below for a short time. It might not be possible, for others, that they should do as much as He did in so short a space because they are intended to live longer and must not destroy future usefulness by present indiscretion. But still, activity was the rule of our Master’s existence. He was at it, always at it, altogether at it, spending and being spent for His Father—such was His mode of walk-

ing among men. Oh, Friends, if we, indeed, are in Him, we ought also to walk even as He walked! Wake up, you lazy ones!

Next, we ought to walk as Christ did in the matter of self-denial. Of course, in this work of self-denial we are not called to imitate Christ in offering up ourselves as a propitiatory sacrifice. That would be a vain intrusion into things which are His peculiar domain. The self-denials which we practice should be such as He prescribes us. There is a will-worship, which is practiced in the Church of Rome, of self-denials which are absurd and must, I think, be hateful in the sight of God rather than pleasing to Him. Saint Bernard was a man whom I admire to the last degree and I count him to be one of the Lord's choice ones. Yet in the early part of his life there is no doubt that he lessened his powers of usefulness to a large extent by the emaciation which he endured and the way in which he brought himself to death's door.

At times he was incapable of activity by reason of the weakness which he had incurred through fasting and exposure to the elements. There is no need to inflict useless torture upon the body! When did the Savior thus behave Himself? Point me to a single mortification of a needless kind! Enough self-denials come naturally in every Christian man's way to make him try whether he can deny himself in very deed for the Lord's sake. You are thus tested when you are put in positions where you might get gain by an unrighteous act, or win fame by withholding a Truth of God, or earn love and honor by pandering to the passions of those around you. May you have Grace enough to say, "No, it cannot be. I love not myself, but my Lord. I seek not myself, but Christ. I desire to propagate nothing but His Truths—not my own ideas." Then will you have exhibited the self-denial of Jesus!

These self-denials will sometimes be difficult to flesh and blood. And then in the Church of God to be able to give all your substance, to devote all your time, to lay out all your ability—this is to walk as Jesus walked. When weary and worn, still to be busy. To deny yourself things which may be allowable, but which, if allowable to *you*, would be dangerous to others—this, also, is like the Lord. Such self-denial as may be helpful to the weak you ought to practice. Think what Christ would do in such a case and do it! And whenever you can glorify Him by denying yourself, do it. So walk as He did who made Himself of no reputation, but took upon Himself the form of a Servant and who, though He was rich, brought Himself down to poverty for our sakes, that we might be rich unto God. Think of that!

Another point in which we ought to imitate Christ most certainly is that of lowliness. I wish that all Christians did this. I sometimes see Christian women dressed up—well, like women of the world—though not with half a worldling's taste. And when I see men so big that they cannot speak to poor people, as if they were made of something better than ordinary flesh and blood—when I notice a haughty, high, hectoring disposition *anywhere*—it grates upon my feelings and makes me wonder whether these blunderers hope to go to the Heaven of the lowly. The Lord Jesus would never have been half as big as some of His followers are! What great folk some of His disciples are, as compared with Him! He was lowly, meek, gentle—a Man who so loved the souls of others that He forgot Himself!

You never detect in the Lord Jesus Christ any tendency towards pride or self-exaltation. Quite the reverse—He is always compassionate and condescending to men of low estate.

And then note, again, another point, and that is His great tenderness, gentleness and readiness to forgive. His dying words ought to ring in the ears of all who find it hard to pass by affronts, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Did He not set us an example of bearing and forbearing? “Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again.” For every curse He gave a blessing! You cannot be Christians if this spirit of love is foreign to you. “Oh,” you say, “we endorse the Confession of Faith.” I do not care! You must love your enemies, or you will die with the Creed in your throats! “Oh,” you say, “we are regular in our pews, hearing the Gospel.” I do not care! You must forgive them that trespass against you, or you will go from your pews to Hell! “Oh, but we have been baptized, and we come to Communion.” I do not care even about that, for unless you are made meek and lowly in heart, you will not find rest unto your souls.

Pride goes not before *salvation*, but before destruction! A haughty spirit is no prophecy of elevation, but the herald of a fall! Take care, take care, you that say that you are in Christ—you ought also to walk in all the lowliness and in all the tenderness of Christ—or else at the end you will be discovered to be none of His. Hard, cruel, unrelenting, iron-hearted professors will no more go to Heaven than the hogs they fatten! There is one little big word which tells us more than all this about how Christ walked, and that is the word, “LOVE.” Jesus was *Incarinate* Love! “God is Love,” but God is a *spirit*, therefore, if you wish to see Love embodied, look at Christ!

He loves the little children and suffers them to come to Him. He loves the widow—He is tender to her and raises her dead son. He loves the sinners and they draw near to Him. He loves all sinful and tempted and tried ones and, therefore, He comes to seek and to save. He loves the Father, first, and then, for the Father’s sake He loves the myriads of men. Do you love nobody? Do you live within yourself? Are you immured within your own ribs? Is self all your world? Then you will go to Hell! There is no help for it, for the place of unloving spirits is the bottomless Pit! Only he that loves can live in Heaven, for Heaven is love—and you cannot go to Heaven unless you have learned to love and find it your very life to do good to those around you!

Let me add to all this, that he who says that Christ is in him ought also to live as Christ lived in secret. And how was this? His life was spent in abounding devotion. Ah, me! I fear I shall condemn some here when I remind them of the hymn we just now sang—

**“Cold mountains and the midnight air  
Witnessed the fervor of His prayer.”**

If the perfect Christ could not live without *prayer*, how can such poor imperfect ones as we are live without it? He had no sin within Him and yet He had need to pray! He was pure and holy and yet He must wait upon God all day long! He often spoke with His Father and when the night came and others went to their beds, He withdrew Himself into the wilderness and prayed. If the Lord Jesus is in you, you *must* walk as He walked in

that matter. And, then, think of His delight in God. How wonderful was Christ's delight in His God! I can never think of His life as an unhappy one. He was, it is true, "a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief," but still there was a deep spring of wondrous happiness in the midst of His heart which made Him always blessed, for He said to His Father, "I delight to do Your will, O My God! Yes, Your Law is within My heart."

He delighted in God! Many a sweet night He spent in those prayer-times of His in fellowship with the Father. Why, it was that which prepared Him for the agony of His bloody sweat and for the, "Why have You forsaken Me?" Those love-visits, those near and dear communing which His holy heart had with the Father were His secret meat and drink! And you and I must also delight in God. This charming duty is far too much neglected. Strange that this honey should so seldom be in men's mouths! Listen to this text, "Delight yourself, also, in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart." Many a man says, "I should like to have the desires of my heart." Brothers and Sisters, here is the royal road to it—the King's ascent to His treasury—"Delight yourself, also, in the Lord." But listen! It is very likely you would not obtain the desire that is now in your heart if you did that, for he that delights himself in *God* rises above the desires of the flesh and of the mind! He comes to desire that which God desires and, therefore, it is that he wins the desire of his heart!

But, oh, the pleasure, the joy, the bliss of delighting in God! How many times have I sung to myself that last dear stanza of the Psalm in which the inspired poet sings—

***"For yet I know I shall Him praise,  
Who graciously gave to me,  
The health is of my countenance,  
Yes, my own God is He."***

Oh, what a pleasure! "Mine own God is He." Rich men glory in wealth; famous men in valor; great men in honor and I in "my own God." There is nothing about God but what is delightful to a saint! The infinite God is infinitely delightful to His people! Once get really to know God and to be like He—and even His sternest attributes—His power, His justice, His indignation against sin will come to be delightful to you! Those men who are quibbling at what God does—questioning what God has revealed—do not know Him, for to know Him is to adore Him! Oh, Brothers and Sisters, let us find our pleasure, our treasure, our Heaven, our ALL in the Lord our God, even as our Lord Jesus did! In this thing let us walk even as He walked.

I am not quite done. Dear Friends, we ought to walk in holy contentment. Jesus was perfectly content with His lot. When the foxes had holes and the birds of the air had nests—and He had nowhere to lay His head—He never murmured, but found rest in pursuing His life-work. The cravings of covetousness and pining of ambition never touched our Lord. Friends, if you do, indeed, say that you abide in Him, I pray you be of the same contented spirit. "I have learned," said the Apostle—as if it were a thing which had to be taught—"in whatever state I am, therewith to be content." In a word, Christ lived above this world—let us walk as He

walked. Christ lived for God and for God, alone. Let us live after His fashion.

And Christ persevered in such living. He never turned aside from it at all, but as He lived so He died, still serving His God, obedient to His Father's will, even unto death. May our lives be a mosaic of perfect obedience and our deaths the completion of the fair design. From our Bethlehem to our Gethsemane may our walk run parallel with the pathway of the Well-Beloved! Oh, Holy Spirit, work us to this sacred pattern!

**III.** I close now by saying, in the last place, consider, dear Friends, **WHAT IS NECESSARY FOR ALL THIS.** First, it is necessary to have a nature like that of Christ. You cannot give out sweet waters so long as the fountains are impure. "You must be born again." There is no walking with Jesus in newness of life unless we have a new heart and a right spirit. See to it, dear Friends, that your nature is renewed—that the Holy Spirit has worked in you a resurrection from among the dead, for, if not, your walk and conversation will savor of death and corruption! A new creature is essential to likeness to Christ—it is not possible that the carnal mind should wear the image of Jesus.

That being done, the next thing that is necessary is a constant anointing of the Holy Spirit. Can any Christian here do without the Holy Spirit? Then I am afraid that he is no Christian. But, as for us, we feel every day that we must cry for a fresh visitation of the Spirit, a renewed sense of indwelling, a fresh anointing from the Holy One of Israel—or else we cannot walk as Christ walked. And then, again, there must be in us a strong resolve that we *will* walk as Christ walked, for our Lord, Himself, did not lead that holy life without stern resolution. He set His face like a flint that He would do the right thing and He did.

Do not, I pray you, be led astray by thoughtlessly following your fellow men—it is a poor, sheepish business—running in crowds. Dare to be singular! Dare to stand alone! Stand to it firmly that you will follow Christ. A Christian man in a discussion attempted to defend the Truth of God, but his opponent grew angry and cried out vehemently again and again, "Hear *me!* Hear *me!*" At last the good man answered, "No, I shall not hear you, nor shall you hear me, but let us both sit down and hear the Word of the Lord." And *that* is the thing to do, Brothers and Sisters, to be hearing Christ and following Him! I am not to learn of you, nor you of me, but both of Christ—so shall we end all controversy in a blessed agreement at His feet! God help us to get there.

And so, once again, I add that if we want to walk as Christ walked, we must have much communion with Him. We cannot possibly get to be like Christ except by being with Him. I wish that we could rise to be so much like the Savior that we should resemble a certain ancient saint who died a martyr's death, to whom the world said, "What are you?" He said, "I am a Christian." They asked, "What trade do you follow?" And he said, "I am a Christian." They inquired, "What language do you speak?" And he said, "I am a Christian." "But what treasures have you?" they asked, and he replied, "I am a Christian." They asked him what friends he had, and he said, "I am a Christian"—for all he was, and all he had, and all he wished to be, and all he hoped to be—were all wrapped up in Christ.

If you live with Christ you will be absorbed by Him and He will embrace the whole of your existence! And, in consequence, your walk will be like His walk. Take care that you do not in all things copy any but Christ, for if I set my watch by the watch of one of my friends and he sets his watch by that of another friend, we may all be wrong! If we shall, each one, take his time from the sun, we shall all be right! There is nothing like going to the fountainhead. Take your lessons in holiness, not from a poor erring disciple, but from the Infallible Master! God help you to do so.

A person has written to me, this morning, to say that he has painted my portrait but that he cannot finish it until he sees me. I should think not! Certainly you cannot paint a portrait of Christ in your own life unless you see Him—see Him clearly, see Him continually! You may have a general notion of what Christ is like and you may put a good deal of color into your copy—but I am sure you will fail unless you see the grand original. You must commune with Jesus! You know what we did when we went to school—our schoolmasters were not quite so wise, then, as schoolmasters are now. They wrote at the top of the page a certain line for us to follow—and a poor following it was!

When I wrote my first line, I copied the writing-master's model. But when I wrote the *next* line I copied *my copy* of the top line, so that when I reached the bottom of the page I produced a copy of my copy of my copy of my copy of the top line! Thus my handwriting fed upon itself and was nothing bettered but rather grew worse. So one man copies Christ, perhaps. A friend who hears him preach, copies him. And his wife at home copies the hearer and somebody copies her—and so it goes on all down the line till we all miss that glorious handwriting which Jesus has come to teach us! Keep your eyes on Christ, dear Brothers and Sisters! Never mind me! Never mind your friends! Never mind the old doctor that you have been hearing so long!

Look to Jesus and to Him alone! We have had our sects and our divisions by that coping of the lines of the boys, instead of looking to the top line that the Master wrote. "He that says he abides in Him ought, himself, also to walk even as He walked" May the Spirit of God cause us to do it! Amen and Amen!

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 John 2.  
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—425, 262, 646.**

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# A SERMON TO THE LORD'S LITTLE CHILDREN NO. 1711

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 18, 1883,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“I write unto you, little children, because your sins are  
forgiven you for His name's sake.”  
1 John 2:12.*

*“I write to you, little children, because you know the Father.”  
1 John 2:13. (Revised Version).*

PROBABLY you ask, “Why does John say, first, ‘I write,’ and then, in verse 14, ‘I have written?’” There is a beautiful touch of nature in this speedy change of tense. John was an extremely old man and, therefore, while he says, “I write,” he adds, “I have written,” as if he felt that it might be the last time that he should take his pen in hand. Very soon with him, the present tense would change into the past—and he indicates the fact by changing his mode of speech. Perhaps he even felt that, possibly, before the letter reached the Brethren to whom he addressed it, he would be no more among the sons of men. Therefore he says, “I write,” indicating that while he was still with them, with warm and loving heart he solemnly exhorted them. And then he adds, “I have written,” as if he had recorded his dying testimony and left it as his last legacy of love.

To us, today, John's words run altogether in the past tense—“I have written.” But we need not, therefore, forget that they were the well-considered words of a venerated father in Christ and that he wrote them as one so near to his departure that he regarded himself as already on the move and, therefore, scarcely knew which tense to use. Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, how soon our, “I speak,” will change into, “I have spoken!” Let this invest every word with solemnity. Remember, also, what order of man John was—that disciple whom Jesus loved, whose head had leaned on Jesus' bosom, whose eyes had seen the King in His beauty and whose strengthened gaze had looked within the gates of pearl! This is he who, at one time, saw the pierced heart of the Well-Beloved pouring forth blood and water! And at another beheld the Lion of the tribe of Judah prevail to take the book and loose the seven seals thereof! It is the Apostle of Love who says to us, “I write to you,” “I have written to you.”

Let us carefully note what the Spirit says to us by His servant, John. Observe that our text is addressed to the “little children.” It is thought by many wise interpreters that under this term John includes the whole Church of God and that afterwards He divides that Church into two companies—the fathers and the young men. Those who, under one aspect, are all “little children,” but are, under another, regarded as young men or fathers. There is very much to support this view. In several instances in this Epistle, John is evidently addressing *all* the saints when he speaks of



them as, "my little children," as, for instance, in the 18<sup>th</sup> verse of the third chapter, and also in the closing verse, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols."

Surely, all the saints are included in these exhortations. There is a sense in which every Christian is still a little child, a sense in which he ought to be so—always dependent upon the great Father, always ready to receive the Word of the Father without question, always teachable—always restful in the Father's care and full of love to Him who is his All in All. Of necessity we must always be children before God, for our finite capacity is so limited that we are mere babes in knowledge in the Presence of Infinite Wisdom and as very sucklings in understanding, when contrasted with the great Father of Spirits. We know enough to make us know that we know very little! The most advanced intellects in the Church are but as infants compared with the Ancient of Days. We are of yesterday and know nothing—with all our experience, with all our study, with all our meditation, with all our illumination we remain, "little children," when measured by the boundless knowledge of the Lord.

Yes, I mean the fathers, the men who bring sinners to Jesus, the men who teach others and are, themselves, taught of God—even these must, each one, cry out with Jeremiah, "Ah, Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child." I mean the young men who have overcome the Wicked One, whose holy valor sets them in the forefront of the battle where they turn to fight the armies of the aliens. "They are strong," says John, and yet, in the Presence of the mighty God of Jacob, what are our champions and our valiant men? Are they not, still, but as, "little children"? It may do us all good to join the infant-class this morning, or, at least to sit with the boys in the school of grace. Even those who have made the greatest advances in Divine Grace may do well to "become as little children," that they may more fully enter into the Kingdom of Heaven and have closer fellowship with "the Holy Child Jesus." It may even be an advance for some who have grown self-willed as they have advanced in knowledge, if they will say with David, "Surely I have behaved and quieted myself. As a child that is weaned of his mother, my soul is even as a weaned child." Happy childhood when it means entire submission to the Father and sweet delight in His will!

Still, I am inclined to think that in this case John really does divide the entire Church into *three* classes—the babes in Grace, or the children. Or, as one of the words might properly be translated, the boys—those who have not long been born into the family—these are an interesting company. Then follow the young men—these are the second class—and a valued body of Christians they are, in the fullness of their vigor. They are strong in faith, giving glory to God, mighty in prayer, vehement in action, bold in testimony! May the Lord muster among our hosts a grand army of these vigorous heroes who shall earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints! The fighting power of the Church militant must come out of them! These are they that turn the battle to the gate. Blessed is the man that has his quiver full of them!

Then there is the third class—the fathers, the mature, the experienced. These do not quite so much delight in war as the young men do, but at

home they diligently care for the household of faith, watching over the feeble, strengthening and comforting them. These are able, by their experience, to answer gainsayers and to guide the ignorant to edify the untaught. Their knowledge is deep and they are, therefore, able to become teachers of others. They are men of spiritual force and have come to the full stature of men in Christ Jesus. Therefore they are the solid strength of the Church! If the young men are the Church's arm, these are the Church's backbone. We need to have many such, though, alas, it is to be feared that our Churches are much like the Apostolic ones of which Paul said, "You have not many fathers."

This morning I am going to say nothing at all to the young men, nor to the fathers, except so far as they are willing to include themselves under the term of, "little children." And, as we have already said, there is just reason why they should do so. Little children, it is to you I speak this day—I mean you that have newly been converted, whose first cries of repentance are still in our ears! You, I mean, whose Grace is feeble; who are new to everything in the House of God and, as yet, need to be fed with the milk of the simple elementary Truth of God. You are the little children, dear to the whole family. You, I mean, who are but little in Israel as yet—little in knowledge, little in faith, little in strength, little in service, little in patience! You cannot, as yet, keep the watch of the House of the Lord, for you, yourselves, need to be watched over. You tremble when you try to stand and your unaccustomed feet can scarcely bear you along the road without a helping hand. You are very apt to tumble down and probably will do so many times before you learn to walk with the fathers, or run with the young men.

You little children may, by some, be thought to be a burden, but the wise among us count you a blessing—the more of you the merrier in the Church of God—for you are the blessed of the Lord and we are glad to hear your youthful voices in the streets of the New Jerusalem! To you I shall speak this morning, as the Holy Spirit shall enable me. I would say these things to you. First, observe your *privilege*—"I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you." Then, note your *knowledge*—"I have written unto you, little children, because you know, or have known, the Father." And thirdly, consider the *precepts* addressed to you. When we get to that point I shall ask you to refer to your Bibles that we may run through the whole of this Epistle and see what John has to say to little children. May we receive the Word of God with meekness, that we may grow thereby.

**I.** First, I want the babes in Grace, the weak in faith, the lambs of the flock, to notice THEIR PRIVILEGE. "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake." This is a privilege extremely desired by the little children. They have but lately felt the burden of guilt—they still smart under the lashes of conscience. The Spirit of God has but newly convinced them of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. And, therefore, above everything, their prayer is, "Father, forgive me." To them the remission of sins stands out as the first and most desirable of all blessings—and, truly, they are right in their estimate, for what

possession is there which can be called a blessing at all until sin is forgiven?

It matters not how healthy a man may be—if his conscience is worried with his sin—his inmost heart is sick. It is small comfort to him to have all the comforts of this life if his heart feels the gnawing of the undying worm of conscious guilt. “God be merciful to me, a sinner,” comes often from his breast as he beats upon it in the deep humiliation of his soul. There can be no joy and rest for him till he hears the words, “The Lord has put away your sin; you shall not die.” To the freshly saved, it is a joy worth *worlds* to have their sins forgiven! It is a bliss akin to the Heaven of angels and this joy belongs by right to all the saints, yes, even to the little children in the family of God!

You were only born again last Sunday, but your sins are forgiven you! Perhaps it is only this morning that you have sought your Savior's face and have come to believe in Him—and, by His Grace, your sins are forgiven you! This assurance is as sweet to you as a seraph's song! I could not have told you a better piece of news. The pardon of sin is as the pearl of great price to you in your present stage of spiritual life—you would have sold all that you had in order to procure it—and now that you have it, your heart is aglow with gratitude! The wound in your conscience, so lately raw and bleeding, makes you set a high price upon the healing balm of free and full forgiveness! Far be it from me to stay your holy joy, and yet the Lord will show you greater things than these!

At your stage of experience, pardon is the most prominent blessing of the Covenant. A newly converted man does not know much about sanctification or union to Christ. Perhaps he does not know much about election, calling, or sealing. The principal point he dwells upon is *pardon*. It is written in the Creed—“I believe in the forgiveness of sins”—and the man who has newly found peace with God by Jesus Christ repeats that article of the Creed with solemn emphasis. “*I believe in the forgiveness of sins,*” he says, for he has just realized it, and to him it is a gift so great that, like the moon and the stars, it shines as a queen among the blessings of Grace! Pardon of sin seems to the “little children” to comprehend the whole work of Jesus and the whole work of the Holy Spirit, too!

Vast favors lie beyond, but to him who has newly crossed the Jordan, this one valley of Eschol fills all the range of vision and the soul hardly dreams of any further benediction! The newly-pardoned does not yet see the innumerable other blessings which come in the train of forgiveness. He is, for the present, absorbed in the hearing of that one sentence, “Go in peace; your sins which are many are all forgiven you.” Well, beloved child, many more blessings await you! Pardon is but an *entrance* blessing, a *welcome* at the doorstep—there are rarer joys within the house! You have become an heir to a boundless inheritance! All things are yours! Heaven, Christ and God are yours! Yet I marvel not, that at present all your heart is taken up with a sense of pardoned sin! I will not disturb you, but I will rejoice with you. I will even sit down and sing with you—let this be our hymn—

***“Now, oh joy my sins are pardoned!  
Now I can, and do believe!  
All I have, and am, and shall be,***

***To my precious Lord I give."***

Even the full-grown child of God highly values this gift so dear to little children and, although he has received many other mercies, besides, yet still, it is a chief part of his joy that he has been cleansed from sin and clothed with righteousness. Ah, and our elder Brothers who are now in the King's country, this is a chief point, even with them, that they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb! And therefore are they before the Throne of God and serve Him day and night in His Temple. Yes, dear little children, you have obtained a most precious favor in which you do well to rejoice—"your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake." Here let me observe that the forgiveness of sins is assuredly the possession of the new beginner in the Divine Life. He is as certainly forgiven as he ever shall be. The forgiveness of sins is not a matter of degrees or of growth. It is done in an instant and done *forever*, never to be reversed!

The child of God who was born but yesterday is not as completely *sanc-tified* as he will be. He is not as completely *instructed* as he will be. He is not as completely conformed to the image of Christ as he will be. But he is as completely *pardoned* as the full-grown saint! He that just now passed the Gate of Pearl—did you not hear the shout as he entered, like a shock of corn fully ripe that comes in his season?—he, I say, was not more truly pardoned than you who but an hour ago believed in Christ unto the salvation of your soul! The dying thief had not many minutes found mercy and yet the Lord Jesus said to him, "*Today* shall you be with Me in Paradise!" It is plain, therefore, that he had been perfectly cleansed in a moment!

To wash in the fountain filled with blood is not a business of weeks and months and years, nor is it to be repeated many times and often! But he that is washed is, then and there, made whiter than snow, and there is, from then on, no defilement upon him. "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you"—they are all gone—Divine Grace has most effectually removed them from you as far as the east is from the west! The Egyptians at the Red Sea were not destroyed by little and by little—they were not swallowed up in the flood, a regiment at a time! The eager depths which had, by miracle, been divided, for a time, leaped together and Pharaoh and his hosts—all of them—were covered, to be seen no more forever! Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously! "The depths have covered them; there is not one of them left."

The Israelites had but barely set their foot upon the other side of the Red Sea and yet all their enemies were as completely drowned as when the people entered into the Promised Land—it is even so with you who have believed in Christ but newly—your sins are cast into the depths of the sea! Your iniquities are subdued by the Lord Jesus who has come to save His people from their sins. Therefore, little children, praise your God and sing unto His name with all your might—"Who forgives all our iniquities; who heals all our diseases."

Note, also, that your sins are forgiven you on the same terms as those of the Apostles and the greatest of the saints—"Your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake"—that is, for the sake of Jesus, for the sake of His glorious Person, for the sake of His honorable offices, for the sake of His

shed blood and atoning death, for the sake of His glorious Resurrection, for the sake of His perpetual intercession before the Throne of God! Your sins are not forgiven you because of anything you are or hope to be, nor because of anything that you have done or have suffered—you are forgiven for Christ's name's sake—and all the saints of God can say the same. This is a sure ground of hope! Quicksand there is none, but a solid rock is under our feet.

Had the pardon been granted for our own work's sake, it might have been reversed upon our disobedience. But as sin is pardoned for Christ's sake, the pardon is irreversible, since there is no change in Christ! Is not this a dainty sweet for the little children? How gladly do I come and sit at the children's table when I see such food placed thereon! Now notice that this is the reason why John wrote to you, little children. People do not generally write letters to little children, but John does because of these special little ones it can be said, their sins are forgiven them. The moment, then, that a man has his sins forgiven, he is old enough to begin to understand that which is written—and he should become a Bible reader and a Bible searcher! The moment that his sins are forgiven him for Christ's name's sake, he becomes capable of exhortation—and it is his business to attend to what is written to him.

If pardoned as criminals, we are enlisted as workers! Why, I think if my sins have been forgiven me, my Heaven-born instincts make me ask, "Lord, what will you have me to do? Have You done so much for *me*? Then set me about doing something for You! Give me, as a privilege, the opportunity of serving You." Therefore, John, knowing that the little children would be eager to obey, has written to them, in this Epistle, certain commands, of which I will speak to you further on. Only, little children, be on the alert to begin, at once, your work of faith and labor of love.

**II.** Secondly, I have to speak of THE KNOWLEDGE of these little children. "I have written unto you, little children, because you have known, or know, the Father." The tiniest babe in the family of God knows the Father. For, first, as we have seen, his sins are forgiven him. By whom is that pardon given? Why, by the Father, and, therefore, he that has had his sins forgiven him necessarily knows the Father. When the poor prodigal felt the kisses of his father's love and saw the best robe adorning his person, then he knew the Father. All the philosophers in the world do not know so much of the Father God as a forgiven sinner knows!

I go a little further—if there are any that have never fallen into sin, but are like the 99 just persons who need no repentance, or like the elder brother who had never, at any time, transgressed his father's commandment, I say that these do not know and cannot know the Father as the forgiven child does—for the Father's heart comes out most fully and expressly when He says, "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. For this, My son was dead, and is alive again! He was lost and is found." Then, as he looks up through his tears and sees the ineffable smile of the Father's affection, the forgiven child knows the Father! The very least child of Grace, having received the forgiveness of sins, knows the Father in this most important sense.

Moreover, this is a piece of knowledge, dear Friends, which the child of God obtains very early in his spiritual life, for whatever a child does *not* know, he knows his father. Think of your dear little one at home. He cannot, as yet, read a letter in the book. He knows nothing of the things which his elder brother studies, but he knows his father! He may not know very much about his father—he certainly could not speak to others about his father's business or his father's wealth—but he knows him! The child cannot help his father, or understand what his father does, but he knows his father and would choose him out from among a thousand. See how his eyes twinkle, now that Father has come home! See him stretch out his little hands! See how eager he is to get into those dear arms! He knows his father and never forgets that knowledge.

Dear child of God, this is a piece of knowledge which *you* have, also! And in this you will yield to none of all the sacred family. Benjamin knows his father with an absolute certainty—he is as sure of it as Reuben is the firstborn. We go to school and college, but long before that we know our father—the fear is lest we overlay that precious knowledge with something not worth half as much! Little children, you know God, now, in your spiritual childhood. You could not preach about Him; you could not write a treatise upon His attributes; you could not describe His mighty acts—but you know Him by the instinct of a child—and in you is the promise fulfilled, “Israel shall cry unto Me, My God, we know You.” Little children, the result of your knowing God as your Father is that when He is away from you, you are in the habit of crying after Him. If you cannot feel your Father's love shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit, you are miserable and you hasten to your closet and begin to pray, “Come to me, my Father! Manifest Yourself to me, for I cannot live without You.”

On the other hand, when you do get to your Father, you show that you love Him by the perfect restfulness of your spirit. In God you are at home. Once get into your Father's arms and you feel quite safe, quite peaceful, quite happy. The Presence of God is the paradise of the Believer! God is the ultimatum of our desires—we speak of Him as “our exceeding joy.” If in my Father's love I share a filial part, I ask no more than to know and enjoy it! We say, “Our Father which are in Heaven”—we might as truly say, “Our Father, You *are* our Heaven.” Hence we seek after Him. “O God, You are my God; early will I seek You.” Here, then, we have a token that we know the Father, when we weep because He is absent, or rejoice because He is present. We know the Father, Brothers and Sisters, even we who are but little in Israel, for we love Him! Do you not feel that you love God, this morning? You might not dare say so in public, and yet you would die for Him. Sooner than renounce your God would you not give up all that you possess? It may be you will never be tried as the martyrs have been, but if you were, can you suppose it possible that you could part with your God? No, your inmost heart loves Him! You know it does and, loving Him, you are united to Him by bonds which cannot be severed!

Moreover, we know the Father, for we trust Him. Is it not written, “They that know Your name will put their trust in You”? Can you not trust God with everything? A child has no cares. His father cares for him. A child knows no anxiety. His father bears all the anxiety on his behalf. Is it not

so with you? Though you are babes in Grace, do you not trust?—trust for time, trust for eternity, trust for your bodies and trust for your souls? I am sure you do! If you are what you should be, you know the Father, for your faith rests upon Him. It is also true that you seek to imitate Him. It is wonderful how little children imitate their father, perhaps more than grown-up children do, though the influence of example is also seen upon them. The very little ones will try to do everything exactly like Father. It must be right, it must be perfect! If father does it, they make us smile as we see in them ourselves in miniature!

Is not this the very thing which you try to do? Though you were converted but a very little while ago, yet you wish to be like Jesus! You long to be like the Father. Would you not be perfect if you could? If you could, would you not be rid of every sin? If some painful surgical operation could take away from you the black drops of indwelling sin, would you not cheerfully bare your breast to the sharpest knife? I know you would! You would die to be rid of sin, for that is the thing you hate. This proves that you know your Father in Heaven, for you are trying to be like He is. And do you not glory in Him? Little children, when they begin to talk and go to school—how proud they are of their father! Their father is the greatest man that ever lived—there never was the like of him! You may talk to them of great statesmen, or great warriors, or great princes, but these are all *nobodies*—their father fills the whole horizon of their being!

Well, so it certainly is with us and our Father God—

***“Since no works are like Yours,  
None so glorious, so Divine.  
Since whatever gods there are,  
None, O Lord, are like You,  
Let me bow before Your Throne  
And exalt Your name alone.”***

We cannot make enough of our God! We extol Him with all our might. With the blessed virgin we sing, “My soul does magnify the Lord.” What does, “magnify,” mean? Why, to make great! We feel as if we would make God’s name great and would greatness Him in the minds of men and make them think what a blessed Father we have! Now, listen! This is the reason why John has written to you, little children, because he says, “They know enough to understand my letter, for they know the Father.” We do not think of writing a letter to a little child. “Ah,” says John, “but the Lord’s children know their Father” and he that knows God is capable of any kind of knowledge! He who knows God is a fit person to be accepted as a disciple of the beloved Apostle. I cannot desire a better congregation than a congregation of men and women that know the Father.

What if they are little children? Well, they can understand anything that I, another child, can have to say, for they know the Father and, therefore, they have an unction from the Holy One and are able to know spiritual things! To know God is the center and the circumference of all knowledge! If you know the Father, do you not see the reason why John writes to you? Because now that you know Him, you are bound to love Him, to trust Him and to serve Him! Having received such knowledge as this, you are bound to impart it as far as you can! You are bound to live up to it and to show to all around you what a child of God is—and how

different he is from the children of darkness! Thus, out of your privilege and out of your knowledge, there arises an obligation which I trust you will not be slow to acknowledge.

Here is a prayer for you—

***“If I’ve the honor, Lord, to be  
One of Your happy family.  
On me the gracious gift bestow  
To call You “Abba, Father,” too.  
So may my conduct ever prove  
My filial piety and love!  
While all my brethren clearly trace  
Their Father’s likeness in my face.”***

**III.** Now we come to our third division. Will you kindly follow me with your Bibles, especially you that are “little children,” while I commend to you THE PRECEPTS which John has written for your guidance. First, look at 1 John 2. “My little children, these things I write unto you, that you sin not.” That is the first precept—“Little children, *sin not.*” Children are very apt to get into the mud. Most mothers will tell you, I think, that if there is a pool of mud anywhere within a mile, her first-born joy and comfort will find it out and get into it if he possibly can! And no matter how often a child is washed, he seems to always need washing again—if there is a method by which he can foul his hands and his face—your pretty cherub is most ingenious to find it out!

I am afraid this is too much the case with the children of God. There is so much of carnality about us, so much of the old Adam, that the question is not into which sin we fall, but into which sin we do *not* fall! Alas, we are apt to be proud, though we have nothing to be proud of! We are prone to despond and doubt our Father, though He never gave us any cause to do so! We are inclined to be worldly, though there is nothing in the world worth loving! And we have a tendency to grow cold and chill towards God, though He is altogether lovely and ought to win our warmest affection. We are apt to speak unadvisedly with our lips. We are apt to be full of foolish thoughts. We are apt to be self-willed. We find an angry temper rising against some Brother of ours whom we ought to love—and we have not long got over *that* before we are half-afraid to utter a word of rebuke lest we should incur the laughter of the ungodly!

We glide from one sin to another, even as a waterfall descends from rock to rock. As weeds multiply in the soul, so do sins spring up in our hearts. We are a mass of faults. Like the pendulum, we swing to the right hand and then to the left—we err, first, in one way and then in another—we are always inclined to evil! And, therefore, the Apostle sweetly puts it, “My little children, I write unto you, that you sin not.” Avoid every sin—forsake it altogether! Ask for the Grace of God to sanctify you wholly—spirit, soul, and body. Though you are only newly born, yet, my little children, sin not. You will soon lose your comfort if you do. Little children, sin will hurt you, damage you, grieve you, and displease your heavenly Father! Sin will raise a cloud, behind which His Presence will be hidden from you! It will stop your heavenly growth. It will prevent your usefulness.

My little children, I earnestly entreat you that you sin not! Burnt child, dread the fire you have just been plucked out of, do not go back to it. Do not play with sparks! Keep clear of every kind of match that might create



a flame. Seek after holiness with all your might. Though born but yesterday, do not sin today. God help you to fulfill this holy precept. Further on in this second chapter, the Apostle writes to them again, and tells them (v. 18) that it is the last times and that there are many antichrists abroad. You will have to run your eyes right down the chapter till you come to verse 24, for that is what he says to little children, because there are many antichrists in the world that would seduce them—"Let that, therefore, abide in you, which you have heard from the beginning."

Little children are very fickle. The toys which they cry for one day, they break the next. Young minds change with the wind. So, little children, there are many evil ones who will endeavor to seduce you from the Truth of God and, as you have a natural instability of mind as yet, for you are only newly converted, it is well to be on your guard against those who would mislead you. Till we are rooted and grounded in the Truth of God, new things have great charms for us, especially if they have about them a great show of holiness and zeal for God. Listen, then, dear children but newly born into the Savior's family—"Let that, therefore, abide in you, which you have heard from the beginning."

Alas, even those who are older in Grace than you are have shown a sad readiness to be duped by plausible persons who have invented fresh notions and methods! I have lived long enough to have seen a considerable variety of follies and manias in the religious world. They have sprung up, grown great, declined and vanished. One day it has been one thing, another, another. I have lived to see those things justly ridiculed which, a few years before, were cried up as the wonders of the age! I thank God I have not been moved by any of these periodical fits of frenzy, but have been content to keep to the one old Truth of God which I have gathered from the Scriptures and made my own by experience and by the teaching of the Holy Spirit! I have not had to tack about, for I have been enabled to steam ahead—and I hope I shall do so to the end.

I have no respect for these upstart inventions. I regard them as so many phases of human delusion. One never knows what will come next, but of this we are pretty sure, that every now and then a new doctrine is brought forth which turns out to be an old heresy with a fresh coat of varnish on it! Or else some new method of saving souls is found out and the work blazes away like a house on fire till it dies out in smoke. Let us not be carried off our feet by every wind of doctrine! We may live to see the present craze ended and another or two after it—only be it ours to be steadfast, immovable! "Little children, let that, therefore, abide in you, which you have heard from the beginning." Leave to others the soon exhausted novelties and you keep to the eternal unchangeable Truth which is taught you in God's Word and in your own soul's experience.

Little children, here is a third precept for you, and I want you to put it into your bosom and carry it home (v. 28). "And now, little children, abide in Him." There is a Sabbath portion for you—"Abide in Him." Let the Truth of God abide in you and you abide in Christ, who is the Truth of God. Little children are very apt to stray. I have known them tempted away from home and to play the truant. They have gone into the fields after pretty flowers, or down by the brook to fish for minnows, and then they have

fallen into all sorts of trouble. The best place for a child is at home. And for a babe in Grace the best shelter is the Savior's bosom. "Little children, abide in Him." If you forget everything else I say this morning, lay this up in your hearts, and let none tempt you away from simply trusting your Savior, sweetly resting in His love and humbly following on to know more and more of Him! "And now, little children, abide in Him."

What next? Read on to chapter 3:7— "Little children, let no man deceive you." Children are very credulous. They will believe any idle tale if it is told by a clever and attractive person. Little children, believe your Savior, but be not ready to believe anybody else! Believe God's Word and stand fast to that. And if sinners entice you, do not consent to them. And if antichrist would teach you false doctrine, close your ears to it. Be as the sheep of whom Jesus said—"A stranger they will not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers." Further on, (3:18), we read—"My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue but in deed and in truth." Little children are apt to let their angry passions rise till they have to be told by Dr. Watts that their—

***"Little hands were never made  
To tear each other's eyes."***

And truly we have some Christian children who have been all too quick about this tearing of each other's eyes. They have seen a Truth of God and some friend they meet with does not see it. Therefore they have tried to knock his eyes out to make him see it! That is a faithful description of many Christian controversies. It is idle to attempt to compel another to think as I think by scolding him and heaping wrath upon him. Let us never do that. Let us love! If you cannot expect anything else of a child, you do expect love, and love never seems to be more suitably enshrined than in the heart and mind of a little child. Come, you that are newly brought to Christ, love with all your might! If you cannot fight as soldiers, or work as laborers, yet love the Brotherhood! Love Christ! Love God! Love the souls of men and by love seek to win them to the Savior who has saved you! Love not in word only, but in deed and in truth.

You have the next words in chapter 4, verse 4—"You are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you, than He that is in the world." Little children are frequently timid. They are sometimes terrified when left alone. They are generally afraid of strangers. Hear, then, you little children, you are very weak and feeble, but do not be dismayed because of that, for there is a Power dwelling in you which is mightier than the power which dwells in the world! Satan dwells in the world and he is mighty, but *God* dwells in *you* and He is Almighty! Therefore be not afraid—

***"A feeble saint shall win the day,  
Though death and Hell obstruct the way."***

Hold on to your faith in the eternal Lord who dwells in you, and you shall never perish, neither shall any pluck you out of His hand!

The last precept to little children is at the end of the Epistle. Carefully read the last verse—"Little children, keep yourselves from idols." Little children are naturally fond of toys and pretty pictures. Anything like pomp and show is sure to please children. How fond they are of soldiers, banners, processions, bands of music and all that is frivolous—these are

their idols. That is the also tendency of many grown-up children that I know of. They admire a fine religion, tasteful, striking, artistic. "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." I would like this text printed over the altars of our Ritualistic neighbors. I need scarcely mention others who have no taste or care for the beautiful, but their toys are all for noise-making, glitter and flash—a sort of Fifth of November all the days of the year! Do not become fascinated with their playthings. Be not led away from the Church of God by armies or navies.

Alas, the children must now have their play toys in the Church and their toys in the Chapel—and some must have their toys in the streets, till one would think, with their trumpets and drums, that they had just come home from the fair! "Little children, keep yourselves from idols," I do not think you are likely to fall in love with the idols of the heathen and bow down to *them*—but there are plenty of other gods which are the idols of one period and the derision of the next. Keep to Christ! Ask not for pomp and show! Ask not for noise and bluster! Ask for nothing but that your sins may be forgiven you; that you may know the Father; that you may abide in Christ and be full of love to all the family of God!

Little children, may the Lord Jesus Christ be with you and may you grow in Grace till you come unto the fullness of the stature of men in Him. May His Grace be upon all them that love Him and wait for His appearing.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 John 2.  
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN BOOK"—909, 728, 248.**

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# A DESCRIPTION OF YOUNG MEN IN CHRIST NO. 1715

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 8, 1883,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“I write unto you, young men, because you have overcome the Wicked One... 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.”  
1 John 2:13, 14.***

WHEN I preached a short time ago upon John's message to the “little children,” [Sermon #1711—*A Sermon to the Lord's Little Children*] I explained why it was that he first said, “I write,” and then, “I have written.” He is writing—his whole heart is in it and he cannot help saying that he is earnestly writing to those whom he loves so well. But he has scarcely penned the line before he feels that he must alter that present tense and set it in the past, under the form of, “I have written.” He knows that he must soon be gone from them and be numbered with those who were, but are not, among living men. These words, then, are the language of a father in Israel still among his children; they are also the words of one who has passed from earth and entered into Glory.

If what I shall have to say at this time, fairly flowing from the text, shall come to you as Christ's words from His favored disciple, John, you will attach the more importance to it and it will do your hearts the more good. Lifting his head from that dear bosom which gave him unexampled rest, he whispers, “I write unto you young men.” Looking down from that favored place which he now occupies so near to the Throne of the Lamb, he looks over the battlements of Heaven upon us and cries, “I have written unto you, young men.” In the Christian Church there is an order of Christians who have grown so much that they can no longer be called, “babes in Grace,” but yet they are not so far matured that they can exactly be called, “fathers.” These, who form the middle class of the spiritual-minded, are styled “young men.”

Understand that the Apostle is not writing, here, to any according to their bodily age—he is using human age as a metaphor and figure for representing growth in the spiritual life. Age, according to the flesh, often differs much from the condition of the spirit—many old men are still no more than “babes.” Some children in years are, even now, “young men” in Grace, while not a few young men are “fathers “ in the Church while young in years. God has endowed certain of His servants with great Grace and made them mature in their youth—such were Joseph, Samuel, David, Josiah and Timothy. It is not age according to the family register that we are now to speak about, but age according to the Lamb's Book of Life.

Grace is a matter of growth and, therefore, we have among us babes, young men and fathers, whose position is not reckoned according to this fleeting, dying life, but according to that eternal life which has been

worked in them by the Spirit of God. It is a great mercy when young men, in the natural sense, are also young men in the spiritual sense—and I am glad that it is largely so in this Church! The fathers among us need not be ashamed of their spiritual seed. In speaking to young men in Christ, I am speaking to a numerous body of Christians among ourselves who make up a very efficient part of the army of Christ in this region. I would ask them not to be either so modest or so proud as to decline to be thus classed.

You are no longer weaklings—do not, therefore, count yourselves mere babes lest you plead exemption from hard service! You are hardly yet mature enough to rank with the fathers—do not forget the duties of your real place under cover of aspiring to another. It is honor enough to be in Christ and certainly it is no small thing to be, in spiritual things, a man in the prime of life! These young men are not babes—they have been in Christ too long for that—they are no longer novices to whom the Lord's house is strange. They have been born unto God probably, now, for years. The things which they hoped for at first they have, to a large extent, realized. They know now what once they could not understand. They are not now confined to a milk diet—they can eat meat and digest it well.

They have discernment, having had their senses exercised by reason of use, so that they are not so liable to be misled as they were in their infancy. And while they have been longer in the Way, so also have they now grown stronger in the Way. It is not a weak and timorous faith which they now possess—they believe firmly and stoutly and are able to do battle for the “faith once delivered to the saints”—for they are strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. They are wiser, now, than they used to be. When they were children, they knew enough to save them, for they knew the Father and that was blessed knowledge! But now they know far more of the Word of God which abides in them through their earnest, prayerful, believing reception of it.

Now they have a clearer idea of the breadth and length, and depth and height of the work of redemption, for they have been taught of God. They even venture to enjoy the deep things of God—and the Covenant is by no means an unknown thing among them. They have been under the blessed teaching of the Spirit of God and from Him they have received an unction, so that they know all things. In knowledge they are no more children, but men in Christ Jesus. Thus they are distinguished from the first class which comprehends the babes in Christ. They are not yet fathers because they are not yet so established, confirmed and settled as the fathers are, who know what they believe, and know it with a certainty of full assurance which nothing can shake.

They have not yet had the experience of fathers and, consequently, have not all their prudence and foresight—they are richer in zeal than in judgment. They have not yet acquired the nursing faculty so precious in the Church as the product of growth, experience, maturity and affection. They are going on to that and in a short time they will have reached it, but as yet they have other work to do more suitable to their vigor. Do not suppose that when we say they are not to be called “fathers,” that they are not, therefore, very valuable to the community, for in some senses they

are quite equal to the fathers—and in one or two respects they may even be superior to them. The fathers are for contemplation—they study deep and see far—and so they “have known Him that is from the beginning.” But a measure of their energy for action may have gone through stress of years.

These young men are born to fight! They are the militia of the Church, they have to contend for her faith and to extend the Redeemer’s Kingdom. They should do so, for they are strong. This is their lot and the Lord helps them to fulfill their calling. These must, for years to come, be our active spirits—they are our strength and our hope. The fathers must soon go off the stage—their maturity in Grace shows that they are ready for Glory—and it is not God’s way to keep His shocks of corn in the field when they are fully ripe for the granary! Perfect men shall be gathered up with the perfect and shall enter into their proper sphere. The fathers, therefore, must soon be gone. And when they are gone, to whom are we to look for a succession but to these young men? We hope to have them for many years with us, valiant for the Truth of God, steadfast in the faith, ripening in spirit and growingly made meet to take their seats among the glorified saints above.

Judge for yourselves, dear Brothers and Sisters, whether you are fairly to be ranked among the young men. Have no regard to the matter of sex, for there is neither male nor female in Christ Jesus! Judge whether you are fit to be ranked among those whose full-grown and vigorous life entitles them to stand among the effectives of the Church, the vigorous manhood of the seed of Israel. To such I speak. May God the Holy spirit bless the word!

**I.** The first thing that John notes about these young men is THEIR POSSESSION OF STRENGTH—“I have written unto you young men, because you are strong.” These Christians of the middle class are emphatically strong. This does not imply that any measure of spiritual strength was in them by *nature*, for the Apostle Paul clearly puts it otherwise concerning our natural state saying, “When we were yet without strength, Christ died for the ungodly.” So that by nature we are without strength to do anything that is good and right.

We are strong as a wild bull, to dash headlong into everything that is *evil*—strong as a lion to fight against all that is good and Godlike—but for all *spiritual* and holy things we are utterly infirm and incapable. Yes, we are as dead men until God the Holy Spirit deals with us! Neither does the Apostle, here, at all allude to the strength of the body in young men, for in a spiritual sense this is rather their weakness than their strength! The man who is strong in the flesh is too often, for that very reason, strongly tempted to sins of the flesh and, therefore the Apostle bids his young friend, “flee youthful lusts.” Whenever you read the life of Samson you may thank God you had not Samson’s muscles and sinews, or else it is more than probable that you would have had Samson’s passions—and they might have mastered you as they mastered him.

The time of life in which a young man is found is full of perils and so is the spiritual condition of which it is the type. The young man might almost wish that it were with him as with the older man in whom the forces

of the flesh have declined, for though age brings with it many infirmities, it also has its gain in the abatement of the passions. So you see the young man cannot reckon upon vigor of the flesh as contributing towards real “strength”—he has, rather, to ask for more strength from on high lest the animal vigor that is within him should drag down his spirit. He is glad to be in robust health that he may bear much toil in the Lord’s cause, but he is not *proud* of it, for he remembers that the Lord delights not in the strength of the horse, and takes not pleasure in the legs of a man.

These young men in Grace are strong, first of all, in faith, according to that exhortation, “Be strong! Fear not!” They have known the Lord, now, for some time, and they have enjoyed that perfect peace which comes of forgiven sin. They have marked the work of the Spirit within themselves and they know that it is no delusion, but a Divine change—and now they not only believe in Christ, but they *know* that they believe in Him! They know whom they have believed and they are persuaded that He is able to keep that which they have committed to Him. That faith which was once a healing touch has now become a satisfying embrace! That enjoyment which was once a sip has now become a draught, quenching all thirst! Yes, and that which was once a draught has become an immersion into the river of God which is full of Living Water—they have plunged into the River of Life and find waters to swim in!

Oh what a mercy it is to be strong in this fashion! Let him that is strong take heed that he glory only in the Lord who is his righteousness and strength—but in Him and His strength, he may, indeed, make his boast and defy the armies of the aliens! What says Paul—“I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me.” My Brothers and Sisters, take good heed that you never lose this strength! Pray God that you may never sin so as to lose it; may never backslide so as to lose it; may never grieve the Spirit so as to lose it—for I reckon that to be endowed with power from on High and to be strong in faith, giving glory to God, is the truest glory and majesty of our manhood—and it were sad to lose it, or even to deface it. Oh that all Christians were so much advanced as to enter the enlisted battalion of the Lord’s young men!

This strength makes a man strong to endure. He is a sufferer, but mark how patient he is! He is a loser in business and he has a hard task to earn his daily bread, but he never complains! He has learned, in every state, to be content. He is persecuted, but he is not distressed. Men revile him, but he is not moved from the even tenor of his way. He grows careless, alike, of flattery and calumny. So long as he can please God, he cares not to displease men. He dwells on high and lives above the smoke of human opinion. He bears and forbears. He bows his neck to the yoke and his shoulders to the burden—and has fellowship with Christ in his sufferings! Blessed is that man who is so strong that he never complains of his trials, never whimpers and frets because he is made to share in the humiliations and griefs of his Covenant Head!

He expected to bear his cross when he became a follower of the Crucified and he is not now made weary and faint when it presses upon him. It is a fair sight to see young Isaac bearing the wood for the sacrifice! Young Joseph bearing the fetters in prison with holy joy! Young Samson carrying

away the gates of Gaza, bars and all, and young David praising God with his harp though Saul is feeling for his javelin! Such are the exploits of the young men who count it all joy when they fall into manifold trials for Christ's sake! O young man, be strong, strong as an iron column which bears the full stress of the building and is not moved!

This strength shows itself, next, in laboring for Christ. The young man in Christ is a great worker. He has so much strength that he cannot sit still! He would be ashamed to leave the burden and heat of the day to be borne by others. He is up and at it according to his calling and ability. He has asked his Lord, as a favor, to give him something to do. His prayer has been, "Show me what You would have me to do," and having received an answer, he is found in the vineyard trenching the soil, removing the weeds, pruning the vines and attending to such labors as the seasons demand. His Master has said to him, "Feed My sheep," and, "Feed My lambs." And, therefore, you shall see him through the livelong day and far into the night watching over the flock which is committed to him.

In all this toil he greatly rejoices, for he is strong. He can run and not be weary. He can walk and not faint. "By my God have I leaped over a wall," he says. Nothing is hard for him. Or, if it is, he remembers that the diamond cuts the diamond and so he sets a harder thing against a hard thing—and by a firm and stern resolution he overcomes. That which ought to be done, he declares shall be done in the power of God, and lo, it is accomplished! Blessed is the Church that has her quiver full of these! She shall speak with her adversaries in the gate. These are the men that work our reformations! These are the men who conduct our missions! These are the men who launch out into the deep for Christ! They make the vanguard of the host of God and largely compose the main body of her forces. I trust this Church has many such. May they yet be multiplied and increased among us, that we may never lack for choice soldiers of the Cross, able to lead on the hosts of God!

So, also, are these young men strong to resist attack. They are assaulted, but they carry with them the shield of faith with which they quench the fiery darts of the enemy. Wherever they go, if they meet with other tempted ones, they spring to the front to espouse their cause. They are ready in the day of battle to meet attacks upon the faith with the sword of the Spirit—they will yield no point of faith, but defend the Truth at all hazards. Clad in the panoply of Truth, they meet no deadly wound for, by Grace, they are so preserved that the Wicked One touches them not. They resist temptation and are unharmed in the midst of peril. Do you need an example? Look at Joseph! Where 10,000 would have fallen, he stands in snow-white purity. Joseph, as contrasted with David, is an instance of how a young man may bring greater glory to God than an older man when assailed by a similar temptation.

Joseph is but young and the temptation forces itself upon him while he is in the path of duty. He is alone with his temptress and no one need know of the sin if it is committed. On the other hand, if he refuses, shame and possibly death may await him through the calumny of his offended mistress! Yet he bravely resists the assault and overcomes the Wicked One. He is a bright contrast to the older man, a father in Israel, who went



out of his way to compass an evil deed and committed crime in order to fulfill his foul desire. From this case we learn that neither years, nor knowledge, nor experience can preserve any one of us from sin—old and young must be kept by the power of God—or they will be overthrown by the Tempter.

Furthermore, these young men are not only strong for resistance, but they are strong for attack. They carry the war into the enemy's territory! If there is anything to be done, they are like Jonathan and his armor-bearer, eager for the fray! These are very zealous for the Lord of Hosts and are prompt to undertake toil and travail for Jesus' sake. These smite down error and set up the Truth of God! These *believe* great things, *attempt* great things and *expect* great things and the Lord is with them. The archers have sorely grieved them, shot at them and hated them—but their bows abide in strength, for the arms of their hands are made strong by the mighty God of Jacob! One of them shall chase a thousand, and two put 10,000 to flight!

So have I shown you what these young men are—they are strong—strong to believe, strong to suffer, strong to do, strong to resist, strong to attack! May companies of these go in and out among us to fight the Lord's battles, for to this end has the Lord girded them with strength.

**II.** Secondly, let us notice that he implies THEIR NEED OF STRENGTH, for he says, "You are strong, and you have overcome the Wicked One." Between the lines of the text I read the fact that young men who are strong must *expect* to be attacked. This also follows from a rule of Divine economy. Whenever God lays up stores, it is because there will be need of them. When Egypt's granaries were full with the supply of seven years of plenty, one might have been sure that seven years of famine were about to come. Whenever a man is strong, it is because he has stern work to do for, as the Israelite of old never had an ounce of manna left over till the morning except that which bred worms and stank, so there never will be a Christian that has a penny's worth of Grace left over from his daily requirements.

If you are weak, you shall have no trial happen to you but such as is common to men. But if you are strong, rest assured that trials, many and heavy, are awaiting you! Every sinew in the arm of faith will have to be tested. Every single weapon given out of the armory of God will be called for in the conflict. Christian soldiering is no piece of military pastime—it is no proud parade—it means hard fighting from the day of enlistment to the day of reward. The strong young man may rest assured that he has no force to spend in display, no energy which he may use in boasting and vainglory. There is a heavy burden for the strong shoulder and a fierce fight for the trained hands!

Why does Satan attack this class of men most? I reckon, first, because Satan is not always sure that the babes in Grace are in Grace and, therefore, he does not always attack beginners. But when they are sufficiently developed to make him see who and what they are, then his wrath is awakened. Those who have clean escaped from him, he will weary and worry to the utmost of his power. A friend writes to me to enquire whether Satan knows our thoughts. Of course he does not as God does! Satan

pretty shrewdly guesses at them from our actions and our words—and perhaps even from manifestations upon our countenances—but it is the Lord, alone, who knows the thoughts of men immediately and by themselves.

Satan is an old hand at studying human nature—he has been near 6,000 years watching and tempting men and women and, therefore, he is full of cunning. But he is not Omniscient and, therefore, it may be that he thinks such and such a person is so little in Grace that perhaps he is not in Grace at all! And so he lets him alone—but as soon as ever it is certain that the man is of the royal seed—then the devil is at him! I do not know whether our Lord was ever tempted at Nazareth, while He was yet in His obscurity, but the moment He was baptized and the Spirit of God came upon Him, He was taken into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. If you become an avowed servant of God, do not think the conflict is over—it is *then* that the battle begins!

Straight from the waters of Baptism, it may be, you will have to go into such a wilderness and such a conflict as you never knew before! Satan knows that young men in Grace can do his kingdom great harm and, therefore, he would gladly slay them early in the day, as Pharaoh wished to kill all the male children in Israel. My Brothers and Sisters, you are strong to overthrow his kingdom and, therefore, you need not marvel that he desires to overthrow you! I think it is right that young men should endure hardness, or else they might become proud. It is hard to hide pride from men. Full of strength, full of courage, full of patience, full of zeal, such men are ready enough to believe the Wicked One when he whispers that they are perfect—and, therefore, trial is sent to keep them out of that grievous snare of the Evil One.

The devil is used by God as a householder might employ a dirty, smutty servant to clean his pots and kettles. The devil tempts the saint and thus the saint sees his inward depravity and is no longer able to boast. The devil thinks he is going to destroy the man of God, but God is making the temptation work for the Believer's eternal good! Far better to have Beelzebub, the god of flies, pestering you, than to become fly-blown with notions of your own excellence. Besides, not only might this young man be a prey to pride, but he certainly would not bring the glory to God, untried, that he brings to Him when he overcomes temptation.

Read the story of Job up to the time when he is tempted. You say, "We have no story to read." Just so, there was nothing worthy of record, only that his flocks and herds continued to multiply, that another child was born and so forth. There is no history to a nation when everything goes well! And it is so with a Believer. But when trial comes and the man plays the man, and is valiant for God against the arch-enemy, I hear a voice from Heaven. saying, "Write." Now you shall have history—history that will glorify God! It is but right that those who are young men and women in Christ should endure conflicts that they may bring honor to their Father, their Redeemer and the Holy Spirit who dwells in them!

Besides, it prepares them for future usefulness, and here I venture to intrude the testimony of my own experience. I often wondered, when I first came to Christ, why I had such a hard time of it when I was coming to the

Lord, and why I was so long and so wearied in finding a Savior. After that, I wondered why I experienced so many spiritual conflicts while others were in peace. Ah, Brothers and Sisters, I did not know that I was destined to preach to this great congregation! I did not understand, in those days, that I should have to minister to hundreds, and even thousands of distressed spirits, storm-tossed and ready to perish! But it is so, now, with me that when the afflicted mention their experience I can, as a rule, reply, "I have been there"—and so I can help them, as one who has felt the same.

It is necessary, therefore, that the young men should bear the yoke in their youth and that while they are strong they should gain experience, not so much for themselves, as for others, that in later days when they come to be fathers they may be able to help the little ones of the family. Take your tribulation kindly, Brother. Yes, take it *gratefully*—thank your King that He puts you in commission where the thick of the battle centers around you. You will never be a warrior if you never enter the dust clouds where garments are rolled in blood. You will never become a veteran if you do not fight through the long campaign.

So be it unto you—may your Captain save you from the canker of inglorious ease. You must *fight* in order that you may acquire the character which inspires others with confidence in you—and thus fits you to lead your comrades to the fray. Oh, that we may have, here, an abundance of the young men of the heavenly family who will defend the Church against worldliness and error, defend the weaker ones from the wolves that prowl around and guard the feeble against the many deceivers that waylay the Church of God! As you love the Lord, I charge you, grow in Grace and be strong, for we have need of you just now.

Oh, my Brothers, take hold on sword and buckler; watch and stand fast! May the Lord teach your hands to war and your fingers to fight. In these evil days may you be as a phalanx to protect our Israel! The Canaanites, the Hivites and the Jebusites are upon us just now! War is at all our borders—now, therefore, let each valiant man stand about the King's chariot, each man with his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night.

**III.** Thirdly, the text reminds us of THEIR PROOF OF STRENGTH—they have overcome the Wicked One. Then they must be strong, for a man who can overcome the Wicked One is not only a mean man of war—write him down among the first three! Wicked ones abound, but there is one crafty being who deserves the name of the Wicked One—he is the arch-leader of rebellion, the first of sinners, the chief of sinners, the tempter of sinners! He is the Wicked One who heads assaults against the pilgrims to Zion. If any man has ever stood foot to foot with him, he will never forget it—it is a fight that once fought will leave its scars, even though the victory is won!

In what sense have these young men overcome the Wicked One? Well, first, in the fact that they have broken right away from his power. They were once his slaves—they are not so now. They once slept beneath his roof in perfect peace, but conscience raised an uproar and the Spirit of God troubled them—and they then escaped his power. Once Satan never troubled them at all. Why should he? They were good friends! Now he

tempts them, worries them and assaults them because they have left his service, engaged themselves to a new Master and become the enemies of him who was once their god. I speak to many who gladly acknowledge that not a bit of them now belongs to the devil! From the crown of their head to the soles of their feet Christ has bought them—body, soul and spirit—with His precious blood!

And they have assented to the purchase and feel that they are not their own, and certainly not the devil's, for they are bought with a price and belong to Him who purchased them. The strong man armed has been turned out by a stronger than he—Jesus has carried the fortress of the heart by storm and driven out the foe! Satan is not inside our heart, now that he entered Judas—and he cannot enter into us, for our soul is filled by Another who is well able to hold His own! The Wicked One has been expelled by the Holy One who now lives and reigns within our nature as Lord of All. Moreover, these young men have overcome the Wicked One, not only by breaking away from his power and from driving him entirely out of possession so that he is no longer master, but they have overcome him in the very fact of their opposition to him.

When a man *resists* Satan, he is victorious over Satan in that very resistance! Satan's empire consists in the yielding of our will to his will, but when our will revolts against him, then already we have, in a measure, overcome him. Albeit that sometimes we are much better at *willing* than we are at *doing*, as the Apostle Paul was for he said, "To will is present with me; hut how to perform that which is good I find not." Yet, still, the hearty will to be clean from sin is a victory over sin and, as that will grows stronger and more determined to resist the temptations of the Evil One—in that device we have overcome sin and Satan! What a blessed thing this is for us to remember, that Satan has no weapons of defense, and so, when we resist him, he must flee! A Christian man has both defensive and offensive weapons! He has a shield as well as a sword—but Satan has fiery darts and nothing else! I never read of Satan having any shield whatever—so that when we resist him, he is bound to run away. He has no defense for himself and the fact of our resistance is, in itself, a victory!

But, oh, Brothers and Sisters, besides that, some of us who are young men in Christ have won many a victory over Satan! Have we not been tempted, fearfully tempted? But the mighty Grace of God has come to the rescue and we have not yielded! Cannot you look back, not within Phari-saic boasting, but with gracious exultation, over many an evil habit which once had the mastery over you, but which is master of you no longer? It was a hard conflict. How you bit your lip, sometimes, and feared that you must yield! In certain moments your steps had almost gone; your feet had well-nigh slipped, but here you are, conqueror! Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! Hear what the Spirit says to you when John writes to you because you have overcome the Wicked One! He says, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world."

Once more, in Christ Jesus we have entirely overcome the Wicked One, already, for the enemy we have to battle with is a vanquished foe—our Lord and Master met him and destroyed him! He is now destitute of his

boasted battle-ax, that terrible weapon which has made the bravest men to quail when they have seen it in his hand. "What weapon is that?" you ask. That weapon is death! Our Lord overthrew him that has the power of death, that is, the devil, and, therefore, Satan has not the power of death any longer. The keys of death and of Hell are at the belt of Christ! Ah, Satan, we who believe in Jesus shall defeat you, for our Lord defeated you! That bruise upon your head cannot be hidden! Your crown is dashed in pieces! The Lord has sorely wounded you, O Dragon, and your deadly wound can never be healed!

We have at you with dauntless courage, for we believe the promise of our Lord, that He will shortly bruise you under our feet. As certainly as you were bruised under the feet of our crucified Lord, so shall you be bruised under the feet of all His seed—to your utter overthrow and contempt! Let us take courage, Brothers and Sisters, and abide steadfast in the faith, for we have in our Lord Jesus overcome the Wicked One. We are more than conquerors through Him that has loved us!

**IV.** Now I close with my fourth point, which is—THEIR SOURCE OF STRENGTH. You have seen their strength and their need of it—and their proof of it—now for the fountain of it. "The Word of God abides in you." I labor under the opinion that there never was a time in which the people of God had greater need to understand this passage than now. We have entered upon that part of the pilgrim path which is described by Bunyan as the Enchanted Ground—the Church and the world appear to be alike bewitched with folly! Half the people of God hardly know their head from their heels at this time. They are gaping after wonders, running after a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal and waiting for yet more astounding inventions. Everything seems to be in a whirligig! A tornado has set in and the storm is everywhere!

Christians used to believe in Christ as their Leader and the Bible as their rule. But some of them are pleased with lords and rules such as He never knew! Believe me, there will soon come new Messiahs. Men are already pretending to work miracles! We shall soon have false Christs and, "Lo! Here!" And "Lo! There," will be heard on all sides! Anchors are up, winds are out and the whole fleet is getting into confusion! Men in whose sanity and stability I once believed, are being carried away with one fancy or another, and I am driven to cry, "What next? And what next?" We are only at the beginning of an era of mingled unbelief and fanaticism!

Now we shall know who are God's elect and who are not, for there are spirits abroad at this hour that would, if it were possible, deceive even the very elect! And those who are not deceived are, nevertheless, sorely put to it. Here is the patience of the saints. Let him look to himself who is not rooted and grounded in Christ, for the hurricane is coming! The signs of the times indicate a carnival of delusions! Men have ceased to be guided by the Word of God and claim to be, themselves, prophets. Now we shall see what we shall see! Blessed is the sheep that knows his Shepherd and will not listen to the voice of strangers. But here is the way to be kept steadfast—"The Word of God abides in you." "The Word of God"—that is to say we are to believe in the doctrines of God's Word—and these will make us strong.

What vigor they infuse into a man! Get the Word of God well into you and you will overcome the Wicked One! When the devil tempted Luther, the Reformer's grand grip of justification by faith made him readily victorious. Keep a fast hold of the Doctrines of Grace and Satan will soon give up attacking you, for they are like plate armor, through which no dart can ever force its way. The promises of God's Word, too—what power they give a man! To get hold of a, "shall," and, "will," in the time of trouble is a heavenly safeguard! "My God *will* hear me." "I *will not* fail you nor forsake you." These are Divine holdfasts! Oh, how strong a man is for overcoming the Wicked One when he has such a promise at hand!

Do not trust yourself in the morning, in the street, till you have laid a promise under your tongue. I see people put respirators on in foggy weather—they do not make them look very lovely—but I dare say they are useful! I recommend the best respirator for the pestilential atmosphere of this present evil world when I bid you fit a promise to your lips! Did not the Lord rout the Tempter in the wilderness with that promise, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God shall man live"? Get the promises of God to lodge within you and you will be strong! Then mind the precepts, for a precept is often a sharp weapon against Satan. Remember how the Lord Jesus Christ struck Satan a killing blow by quoting a precept—"It is written, You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve." If the precept had not been handy, with what would the adversary have been rebuked?

Nor is a threat at all a weak weapon. The most terrible threats of God's Word against sin are the best helps for Christians when they are tempted to sin—"How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God? How should I escape if I turned away from Him that speaks from Heaven?" Tell Satan the threats and make him tremble! Every Word of God is life to holiness and death to sin. Use the Word as your sword and shield—there is none like it! Now notice that John not only mentions "the Word of God," but the Word of God "in you." The inspired Word must be received into a willing mind. How? The Book which lies there is to be pleaded here, in the inmost *heart*, by the work of the Holy Spirit upon the mind. All of this letter has to be translated into spirit and life. "The Word of God abides in you"—that is, first to *know* it—next to remember it and treasure it up in your heart. Following upon this, we must *understand* it, learn the analogy of faith by comparing spiritual things with spiritual till we have learned the system of Divine Truth and more able to set it forth and plead for it.

It is, next, to have the word in your affections—to love it so that it is as honey or the droppings of the honeycomb to you. When this is the case, you must and shall overcome the Wicked One! A man instructed in the Scriptures is like an armed knight, who, when he goes among the throng, inflicts many a wound, but suffers none, for he is locked up in steel. Yes, but that is not all! It is not the Word of God in you, alone, it is, "the Word of God *abides* in you." It is *always* there, it cannot be removed from you! If a man gets the Bible right into him, he is all right, then, because he is full, and there is no room for evil! When you have filled a measure full of wheat, you have effectually shut the chaff out. Men go after novel and false doctrines because they do not really know the Truth of God; for if the

Truth had gotten into them and filled them, they would not have room for these daydreams!

A man who truly knows the Doctrines of Grace is never removed from them. I have heard our opponents rave at what they call the obstinacy of our Brothers and Sisters. Once get the Truth of God really into you, it will enter into the texture of your being and nothing will get it out of you! It will also be your strength, by setting you watching against every evil thing. You will be on your guard if the Word of God abides in you, for it is written, "When you go it will keep you." The Word of God will be to you a bulwark and a high tower, a castle of defense against the foe! Oh, see to it that the Word of God is in you, in your very *soul*, permeating your thoughts and so operating upon your outward life, that all may know you to be a true Bible-Christian, for they perceive it in your words and deeds! This is the sort of army that we need in the Church of God—men that are strong by feeding on God's Word! Aspire to it, my Brothers and Sisters, and when you have reached it, then aspire unto the third degree that you may become fathers in Israel!

Up to this measure, at any rate, let us endeavor to advance, and advance at once. Are there any here who are not young men in Christ Jesus because they are not in Christ Jesus at all? I cannot speak with you this morning, for my time is gone, but I am distressed for you. To be out of Christ is such an awful thing that a man had better to be out of existence! Without God, without Christ—then you are without joy in life or hope in death! Not even a babe in the Divine family! Then know this, that God shall judge those that are outside and when He comes, how swift and overwhelming will that judgment be! Inasmuch as you would not have Christ in this day, Christ will not have you in that day! Stay not out of Christ any longer! Seek His face and live, for, "He that believes in Him has everlasting life." May you be enabled to believe in Him at this moment, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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# FATHERS IN CHRIST

## NO. 1751

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 18, 1883,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“I write unto you, fathers, because you have known Him  
that is from the beginning. I have written unto you,  
fathers, because you have known Him that is  
from the beginning.”  
1 John 2:13, 14.*

OBSERVE the difference in the two verses—John first says, “I write,” and then, “I have written.” When in two former discourses I preached upon the beloved Apostle’s address to the young men and the children, [Sermon #1711—**A Sermon to the Lord’s Little Children** and Sermon #1715—**A Description of Young Men in Christ**] I gave you as full an interpretation of this difference as I could command—and I need not, now, repeat it. Certain additional thoughts occur to me, which I will give you, that the matter may be still clearer. The Apostle John says, “I write,” and, by-and-by, “I have written.” This shows, I think, the importance of his subject. If he has already written upon it, he must think it to be a very necessary and valuable Truth of God if he writes upon it yet again.

A man does not discourse repeatedly upon the same subject if he is a man full of matter, as this Inspired writer was, unless he feels that it is necessary that he returns, again and again, to his subject until he has impressed it upon the minds of his audience. Hence the Apostle is not ashamed to say, in effect—“I write this, though you need not remind me that I have written it before, for I feel it to be wise, so long as I am in this tabernacle, to put you in remembrance of what I have said unto you.” Nails which are important to a structure must be driven in with diligence. Foundation stones should be laid with scrupulous care and Truths of God which are fundamental, should be repeated by the teacher till the disciple has learned it beyond all fear of ever forgetting it.

This form of speech also reveals the unchanging conviction of the writer, who, having written once, is glad to write the same things again. This shows a mind made up and decided, from which proceeds consistent testimony. In these fickle times, certain of our public teachers must feel unable to say of any one subject, “I write,” and, “I have written,” for before the ink is dry they have need to blot out what they have put on paper and to write an amended version of their religious ideas! Scarcely for a month at a stretch do these loose thinkers abide in one place—they are such wandering stars that no chart could ever mark their position for three weeks together!

They might say, “I write, but bless you, dear people, I do not know what I wrote six months ago. Very probably my former opinion is not, now, true, for all things are flowing on and my head is swimming with the rest. I am a man of progress—forever learning and never coming to the knowl-



edge of the Truth of God! Blot out what I wrote a year ago and read with care what I write today.” To which we reply—“Dear Sir, we cannot take much notice of what you write *now*, because, in all probability, in another week or two you will retract it all, or improve it from off the face of the earth! Neither shall we pay much attention to you, then, for you will probably be on the move as soon as ever you have said your say. We decline to learn what we shall have to unlearn! We will wait in our present knowledge until you have reached something certain for yourself. Perhaps in 20 years’ time, when you have pitched your gypsy tent, it may be worth our while to hear where it is, but we do not commit ourselves even to *that* promise—for as the progress you are now making is into deeper darkness, you will probably end in sevenfold night.”

I rejoice, dear Friends, in the solidness of the Christian’s faith! I know nothing of improvements and growths in the Gospel of the Lord Jesus, which is summed up in these words, “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever.” I believe that God the Holy Spirit has given us, in the Scriptures, a perfect and entire Revelation which is to be received by all Christians without addition or diminution. I do not believe that Apostles, martyrs, confessors and teachers have been living for these 1,900 years upon lies—I prefer the faith of saints in Glory to the daydreams of those whippersnappers who nowadays claim to lead us by their “thought.” Our mind is that of David when he said, “I hate vain thoughts.” Well says the Scripture, “The Lord knows the thoughts of man, that they are vanity.” If it is a question of *thinking*, we can think as well as they can—then our thoughts about the modern theology are full of sorrowful contempt.

Perhaps the doctrine is new, though even this we doubt! But if it *is* new, it is not true, for the Truth of God must necessarily be as old as the everlasting hills! We observe that the word, “meditation,” is now seldom used and, “thought,” is the modern idol. Just so. We *meditate* on revealed Truths of God—this notion of “thought” sets aside the Truths of God and sets up mere fancy. We refuse to be of this vagrant party of thinkers! We are of the settled race of Believers. We can say what we have written, we still write. What we have preached, we still preach, for inasmuch as we have preached that which is revealed in Holy Scripture, to that Truth we stand and shall stand, God helping us. If we live a thousand years, at the close of life we shall have nothing more nor less to say than the fixed, Im-mutable, eternal Truth of God. We hope to understand the Truth better, but we shall never discover better Truth!

“I write,” and, “I have written,” also indicate the abiding need of men—they require the same teaching from time to time. I suppose that John alludes to his *Gospel* when he says, “I have written,” and now, a little later, he writes his *Epistle* and says, “I write”—giving, in each case, the same teaching. Men’s natures are still the same; men’s spiritual conflicts and dangers are still the same and, therefore, the same Truth of God is suitable, not only from day to day, but from century to century! There is but one food for soul hunger and but one help in spiritual danger. The true teacher always comes to men with the same Truths because men continue to have the same dangers, necessities, sorrows and hopes.

The fathers who needed that John should previously write to them, still needed that he should write to them the same thing. Though they may have grown more fatherly, they have not outgrown Apostolic teaching. The former Truth is good for our latter days. Many years ago, when some of us were mere boys, we listened to the Gospel of Jesus and our heart leaped as we embraced it. It was the life and joy of our spirit and now, today, after having advanced far in the Divine Life, if we hear one of those simple sermons that first brought us to Christ concerning the precious blood of Jesus and child-like faith in Him, it suits us quite as well as in those early days!

I have noticed with regard to well-grown Christian people, that when I have given a purely evangelical discourse, meant only for sinners and not at all designed for the edifying and comforting of full-aged saints, they have sucked it in with as much delight as if they were, themselves, newly converted! After all, though you and I are not now fed upon milk, yet a drink of milk is still most refreshing! Though we can now digest the solid meat of the Kingdom of God, yet the children's bread has lost none of its relish in our esteem. The Truths of God are still sweet to our hearts, yes, sweeter than they ever were! Though we have advanced to the higher courses of the edifice of holy knowledge, yet we never cease to look with intense delight upon those foundation Truths of God which concern our Lord Jesus. We cleave with full purpose of heart to Him of whom the Lord God has said, "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation." Jesus remains to us, "elect, precious," and we know it will be so with us till life's last hour.

From this text I am to preach principally to the fathers, but as the Church has not many fathers, I may be supposed to have a slender audience! But this is hardly so, since I hope and trust that the area of the sermon's influence will include young men, for you, my Brothers, aspire to reach the front rank and to be numbered among the fathers. Even to you who are little children, the text has its word of instruction, for you will be glad to hear what the fathers know, since you hope, before long, to know the same. The life of God is so much the same in all stages that the Word which is profitable to fathers has a use for babies—and that which is spoken to little children has a voice in it for young men. May God the Holy Spirit bless this Word of God to the hearts of *all* His people!

Concerning the fathers, I am going to inquire three things this morning. First, who are they?—"You fathers." Secondly, what is their peculiar characteristic?—"You have known Him that is from the beginning." And, thirdly, what is the message to them?—"I have written unto you, fathers." What is it that John has written to fathers in the Church of God?

**I. First, WHO ARE THE FATHERS?** We usually associate that idea somewhat with age, but we must take care that we do not make a mistake here, because age, in Grace, albeit that it may run parallel with age in nature in many cases, does not always do so. In the Church of God there are children who are 70 years old. Yes, little children displaying all the infirmities of declining years! It is not a pleasant sight to see gray-headed babies, yet I must confess I have seen such and I have even been glad that I could dare to go the length of hoping that they *were* babies in Christ! One

would not like to say of a man of 80 that he had scarcely cut his wisdom teeth—and yet there are such—scarcely out of the nurse's arms at 60 years of age, needing just as much care and comfort as sucklings at the breast!

On the other hand, there are fathers in the Church of God—wise, stable, instructed—who are comparatively young men. The Lord can cause His people to grow rapidly and far outstrip their years. David, as a lad, was more of a father in God than Eli in his old age. Growth in Grace is not a *time* growth. In eternal matters, years count for little. The Lord gives subtlety to the simple and to the young men knowledge and discretion. Solomon was wise while yet young—in some respects wiser than when he was old. Some youths have been like Joseph—men with God before they were men among men. Joseph, we are told in our translation, was more loved by Jacob than any of his brothers, “because he was the son of his old age.” This can hardly be a correct rendering, for Benjamin, who was born 16 years later, was far more entitled to be called so.

Another interpretation, which seems to me more correct, signifies that he was a son of the elders and implies that while he was a child, he was an associate of elderly persons and was, himself, so thoughtful, serious and well-instructed as to be an elderly child, a child-man, full of unusual wisdom and prudence. Josephs are still sent into the Church, now and then, and the Lord greatly blesses His people by their means. Oh, for more of them! From their early youth they have a discernment of God's Word and a quickness of apprehension wonderful to notice. More than that, I have even observed a depth of experience within a very short time granted to certain young Believers, so that though they were but youths in age, they were fathers in piety.

Nevertheless, as a usual thing, it is to be expected that advancement in Grace should be accompanied with advancement in years. And it is so often so that we are known to call those who are fit to look after the souls of others, “the elders of the Church,” not necessarily because they are old men, but because they are instructed in the things of God. These are the fathers, then—men who have aged in Grace, have come to the full development of their spiritual manhood—and have been confirmed in that development by the test of time and trials. Believers, when they have, in the course of years, shown themselves able both to labor and to suffer, are fitly ranked among fathers.

Why do we call the early writers the fathers of the Church? Not, I think, because we owe more to their teaching than to those of a later period, but because they were the first men, the pioneers, the vanguard—and so the fathers of the Church. The first and earliest members of a Church will become fathers, in due time, if they continue in the faith, grounded and settled. Their years of persevering holiness entitle them to respect. Paul mentions with honor, certain persons, saying, “Who also were in Christ before me.” There is an honor in having been a soldier of Christ for a long time. It was no small praise of His disciples when Jesus said of them, “You have been with Me from the beginning.”

With the idea of fathers, we so far associate that of age that we hope and expect that Believers who have been in Christ, long, have well learned

their lesson and have come to a fullness of growth in the things of God. Judge, Christian Brothers, whether you can rank yourselves among the fathers. And if you are not able to do so, yet press onward towards it. I boldly say that in this Church there is a larger proportion of this class of Christians than I have ever seen elsewhere, and for this I thank God with all my heart, for they are of the utmost service to our host.

“Fathers,” again, are persons of maturity, men who are not raw and green—not fresh recruits, unaccustomed to march or fight—but old legionaries who have used their swords on others and are, themselves, scarred with wounds received in conflict. These men know what they know, for they have thought over the Gospel, studied it, considered it and, having so considered it, have embraced it with full intensity of conviction! Usually we mean by, “fathers,” men who have become developed in Grace, mature in character, decided in conviction, clear in statement and accurate in judgment. These can discern between things that differ and are not deceived by the philosophies which allure the ignorant. They know the voice of the Shepherd—and a stranger they will not follow.

The younger folk may be bewitched so that they do not obey the Truth of God, but these are not fascinated by error. New converts, in their difficulties, resort to these fathers, for doubts which bewilder the beginner are simplicity itself to those who are taught of the Lord. These are the watchmen on the walls who detect where insidious doubt is creeping in, where deadly error under the guise of the Truth of God is undermining the faith of the Church—to that end the Lord has instructed them and given them to have their senses exercised to discern between good and evil. Among them are men who have understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do. If you are such fathers, dear Brothers, I rejoice in you! If you are not such as yet, aspire to this eminence and pray the Lord that you may not be long before you arrive at the ripeness and sweetness which belong to mellow Christians who are prepared for the great ingathering!

“Fathers,” again, are men of stability and strength. If burglars are planning to attack a house, they care little about the children and make small account of the boys. But if fatherly men are about, the thieves are not eager for an encounter. Even thus, the arch-deceiver has hope of injuring the Church by deceiving the little children and the young men, but the stalwart men of God, who walk in the midst of the household, looked up to by everybody, are not so readily blown to and fro. As the Spartans pointed to their citizens as the real walls of Sparta, so do we point to these substantial men as, under God, the bronze walls and bulwarks of the Church!

Men who are well taught, confirmed, experienced and trained by the Spirit of God are pillars in the house of our God. It may be said of each of them, “He keeps himself so that the Evil One touches him not.” These are men who know how to wear the armor which God has provided and to use the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. These are men of strong faith and convictions; men of decision and courage; men of prudent action, in no hurry through fear and under no excitement through false hope. These are not men that retract, or shuffle, or evade—but witnesses who are faithful and true—imparting confidence to the feebler sort by

their calm defiance of the foe. Oh, that all Christians would grow into such solid saints!

Many light, frothy, chaffy minds come into the Church and give us untold trouble to keep them right—and infinitely more trouble because they will not be kept right! Oh, for more men of such a sort that if the whole world went wrong they would still abide by the right! Men who cannot be carried away by superstition let it adorn itself with all the beauties of art! Men who cannot be borne down by skepticism—let it flaunt all the pomp of its pretended culture and wisdom! These fathers know and are sure. They have learned to be, on their own accounts, determined and unyielding, for they will not stir beyond, “It is written,” nor tempt eternal ruin by building upon the shifting quicksand of the hour!

At this moment there is large need for an army of invincibles. Be you steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. But there is something more than this in Christian fatherhood. The fathers of the Church are men of heart who naturally care for the souls of others. It is upon the father that the weight of the household falls—he goes forth in the morning to his daily labor and he returns at night with the fruit of his toil for the support of the household. It is not for himself that he lives, but for that dear family which is gathered about him. He is not wholly comprised within his own personal self, for he lives in all the house—he lives especially in his children. Their suffering or their need would be his suffering and his need.

His heart has grown larger than when he was a child or a young man, for now his heart beats in all that household of which he is the life. It is a grand thing when Christian men and Christian women come to this, that they are not perpetually thinking of their own salvation and of their own souls being fed under the ministry, but they care most of all for those who are weak and feeble in the Church! During a service, their thoughts go out for those assembled. They are anxious as to how that stranger may be impressed by the sermon; how yonder anxious spirit may be comforted; how a backsliding Brother may be restored; how one who is growing somewhat cold may be revived. This paternal care betokens a true father in the Church! May the Lord multiply among us those who feel it to be their life-work to feed the flock of Christ.

Having this care upon him, the father comes to be tender. He partakes somewhat of the tenderness of a mother and thus is called a nursing father. A true father, such as fathers should be, has a tender love for all the little ones. He would not hurt them. Nothing would be more painful to him than to grieve them—on the contrary, he studies to give them pleasure and lays himself out for their good. It is a great blessing to the Church, when the leading spirits are loving—not rough and uncouth, domineering or hectoring, but gentle and Christ-like! Oh, my Brothers who take the lead, let us bear and forbear, and put up with a thousand trying things from our Master’s children whom He has committed to our care! Let us make ourselves the servants of all! Is not the father the laborer for the children? Does he not lay up for them? Is not his superiority best seen by his doing more for the family than anybody else?

This is how Christians grow great, by making themselves greatly useful to others! If you are the slave of all, willing to do anything so that you can but help them and make them happy and holy—this is to be a father in the Church of God! Sympathetic care and hearty tenderness are gifts of the Holy Spirit and will bring you a happiness which will richly compensate you for your pains. Not yet have I quite reached the full meaning of a father, for the father is the author, under God, of the being of his children—and happy is a Church that has many in it who are spiritual parents in Zion, through having brought sinners to Christ! Happy are the men by whose words, acts, spirit, prayers and tears, some have been begotten unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

What an honor it is to be such a father! Some of us have been filled with this joy till it has well-near broken our hearts even to think of it, for the Lord has fulfilled to us the promise which He made to Abraham when He bade him lift up his eyes to the stars and said, “So shall your seed be.” This cannot fall to the lot of all, but in the Church of God every man and woman should pray that he may not be barren or unfruitful. May we all be soul-winners! Not the minister alone—not the Sunday school teachers alone—but each one without exception! Why should not each saint bring someone to the Lord Jesus? At least, by our united prayers and godly living, by our united testimony and fidelity, let us labor for the increase of Messiah’s kingdom! I hardly think we can put anyone among the fathers until he has won some heart for Jesus.

Thus have I described the fathers. They are never very numerous—they are never so numerous as they ought to be. Paul says, “Yet have you not many fathers.” But wherever they are, they are the strength of the Church. I have seen in the army a number of veterans marching in front—an ornament and an honor to the whole company. Your short-service men come and go, but these tried men stick to the colors and are the backbone of the regiment. If a tough bit of fighting has to be done, you must rely upon such as these. Like Napoleon’s Old Guard, they cannot be shaken or driven back—the smell of gunpowder does not alarm them, nor the whistling of the shot, nor the roar of the artillery—they have seen such things before. They can also bide their time and wait, which is a great thing in a soldier. And when at last they are bid to charge, they leap like lions on their prey and the enemy is driven before them.

Such men we have in the Church of God and such we need—men that are not flattered by opposition, nor made to lose their heads by excitement. They believe in God and if others doubt, they are not infected by their folly. They know! They are certain! They have put their feet down and will not move from their persuasion. When the time comes for action, they are ready for it and throw their whole weight so heartily into the war that every charge advances! God send us more regiments of these in this evil day and preserve to us such as we have!

**II.** Secondly. WHAT IS THE PROMINENT CHARACTERISTIC OF A FATHER IN CHRIST? Read the text. “I write unto you, fathers, because you have known Him that is from the beginning.” He repeats the expression without alteration. Observe, here, the *concentration* of their knowledge. Twice he says “You have known Him that is from the beginning.” Now, a

babe in Grace knows 20 things—a young man in Christ knows 10 things—but a father in Christ knows *one* thing and that one thing he knows thoroughly! It is very natural for us, at first, to divide our little stream into many rivulets, but as we grow gray in Grace, we pour it all into one channel—and then it runs with a force efficient for our lifework. I trust I know many doctrines, many precepts and many teachings—but more and more my knowledge gathers about my Lord even as the bees swarm around their queen!

May it come to this with us all—“I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” May all our knowledge be focused as with a burning glass upon this one point! May the adorable Person of Him that was from the beginning fill the entire horizon of our thought! Oh, to have one heart, one eye, for our one Lord and for Him alone! Note, next, the peculiarity of their knowledge as to its objective—they know “Him that was from the beginning.” Do not the babes in Christ know the Lord Jesus? Yes, they do, but they do not know Him in His full Character. They know Him as having forgiven their sins, and that is much, but it is not all. Yonder is the blessed Christ and I, a poor sinner, look to Him just as He comes to me—and I am lightened and become one of His little children.

Yes, and as I grow and become a young man, I approach nearer to Jesus and get another view of Him, for I overcome the Wicked One even as He did! And thus I stand side by side with Him in the conflict. But if I come to be a father, I enter into fellowship with the great Father, Himself, for it is union with God the Father that makes a man a father in God! Then do we, as it were, not only look toward Jesus as coming to save, but we look on Christ from the Father’s point of view. The sinner sees Jesus coming to him, but the Father sees Jesus as sent from Him. When we grow in Grace we, in our measure, see Jesus from God’s point of view—that is to say, we see Him as “Him that was from the beginning,” and in due time was manifested to take away sin.

“These are ancient things,” says one. Just so, but fathers are also ancient men—and the deep things of God are suitable to them. Believers see Christ in a fashion similar to their own. I scarcely need allude to that which I have often mentioned to you, that every man in the Old Testament who saw the Lord saw Him in a character like his own. Abraham, the pilgrim, saw Christ as a pilgrim. Jacob, the struggler, saw the Covenant Angel wrestling with him through the night. Moses, the representative of a people tried as by fire and yet continuing, saw the Lord as a burning bush. Joshua, the valiant warrior, saw the Captain of the Lord’s host as a man with a sword drawn in His hand. The three holy children saw the Son of God in the fiery furnace, even as they were, themselves. When you become a father in Christ, you see Christ from the Father’s point of view—not as newly come to save—but as, “from the beginning” the Savior of men!

The father in Grace rejoices to behold the Lord Jesus as God. He beholds the glory of His adorable Person as forever with the Father before the earth was. He knows that without Him was not anything made that was made and, therefore, beholds Him as fashioning everything upon the

anvil of His power. He knows that “His goings forth were of old, from everlasting,” and he delights to see Him planning the salvation of His chosen in the beginning. A glorious sight it is! The grown Believer meditates upon the Covenant—the settlements of Grace in the old eternity. Poor babes in Christ are frequently stumbled by the mysterious Truths of God—high doctrine they call it. But when a man grows to be a father, he loves Covenant Truth and feeds on it.

It is one mark of advanced Grace that the sublime Truths which concern eternity are increasingly valued. In gracious maturity the Christian sees the blessed Persons of the Divine Trinity entering into a compact for the salvation of men. And he sees the Son of God, Himself, from the *beginning* acting as the Representative of His elect and taking upon Himself to answer on their behalf to the Father. He sees the Eternal Son then and there becoming the Sponsor and the Surety for His chosen, engaging to pay their debt and make recompense to the injured Justice of God on account of their sins. He sees that Covenant even from of old ordered in all things and sure in the hands of Him that was from the beginning!

There is one point that the father in Christ delights to think upon, namely, that the coming of Christ into the world was not an expedient adopted after an unavoidable and unforeseen disaster in order to retrieve the honor of God! He understands that the whole scheme of events was planned in the purpose of Divine Wisdom for the glorifying of Christ, so that from the beginning it was part of Jehovah’s plan that Jesus should take upon Himself human nature and should manifest, in that Nature, all the attributes of the Father! It was the *original* plan that the Incarnate God should reveal infinite Grace and boundless love by laying down His life for sinners, “the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.”

The Only-begotten Son is not introduced into the Divine economy as an afterthought—the whole arrangement is shaped with an eye to Him who was before all things and for whom all things were created. It pleased the Father that He should lift up creation by uniting the creature and the Creator in one Person and that He should ennoble our nature, which is a combination of the spiritual and the material, by assuming a body and bearing that body to the Throne of God. O matchless plan, by which the redeemed are ennobled and God, Himself, is glorified! Oh, fathers, if you have ever seen this, I know that you will say, “The preacher does not describe the half of it!” No, I do not—I wish that I could—but neither time nor ability are present with me. Still, I delight in the everlasting glories of the Lord Jesus who was from the beginning.

Greatly dear to my own heart are the “chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills.” I believe in my Lord Jesus Christ as second to none, but as the King and Lord from the beginning, who, though He was despised and rejected of men, yet still is God over all, blessed forever, and will be so forever and ever! Though “the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing,” Jehovah has set His Son as King upon His holy hill of Zion—and God’s decree shall stand! He that is Alpha shall be Omega—He that is from the beginning shall be to the end, King of kings and Lord of lords! My heart cries, “Hallelujah!” Oh, you fathers, cry “Hallelujah” with me!



Yes, but I need to notice, again, that this knowledge is, in itself, special. The knowledge, itself, is remarkable as well as the Object of the knowledge. "You have known Him." A dear servant of Christ on this platform, the other evening, sat beside me. He belonged to quite another part of the Church of Christ, but he said to me, of such-and-such a person, "You know, dear Brother, he is one that knows the Lord. He is not merely a Christian, but he knows our Lord—you and I know what that means, do we not?" I could only look at him with a deep look of loving appreciation. Yes, we *do* know the Lord as a living, bright reality! A daily Friend, Counselor and Companion.

True fathers in Grace meditate upon Christ. They feed upon Scripture, press the juice of it and inwardly enjoy the flavor of it. People say they have a sweet tooth. It is a good thing to have a sweet tooth for the Lord Jesus Christ! They not only know the Lord by much meditation upon Him, but they know Him by actual communion—they walk with Him, they talk with Him! Such saints are more with Christ than with anyone else—to no one do they tell so much as they have told Him—and no one has ever told them as much as Jesus tells them, for "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His Covenant." Ask them, "Who is your dearest friend?" and they will reply, "The Well-Beloved is my next of kin, my dearest companion."

They know the Lord by communion and they have come to know Him, now, by having an intense sympathy with Him. They feel as Jesus does about matters and so they know Him. His tender pity for sinners stirs their hearts, not in the same degree, but yet in like manner according to their measure. They often feel as if they could die for sinners. One of these fathers said, "I could wish myself accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." They look upon matters not from man's standpoint, but from Christ's point of view and, therefore, they understand much of the Lord's ways which, before, were dark to them. He who very deeply sympathizes with a man knows him well.

Learning by faith to sit still and believingly wait on the event, these fathers calmly expect that all things will work together for good to them and, therefore, they understand the unbroken serenity of the heart of Jesus and know Him in His joys as well as in His sorrows. Such saints know what it is to weep over the city with Jesus and to rejoice over returning sinners with the Good Shepherd! Yes, they know what it is to sit down with Him on His Throne, waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. They are calm with Jesus, for they have drunk in the meaning of the text, "He must reign." Yes, He must reign! He must reign till all His enemies shall be under His feet! This knowing Him that is from the beginning is the chief characteristic of the father in Christ.

**III.** Thirdly, dear Friends, WHAT IS THE MESSAGE TO THE FATHERS? I would indicate that message very briefly by referring you to the context. John has been saying to you, dear fathers, and indeed to all of us who are in Christ, that we should love one another. If you are truly fathers, you cannot help loving all the family—the fatherly instinct is love—and fathers in Christ should be full to the brim with it. Little ones should be induced, by our loving spirit, to come around us, feeling that if nobody else loves

them, we do; if nobody else cares for them, we do. I have known a father in Christ to whom a convert would speak much more readily than he would to his own earthly father or mother. I suppose they see an invitation in the faces of these fathers. I do not quite know how they discover it, but somehow converts feel that such an one is a man whom they could address, or a woman whom they could talk with.

These fathers and mothers in Israel are full of love and their speech betrays the fact. I know some men who are like great harbors for ships—a soul tossed with tempest makes for them as for a harbor! Breaking hearts say, “Oh, that I could tell *him* my troubles and get *his* prayers.” May you and I be just such persons and may the Holy Spirit use us for the good of our fellows. The next message immediately succeeds the text—“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.” Oh, dear fathers, you must not love the world, for it passes away—and this is specially true of you! If any Christian man might love the world—and I hope none will do so—certainly the fathers may not! You know so much of Christ that you may well *despise* the world—and you are so soon going Home so that you ought to set little store by these fleeting things.

You have all the marks of what they call declining years—I call them *ascending* years—you will soon be gone from the world and its changing vanities, therefore do not set your love on earthly treasures. Hold wealth with a loose hand! Be ready to depart, for depart you soon will. Before the morning watch, you may be gone to your Father’s House on high! “Love not the world.” Another duty of fathers is also mentioned here. While they are not to love the world, they must take care that they do not fall victims to any of the lusts of this present evil world, such as the lust of the flesh. Can fathers ever fall that way? Ah me, we have to speak very solemnly and admit that the most advanced saint still needs to be warned against the lust of the flesh, the indulgence of appetites which so readily lead men to sin.

Then there is the lust of the eyes. David fell into that when he repined because of the prosperity of the wicked. He was obliged to confess, “So foolish was I, and ignorant.” He looked at the prosperous wicked till he began to fret about them. That lust of the eyes, in desiring more for yourself and envying those that have more—never let it happen to a father! And the pride of life—that thirsting to be thought respectable, that emulation of others, that struggling after honor and such like—this must not be in a father! You are men and must put away childish things. My dear and honored Brothers, fall not prey to vanities—these toys are for the children of the world—not for you who are so near to the Glory of the Lord! You are grown ripe in Grace and will soon enter Heaven—live accordingly. Let all earthly things be like babies’ baubles beneath your feet while you rise to the manhood of your soul.

The next exhortation to the fathers is that they should *watch*, for, says the Apostle, “You have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists.” Oh, valiant fathers, keep watch and ward! I marvel that members of Churches agree to the choice of ministers who are not sound in the faith, no, who do not seem to have any faith at all! Why is this? We used to have, in our Baptist Churches, substantial men who

would as soon have entertained Satan at their own table as an unsound preacher in the pulpit! There used to be a company in the north of Scotland called, "The Men." Why, if heresy had been preached before them, they would have been as provoked as Janet Geddes when she threw her milking stool at the head of the preacher! They would not have endured these modern heresies as the present effeminate generation is enduring them! Let the new theologians have liberty to preach what they like on their own ground, but not in our pulpits!

Alas, the leading members in many Churches are Christians without backbones! I would call them slimy, spongy snails—only they have not the consistency of a snail's shell! They are ready to swallow any mortal thing if the preacher seems clever and eloquent. Cleverness and eloquence—away with them forever! If it is not the Truth of God, the more cleverly and eloquently it is preached the more damnable it is! We must have the Truth of God and nothing but the Truth of God and I charge the fathers in Christ all over England and America to see to this! Get to your watchtower and guard the flock, lest the sheep be destroyed while they are asleep!

Lastly, it is the duty of the fathers to prepare for the coming of the Lord. How beautifully it is put in the 28<sup>th</sup> verse— "Abide in Him; that when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming." It is addressed to you all, for you are all little children, but it is specially incumbent upon those of you who are fathers. Awaken all your faculties! Watch for the coming of the Lord and keep your loins well girded! Jesus may come today—this Lord's Day may be the last Sabbath of this dispensation! Yet He may not come for 10,000 years for all we know!

Therefore weary not if you wait through a long night. Say not that He delays His coming, for He will return at the day appointed. Only let us hold fast that which we have received and stand waiting for the midnight cry. He *will* come! He will not tarry—therefore go forth to meet Him—

***"Hold the fort, for I am coming,  
Jesus signals still!  
Wave the answer back to Heaven,  
By Your Grace we will."***

Amen.

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

# UNTO YOU, YOUNG MEN NO. 811

**DELIVERED ON WEDNESDAY EVENING, MAY 13, 1868,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT WESTMINSTER CHAPEL.**

**Being the Annual Sermon to Young Men in Connection with the London Missionary Society.**

*“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.”  
1 John 2:14.*

JOHN abounded in charity, but with the utmost stretch of it he could not have written to all young men in this style, for, alas, all young men are *not* strong, nor does the Word of God abide in them all, nor have they all overcome the Wicked One. Strong in muscle they may be, like Samson, but like Samson they are weak in moral principle and before long are found in the lap of a sinful Delilah to their own destruction. What multitudes of young men there are in London who, instead of being spiritually strong, are weakness itself—bending like the willow in every gale, drifting down the stream like dead fish—having neither the wish nor the ability to stem the torrent of temptation!

These weak young men who are entrapped in every snare, taken with every bait, are the objects of our earnest anxiety. But to them we can address no Epistles entreating their aid in holy work, or cheering them with sacred consolations. It is painful to reflect that in the vast mass of ripening manhood the Word of God does *not* abide. Tens of thousands of them do not even hear it! They look upon the Sabbath as a day of amusement and to religious exercises as a slavery. Thousands more attend to the Word only after the fashion of the old proverb, “In at one ear and out at the other.” They see their natural face in the glass of the Word, but they go their way and straightaway forget what manner of men they are.

They are young men of good judgment, too, in worldly things and yet so foolish as to esteem *eternal* things as mere trifles! They play with immortality and value the joys of an hour of sin at a higher price than unending bliss. Assuredly in this land there are multitudes of young men who have not overcome the Wicked One. No, they never thought of doing so for they are hand in glove with him—they are among his best allies. Shame that it should be so, that when Satan seeks recruits for his army, he should straightaway send his recruiting sergeant for these fine young fellows. They ought to serve a better master but they are all too willing to give up at once the strength of their youth and the force of their character to the service of a deceiver—overcome the Wicked One, indeed!

In many young men he reigns supreme and they are led captive by him at his will—wickedly insinuating all the while that they are the milksops and the fools who dare to do right and scorn to fling away their souls for the sake of temporary pleasures. Now, there may be in this place tonight

some of these young men who are not strong, in whom the Word of God does not abide, and who have not overcome the Wicked One. Let conscience seek out such and when they are fully revealed and discovered to *themselves*, let them deliberately take stock of their position in the light of *death* and *judgment*—and may they, by God’s Grace, be made to pause awhile and then to decide that it will be a wiser course of action to repent before God, to believe in Jesus and to give themselves up to Him who can make them strong, and put the living seed of His Word into their hearts and enable them to overcome the Wicked One!

But I address myself to many, I trust, this evening, who are such as John described and who can give praise to distinguishing Grace that they are such, for they feel that had they been left to themselves they would have possessed no strength and would not have held the living Truth of God within their hearts. O for a shout of sacred joy from everyone who has been redeemed from his estate of bondage, brought up out of the wilderness and led into the Canaan of salvation! O for something better than shouts of praise—namely, *holy* lives, *devoted* actions, *constant* consecration from those who thus have been strengthened and quickened, and made victors over sin!

Two or three things we shall speak about tonight. First, our text describes the model young man. Secondly, we infer from it that such model men have within them qualifications for usefulness. John wrote to these young men because they were so-and-so, and so-and-so. I shall ask some here to serve God for the same reason, because those parts which make the model man are just such as will qualify them to serve God! And, in the third and last place, I shall try to urge the conscription upon many here, hoping that many will be written down as God’s warriors from this good hour.

**I.** First, then, we have before us THE PHOTOGRAPH OF THE MODEL YOUNG MAN. Nothing is said about his learning—he may be a model of everything that is spiritually good though his education may have been neglected. Nothing is said about his wealth, his position in society, or his personal appearance—without anything to boast of in relation to any of these things he may yet be in the advance guard of Christ’s soldiers.

**1.** What is spoken in the text has to do only with *spiritual* qualifications, and it deals with three points. First, this young man is strong. The strength here meant is not that which is the result of his being in his youth—not a mere natural vigor, but a *spiritual* strength—a strength which comes from the Lord of Hosts. The strength here meant is a strength which is the result of the indwelling of the Spirit within the man—a strength which brings out and consecrates the natural energy and makes the young man with his vigor to be vigorous in the right direction. “I have written unto you, young men, because you are strong.”

Now, the spiritually strong man may be described in this way—he is one who is very decided for Christ. He is not half-hearted, halting between two opinions. There is nothing about him now, as there once might have been, of questioning or hesitation. He is for Christ. Whoever may be for the false, he is for the true. Whoever may side with the unjust, he is for the honest. Whoever may adopt crooked policies, he is for straightforward

principles. He has made up his mind to it, that he is Christ's, and therefore he does not tolerate within his soul *anything* like a question on that matter. He is decided, not only in his service for Christ, but in his opinions. He knows what he knows. He holds firmly what he holds. He is a strong man in the Truth of God.

You cannot pull him by the ear this way today and that way tomorrow. He does not depend upon his religious teacher for his religious thought—he does his own thinking with his Bible before him. By the Grace of God he has grown strong by feeding on an heavenly diet. He is a man with his feet firmly planted on a rock. You may meet with weak professors almost everywhere and you may, by specious arguments, entice them to almost everything. But the young man who is strong will listen to what you have to say and weigh it in the scales of judgment—but when once weighed and found wanting—he will reject it without hesitation. He at once rejects the wrong and cleaves to that which is right, for God has made him strong in integrity of heart.

While thus strong in decision, he is also strong in the matter of establishment. He once believed the Truths of God because he was so taught, but now he begins to search to the roots of them and to find out the arguments which support them. He has proven, if not all things, yet enough to hold fast that which is good. He has become established by some little experience, for, though a young man, experience may come to him and, indeed, it does come to some young men without the lapse of many years. The experience of a single night has taught a man more than the experience of years, and the experience of a single day, a bitter sorrow, or ardent labor, has been more valuable than the mere lapse of a score of ordinary years of prosperity and joy.

What little experience the man has had, and what little observation he has been able to make have joined together to confirm what he believes, and now, though he does not care to be always arguing—in fact, he has passed beyond that stage. Though he does not care to be always testing and trying things—he has advanced farther than that—yet he is prepared, when objections are advanced, to meet them in a spirit of meekness. And he is prepared to instruct the ignorant and those who are out of the way. He is strong in establishment, as well as in decision. Nor is this all, he has become strong, through the Divine Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, in a vigor diffused throughout his whole spiritual constitution.

A very large proportion of the members of our Churches are, I trust, alive, but you have to try them by various experiments to know whether there is any life in them. They are like persons just fished up from the water—in order to discover whether they are alive you place a mirror before their mouth and watch for a little dampness upon it—you kneel down and try to detect the faint sound of breathing—

***“Tis a point I long to know,  
Oft it causes anxious thought.”***

This is the miserable cry of many. There may be life in them, but it is life in a fainting fit or sound sleep!

But the vigorous Christian is far different from this! He does not ask whether he is alive or not—he knows he is by that which he is enabled to do—by the strength of his life! He knows he is by that which he feels pal-

pitating within—by the aspirations that glow within his soul! Yes, and even by the griefs and pains which make him bow his head. He knows that he lives! Others in our Churches do something for Christ and know that they are alive, but their whole spiritual system is *relaxed*. If they take up the hammer and work for God, they strike such feeble blows that the nails do not know it! If they take the spade in their hand to dig in the Master's vineyard, the weeds laugh them to scorn!

They are so exceedingly feeble, and generally so changeable, so fond of new work and of running after this and that, that they are of little or no real service to the Church. But the strong man in Christ Jesus is one who, if he fights, dashes to pieces the helmet of his foe. And if he wields the sling and the stone, he takes care that the stone shall be sent with force enough to go through Goliath's skull. He is a man who, if he prays, makes the gates of Heaven shake and the vaults of Heaven ring. He is a man who, when he pleads with sinners, pleads all over—hands and face, and every muscle revealing his earnestness. He cannot drag on in a dead and alive life. He feels that if religion is worth anything it is worth everything, and he throws his whole being into it—body, soul, and spirit—ardently and to the utmost pitch of energy being given up to the Master's cause.

Meanwhile he is not only strong in actual service, but he is strong in what he *cannot* do. Some of the most acceptable things which are recorded in Heaven are the things which are in our hearts, but which cannot come to our hands for lack of power. It is a great thing, Brothers, to always have some work before you which makes you stand on your tiptoes to reach it—and to be *continually* reaching up till at last you attain it—and then to reach for something still beyond you! I like the thought of David sitting down before the Lord and meditating about that house of cedar which he was *not* permitted to build. The strong young man will have many schemes crossing his brain and while he is in his youth he will not be able to realize them. But they will flit before him so often that at last he will pluck up courage, and as he grows in years and possibilities, he will at last make real that which once was but a dream.

Do not be ashamed, my dear young Friends, you who have scarcely left your father's roof—do not be ashamed, sometimes, to have a few right thorough daydreams! Do not be ashamed to indulge in thoughts of what you would do if you could! I say this provided that you are now doing all you *can* and this day consecrating to God all you *have*. Go to Him and ask Him to enable you to do *more* in your future life—and plan and *work* for that future life! Have a strength of purpose, and it may be God will give you strength of opportunity! And if He does *not*, yet it shall be well that it was in your heart.

I may say, too, even in the presence of the honored fathers who surround the pulpit, we sadly need a generation of stronger men in our Churches. We will not decry the blessings which God has given us already. I do not believe that any age was better than this, all things considered—but this is the time when we need our young men to be strong to all the intents of strength. Battles are coming in which they will need to stand with firm feet. There will be strifes in which they will not be of the

slightest value if they cannot brave the conflict in the very front, or fight where fly showers of fiery arrows and hot bolts of Hell. Rest assured these are not silken days, nor times to make us dream that we have won the victory!

Our fathers, where are they? They are looking down upon us from their thrones, but what do they see? Do they see us wearing the crown and waving the palm branch? If so, they see us lunatics, indeed, for that were a madman's sport. But rather they see us sharpening our swords afresh, and buckling on our panoply anew to fight the same fight which they fought under other circumstances. The young blood of the Church, under God, is our great hope in the conflict for King Jesus! The young men of the Church must be, in the next 20 years, the very soul and vigor of it, and therefore, may God raise up among us a goodly seed, a race of heroes swifter than eagles for zeal, and stronger than lions for faith!

**2.** The text gives a further description of the model Christian young man in the words, "And the Word of God abides in you." Her Majesty was on the south side of the water today, but she does not abide there. All the pomp and sunshine of her presence have vanished, and Westminster Bridge and Stangate are as they were before. The Word of God sometimes comes with right royal pomp into the minds of young men—they are affected by it for a time and they rejoice in it—but, alas, that blessed Word soon departs and they are none the better for that which they have heard.

Multitudes are still stony ground hearers—they receive the Word with joy but they have no root—and by-and-by they all wither away. The model young man in the text is not of this kind. The Word of God abides in him, by which I understand that he is one who understands the Word, for it must get into him before it can abide in him, and it can only enter by the door of the *understanding*. He *understands* the Word and then, by having an *affection* for the Word, he shuts that door and entertains the Truth of God.

Men who understand the Gospel are not quite so common as we sometimes suppose. I am not certain whether the giving up of the use of the Westminster Assembly's Catechism was a very wise thing. That grand old epitome of doctrine conveys to those who are taught it intelligently, a most solid basis upon which afterwards the Truth may be built. A considerable number of our Church members do not understand the Truth which they profess to have received. I believe this is more or less true of all denominations and that the pastors need to adopt measures, by classes or otherwise, which, under the Holy Spirit's blessing, might build up our youth in our most holy faith.

The model young man is thus taught. He understands the Truth so far as it is a matter of intellect. He grapples it to himself as with hooks of steel by intense affection, and then he lives it out with all his soul. While he holds the Word of God as a doctrine, it holds him as a living indwelling force. The Word of God *abides* in him, that is, he is constantly feeling its effects. It abides in him, "a well of water springing up unto everlasting life"—a sacred fire consuming his sins and comforting his spirit. It abides in him—a heavenly messenger revealing to him the freshness of celestial Truth, uplifting him from earthly desires—and preparing him for the man-



sions in the skies. The Gospel permeates his nature. It is inter-twisted into his very self. You would more readily *destroy* him than make him apostatize!—

***“The cords that bind around his heart  
Tortures and riches might tear off;  
But they could never, never part  
The hold he has on Christ his Lord.”***

The Word of God has become God’s resident lieutenant, dwelling in his spirit, reigning like a sovereign over his entire soul. It abides within him as an incorruptible seed which death itself cannot kill. *This* is the blessed young man, indeed! God has blessed him, and who shall reverse the benediction?

**3.** Thirdly, the text adds, “And you have overcome the Wicked One.” This is said of the *young man*. He is but a young man in Grace. He has not reached the point of fatherhood in Christ, but for all that he has overcome the Wicked One! It strikes me that Christianity use to be spoken of as a more effective thing than it is now. When people pray they seldom speak positively about what religion has done for them. I have often heard a Brother say, “The Lord has done great things for us: and we desire to be glad.” Why, dear Brother, if the Lord has done great things for you, you *are* glad!

I have known that text, “The love of Christ constrains us,” preached from as if it said that the love of Christ *ought* to constrain us, which is very true, but it is not the truth of the text! It *does* constrain us! It *does* rule in the soul! We often speak of wrestling with Satan, struggling and striving to overcome—but the *text* speaks of a victory *already* achieved, and too, by young men! We dishonor God and make people think little of the Gospel when we put in those pretended humbling terms which are only used to let people see how exceedingly humble we are. We are so mock-modest as to refuse to acknowledge the power of Divine Grace in our own souls!

As a man I would speak diffidently about anything that I do *myself*, but of anything that God has done in me, or for me, or by me. I shall not speak with bated breath, but affirm it and rejoice in it that God may be glorified. There are men here who have overcome the devil and they have overcome him in many shapes. There are many pictures of the devil about but I am afraid there are none of them accurate, for he assumes different shapes in different places. He is a chameleon—always affected by the light in which he happens to be—a Proteus, assuming every shape so that it may but help his purpose.

Some young men have overcome that *blue* devil which keeps men despairing, doubting, trembling, and fearing. You once were subject to him. You could not, you said, believe in Christ. You were afraid you never should be saved. You wrote bitter things against yourself. Ah, but you have cast him out, now, by a simple faith in Jesus! You know whom you have believed and you are persuaded that He is able to keep that which you have committed unto Him. You have overcome that devil and though he does try to come back, and when your business is a little troublesome, or the liver may not be acting properly, he endeavors to insinuate himself. Yet, by God’s Grace, he shall never fasten on the old chains again!

Then there is that dust-eating devil of whom we can never speak too badly—the yellow devil of the mammon of unrighteousness—the love of gold and silver. He is the dreaded god of London, rolling over this city as if it were all his own! I think I see him as a dragon on the top of the Church steeple, chuckling at the inscription over the Royal Exchange—“The earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof,” and laughing because he knows better, for he reckons it all belongs to him! Even as of old he said to Christ, “All these things will I give You, if You will fall down and worship me.”

What tricks are done nowadays in business for the love of gold! In fact, we know, some of us who are not business men, but who, nevertheless, are not blind, that dishonest marks and dishonest measures have become so systematic that their effect is lost and the thing itself is almost as honest as if it *were* honest. It is the fact that men have become so accustomed to say that twice three make seven that their neighbors all say, “Exactly so, and we will pay you for the goods after the same reckoning!”

But the genuine Christian, the man who is strong and has the Word of God abiding in him, scorns all this. He hears others say, “We must live,” but he replies, “Yes, but we must die.” He determines that he will not throw away his soul in order to grasp wealth, and that if it is not possible to become a merchant prince without the violation of the code of honor and of Christ’s Law, then he will be content to be poor. O young Man, if you have come to this you have overcome the Wicked One, indeed! I am afraid there are some here with gray heads who have hardly ventured on the fight. Alas, for them!

Another form of the Wicked One we must speak of but softly, but oh, how hard to be overcome by the young man. I mean Madam Wanton, that fair but foul—that smiling but murderous fiend of Hell by whom so many are deluded! Solomon spoke, “of the strange woman,” but the strong Christian in whom the Word of God abides passes by her door and shuts his ear to her siren song. He flees youthful lusts which war against the soul! He reserves both his body and his soul for his Lord who has redeemed him by His precious blood.

Young Man, if you are strong and have overcome the Wicked One, you have overcome, I trust, that Lucifer of *pride*, and it is your endeavor to walk *humbly* with your God! You have given up all idea of merit. You cannot boast nor exalt yourself, but you bow humbly at the foot of the Cross, adoring Him who has saved you from the wrath to come. You have given up, also, I trust, young Man, all subjection to the great red dragon of *fashion* who draws with his tail even the very stars of Heaven! There are some who would think it far worse to be considered unfashionable than to be thought unchristian. To be unchristian would be but such a common accusation that they might submit to it—but to be *unfashionable* would be horrible, indeed!

Young men in London get to be affected by this. If the young men in the house are going to such-and-such an entertainment—they all read a certain class of books—if they are dissipated and skeptical, then the temptation is to chime in with them! Only the man who is strong, and has the

Word of God abiding in him will overcome the Wicked One by doing the right, alone—"Faithful among the faithless found."

**II.** Thus I have described a model Christian young man. Let us further observe that THESE THINGS WHICH CONSTITUTE WHAT HE IS ARE HIS QUALIFICATIONS FOR USEFULNESS. Of course certain talents are necessary for certain positions, but it is a rule without exception that *every* child of God may be useful in the Divine family. God has not one single servant for whom He has not appointed a service.

Now, observe, my Friends, to whom I am now addressing myself—you are strong! That granted, then this very strength which you now have will enable you to do mission work for God, and the Graces which have been worked in you, through Christ Jesus—faith, love, courage, patience—are your fitness for sacred labor. If you are to be a minister you may need to acquire a measure of learning. If you are to be a missionary you will need a peculiar training, but you can get these! God will give you strength to obtain them and the spiritual strength will go very far to help you. Meanwhile, for *other* work all the strength you require is that which you already possess.

There are persons in the world who will not let us speak a word to the unconverted because, they say, and say very truly, that unconverted men are dead in sin and therefore we are not to tell them to *live* because they have no power to live. They forget that we have the power in the quickening Word and Spirit of God, and that as we speak the Word for God, power goes with it! Now, there is among us too much of this *forgetfulness* of the fact that we actually have power from on high. In prayer we are always praying for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which is very proper—but remember, we *have* the Holy Spirit—the *Spirit* is here!

He is not always manifest but He is given to His Church to abide in every one of His people. And if we would but *believe* in His Presence we should feel it more. They who preach most successfully will tell you that one cause of it is that they *expect* to be successful. They do not preach hoping that perhaps one or two may be saved, but *knowing* that they will be, because the Word of God is the *power* of God unto *salvation*! They believe in the Holy Spirit and they who do so *see* the Holy Spirit. But they who only waveringly hope in the Holy Spirit discern Him not—according to their faith so is it unto them.

Believe, my Brother, that you have within you, as a Believer, the power which is necessary for reforming that house of business of yours which is now so godless, into a House of Prayer! Believe it, and begin to work like those who do believe it! Believe that those who pass you in the morning, my young artisan Friend, may be and *shall* be converted by you and by God, if you speak to them out of your heart. Go up to them as one who knows that God is working with him! They will be awed by your manner and if they reject your message they will feel it go hard with their consciences. "I write unto you, young men, for you are strong."

We beg you to use that strength in winning souls for Christ! Remember that this very strength which brings a blessing to yourself will benefit another. That very faith which brought *you* to Christ is all you need to bring others to Christ! "He, seeing their faith, said unto the sick of the palsy,

Your sins are forgiven you.” You shall find that in which you are weak spiritually within, you will be powerless spiritually without for Christian service—and in as far as you are strong within for your personal communion with the Lord Jesus, to *that* extent shall you be strong without for the work of your Lord.

Arise, you strong young men! Arise, you who saw the face of Christ this morning in your closets! Arise, you who have waited upon Him in prayer during the day! Arise, you that delight in His Word—arise, and shake yourselves from the dust! Be active in the might which God has given you to serve Him while yet you may. As the angel said to Gideon, so say I to you—young Man, “The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor.” And yet, again, “Go in this your strength.”

If the young man enquires for tools and weapons with which to serve his Master, we refer him to the next point in the text, “The Word of God abides in you.” Now, my dear Brother, if you desire to teach others, you have not to ask what the lesson shall be for it abides in you! Do you need a text that will impress the careless? What impressed you? You cannot have a better! You desire to speak a word in season from the Word of God which shall be likely to comfort the disconsolate? What has comforted your own soul? You cannot have a better guide! You have within your own experience a tutor which cannot fail you, and you have also an encouragement that cannot be taken from you. The Word of God within you will well up like a spring and Truth and Grace will pour forth from you in rivers!

I have heard our Lord likened to a man carrying a water pot, and as He carried it upon His shoulder the water fell dropping, dropping, dropping so that everyone could track the water-bearer. So should all His people be, carrying such a fullness of Divine Grace that everyone should know where they have been by that which they have left behind! He who has lain in the beds of spices will perfume the air through which he walks. One who, like Asher, has dipped his foot in oil, will leave his footprints behind him. When the living and incorruptible seed remains within, the Divine instincts of the *new* nature will guide you to the wisest methods of activity. You will do the right thing under the inward impulse rather than the written Law and your personal salvation will be your prime qualification for seeking out others of your Master’s flock.

Once again, “you have overcome the Wicked One.” The man who has once given Satan a slap in the face need not be afraid of *men*. If you have often stood foot to foot with a violent temptation, and, after wrestling, have overcome it, you can laugh to scorn all the puny adversaries who assail you. It will breed manliness within the young man and make him a truly muscular Christian to have been practiced in inward conflicts. You have overcome Satan by the power of Divine Grace—why, then, there is hope that in the Sunday school class which you have to teach—in the hearts of those boys and girls, Satan may *again* be conquered!

There is hope for that drunken man you have been talking with lately—why should not *he* overcome the Wicked One? You were once weak enough, but Divine Grace has made you strong—what Grace has done for you it can do for another! “After I was saved myself” said one, “I never de-

spaired of any other.” So should the fact that you have been enabled to achieve a conquest in a very terrible strife comfort you with regard to all other cases! Go into the back slums—they are not far off. Penetrate the dark lanes and alleys. You have overcome the Wicked One! You cannot meet with anything worse than he whom you have already vanquished. Let the majesty of Grace in your souls be to you a solace and a stimulus—and never say anything is too hard for you to do who have already met Apollyon face to face and put him to the rout!

**III.** The wording of the text suggested to me TO FORCE THE CONSCRIPTION. “I have written unto you, young men.” In the French wars, certain young men, unhappily, found their names written down in the conscription and were marched to the wars. Now, in a war from which none of us desire to escape, I hope there are young men here tonight whose names are written down—heavenly conscripts—who are summoned tonight, more fully than ever before in their lives, to go forth to the battle of the Lord of Hosts!

I invite every young man here who is already converted to God to dedicate himself to the Lord Jesus Christ tonight. It is not a matter that I can talk you into, nor, indeed, would I try it, but I would ask you to sit still a moment and consider with yourselves this—“I am a believer in Christ. I have been lately to the sacramental table. I profess to have been chosen of God, to have been redeemed with precious blood, to have been separated from the rest of mankind to be destined for an immortality most brilliant. Am I living as becomes a redeemed one?”

Passing your hand over your brow thoughtfully, you will come to the conclusion, probably, “I am not. I am serving God, I trust, in a way, but not with all my heart, and soul, and strength as I should. How about my *time*? Do I devote as much of that as I can to sacred work? How about my *talent*? Does that display itself most in the Literary Association or in the Sunday school? Are my oratorical abilities most developed in the debating room or in preaching at the street corner? Am I giving to Christ the prime and choice, and vigor of my life? If I am not, I ought to do so. I ought, I feel I ought to be altogether Christ’s. Not that I should leave my business, but I must *make* my business *Christ’s* business, and so conduct it, and so to distribute of its results as to prove that I am Christ’s steward, working in the world for Him, and not for self.”

Dear Friends, if this night you shall not so much vow as *pray* that from this time there shall not be a drop of blood in your body, nor a hair on your head, nor a penny in your purse, nor a word on your tongue, nor a thought in your heart but what shall be altogether the Lord’s, I shall be glad enough. It will be well if you take a step further as *conscripts*. You “holy-work folk”—as they used to call those who dwelt around the cathedral at Durham and were exempt from all service to the baron because they served the Church—I want you now to think of some particular walk and department in which as young men and young women you can devote yourselves wholly to Christ.

Generalities in religion are always to be avoided, more especially generalities in service. If a man waits upon you for a situation, and you say to him, “What are you?” if he replies, “I am a painter, or a carpenter,” you

can find him work, perhaps, but if he says, "Oh, I can do *anything*," you understand that he can do nothing! So it is with a sort of spiritual jobber who professes to be able to do anything in the Church but who really does nothing. I want my conscript Brethren tonight to consider what they are going to do, and I beg them to consider it with such deliberation that when once they have come to a conclusion, they will not need to change it, for changes involve losses.

What can you do? What is your calling? Ragged schools? Sunday schools? Street preaching? Tract distribution? Here is a choice for you—which do you select? Waste no time, but say, "This is my calling, and by God's Grace I will give myself up to it, meaning to do it as well as any man ever did do it—if possible, better—meaning if I take to the Ragged school, to be a thoroughly good teacher of those little Arabs. If I take to the Sunday school, intending to make myself as efficient in the class as ever teacher could be."

It shall be no small blessing to the Churches whom you represent if such a resolve is made. And if the conscripts are found tonight of such a sort, I would enquire next, whether there may not be young men here who can give themselves up to the Christian ministry, which is a step farther. There are many men who ought to be employed in the Christian ministry who stand back. You need not expect that you will gain earthly wealth by it. If you have any notion of that sort, I pray you keep to your breaking of stones—that will pay you better. If you have any idea that you will find the ministry an *easy* life, I entreat you to try the treadmill—for that would be an *amusement* compared with the life of the genuine Christian minister—in London, at least.

But if you feel an intense earnestness to win souls, and if you have succeeded in speaking on other subjects and can get some attention, think whether you cannot devote yourself to the work. Ah, young man, if I cast an ambitious thought into your mind I mean it only for my Master's glory! If the Lord should say tonight, "Separate me Saul and Barnabas to this work." If He should call out some fine noble young fellow who might have given himself up, perhaps, to the pursuits of commerce, but who now will dedicate himself to the service of the Christian ministry, it would be well! Take care you keep not back whom God would have!

Then, further, I have to ask may there not be here some young man who will become a conscript for missionary service abroad? "I write unto you, young men, because you are strong, and the Word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the Wicked One." You are the men we need. Dr. Mullens and Mr. Robinson will be glad to hear of you. I might, tonight, read a sort of proclamation such as I see sometimes issued by Her Majesty—"Wanted, young men." We give no description about the inches, either in girth or the height, but we do give this description—"Wanted, young men who are strong and in whom the Word of God abides, and who have overcome the Wicked One."

You who are weak had better stop at home in the Christian nursery a little while. You in whom the Word of God does not as yet abide had need to stay till you are taught what are the elements of the faith. You who have not overcome the Wicked One had better flesh your maiden swords

in home fields of conflict. You are not the men who are wanted. But you who are strong enough to do and to dare for Jesus—you who are spiritually-minded enough to have overcome the monster of evil within yourselves—you are the men to fight Satan abroad in his strongholds of heathendom, and Popery, and Mohammedanism! You, the choice men of the Church—you are the men whom the Missionary Society requires! Think of it tonight before you go to sleep, and if the Lord inclines you, come forward and say, “Here am I. Send me.”

Once again. If this is impossible, and I suppose it may be to the most of us, then may we not get up a conscription tonight of young men who will resolve to help at home those who have the courage to go abroad? You have nobly done, as young men, in endeavoring to raise a large sum for the work. You are an example to every Christian denomination in that respect. But do not let the project fall short of its full completion! And when it is completed take care that you do it *again*, for it is good to be zealous *always* in a good thing!

We should forget the things that are behind and press forward to that which is before. It will be a great thing when *all* Christian merchants do what some are doing, namely, give of their substance to the cause of Christ in due proportion. It is a blessed thing for a young man to begin business with the rule that he will give the Lord at least his tenth. That habit of weekly storing for Christ and then giving to Christ out of his own bag instead of giving from your own purse is a most blessed one! Cultivate it, you young tradesmen who have just set up in business for yourselves—and you good wives help your husbands to do it.

You young men who are clerks and have regular incomes, make that a regular part of your weekly business and let some share of the consecrated spoil go to the Lord’s foreign field. At the same time, never let your subscriptions to this or that act as an exoneration from *personal* service—give *yourselves* to Christ—your whole selves in the highest state of vigor! Your whole selves constantly, intelligently, without admixture of sinister motives. May God send His blessing, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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

# PREPARATION FOR THE COMING OF THE LORD NO. 2105

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 22, 1889,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And now, little children, abide in Him. That, when He shall appear, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.”*  
1 John 2:28.

OUR first anxious desire is that our hearers would come to Christ. We lay ourselves out to lift Him up, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness and to bid men look to Him and live. There is no salvation except by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He said, “Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God and there is none else.”

When men have looked to Jesus, our next anxiety is that they may be *in* Christ, the City of Refuge. We long to speak of them as “men in Christ Jesus.” My beloved Hearers, you must be in living, loving, lasting union with the Son of God, or else you are not in a state of salvation. That which begins with coming to Christ, as the engrafted branch is bound to the vine, continues in your growing into Him and receiving of His life. You must be in Christ as the stone is in the building, as the member is in the body.

When we have good hope that our hearers have come to Christ and are “in Christ,” a further anxiety springs up in our hearts that they may “abide” in Christ. Our longing is that, despite temptations to go away from Him, they may always remain at His feet. That, notwithstanding the evil of their nature, they may never betray their Master but may faithfully hold to Him. We would have them mindful of that precept—“As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk you in Him.” Oh, that they may be rooted in Him, and built up in Him—and may always be in union with Him! Then shall we present them to our Lord in the day of His appearing with exceedingly great joy.

To this third anxiety of the minister of Christ I would give my mind this morning. John says, “Little children, abide in Him.” How sweetly those words must have flowed from the lips and the pen of such a venerable saint! Methinks he is, in this, the echo of the Lord Jesus. For in the fifteenth chapter of the Gospel of John, the Lord Jesus said, “Abide in Me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can you, except you abide in Me. If you abide in Me and My Words abide in you, you shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you.”

That word, “abide,” was a very favorite one with the Lord Jesus and it became equally dear to that disciple whom Jesus loved. In our Authorized Version, the translators have interpreted it sometimes, “remain,” and sometimes, “continue.” But it is not very wise of them to have so changed the rendering. It is one of the virtues of the Revised Version that it gener-



ally translates the same Greek word by the same English word. This may not be absolutely requisite, for a little variety may be tolerated. But it is eminently instructive, since it allows us to see in our own mother tongue where the Holy Spirit used the same word. And if the translation is correct in one case, we may naturally conclude it will not be incorrect in another. “Abide,” is one of John’s special words.

May the Lord help us to consider these blessed words! Better still, may He write them on our hearts and may we fulfill their teaching! First, notice to what he urges them—“abide in Him.” Secondly, under what character he addresses them—“little children.” And thirdly, by what motive he exhorts them—“that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.”

**I.** First, then, OBSERVE TO WHAT HE URGES THEM—“Abide in Him.” By this he meant one thing. But that thing is so comprehensive that we may better understand it by viewing it from many sides.

He meant fidelity to the Truth taught by our Lord. We are sure he meant this, because, a little previously, in the twenty-fourth verse, he had said, “If that which you have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, you also shall continue in the Son and in the Father.” Beloved, you have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ unto the salvation of your souls. You have trusted in Him as the Son of God, the appointed Mediator and the effectual Sacrifice for your sin.

Your hope has come from a belief in Christ as God has borne witness to Him. Abide in the Truth which you received from the beginning—for in your earliest days it worked salvation in you. The foundation of your faith is not a changeable doctrine—you rest on a sure word of testimony. Truth is, in its very nature, fixed and unalterable. You know more about it than you did. But the thing itself is still the same and must be the same. Take care that you abide in it. You will find it difficult to do so, for there is an element of changeableness about *yourself*—this you must overcome by Divine Grace.

You will find many elements of seduction in the outside world. There are men whose business it is to shake the faith of others, and thereby gain a reputation for cleverness and depth of thought. Some seem to think it an ambition worthy of a Christian to be always questioning, or, as the Apostle puts it, to be “ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the Truth.” To throw doubt into minds which, by a gracious certainty, have been made blessed, is their chosen lifework. Therefore, you will be often led to try your foundation, and at times you will tremble as you cling to it.

Hearken, then, to this Word from the mouth of the Holy Spirit—“Abide in Him.” Stay where you were as to the Truth which you believe. That which has justified you, will sanctify you. That which has, in a measure, sanctified you, will yet perfect you. Make no change as to the eternal verities upon which you ground your hope. As a stone, you are built on the foundation—abide there. As a branch, you have been grafted into the stem—abide there. As a member, you are in the body—abide there. It is all over with you if you do not. Abide in that holy mold of doctrine into which you were at first delivered.

Let no man deceive you with vain words, though there are many abroad in these days who “would deceive, if it were possible, the very elect.” Abide in Jesus, by letting His Words abide in you. Believe what you have found to be the means of your quickening. Believe it with a greater intensity and a greater practicality. “Cast not away your confidence, which has great recompense of reward.”

Next, John means “abide in Him” as to the uniformity of your trust. When you first enjoyed a hope, you rested upon Christ alone. I think I heard the first infant prattle of your faith when it said—

***“I’m a poor sinner and nothing at all,  
But Jesus Christ is my All in All.”***

At first you had no experience upon which you could rely, you had no inward Divine Graces upon which you could depend—you rested wholly upon Christ and His finished work. You rested in no degree upon the works of the Law, nor upon your own feelings, nor upon your own knowledge, nor upon your own resolves. Christ was all.

Do you not remember how you used to tell others that the Gospel precept was, “Only believe”? You cried to them, “Trust in Jesus! Get out of yourselves! Find all your wants provided for in Him.” Now, Beloved, you have experience—thank God for it. Now you have the Graces of the Spirit—thank God for them. Now you know the things of God by the teaching of the Holy Spirit—be grateful for that knowledge. But do not now fly in the face of your Savior by putting your experience, or your Graces, or your knowledge, where He, and He alone, must be.

Depend today as simply as you depended then. If you have some idea that you are hastening towards perfection, take care that you do not indulge a vain conceit of yourself. But even if it is true, still do not mix your perfection with His perfection, nor your advance in Divine Grace with the foundation which He has laid for you in His blood and righteousness. “Abide in Him.” He is that good ship into which you have entered that He may bear you safely to the desired haven. Abide in the vessel—neither venture to walk on the water, like Peter—nor think to swim by your own strength. “Abide in Him,” and you shall weather every storm.

Only as you keep to your first simple confidence in the perfect work of the Lord Jesus can you have peace and salvation. As it is written, “You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You. Because he trusts in You.”

Moreover, abide in the Lord Jesus Christ in making Him the constant object of your life. As you live by Christ, so live *for* Christ. Ever since you trusted in Christ as dying for you, you have felt that if He died for you, then you died in Him—that from now on your life might be consecrated to Him. You are not your own but you are Christ’s and Christ’s only. The first object of your being is to honor and serve Him who loved you and gave Himself for you. You have not followed after wealth, or honor, or self-pleasing, but you have followed Jesus—take heed that you “abide in Him” by continuing to serve Him.

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 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. And the world passes away and the lust thereof: but he that does the will of God abides forever.”

You may wisely continue where you are, for you have chosen the right pursuit and you have entered upon the right road. That crown which glitters in your eyes at the end of the race is worthy of all your running. You could not have a nobler motive than the constraining love of Christ. To live for Christ is the highest style of living—continue in it more and more. If the Lord changes your circumstances, still live for Christ. If you go up, take Christ up with you—if you go down, Christ will go down with you. If you are in health, live for Christ earnestly. If you are bound to a sick bed, live for Christ patiently. Go about your business and sing for Jesus. Or if He bids you stay at home and cough away your life, then cough for Jesus. But let everything be for Him. For you, “Excelsior” means higher consecration, more heavenly living.

Surely, we should also understand by, “Abide in Him,” that we are to persevere in our obedience to our Lord. The next verse is, “If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone that does righteousness is born of Him.” What your Lord bids you, continue to do. Call no man Master, but in all things, submit your thoughts, your words, and your acts to the rule of the Lord Jesus. Obey Him by whose obedience you are justified. Be precise and prompt in your execution of His commands. If others reckon you morbidly conscientious, heed not their opinion but, “Abide in Him.”

The rule of the Master is always binding on all His disciples and they depart from Him in heart when they err from His rule. Reverence for the precept is as much included in our homage of Christ as credence of the doctrine. If you have been upright in your dealings, be upright. Be accurate to the penny in every payment. If you have been loving and generous, continue to be loving and generous. For your Lord’s Law is love. If you have closely imitated the Lord Jesus, go on to copy Him still more minutely. Seek no new model—pray the Holy Spirit to work you to the same thing. To you, as a soldier, your Captain’s word is Law—

***“Yours not to reason why,  
Yours but to dare and die.”***

“Abide in Him.” I know you might be rich by doing that un-Christly act—scorn to win wealth in such a way. I know you may involve yourself in persecution if you follow your Lord closely—accept such persecution gladly and rejoice in it, for His name’s sake. I know that a great many would say that for charity’s sake you had better make compromises and keep in union with evil doctrine and worldly practice. But you know better. Be it yours to follow the Lamb wherever He goes. For this is what His beloved Apostle means when he says, “Abide in Him.”

But I have not completed the full description yet. I fear I am not able to do so, by reason of my shallow knowledge and forgetfulness. Continue in spiritual union with your Lord. All the life you have is life derived from Him—seek no other. You are not a Christian except as Jesus is the Christ of God to you. You are not alive unto God, except as you are one with the risen Lord. You are not saved, except as He is your Savior. Nor righteous, except as He is your Righteousness. You have not a single pulse of heav-

only desire, nor a breath of Divine life in you but what was first given you *from Him* and is daily given to you *by Him*.

Abide in this vital union. Do not try to lead an independent life. "Abide in Him," in complete dependence from day to day upon the life which is treasured up in Him on your behalf. Let your life "abide in Him" in the sense of being directed by Him. The head directs all the members. The order which lifts my hand, or spreads my palm, or closes my fist, or lowers my arm, comes from the brain, which is the headquarters of the soul. Abide in your Lord by implicitly acknowledging His headship. Let every regulation of your life come from Him who is the Head, and let it be obeyed as naturally as the desires of the mind coming from the brain are obeyed by every part of the body.

There is no war between the hand and the foot, for they abide in the head and so are ruled without force and guided without violence. If the leg were to set up an independent authority over itself, instead of obeying the head, what a strange walking we should see! Have you ever met with afflicted people in whom the nerves have lost vigor and the muscles seem to jerk at random and throw out a leg or an arm without reason? Such movements are painful to see and we know that such a man is diseased. Do not desire to be without Law to Christ. Let that mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus—in that respect, "abide in Him."

"Abide in Him" as the element of your life. Let Him encompass you as the air surrounds you on all sides. As a fish, whether it is the tiniest sprat or the largest whale, abides in the sea—so do you abide in Christ. The fish does not seek the sky or the shore, it could not live out of the element of water. And even so, I beseech you, do not seek to live in the world and in its sins. As a Christian, you cannot live there—Christ is your life. There is room enough for you in the Lord Jesus Christ, for He is the infinite God. Go not out of Him for anything. Seek not pleasure outside of Christ, nor treasure outside of Christ. For such pleasure or treasure would be ruinous. Have neither want, nor will, nor wish, beyond your Lord. Let Him draw a line around you and abide within that circle.

"Abide in Him" in the sense of being at home in Him. What a world of meaning I intend by those words, "being at home in Christ"! And yet this is the sense of the words, "Abide in Him." I was speaking yesterday to a friend who had bought a pleasant house, with a large garden. And he said to me, "I now feel as if I have a *home*. I have lived in London for years and I have changed from one house to another with as little regret as a man feels in changing an omnibus. But I have always longed for the home feeling which hung about my father's house in the country.

"Why, there we loved the cozy rooms and the look-outs from the little windows and the corner cupboards in the kitchen. As for the garden and the field, they yielded us constant delight, for there was that bush in the garden where the robin had built and the tree with the blackbird's nest. We knew where the pike lay in the pool and where the tortoise had buried itself for the winter and where the first primroses would be found in the spring. There is a vast difference between a house and a home."

That is what John means with regard to Christ—we are not merely to call on Him but to *abide* in Him. Do not go to Jesus one day, and to the

world another day—do not be a lodger with Him, but *abide* in Him. My friend spoke of changing from one omnibus to another, and I fear that some change from Christ to the world when the day changes from Sunday to Monday. But it should not be so. Say with Moses, “Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.” Your Cross is the tree of the family of love—within the thorn-hedge of Your suffering love our whole estate is shut in. Your name is posted on our home. We are not to You as tenants with a lease but we have a freehold in You. We can truly say and sing—

**“Here would I make a settled rest  
While others go and come—  
No more a stranger or a guest,  
But like a child at home.”**

Lord Jesus, I am at home nowhere but in You. In You I abide. Wherever else I lodge, I have in due time to shift my quarters. Whatever else I have, I lose it, or leave it. But You are the same and You change not. What a comfort to have our Lord Himself to be our chosen dwelling place in time and in eternity!

Now I think I have come nearer to the full sense of my text! “Abide in Him,” means hold fast to Him, live in Him, let all your noblest powers be drawn forth in connection with Him. As a man at home is all there, feel at ease in fellowship with Him. Say, “Return unto your rest, O my Soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.”

Why does the Apostle urge us to abide in Christ? Is there any likelihood of our going away? Yes. For in this very chapter he mentions apostates, who from disciples had degenerated into antichrists. He says of them, “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.” “Abide in Him,” then, and do not turn aside unto crooked ways, as many professors have done. The Savior once said to His Apostles, “Will you, also, go away?” And they answered Him with that other question, “Lord, to whom shall we go?”

I hope your heart is so conscious that He has the words of eternal life that you could not dream of going elsewhere. “But surely it is implied in these warnings that SAINTS leave their Lord and *perish*?” I answer, “No.” Carefully observe the provision which is made against that fatality—a provision to enable us to carry out the precept of the text.

Will you open your Testaments and just look at the verse which immediately precedes my text. What do you see? “You *shall* abide in Him. And now, little children, abide in Him.” There is a promise made to those who are in Christ that they *shall* “abide in Him.” But that promise does not render the precept unnecessary. For the Lord deals with us as with reasonable beings, not as with sticks and stones. And He secures the fulfillment of His own promise that we shall abide in Him, by impressing upon our hearts His sacred precept, whereby He bids us “abide in Him.”

The force He uses to effect His purpose is instruction, heart-winning and persuading. We abide in Him, not by a physical Law, as a mass of iron abides on the earth. But by a mental and spiritual Law, by which the greatness of Divine love and goodness holds us fast to the Lord Jesus. You have the guarantee that you shall abide in Christ in the Covenant engagement, “I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me.” What a blessed promise that is!

You are to take care that you abide in Christ as much as if all depended upon yourself. And yet you can look to the promise of the Covenant and see that the *real* reason for your abiding in Christ lies in the operation of His unchanging love and Divine Grace. Moreover, Brethren, if you are in Christ Jesus, you have the Holy Spirit given you to enable you to abide in Him. Read the twenty-seventh verse—"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."

The Holy Spirit brings the Truth of God home to your heart with savor and unction, endearing it to your inmost soul. The Truth of God has so saturated you through the anointing, that you cannot give it up. Has not your Lord said, "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life"? Thus, you see that what is commanded in one Scripture is promised and provided for in another. To His people, God's commands are enablings. As He bids you abide in Him, so by that very bidding He causes you to abide in Him to His praise and glory.

**II.** Secondly, notice UNDER WHAT CHARACTER JOHN ADDRESSES THESE BELIEVERS. He says, "And now, little children." This indicates the Apostle's love to them. John lived to a great age. The tradition is that they used to carry him into the assembly, and when he could do nothing else, he would lift his hand, and simply say, "Little children, love one another." Here, to show his tender concern for those to whom he wrote, he called them, "little children." He could not wish them a greater blessing out of the depth of his heart's affection, than that they should faithfully abide in Christ.

Next, by this he suggests their near and dear relation to their Father in Heaven. You are the children of God. But as yet you are little ones, therefore do not leave your Father's house, nor run away from your elder Brother's love. Because you are little children, you are not of traveling years, therefore stay at home and abide in your Lord. Does he not hint at their feebleness? Even if you were grown and strong, you would not be wise to gather all together and wander away into the far country. But as you are so young, so dependent, so feeble, it is essential that you abide in Him. Shall a babe forsake its mother? What can you do apart from God? Is He not your life, your All?

Does not the Apostle also gently hint at their fickleness? You are very changeable, like little babes. You are apt to be hot and cold in half an hour. You are this and that and fifty other things, in the course of one revolving moon. But, little children as you are, be faithful to one point—abide in your Savior. Change not towards your Redeemer. Stretch out your hands and clasp Him and cry—

***"My Jesus, I love You, I know You are mine,  
For You all the follies of sin I resign."***

Surrender yourself to Him by an Everlasting Covenant never to be cancelled. Be His forever and ever.

Did not this remind them of their daily dependence upon the Lord's care, as little children depend on their parents? Why, Beloved, the Lord has to nurse you. He feeds you with the unadulterated milk of the Word.

He comforts you as a mother does her child. He carries you in His bosom, He bears you all your days. Your new life is as yet weak and struggling—do not carry it into the cold atmosphere of distance from Jesus. Little children, since you derive all from Jesus, abide in Him. To go elsewhere will be to wander into a howling wilderness.

The world is empty—only Christ has fullness. Away from Jesus you will be as a child deserted by its mother, left to pine and starve and die. Or as a little lamb on the hillside without a shepherd, tracked by the wolf, whose teeth will soon extract your heart's blood. Abide, O Child, with your mother! Abide, O Lamb, with your shepherd! We may all come under John's description at this time. The beloved John speaks unto us as unto little children, for we are none of us much more. We are not such wonderfully knowing people as certain of our neighbors—we are not such learned scientists and acute critics as they are—neither have we their marvelous moral consciousness, which is superior to inspiration itself.

Therefore we are bound by our very feebleness to venture less than they do. Let the men of the world choose what paths they will—we feel bound to abide in Christ because we know no other place of safety. They may push off into the sea of speculation. Our smaller boats must hug the shore of certainty. To us, however, it is no small comfort that the Lord has revealed to babes the things which are hidden from the wise and prudent. Those who become as little children enter into the kingdom of Heaven.

Cling to the Lord Jesus in your feebleness, in your fickleness, in your nothingness. And abidingly take Him to be everything to you. "The conies are but a feeble sort, yet they make their houses in the rocks." Be you like they are. Abide in the rifts of the Rock of Ages and let nothing tempt you to quit your stronghold. You are no lion, able to fight your foes and deliver yourself by main strength. You are only a little cony and you will be wise to hide rather than fight. "Little children, abide in Him."

**III.** I now come to my last point, which is most important, for it finds steam to drive the engine. Thirdly, we shall consider BY WHAT MOTIVE JOHN EXHORTS US TO THIS PLEASANT AND NECESSARY DUTY OF ABIDING IN CHRIST.

Kindly look at the text, for there is in it a little word to be noticed. The Apostle exhorts us by a motive in which he takes his share. Let me read it—"Now, little children, abide in Him. That, when He shall appear, you may have confidence." No, no. Look at that little word—it runs thus, "that WE may have confidence." The beloved John needed to have confidence at the appearing of the Lord and confidence fetched from the same source as that to which he directed his little children. They must abide in *Christ*, that they might have confidence—and the dearest of the Apostles must practice the same abiding. How wisely and yet how sweetly he puts himself upon our level in this matter!

Notice, further, that the motive is one drawn from Jesus. John does not drive Believers with the lash of the Law—he draws them with the cords of love. I never like to see God's children whipped with rods gathered from the thorny sides of Sinai. We have not come to Mount Sinai but to Mount Zion. When a man tries to pommel me to my duty by the Law, I kick at the goad like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. And rightly so, "For you are

not under the Law but under grace.” The motive which sways a free-born heir of Heaven is fetched from Divine Grace and not from Law. It is from Jesus, not from Moses. Christ is our example and our motive, blessed be His name!

The motive is drawn from our Lord’s expected advent. Notice how John puts it. He uses two words for the same thing—“When He shall appear,” and, “at His coming.” The second advent may be viewed in two lights. First, as the appearing of One who is here already but is hidden. And next, as the coming of One who is absent. In the first sense, we know that our Lord Jesus Christ abides in His Church—according to His words, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” Yet, though spiritually present, He is unseen. Our Lord will, all of a sudden, be “manifested,” as the Revised Version has it. The spiritual and secret Presence of Christ will become a visible and manifest Presence in the day of His appearing.

The Apostle also uses the term, “at His coming,” or, “His Presence.” This is the same thing from another point of view. In a certain evident sense our Lord is absent—“He is not here, for He is risen.” He has gone His way unto the Father. In that respect He will come a second time, “without a sin-offering, unto salvation.” He who has gone from us will so come in like manner as He was seen to go up into Heaven. There is, then, a difference of aspect between the second advent when it is described as, “His appearing,” and “His coming.” John pleads the glorious manifestation of our Lord under both of these views as a reason for abiding in Him.

As to our Lord’s “appearing,” he would have us abide in Christ, that we may have confidence when He appears. Confidence at His appearing is the high reward of constant abiding in Christ. The Apostle keeps most prominent “the appearing” as an argument. A thousand things are to happen at our Lord’s appearing. But John does not mention *one* of them. He does not hold it up as a thing to be desired that we may have confidence amid the wreck of matter and the crash of worlds, when the stars shall fall like autumn leaves, when the sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood.

He does not mention that the graves shall be opened and the dead shall rise, or when the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat—the earth also, and the works that are therein—shall be burned up. Those will be direful times, days of terror and dismay. But it is not of these that he speaks particularly. For he regards all these events as swallowed up in the one great fact of the glorious appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

His desire is that we may have confidence if He appears all of a sudden. What does he mean by having confidence when He shall appear? Why, this—that if you abide in Him when you do not see Him, you will be very bold should He suddenly reveal Himself. Before He appears, you have dwelt in Him and He has dwelt in you. What fear could His appearing cause you? Faith has so realized Him, that if suddenly He were to appear to the senses, it would be no surprise to you.

And, assuredly, it would cause you joy, rather than dismay. You would feel that you at last enjoyed what you had long expected, and saw some-



what more closely a Friend with whom you had long been familiar. I trust, Beloved, that some of us live in such a style that if, all of a sudden, our Lord were to appear, it would cause no alarm to us. We have believed Him to be present, though unseen, and it will not affect our conduct when He steps from behind the curtain and stands in the open light. O Lord Jesus, if You were now to stand in our midst, we should remember that we had Your presence before, and lived in it, and now we should only be the more assured of that which we before knew by faith.

We shall behold our Lord with confidence, freedom, assurance and delight—feeling perfectly at home with Him. The Believer who abides in his Lord would be but little startled by His sudden appearing. He is serving his Lord now, and he would go on serving Him. He loves Him now, and he would go on loving Him. And because he would have a clearer view of Him, he would feel a more intense consecration to Him.

The word translated “confidence” means freedom of speech. If our Divine Lord were to appear in a moment, we should not lose our tongue through fear, but should welcome Him with glad acclaim. To desert our Lord would rob us of that ease of mind which is betokened by free speech. But to cleave to Him will secure us confidence. We now speak to Him in secret, and He speaks again to us. We shall not cease to speak in tones of reverent love when He appears. I have preached concerning my Lord, while He is not seen, those Truths of God which I shall not blush to admit before His face.

If my Lord and Master were, at this instant, to appear in His Glory in this Tabernacle, I would dare, with confidence, to hand Him the volumes of my sermons, in proof that I have not departed from His Truth, but have heartily continued in Him. I ought to improve in many things but I could not improve upon the Gospel which I have preached among you. I am prepared to live by it, to die by it, or to meet my Lord upon it if He should, this day, appear.

O my Hearers, if you are in Christ, see to it that you so abide in Him that, should He suddenly appear, you would behold Him with confidence. If we abide in Him, if he were to unveil His majestic face, we might be overcome with rapture. But our confidence in Him would grow stronger, our freedom with Him would be even more enlarged and our joy in Him would be made perfect. Has He not prayed for us that we may be with Him, and behold His Glory? And can we be afraid of the answer to His loving prayer? If you abide in Christ, the manifestation of Christ will be *your* manifestation and that will be a matter of delight—not of fear.

Beloved, if you do not abide in Him, you will have no confidence. If I were to compromise the Truth of God and then my Lord were to appear, could I meet Him with confidence? If, to preserve my reputation, or be thought liberal-minded, I played fast and loose with the Gospel, how could I see my Lord’s face with confidence? If any of you have failed to serve your Master. If you have preferred gain to godliness, and pleasure to holiness—if He were suddenly to shine forth in His Glory—what confidence could you have in meeting Him?

A good man was asked, one day, “If the Lord were now to appear, how would you feel?” He replied. “My Brother, I should not be afraid. But I

think I should be ashamed.” He meant that he was not afraid of condemnation but he blessed him who knows how little he had served his Lord. This case it was genuine humility. I pray you, get not only beyond being afraid, but may the Lord make you so to abide in Him that you would not even be ashamed at His appearing!

The other point is that you should “not be ashamed before Him at His coming.” That means that having regarded Him as being absent, you have not so lived that, if He should suddenly be present in Person, you would be ashamed of your past life. What must it be to be driven with shame away from His Presence into everlasting contempt? The text may have such a meaning. What have you been doing while He has been absent?

This is a question for a servant to answer at his employer’s arrival. You are left in his house to take care of it while he is in the far-off country. And if you have been beating his servants and eating and drinking with the drunken, you will be greatly ashamed when he returns. His coming will be in itself a judgment. “Who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when He appears?” Blessed is that man who, with all his faults, has been so sanctified by Divine Grace that he will not be ashamed at his Lord’s coming.

Who is that man? It is the man who has learned to abide in Christ. What is the way to prepare for Christ’s coming? By the study of the prophecies? Yes, if you are sufficiently instructed to be able to understand them. “To be prepared for the Lord’s coming,” some enthusiasts might ask, “had I not better spend a month in retirement and get out of this wicked world?” You may, if you like. And especially you will do so if you are lazy. But the one Scriptural prescription for preparing for His coming is this: “Abide in Him.”

If you abide in the faith of Him, holding His Truth, following His example, and making Him your dwelling place, your Lord may come at any hour and you will welcome Him. The cloud, the Great White Throne, the blast of trumpets, the angelic attendants of the last assize, the trembling of creation, and the rolling up of the universe as a worn-out vesture will have no alarms for you. For you will not be ashamed at His coming.

The date of that coming is concealed. When He shall come, no man can tell. Watch for Him and be always ready, that you may not be ashamed at His advent. Should a Christian man go into worldly assemblies and amusements? Would he not be ashamed should his Lord come and find him among the enemies of the Cross? I dare not go where I should be ashamed to be found should my Lord come all of a sudden. Should a Christian man ever be in a passion? Suppose his Lord should then and there come? Would he not be ashamed at His coming?

One here says of an offender, “I will never forgive her. She shall never darken my doors again.” Would you not be ashamed if the Lord Jesus came and found you unforgiving? Oh, that we may abide in Him and never be in such a state that His coming would be unwelcome to us! Beloved, so live from day to day in duty and in devotion that your Lord’s coming would be timely. Go about your daily business and abide in Him, and then His coming will be a glorious delight to you.

I called to see one of our friends and she was whitening the front steps of the house. She apologized very much and said that she felt ashamed of being caught in such a position. But I assured her that I should like my Lord to come and find me, just as I found her, doing my daily work with all my heart. We are never in better trim for seeing our Master than when we are faithfully doing His work. There is no need for a pious smartening up—he that abides in Christ always wears garments of glory and beauty. He may go in with his Lord into the wedding whenever the midnight cry is heard. Abide in Him and then none can make you ashamed. Who shall lay anything to your charge?

He will come—behold, He is coming even now. Hear you not the sounding of His chariot wheels? He may arrive before yon sun goes down. “In such an hour as you think not, the Son of man comes.” When the world is eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, He will bring destruction upon the ungodly. Be you so engaged, day by day, that you will not be taken at unawares. What will it be to be caught up together with the saints in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air! What will it be to see Him come in the glory of the Father and all His holy angels with Him! What will it be to see Him reign upon the earth, with His ancients gloriously!

Can you imagine the millennial splendor, the age of gold, the halcyon days of peace? As for the judgment of the world, know you not that the saints shall judge angels? They shall appear as assessors with Christ and the Lord shall bruise Satan under their feet. Glory awaits us and nothing but glory, if we abide in Christ. Therefore, keep your garments unspotted, your loins girt, your lamps trimmed, and your lights burning—and you, yourselves, as men and women that look for your Lord—when He comes, you may have confidence and not shame.

May the Holy Spirit, without whom this cannot be, be freely given to us this day, that we may abide in the Lord! And you who have never trusted in Christ for salvation, may you come to Him and then “abide in Him” from this good hour! To His name be glory! Amen.

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

# “AND WE ARE”—A JEWEL FROM THE REVISED VERSION NO. 1934

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY,  
DECEMBER 19, 1886,  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, JULY 19, 1885.**

*DEAR friends, the most of my text will be found in our Old Version, but for once I shall ask you to look elsewhere for a part of it. A genuine fragment of Inspired Scripture has been dropped by our older translators and it is too precious to be lost. Did not our Lord say, “Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost”? The half lost portion of our text is restored to us in the Revised Version. Never did a translation of the New Testament fail more completely than this Revised Version has done as a book for general reading, but as an assistant to the student, it deserves honorable mention, despite its faults! It exhibits, here and there, special beauties and has, no doubt, in certain places, brought into notice words of sacred Scripture which had fallen out. We have a notable instance in my present text. Turn to the First Epistle of John, the third chapter, at the first verse—*

***“Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.”***

So far we keep to our Authorized Version. Now read the Revised Version, and note the words added—

***“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God: and such we are.”***

The word “such” is not in the original. We therefore leave it out and then we get the words—AND WE ARE. There are only two words in the Greek—“and we are.” That the addition is correct I have not the slightest doubt. Those authorities upon which we depend—those manuscripts which are best worthy of notice—have these words and they are to be found in the Vulgate, the Alexandrian and several other versions. They ought never to have dropped out. In the judgment of the most learned and those best to be relied on, these are veritable words of Inspiration. So far as doctrine is concerned, it does not matter, much, whether they are or are not in the original text because we get the same words farther on. “*Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that if He shall be manifested, we shall be like He; for we shall see Him even as He is.*”

The point that struck me as being most worthy of notice was that when the Apostle had said, “We shall be called children of God,” he then adds—We are not only to be called so, but *we are so*. The glory of it is that we now have this thing. We have it in possession—“*and we are.*” This little interjected assertion, “and we are,” brings most forcibly before my own mind the truth of our present sonship towards God—“*That we should be called children of God: and we are.*”

Let me now introduce to you my text as I mean to preach from it—

**“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us,  
that we should be called children of God: and we are.”**

Our text begins with the exclamation “Behold.” *This word, “Behold,” is a word of wonder.* John had lived among wonders. John’s life, from the time of his conversion, was a life of wonders, not only in what he saw with his natural eyes, but in all the sights that the Lord gave him to see with his spiritual eyes when He appeared to him in “the isle which is called Patmos.” His life was crowned with wonders in his memorable escape from martyrdom, when, according to tradition he was cast into a caldron of boiling oil, but came out unharmed—his Master having determined that he was not by martyrdom to glorify His name. If ever there was a Seer among men to whom wonders became common things, it was John! Yet as he wrote this heavenly Epistle, he could not help bursting out in exclamations of amazement such as do not generally come from writers so much as from speakers—“*Behold,*” he says, “*Behold, what manner of love!*”

I believe, my Brothers and Sisters, that if we realized the truth of our own adoption into the family of God, we would never leave off marveling at it. That any man of mortal race should become a child of God might astound us, but that we, ourselves, should be such should amaze us beyond degree! We ought to cry, “Behold! Behold!” Let us begin to talk of it now, for we shall never cease to speak of it when we reach the New Jerusalem. Our regeneration and adoption are complex miracles of Grace—a cluster of wonders condensed into one. It would seem too good to be true if the Lord, Himself, had not revealed it! We will call upon angels, principalities and powers and say to them with delighted wonder, “*Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us.*” Admire, O sanctified intelligences, that God should do this for unworthy sons of Adam!—

**“Behold what wondrous Grace  
The Father has bestowed  
On sinners of a mortal race  
To call them sons of God!”**

*But this, “Behold,” is also a note of instruction.* It is as if the man of God said, “Stand still and consider the extraordinary love of God.” Do not speak of it, for some of these things slip glibly from the tongue. No, rather sit down and ponder, and weigh, and mark and behold! *Behold, what manner of love.* Here, take your glass and look at it microscopically. Study it. Wonder at it. Study it with every faculty concentrated upon it, for you shall find new excellences in it every time you look into it. “*Behold, what manner of love*”—the very manner of it is exceedingly sublime and ador-

able! Do not merely glance and go your way, but stop and rest and pry into this secret, comparing this love with all other loves, and the manner of it with the manner of men. Come here and dig where there are nuggets of pure gold to reward every moment of your industry! Here sink your shafts and go into the depths to bring up this priceless treasure. *Behold*—read, mark, learn, inwardly digest and still *behold* again! Look, and look, and look on—for there will be no end to the discoveries you will make. When you have looked, remember that you have not been gazing upon a mere appearance, but have beheld an actual fact—“*Behold* what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God.” When you have beheld this, then look again and behold with equal admiration that it is no supposition, or fancy, or romance—the Lord calls us children—“*and we are.*”

Thus having introduced the text with its own note of exclamation, I invite you to behold the two wonders which are enshrined within it. I would first say—*Let us behold with joyful wonder our being called the sons of God.* And then, secondly, *let us behold the equal wonder of our being really so, expressed in those three words, “and we are.”*

**I.** First, then, behold THE WONDER OF OUR BEING CALLED THE SONS OF GOD.

Who calls us so? That is the wonder! Men take upon themselves great names without any right to them. There are degrees among men that are degrees of shame because the persons who claim them were never justly entitled to them. It is one thing for us to call ourselves children of God and another thing for the Father to bestow His love so that we are truly called the sons of God. From where does this princely title of “sons of God” come? Who calls the saints, the sons of God?

*The Father Himself does!* He speaks unto them as unto children. He deals with them as with sons. He is pleased in infinite love to bid them say, “Our Father,” and He answers to them by calling them children and heirs. He acknowledges their sonship and pities them as a father pities his children. He has called them sons, saying, “I will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord God Almighty.” Oh, what a blessing it is to have God calling you His child—the great Almighty and Infinite One looking upon you with a Father’s love and saying, “You are My son!” He speaks the truth and we may believe it and be sure! He knows His own children and gives the name of sons to none whom He will, in the end, disown. He calls us His children—and we are!

Who has called us the sons of God? *Jesus Himself*, the first-born among many Brethren, has called us so! Did He not speak of, “My Father and your Father”? What did He mean when He was not ashamed to call us Brothers and Sisters? Everywhere our dear Lord and Master speaks of us as belonging to the one family of which He is the Head. By sweetly taking us into union with Himself, Jesus practically calls us Sons of God—and we are!

*The Holy Spirit* also dwells in all the heirs of Heaven and thereby calls them sons of God. He bears witness with our spirit that we are the sons of

God and it is He who is given to us to be “the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” That, “Abba, Father,” of ours is prompted by the Spirit of Grace who would never prompt a stranger and an alien to claim kinship with the Lord. Oh no! The witness of the Holy Spirit is the witness of truth! A filial spirit implanted by the Spirit of God cannot deceive us. Thus Father, Son and Holy Spirit call us the children of God—and we are!

With these the holy angels are in full accord. Not in words, perhaps, but in acts and deeds which speak quite as loudly, they declare us to be the children of God. They bear us up in their hands, lest we dash our foot against a stone and this they do because we belong to the Divine family! “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation”? They acknowledge that we are heirs of God and, therefore, they act as our waiting servants.

*All Providence*, Brothers and Sisters, acknowledges us to be children of God, if we are, indeed, so. This is specially true of chastening Providences. When they come to us, they gently whisper, “What son is there whom the Father chastens not?” Yes, trials and afflictions, especially such as come for the Truth of God’s sake and because of our love to Christ, are tokens of sonship. The persecution which is involved in holy and separated living is the witness of Providence that we are no longer of the evil seed, but are adopted sons of God.

Yes, and I trust that there are some here who can modestly say that they have, even, *the witness of men*, for they are called the children of God even by men who do not know much about the mysteries of the new birth. “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God”—they shall not only *be* so, but they shall extort from others the confession that they *are* so. I am sure that when William Penn dealt so kindly and peacefully with the Indians when everybody else was false to them, the untutored man of the woods felt that the Quakers were children of the Great Spirit. Their peacefulness was a mark of their descent from the God of Peace. Any man or woman who shall be well known to bear injuries with patience and to make no return but that of doing good for evil shall be recognized, even by scoffers and blasphemers, as a child of God! God is Love—and wherever there is love, men with more or less of intelligence trace it to God. They cannot help it. Blessed are you, Beloved, if you have the witness, even, of your enemies, that you are the children of God—and you *will* have that witness if your lives are conformed to the holy Law of Love!

Behold, then, how God’s people are called the sons of God—called with a Divine calling to which all things bear corroborating witness so that they believe—and are sure! And in reply to all voices attesting their sonship they cry, “and we are!”

Enquire next, *what is involved in this calling them to be the children of God?* What is there conspicuous in it? Read the passage. “Behold, what manner of \_\_\_\_\_. “What is the word? “What manner of *gift* the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God”? It might have been so written and have been quite correct. But it is not so written.

“Behold what manner of *honor* the Father has bestowed”? No, no! “Behold what manner of *LOVE* the Father has bestowed upon us”—as much as to say that the adopting of a man to be a son of God is an act which involves so much of love that you are bid, especially, to fix your eyes on the love of it and to notice its manner. “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God.”

Now just think for a minute what *intense* love is manifested to that man who is favored to be called a child of God. It is love in the highest degree! What love you would have in your heart if you were to take a wanton and malicious enemy and say, “You shall be my son!” If one had wronged you and despised you and defied your authority—and you should say to him, “You shall be my child from this time forth”—what an amazing deed of love this would be! Yet it might not be very much for you to do, my dear Friend, for you may be, after all, nothing very great! It would, however, be the utmost your love could devise! Only think of what it must be for God—even that Infinite and Eternal Spirit—to say, “You shall be My child. I will take you, though you are an heir of wrath, and make you Mine.” Herein, indeed, is love! Love worth the beholding!

It is certainly an *undeserved* love because no man can possibly deserve to be made into a child of God. Grace in this instance is the sole source of the stream of goodness. You might think it possible that you could deserve some ordinary gift, but such a blessing as to be made a son of God you could not deserve! If you had never sinned, I do not see that you could have had any right to sonship. The most faithful service does not make a servant into a son. Had you been *perfect*, what would you have given to God as purchase money for this high dignity? He is great and glorious without your service! To be promoted to be a prince of the blood royal of Heaven—it is not possible for any man to deserve this! No works can climb to this lofty place—only *faith* can reach it by the power of *Grace*. “But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.” This power, this privilege, this honor of sonship before God is gained in no other way but that of faith—and that is the *gift* of God!

And oh, see the blessed manner of love there must be in it, since there is *everlasting* love in it for, if God makes you to be called a son of God, that is done and done forever—and it never can be undone. Here is the joy of it. The servant abides not in the house forever—but a son abides always. The relationships that come of service begin and end. You know it is so among men. You can say to a hired servant—“There, take your money and be gone.” But you cannot say that to your son! Whatever you give him, or do not give him, if he is your son, he is your son and always must be so. Especially is this true of the children of God—that they are not only called the children of God, but it is added—“*and we are.*” In very deed we are and always shall be His sons! We are made really to be what we are said to be. We are *called* the children of God and we *are* the children of God—and this cannot be undone. How greatly do I rejoice in the final perseverance of the saints! As I have often said, I would not go across the



street to pick up the other kind of salvation which only saves me for a while and afterwards lets me slip through! Grace brings me into the family of God and keeps me there. When the Lord calls me His son, I know what He means—He intends all that *we* mean by the relationship and more! He does not mean that He will cast His children away, or suffer them to perish, but He means this—“I will put My fear in their hearts and they shall not depart from Me.” Or, as the Lord Jesus puts it, “I give unto My sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.”

“Behold,” then, “what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.” It is *infinite* love that knows no end. It is the love of the Father—that glorious Person of the blessed Trinity in whom the fountain of all Grace is seen. It is the Father who in boundless love has called us to be His sons! How I delight to trace this love up to the Fountainhead! Jesus says, “the Father Himself loves you.” It is not the death of Jesus which moved the heart of the Father to love us, as some fondly dream—the truth is that the Father’s love is the reason *why* Jesus was given. “Behold, what manner of love the FATHER has bestowed upon us.” How it unveils the heart of the Father when we see that He who gave His Son for us has also bestowed upon us this manner of love that we should be called His sons! Let us adore and love the great Father of our spirits, whose love is the first cause of all our blessings.

Now, while I am asking for your wonderment in answer to the questions—Who calls us sons? and, What is involved in the call? I will reply to another question—“*Who are the persons thus called sons?*” “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God.” It is bestowed upon us men and women. We are poor creatures when we make the best of ourselves and yet He calls us sons of God. “Unto which of the angels said He at any time, You are My son?” Brethren, this dignity is reserved for us whom He has made a little lower than the angels! Think of what His Only-Begotten Son is like—that glorious Son of God of whom He says, “Let all the angels of God worship Him.” Behold how in splendor of beneficence He deigns to call us, also, His sons and so to put us side by side with the Only-Begotten—not on an equality as far as His Godhead is concerned, for that cannot be—but yet bestowing on us that same love with which He loves His Son! He loves us in Christ even as He loves Christ Himself! Behold, what manner of love it is, that we should be adopted and regenerated by the living God!

And this is true, remember, of that poor man who does not know where tomorrow’s bread shall come from. You say he is not respectable, but I say that he is right honorable, for God has called him His son! I mean that man whose name was never heard of, who lives in a room in a back street and when he dies will be buried in the corner of the cemetery, “unwept, unhonored, and unsung.” Yes, God has bestowed this manner of love upon him—that he is called one of His sons! Yes, I mean that poor presumptive girl—I mean that lame, decrepit youth! I mean that blind man who begs his bread. Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed

on such as these! Poor cottagers, hard-working men and women, cobblers and tinkers! Chimney sweepers and laborers—such as these He calls the sons of God when He has renewed them by His Grace! Ah, and I mean those who are lying yonder in the hospital and in the workhouse infirmary who are nearing their last hour upon beds found for them by charity. These are God’s children if they believe in Jesus! They pine away till bed-sores make it hard to move and harder to lie still. Dissolved by pain, they are melting away into eternity—but behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon such poor, frail mortals as these, that they should be called the sons of God—and they are!

Yet the wonder rises a stage higher when we recollect that these are not only men and women, but *sinner*s. Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us sinful ones, that we should be called the children of God! He has taken us from the dunghill and washed us—and then made us to sit at His royal table! You know the story in Ezekiel of the infant cast out in the open field, defiled in its own blood and how He that passed by looked on it, and said, “Live,” and washed it, and swaddled it, and fed it. It is just what the Lord has done for us poor sinful men and women. We were cast out under condemnation, but behold what manner of love He has bestowed upon us guilty ones to make us children of God! Alas, even after we are made His sons, we are not free from evil—we still need that abundant Grace should have patience with us. We still grieve Him by lukewarmness and backsliding—and yet He calls us children! Behold what manner of love He has bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God!

There! I do not feel as if I wanted to preach about it. I long to sit down and cry over it for very joy of heart. That ever God should have put *me* among His children shall be my everlasting wonder! How could He love such a vain, frail, sinful, troubled creature, full of all manner of infirmities! Yet the Spirit of adoption makes me cry with boldness, “Doubtless You are my Father!” I cannot help it. I know that I am His and I dare not question it. But what manner of love, what manner of love, He has bestowed on me! Do you not say the same? Does not the gracious Spirit of God now move on your soul and make you stand in amazement at Divine Grace? Do you not melt with humble gratitude? What was there in you? What is there in you that you should be a son of God? If children, then heirs—heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ—why are we lifted to such a privilege? The blessing of sonship has earth and Heaven wrapped up in it and all this is ours! If we know ourselves, we mourn our lack of worthiness and yet we rejoice that we are the Lord’s dear children. When we consider the persons who are called the children of God, there is, indeed, reason to say, “Behold, what manner of love!”

And, once more, let me just go over the ground again, and show you *what is connected with being called the children of God*.

It is, as it were, God’s public acknowledgment of His relation to us—He acknowledges us as sons! Sometimes we hear of clandestine marriages which may be valid, but the man seems to be ashamed to acknowledge his

wife. He pleads that he be permitted to *not* introduce her into the noble family to which he belongs and so he keeps the marriage in the dark. And he does not admit there are children. This is after the manner of wicked men! But God is not ashamed of us when He takes us to be His children. It is written concerning our Lord Jesus, “For this cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren.” I have heard of some fine gentleman in London, dressed in all his best, walking out in the park. He had a poor old father who lived in the country and who came up dressed in his rustic raiment to see his son. As the son was not at home when the father reached the house, he went into the park to find him. Now, the fine gentleman did not absolutely disown his father, but he went out of the park at a pretty sharp trot, for fear anybody should say, “Who is that country fellow you were talking with?”

He did not like to acknowledge his father because he was a laborer. That is mean as the mud in the kennel, is it not? We would not thus wonder if the glorious Lord refused to acknowledge us! There is such a come-down from the loftiness of His holiness to the depth of our faultiness. But yet He has such love, such a manner of love, that He bestows upon us this honor, that we should be openly called the sons of God! He Himself tells us so in our text. His Spirit makes the avowal. “There,” He says, “you poor people that love Me. You sick people, you unknown, obscure people, without any talent—I have published it before Heaven and earth and made the angels know it—you are My children and I am not ashamed of you! I Glory in the fact that I have taken you for My sons and daughters.”

There is, moreover, this involved in it, that He claims our loving obedience. Do not put dishonor upon your Father’s name! Stand up for your Father. It is one of the marks of a true child that he cannot bear to say or do anything that would place his Father’s name under a cloud. God, as it were, stakes His honor upon the character of everyone of His people. He has said, “They shall be called My children.” Now, if you do anything that is wrong or base, what will men think of your Father? He has condescended to call you a child—do not let His name be evilly spoken of through you. He has put this high honor upon us, that we should be called His sons and daughters—let us seek so to behave ourselves that men may see our good works and glorify our Father who is in Heaven! I have taken up all this time with the first part of the verse, but we must not forget the second part of it, “and we are.” I shall only introduce it to your meditation and, indeed, this is all that is needed if you are able to repeat the words on your own account and say, “and we are.”

**II.** The second and greatest wonder is THE WONDER OF OUR REALLY BEING THE SONS OF GOD. “And we are.”

Adoption gives us the *name* of God’s children. The new birth gives us the *Nature of God’s* children. And so in both senses we are. Adoption is the legal act by which our Father receives us. Regeneration is that spiritual deed by which we receive the nature of our Father. Every man that is really adopted into the family of God also really becomes a son of God by being begotten, again, unto a lively hope. I want to put it to you, my Hear-

ers, whether you can, on this double ground, join in these Inspired Words, and say, “And we are”?

Let us work out the question. Are we really the children of God? We must answer that question by another—Do we truly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? I have already quoted the Inspired Declaration—“But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.” We can answer that question. Are we believing in the Lord Jesus Christ with all our heart? Is He our confidence? Do we trust in His blood and righteousness? If so, if we believe in Him, then He *has* given us the right and the power to become the sons of God!

That question, alone, might settle it, but let us go a little farther. If we indeed can say, “and we are,” then we have received some measure of the Nature of God. Have you, Brothers and Sisters, become spiritual? God is a spirit. Do you hate sin? God is holy. Do you love that which is right? Let your conscience speak. Do you endeavor to act generously? Does love rule you? Do you seek to be full of pity, tender, courteous and kind? Have you love to God and love to men? For, if not, you have not the Nature of God, for God is Love. Have you somewhat of that Nature and is there within you a longing and a striving to have the whole Nature of God in you, as far as it can dwell in mortal man? Remember, no person can be a child of God if he has not something of likeness to God. If you are not in the least like your Father, then you make a mistake if you profess to be His child. “You are made partakers of the Divine Nature,” says one of the Apostles, “having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”

Am I a child of God? Then listen—I have a love to my Father. If you are truly born from above, your heart goes out in longings after Him to whom you owe your heavenly birth! If you are no child of God, you can live without Him. Indeed, you will *try* to do so! To the most of men, God is virtually non-existent. They look up to the skies and view the wondrous lights of Heaven, but they never think of Him who shines through them. They do not believe that there is such a Being, or else they have to admit that there must be a design and a Designer—and that is an end of the matter with them. Whether there is a God or not is no matter of importance to them. How different is it with the regenerate! To us God is All in All. To love God is the great fact of my life! The tears run down my cheeks when I think of Him. He is everything to me—

***“Do not I love You from my soul?  
Then let me nothing love!  
Dead be my heart to every joy,  
When Jesus cannot move.  
Have You a lamb in all your flock  
I would disdain to feed?  
Have You a foe, before whose face  
I fear Your cause to plead?”***

It cannot long be a question with the child of God whether he loves his Father or not. It may occasionally happen that he has to make the enquiry, for times and circumstances will test him, but before long he comes

to the solemn conclusion, “You know all things; You know that I love You.”

More than that—if I am a child of God, I learn to trust my Father. I do not know a more delightful act of childhood than trustfulness in a parent. And how often, if we trust God, we shall be rewarded! A circumstance happened to me yesterday. I cannot help telling it to you. I received a note from one of the trustees of the Orphanage to say that the running account was so low that when the checks were paid on Friday morning, we should have overdrawn our banking account. I did not like that state of things, but I did not fret about it. I breathed a prayer to God that He would send money to put into the bank to keep the account right. Last night, at nearly ten o'clock, I opened a letter that came from Belfast and it had in it a check for £200, being the amount left as a legacy. I wrote across my acknowledgment, “O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together!”

That amount put the account square for the time being and though the Orphanage has no ready money to go on with, still that does not matter—God will send more means during the week and at all other times when the expenditure calls for it. At the moment when I opened the letter and found the £200, I felt as if my hair stood on end because of the conscious nearness of the Lord my God! My Brother, Hugh Hannah, when he sent that check and sent it on that particular day, did not know that it would come just when I was praying to God for help in a time of trouble—yet it came exactly when it was sought for! If I were to tell my own personal experience of the way in which God hears prayer, it would seem to you as if it could not be true—it would appear too romantic. But oh, it is a blessed thing to take everything to God, little or big, and leave all with Him! I am resolved to live and die trusting in the living God and you shall all mark for yourselves whether He forsakes me, or bears me through!

Look how your child trusts you. He comes to you, and cries, “Please, father, I have a thorn in my finger.” Or, “Please, father, I have lost my pocket handkerchief.” No matter what his trials are, the child brings them all to father or mother. You turn from your business and attend to him. You say, “My dear, I will see to you directly.” You love your little boy and, therefore, his little concerns are not too little for you. And God, who gave us to be called the sons of God, teaches us to cry, “and we are,” and leads us in that confidence to go to Him with each day's burden and care—and prove for ourselves that we are the objects of the Father's love!

Now, the true child of God not only shows love and trust, but he also suffers *sorrow* when he has grieved his Father. If you grieve over sin, if you grieve over error, if you grieve over your omissions, if you go to God with tears in your eyes because you are not what He would have you to be, this sorrow proves that you are one of His children. He that can sin without sorrow will one day sorrow without hope! A broken heart is one of the most sure signs of sonship. We have this grief and this proves that we are sons of God, “and we are.”

You may also know a child by his *joys*. If a child has joy when his father is glad, when his father's name is honored, oh, then you believe that he is his father's child! I thought to myself one day, “Well, I have preached this Gospel to vast crowds of people but is it my own? Perhaps I have only an official hold of it and have no personal grip of it for myself.” I had a day's respite and I went in to hear the Word of God in a humble, out-of-the-way room. I sat down on a form and heard a working-man preach the Gospel very sweetly. By the way, the sermon was originally my own, and this the preacher acknowledged most freely! But as he preached it, I found myself melted down with the story of God's Love. My heart was so hot within me that I was ready to shout, “Hallelujah!” when I heard the preacher magnifying the name of Christ Jesus, my Lord! And I said to myself, “Oh, you *are* a child of God, after all! You love this food as well as the other children do! And though you generally have to stand at the table and be a waiter and sometimes wish you could sit and have a meal, yourself, you still do love this heavenly Bread! You have a taste for the things that God provides for His people.” Yes, I could talk thus to myself and of myself—and feel myself to be a child of God. I came away comforted, for I felt that I had a share in the joys of the heirs of salvation!

Need I go on to tell you what are the sure evidences of being a child of God? The man who is truly such cries, “Why, *everything* is an evidence.” Wherever he is, God is with him! And if he thinks that he has wandered away from God five minutes, he cries to be back again. He sees his Father everywhere—where the infidel cannot see Him at all. He spies Him in the clouds. He hears Him in the thunder. He beholds His flaming Glory in every lightning flash and His tender pity in every dewdrop. With God and on God the Believer lives! In God he lives and God lives in him! All his expectations are from God. Everywhere, in every time and in every way, he proves that he is a child of God because he continues to draw his life from his Divine Father!

Then God gives him one more seal of his being His child and that is that He chastens him. I know an old friend who used to tell me that for 60 years he had never known a day's illness. A splendid healthy old man he was—and about three months ago the old man took typhoid fever. I went to see him and when he got better, he came to see me and, sitting down, he said, “Well, Sir, you see I am not the man I was, but I have made a great advance through this sickness. I have never known any weakness before, but now I have been brought very low. The Bible says, ‘If you are without chastisement, of which all are partakers, then are you bastards, and not sons.’ Oh,” he said, “I am not a bastard after all! I have had my chastening and I hope I shall take up my sonship more than I ever did before.” God grant that every chastened child may gather assurance from the Covenant rod! You, dear child of God, will not be long without a touch of the rod! May you have as little of it as the Lord judges to be proper! As for myself, I owe everything to the furnace and the hammer. I have made no progress in heavenly learning except when I have been whipped by the Great Schoolmaster! The best piece of furniture in my house has been the

Cross! My greatest enricher has been personal pain and for that I desire to thank God. I can sing with the poet—

**“God in Israel sows the seeds  
Of affliction, pain and toil.  
These spring up and choke the weeds  
Which would else overspread the soil.  
Trials make the promise sweet!  
Trials give new life to prayer!  
Trials bring me to His feet,  
Lay me low, and keep me there.”**

The children of God under the rod can say, “And *we are!*” Thank God for anything which emphasizes that affirmation—“*And we are.*” It is wondrous love that we should be called the children of God, “and we are.” The bastard kicks against his father’s stroke, but the wise child kisses the rod and blesses the hand that uses it—and cries, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” This is a sure seal of our true sonship.

The text says, “*And we are.*” I must turn it round, and ask, “Are we?” And when you have worked that out and you can say, “Yes,” then I want you all to get to be very positive about this matter—“Now are we the sons of God.” I pray that you may be able to say boldly, “*And we are.*” When you are depressed and your spirit hangs fire, say, “*We are.*” When the devil says, “If you are the children of God,” give him a slap in the face with this, “*And we are.*” And when the world says, “What? You call yourselves sons of God?” say, “*Yes, and we are.*” Whenever doubts and fears come in, drive these evil birds away from eating your ripe fruit and let this be the shout you use, “*And we are.*” “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God: *and we are.*” Called by His name, may we enjoy the full assurance of faith through believing in Jesus! Amen.

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# A PRESENT RELIGION

## NO. 196

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MAY 30, 1858  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“Beloved, now are we the sons of God.”  
1 John 3:2.***

I SHALL not pretend to preach from the whole of my text this morning, short though it is. The word “now” is to me the most prominent word in the text and I shall make it so this morning. “Beloved, *now* are we the sons of God.”

It is astonishing how distance blunts the keen edge of anything that is disagreeable. War is at all times a most fearful scourge. The thought of slain bodies and of murdered men must always harrow up the soul. But because we hear of these things in the distance, there are few Englishmen who can truly enter into their horrors. If we should hear the booming of cannon on the deep which girdles this island. If we should see at our doors the marks of carnage and bloodshed—then should we more thoroughly appreciate what war means. But distance takes away the horror and we therefore speak of war with too much levity and even read of it with an interest not sufficiently linked with pain.

As it is with war, so it is with death. Death is a frightful thing. He who is the bravest must still fear before it, for at best it is a solemn thing to die. Man, therefore, adopts the expedient of putting off all thoughts of death. It may be very near to him but he conceives it to be at a distance and then the same effect is produced as when war is at a distance—its horror is forgotten and we speak of it with less solemnity.

So likewise with true religion—men are constrained to believe that there is the Truth of God in religion. Though there are some foolhardy enough to deny it, the most of us in this enlightened land are obliged to acknowledge that there is a power in Godliness. What, then, does the worldling do? He practices the same expedient. He puts religion far away—he knows that its disagreeableness will be diminished by his believing it to be distant. Hence there has sprung up in the minds of the unregenerate world a notion that religion is a thing to be accomplished just at the close of life and the usual prayer of an ungodly man, when in the slightest degree pricked in his conscience, is, “Oh, that I may be saved at last!” He does not feel anxious to be saved NOW. Religion is a thing for which he has no appetite and therefore believing it essential to insure his eternal welfare, he adopts the alternative of saying, “I hope to have it at last.”

The religion, then, of the *present*, is not the worldling’s religion. He tolerates that which speaks of eternity. That which deals with dying. That



which leads him to look back with a specious repentance upon a life spent in sin, but not that which will enable him to look forward to a life spent in holiness. Very differently, however, do we act with affairs of the present life—things that are sweet to us become the more sweet by their nearness. Was there ever a child who longed for his father's house who did not feel that the holidays grew more sweet in his estimation the shorter the time was that he had to tarry?

What man is there who having once set his heart on riches did not find his delight in the thought of being rich increase with the nearness of his approach to the desired object? And are we not all of us accustomed, when we think a good thing is at a distance, to try if we can shorten the time between us and it? We try anything and everything to push on the lagging hours. We chide them, wish that Time had double wings, that he might swiftly fly and bring the expected season. When the Christian talks of Heaven, you will always hear him try to shorten the distance between himself and the happy land. He says—

**“A few more rolling suns at most  
Will land me on fair Canaan's coast.”**

There may be many years between him and Paradise, but still he is prone to say—

**“The way may be rough, but it cannot be long.”**

Thus do we all delight to shorten the distance between us and the things for which we hope. Now let us just apply this rule to religion. They who love religion love a present thing. The Christian who really seeks salvation will never be happy unless he can say, “Now am I a child of God.” Because the worldling dislikes it, he puts it from him. Because the Christian loves it, therefore its very fairest feature is its present existence, its present enjoyment in his heart. That word “now” which is the sinner's warning and his terror, is to the Christian, his greatest delight and joy. “There is therefore”—and then the sweetest bell of all rings—“there is therefore *now* no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” To the sinner that same idea is the blackest of all, “He that believes not is condemned *already*, because he has not believed on the Son of God.”

This morning, in God's name, I shall endeavor to plead with men and show them the importance of having a present religion. I am quite certain that this is a habit which is too much kept in the background. I am sure from mixing with mankind that the current belief is that religion is a *future* thing, perhaps the wish is father to the thought. I am certain the ground of it is men love not religion and therefore they desire to thrust it far from them.

I shall commence by endeavoring to show that religion must be a thing of the present, because *the present has such intimate connection with the future*. And to proceed—we are told in Scripture that this life is a seed time and the future is the harvest, “He that sows to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption. He that sows to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting.” The Scripture often speaks to us in words like these, “They

that sow in tears, shall reap in joy.” It is always supposed in Scripture that this life is the time of generating, if I may use such an expression—the life that is to come—as the seed generates the plant, even so does this present life generate the eternal future.

We know, indeed, that Heaven and Hell are, after all, but the developments of our present character, for what is Hell but this, “He that is filthy, let him be filthy still and he that is unholy, let him be unholy still”? Do we not know that in the heart of every sin, damnation slumbers? Is it not a fearful Truth of God that the germ of everlasting torment sleeps in every vile wish, every unholy thought, every unclean act, so that Hell is but a great breaking out of slumbering lava which had been so quiet, that while the mountain was covered with fair verdure, even to its summit, death comes and bid that lava rise? And down the steeps of manhood’s eternal existence the fiery flame and the hot scalding lava of eternal misery does pour itself. Yet it was there before—for sin is Hell—and to rebel against God is but the prelude of misery.

So is it with Heaven. I know that Heaven is a reward, not of debt, but of grace. But still the Christian has that within him which forestalls for him a Heaven. What did Christ say? “I *give* unto My sheep eternal life.” He did not say, I *will* give, but, I *give* unto them. “As soon as they believe in Me, I give them eternal life,” and, “He that believes has eternal life and shall never come unto damnation.” The Christian has within him the seedbeds of a Paradise—in due time the light that is sown for the righteous and the gladness that is buried beneath the black earth for the upright in heart—shall spring up and they shall reap the harvest.

Is it not plain, then, that religion is a thing which we must have here? Is it not prominently revealed that religion is important for the present? For if this life is the seed time of the future, how can I expect to reap in another world other crops than I have been sowing here? How can I trust that I shall be saved unless I AM saved? How can I have hope that Heaven shall be my eternal inheritance unless the earnest is begun in my own soul on earth?

But again, this life is always said in Scripture to be a preparation for the life to come, “Prepare to meet your God, O Israel.” “They that were ready went in with Him to the supper and the door was shut.” There is in this world a getting ready for another world. To use a Biblical figure, we must here put on the wedding dress which we are to wear forever. This life is as the vestibule of the king’s court—we must put our shoes from off our feet. We must wash our garments and make ourselves ready to enter into the marriage supper of the Lamb. Somehow, in Scripture, the thought comes out as plain as if written with a sunbeam—this world is the beginning of the *end*—it is the preparing-place for the *future*.

Supposing you have no religion now—how will you stand when *now* is turned into *eternity*? When days and years are gone, how will it fare with you, if all your days have been spent without God and without Christ? Do

you hope to hurry on the white garment after death? Alas, you shall be girt with your shroud, but not be able to put on the wedding raiment. Do you trust that you shall wash and make yourself clean in the river Jordan? Alas, you shall breed corruption in your tomb, but you shall not find holiness there! Do you trust to be pardoned after you have departed?—

***“There are no acts of pardon passed  
In the cold grave to which we haste.  
Darkness, death and fell despair,  
Reign in eternal silence there.”***

Or do you think that when you near the borders of the grave, then will be the time to prepare? Be not deceived. We read in Scripture an instance of a man saved at the eleventh hour. Remember, there is but *one*. And we have no reason to believe that there ever was, or ever will be another. There may have been persons saved on their dying beds, but we are not sure there ever were. Such things may have happened, but none of us can tell. Alas, facts are sadly against it. For we have been assured by those who have had the best means of judging—those who have long walked the hospital of humanity—that such as thought they were dying and made vows of repentance, have almost invariably turned back, like “the dog to his own vomit and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.” Oh no—“Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” For to-day is the preparing-time for the dread tomorrow—today is the making ready for the eternal future.

Let me urge one other reflection here. How are we saved? All through Scripture we are told we are saved by *faith*—except in *one* passage—where it is said, we are saved by *hope*. Now note how certain it is that religion must be a present thing if we are saved by faith, because faith and hope cannot live in another world. “What a man sees, why does he yet hope for?” Hope cannot exist in that world of realities where shadows are unknown. How can faith be exercised when we *see* a thing? For what a man perceives by faith that he realizes not by sense. And although we say “seeing is believing,” it is quite certain that seeing and believing are at opposite poles.

Believing is an assurance of that which we see not and in confidence of faith waiting until we do see it. But seeing is sensuous and the very reverse of faith. Now if I am to be saved by faith, it is quite certain I must be saved in a state where faith can be exercised—that is in this world. And if I am to be saved by hope, I cannot be saved by hope in that world where hope cannot exist. I must be saved *here*, for here is the only place where hope can breathe an air that lets it live.

The air of Heaven is too bright and pure, too heavenly, too warm, too sweet with angels’ songs, for faith and hope to inhabit. They leave us on this side of the Jordan. If then we are saved by these, I think it follows—and everyone of you must perceive the inference—we must be saved *now*, because faith and hope are not things of the future. Oh how pleasant, if

after these remarks we can say, “Yes, it is so. It is even so and we rejoice therein, for ‘now are we the sons of God.’”

In the second place, as I have briefly shown the connection between the present and the future, let me use another illustration to show the importance of a present salvation. *Salvation is a thing which brings present blessings.* When you read Scripture, and alas, there are few who care to read it as they ought in these times—they read anything but their Bibles—when you read Scripture, you will be struck with the fact that every blessing is spoken of in the *present* tense. You remember how the Apostle in one of his Epistles says, “Unto them which are saved, Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God.” He does not say to them who shall be saved, but to them which *are* saved.

We know, too, that justification is a present blessing—“there is therefore *now* no condemnation.” Adoption is a present blessing, for it says, “*Now* are we the sons of God,” and we know also that sanctification is a present blessing for the Apostle addresses himself to “the saints who *are* sanctified in Christ Jesus and called.” All the blessings of the new Covenant are spoken of in the *present* tense, because with the exception of eternal glory in Heaven, they are all to be enjoyed here.

I know this, that I shall be one day, if I am a believer in Christ, more sanctified than I am today—if not in the sense of consecration, yet still in the sense of purification—but at the same time I know this for a fact, that when I stand at God’s right hand, amidst the lamps of eternal brightness and when these fingers move with vigor across the golden strings and when this voice is filled with the immortal songs, I shall not be one whit more a child of God than I am now! And when the white robe is upon me and the crown upon my head, I shall not be more justified than I am at the present moment, for it is the doctrine of Holy Scripture that—

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

But the assurance of our possession in these things is a present blessing, also. I will illustrate what I mean by a circumstance which happened to myself. A lady called upon me in some distress of mind and this was her difficulty—she had, she trusted, been converted to God, enjoyed great peace of mind and for a little season was very full of joy—because she believed that she had been forgiven and was accepted in the Beloved. Naturally enough, seeking her religious instructor, she went to the clergyman of the parish, who, unfortunately for her was a blind guide, for when she began to tell him concerning her joy, he checked her by saying, “My good woman, this is all presumption.” “No, Sir,” said she “I trust not—my hope is fixed on nothing else than Jesus. I repose alone in Him.” “That is right enough,” said he, “but you have no authority to say you *know* you are saved. You have no authority to believe that you are already pardoned.”

And he told her that he did not believe it possible for any Christian to be assured of this except a very few eminent saints—but they might only hope, that was all. They might trust but they could never be sure. Ah, methinks he had gone but a very little way on the road to the kingdom of Heaven. He must have been but a very small infant in Christ, if in Christ at all, to have told her so. For those of us who have for a few years put on the Lord Jesus know of a surety that there is such a thing as infallible assurance—we know that although there is such a thing as presumption, there is a distinction which every Christian can easily mark between the one and the other.

Presumption says, “I am a child of God and I may *live as like*. I know I am saved, I need not therefore seek to have present communion with Christ.” But Assurance says, “I know whom I have believed. I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.” And then she meekly bows her head and says, “Hold You me up and I shall be safe, keep me and I shall be kept; draw me and I will run after You.” Oh, my dear Hearers, never believe that falsehood of the day—that a man cannot know himself to be a child of God!

For if you tell us that, we can refute you with a thousand testimonies. We have seen the poor, the humble and the illiterate confident of their interest in Christ. It is true, we have seen them doubt. We have heard their wailings when they could not see Christ with their heart. Yes, we have known the time when the greatest of God’s people have had to tremble and say—

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

But still, God’s people may be assured. They may know, by the witness of the Spirit within, that they are born of God. For does not an Apostle say, “We know we have passed from death unto life, because we love the Brethren?” “The Spirit bears witness with our spirits that we *are* born of God.” I would that we had more Christians who lived in the enjoyment of full assurance. How precious it is when the milk of faith settles down and the thick cream of full assurance can be skimmed from the surface as marrow and fatness to the children of God. Religion, then, is a thing of present assurance. A man may know in this life, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that he is accepted in Christ Jesus.

Yet I am inclined to think that the worldly man most of all objects to present religion because he does not like its duties. Most men would be very religious if religion did not entail obligations. Many a man would be a very pious man if he were not curtailed of a few of his bottles of wine. Many a loose character would have no objection to go up to the temple and pray and subscribe his name to the God of Jacob if the Gospel did not forbid all uncleanness and everything that is lascivious. Many a tradesman would put on the Lord Jesus Christ if there were no necessity to put

off the old man—if he could keep his sins and have Christ, too—oh, how willing would he be!

Indeed, there are a great many who are so fond of it, that they have tried it. We know people who are like the Roman Emperor who believed that Jesus Christ was God, but thought that all the other strange gods were likewise to be worshipped. So these people think religion a very good thing but think sin a very good thing, too—so they set up the two together and their whole life is like Janus—two-faced. They are the most comely Christians in the synagogue, but they look most unmistakable hypocrites if you see them in the market. Men will not direct a single eye to religion because it curtails license and entails duties. And this, I think, proves that religion is a present thing, because the duties of religion cannot be practiced in another world, they must be practiced *here*.

Now, what are the duties of religion? In the first place, there are its active duties which a man should do between man and man, to walk soberly and righteously and uprightly in the midst of an evil generation. Lightly as some people speak about morality, or against morality, there is no true religion where there is no morality. Do not tell me about your orthodoxy, do not come and tell me about your private prayers and secret piety—if your life is bad—you are bad altogether.

A good tree cannot bring forth anything but good fruit and a corrupt tree will bring forth corrupt fruit. There is no questioning that. What your life is, that you are—for as out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks, so out of the abundance of the heart the man lives. It is in vain for you to deprecate so strong a sentiment as this and to say, “The best of saints are fallible.” I know they are. I know that even the best of men will sin, but they will not sin willingly. If they sin publicly, it will be but an exception, their lives, under the power of Divine Grace, will be holy and pure and upright.

I believe the devil likes Antinomianism and he says to the Romanist, “Preach on, you Priest. I do not mind what you preach, for you will enter my dominions. You tell people that they may live in sin and then procure absolution for a shilling! Fine doctrine that!” And he pats the priest on the back and gives him all the assistance he can. Then comes there an Antinomian minister into the pulpit. The devil says, “Ah, though he rails against the Pope of Rome, I like them both, the one as much as the other.” Then how he preaches! He begins preaching justification by faith alone and he carries his argument a step too far, for he begins railing at good works, calls them legalists who think it their duty to lead a holy life and hints with a smirk and a smile, that the excellent conduct of a man is of little importance, so long as he believes the Truth and goes to his Chapel.

“Ah,” says the devil, “preach away. I love the two things, Antinomianism and Popery, for they are two of the finest quacks for canting souls.” Again, I say, “Be not deceived, God is not mocked. For whatsoever a man sows that shall he also reap.” By our works we are not to be justified, but still

by our works we shall be *judged* and by our works we shall be *condemned*. So says the Scriptures and this we must receive. Religion, therefore, must be a present thing. We need not talk of walking righteously and soberly in the world to come—

***“There all is pure and all is clear,  
There all is joy and love.”***

There will be no duty to discharge between the tradesman and the customer, between the debtor and the creditor, between the father and the child, between the husband and the wife in Heaven. All relationships shall have passed away. Religion must be intended for this life. The duties of it cannot be practiced, unless they are practiced here.

But besides these, there are other duties delegated to the Christian. Though it is every man’s duty to be honest and sober, the Christian has another code of Law. It is the Christian’s duty to love his enemies, to be at peace with all men, to forgive as he hopes to be forgiven. And it is his duty to resist evil, when smitten on the one cheek to turn the other also. It is his duty to give to him that asks of him and from him that would borrow of him not to turn away. He is to be a liberal soul devising liberal things. It is the Christian’s duty to visit his Master’s children when they are sick, so that it may be said to him at last, “I was sick and naked and in prison and you visited Me and ministered to My necessities.”

Now, if religion is not a thing for this world, I ask you how is it possible to perform its duties at all? There are no poor in Heaven whom we can comfort and visit, there are no enemies in Heaven whom we can graciously forgive. And there are no injuries inflicted, or wrongs endured which we can bear with patience. Religion must have been intended in the very first place for this world, it must have been meant that *now* we should be the sons of God. For again I repeat it—the major part of the duties of religion cannot be practiced in Heaven and therefore religion must be a present thing.

But, coming near to our conclusion, I believe there are many more persons who do not like religion for today, but who want to have it at the last, for this reason—they think religion is not a happy thing. They believe it makes men miserable. They have met with persons with long faces. They have seen some who were born in stormy weather and who seem to have lived all their lives long with a hurricane inside their hearts, never having one flash of sunlight, nor one pleasant rainbow across their brow. Many young people imbibe this idea. They think that surely religion must be a thing that will make men go moping and melancholy all through this world. In fact, they enter the Chapel sometimes and they hear the saints singing—and what a sweet hymn it is—a sorry sweetness in the Truth of God!—

***“Lord, what a wretched land is this,”***

and they go out and say, “No doubt it is, we will have nothing to do with it.” Looking upon religion as medicine which is extremely nauseous—if they must drink it—they will put it off to the last. They will gulp it down at

their death bed with a, "Lord, have mercy on me!" and before its bitterness is fairly in their mouth, they expect to begin to enjoy its sweetness in Heaven.

What a mistake! Religion has its present enjoyments. I do solemnly affirm today, in the face of this congregation and before Almighty God, if I were certain that I were to die like a dog and when I was buried there would be an end of me—had I my choice of the happiest life a man could lead, I would say, "Let me be a Christian." If, as some say, it is a delusion, it is one of the most magnificent delusions that ever we devised! If any man could prove the religion of Christ to be a delusion, the next thing he should do would be to hang himself, because there is nothing worth living for. He might as well sit down and weep to think he had made a ruin of so goodly a structure and dissolved such a pleasant dream.

Ah, Beloved, there are present enjoyments in religion. Speak, you that know them, for you can tell. Yet you cannot recount them all. Oh, would you give up your religion for all the joys that earth calls good or great? Say, if your immortal life could be extinguished, would you give it up, even for all the kingdoms of this world? Oh—you sons of poverty, has not this been a candle to you in the darkness? Has not this lightened you through the dark shades of your tribulation? Oh, you rough-handed sons of toil, has not this been your rest, your sweet repose? Have not the testimonies of God been your song in the house of your pilgrimage? Oh, you daughters of sorrow, you who spend the most of your time upon your beds—and your couch to you is a rack of pain—has not religion been to you a sweet quietus? When your bones were sore vexed, could you not even then praise Him on your beds?

Speak from your couches today, you consumptives, blanched though your cheeks are. Speak this day from your beds of agony, you that are troubled with innumerable diseases and are drawing near your last home! Is not religion worth having in the sick chamber, on the bed of pain and anguish? "Ah," they heartily say, "We can praise Him on our beds. We can sing His high praises in the fires." And you men of business, speak for yourselves! You have hard struggles to pass through life. Sometimes you have been driven to a great extremity and whether you would succeed or not seemed to hang upon a thread.

Has not your religion been a joy to you in your difficulties? Has it not calmed your minds? When you have been fretted and troubled about worldly things, have you not found it a pleasant thing to enter your closet and shut the door and tell your Father in secret all your cares? And O, you that are rich, cannot you bear the same testimony, if you have loved the Master? What had all your riches been to you without a Savior? Can you not say that your religion did gild your gold and make your silver shine more brightly? For all things that you have are sweetened by this thought—that you have all these and Christ, too!



Was there ever a child of God who could deny this? We have heard of many infidels who grieved over their infidelity when they came to die. Did you ever hear of a Christian acting the counterpart? Did you ever hear of anyone on his deathbed looking back on a life of holiness with sorrow? But we *have* seen the poor debauched child of sin rotting with disease and listened to her shriek and heard her miserably curse herself that she ever turned aside to what was called the path of gaiety, but what was really the path to Hell.

We have seen the miser, too, who has gripped his bags of gold and on his dying bed we have found him curse himself, that when he came to die, his gold, though laid upon his heart, could not still its aching and give him joy. Never, never did we know a Christian who repented of his Christianity! We have seen Christians so sick that we wondered that they lived—so poor, that we pondered at their misery. We have seen them so full of doubts, that we pitied their unbelief. But we never heard them say, even then, “I regret that I gave myself to Christ.” No! With the dying clasp, when heart and flesh were failing, we have seen them hug this treasure to their breast and press it to their heart, still feeling that this was their life, their joy, their all!

Oh, if you would be happy, if you would be saved, if you would strew your path with sunshine and dig out the nettles and blunt the thorns, “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you.” Seek not happiness first—seek CHRIST first and happiness shall come after. Seek first the Lord and then He will provide for you everything that is profitable for you in this life and He will crown it with everything that is glorious in the life to come. “Beloved, NOW are we the sons of God.”

Before closing this discourse, I fear that there are a great many of you who will say, “Well, I care nothing at all about religion—it is of no avail to me.” No, my Friends and it is very probable that you will not care about it until it shall be too late to care. Maybe you will go on putting off these thoughts until the day shall come when they will come so thick upon you that you will not be able to procrastinate any longer—and then will you in right earnest set about seeking Christ. But at that hour He will say to you, “Inasmuch as Moab has wearied himself upon the high places and he betakes himself to My sanctuary, I will not hear him, says the Lord.” “Strive to enter in at the strait gate” *now*, “for many *shall* seek to enter in, but shall not be able.” Let us fear, lest, having the Gospel preached in our ears, we should neglect and put it off until the last hour has struck and we find ourselves without hope—when there is no time to seek a Savior.

I know where this morning’s sermon will be found profitable. It will be in the case of those who are seeking Christ. Old Flockhart, who used to preach till within the last few months in the streets of Edinburgh—a much despised, but a very godly man, used to say—“When I begin my sermon, I begin by preaching the Law and then I bring the Gospel after-

wards. For," he said, "it is like a woman who is sewing—she cannot sew with thread alone. She first sticks a sharp needle through and then draws the thread afterwards." He continues, "So does the Lord with us. He sends the sharp needle of conviction, the needle of the Law, into our hearts and pricks us in the heart and He draws through the long silken thread of consolation afterwards."

Oh, I would that some of you were pricked in the heart today! Remember, there are thunders in this Bible. Though they are sleeping now, they will awake by-and-by. There are in this Bible curses too horrible for heart to know their full extent of meaning. They are slumbering now, but they shall waken and when they leap from between the folded leaves and the seven seals are broken—where will you flee and where shall you hide yourselves—in that last great day of anger? If, then, you are pricked to the heart, I preach to you the Gospel now. "Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation." This day look to Him that hung upon the Cross. This day believe and live.

And now to illustrate the manner in which rebellious sinners are reconciled to God, I will relate to you an interesting anecdote from the life of a soldier. It may picture to your minds the majesty of God in strewing grace and the humbling experience of the sinner in receiving it and help us to answer that solemn question—"What must I do to be saved?" My author says that he and his comrades of a certain regiment serving in India had been without pay for about six months and there was strong suspicion throughout the ranks that their commanding officer had embezzled the money. He was a great gambler and they thought it most likely that he had gambled away their pay.

They were determined to seek redress. So all the private soldiers (with the exception of non-commissioned officers) agreed that on a particular morning, when on parade, they should not obey the word of command. The day arrived and they carried their design into execution. The regiment was assembled. The men in companies headed by their respective officers proceeded to the parade ground and formed into open columns. The commanding officer took his station in front and gave the word of command. Not one, however, of the privates obeyed. This being the conduct of the regiment, the commanding officer, with great self-possession, ordered every tenth man to be confined in the guardhouse. It was done without a show of resistance. But then all the privates fixed bayonets, shouldered arms and marched off—the band playing and the drums beating alternately—all the way to the residence of the general, about a mile distant.

There they halted and formed a line in a most orderly manner fronting the house. One man from each of the ten companies then stepped forward and they proceeded to lodge a written complaint against the colonel. Having thus fulfilled their purpose they marched back and dismissed. The next thing they did was release the prisoners and this they did without any violence being offered by the guard. Whatever extenuations we may

conceive for such conduct, according to military Law, it was a heinous crime.

The soldier's duty is to obey. He must not think for himself, but he must be as a tool in the hands of his superior officers—to do as he is told and not to complain. Shortly after this, to the surprise of these soldiers, the general was seen approaching with a large army of Sepoys, infantry and cavalry, with field pieces in front. The regiment went out and respectfully saluted him, forming in line. But this was not what the general came for. They saw the storm brewing and prepared to fight.

After the two lines had been formed, facing each other, the General moved out on horseback and said, "Twenty-second, take the command from me." They obeyed. He then said, "Order arms." Next—"Handle arms." And last, which was most disgraceful to them—"Ground arms." Having thus disarmed, he ordered his black cavalry to charge upon them and drive them from their arms. One more order he gave to those disaffected men—that they should strip off their accoutrements, and lay them on the ground, and be off to their barracks. When he had thus disarmed and dishonored the men, he forgave them.

And now will not this incident fitly represent the manner of God with sinners, when according to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, He brings terms of peace and reconciliation to us who are in revolt against Him? He says, "Ground arms, give up your sins, take off your self-righteousness." He disarms us, dishonors us and strips off all our comely array and then says, "Now I will forgive you."

If there is anyone here who has thrown down his weapons of rebellion and whose fine ornaments of beauty are stained with shame, let him believe that God will *now* forgive him. He forgives those who cannot forgive themselves. The great Captain of our salvation will pardon those whom He has humbled. He will have you submit to His will and though that may at first seem imperious to drive you from your quarters and visit you with punishment, you shall presently find that His sovereign will is gracious and He delights in mercy. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved," for thus says the Word, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believes not shall be damned."

May you believe, by His Grace. Amen. Amen.

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# THE CHRISTIAN'S MANIFESTATION

## NO. 3004

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 1906.

*DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,*  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 5, 1866.

*"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear  
what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear,  
we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."  
1 John 3:2.*

THE text mentions, "now," and then passes on to the future and speaks of, "yet." It does, however, speak of, "now" and, after all, despite our trials, there is much to make us happy in our present condition. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God." Our manifold temptations and infirmities cannot make us lose the blessings that come to us through our adoption into the family of God! "Happy are you, O Israel: who is like unto you, O people saved by the Lord?" Today, even today, we are the blessed of the Lord and we find in godliness the blessing of "the life that now is."

Yet, Beloved, for all that, we are still forced to cry—

*"Alas for us if you were all,  
And nothing beyond, O earth!"*

If this were all our life, it would have been better for us not to have lived. Woe unto us if we had to live here always! Young says—

*"Were there no death, even fools might wish to die"—*

and, certainly, wise men would do so, for, Brothers and Sisters, this is a life of distractions, cares, anxieties, disappointments and, what is worse, it is a life of sins, sorrows and bitter repentances for wrong-doing! This life is to us a traveler's life with all the inconveniences that we meet with in travelling. We are here today and we are gone tomorrow! Sometimes the heat consumes us and at other times the cold bites us. We are like men at sea—we have not yet cast our anchor, nor furled our sails, nor reached the port where we are bound—and the sea in which we are sailing is rough, tempest-tossed and beset with rocks, shoals and quicksands. Our soul is often half a wreck and longs for the desired haven where, "the wicked cease from troubling" and, "the weary are at rest." Ours is a soldier's life—we have to be constantly fighting, or else continually upon our guard. Think not, you who have just buckled on your harness, that you have won the victory, for the good soldiers of Jesus Christ must fight from morn till evening, from youth's happy morning till the eve of gray old age!

I would not paint life in sadder colors than it needs, but I dare not shut my eyes to the fact that this is a sad world and that our path is one

of sorrow, for it is “through much tribulation” that we “enter into the Kingdom of God.”—

***“The path of sorrow and that path alone,  
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown.”***

It is to that other and better land that I would, for a little while, bear away your thoughts. We shall borrow the wings of our text and, like the eagle, soar towards Heaven!

**I.** We will begin with this sentence—IT DOES NOT YET APPEAR WHAT WE SHALL BE.

What we are to be, we can scarcely guess. Indeed, we cannot guess at all by the use of our senses. “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him. But God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit.” But only to our spirits! Flesh and blood, as they are, cannot inherit the Kingdom of God and cannot even guess what that Kingdom is like. This is not the place where the Christian is to be seen. This is the place of his veiling—Heaven is the place of his manifestation. This is the place of his night. Yonder is the place of his day. Our portion is on the other side of the river—our days of feasting are not yet!

Some of the reasons why “it does not yet appear what we shall be” may be as follows. First, *our Master was, to a great extent, concealed and hidden, and we must expect to be as He was.* Is it not written, in this very Epistle, “as He is, as are we in this world?” Jesus said to His followers when He was here upon earth, “The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord.” My Brothers and Sisters, see that Man wearing a coat “without seam, woven from the top throughout”—the carpenter’s son, the heir of poverty, the Companion of the humblest classes of mankind? Can you see in Him God over all, blessed forever? If you can, you are not looking with the eyes of your flesh, I am sure, for in that manner, you cannot detect the Glory of the Lord Jesus Christ beneath so humble a garb. The veil which the Savior cast about Himself was not so thick but that some rays of His Glory burst through when He trod the waves, rebuked the winds and raised the dead, but still, it was sufficiently dense, for He cried, “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head.” You will see that Christ was concealed as you remember that.

But, as Dr. Watts says—

***“All riches are His native right”—***

yet, when He had to pay the Temple tax, He had to work a miracle that Peter might be able to catch the fish which had the exact amount required in its mouth. He was so poor that He had to live upon the charity of His followers. Would you have believed that He was the Lord of all creation if you had seen Him up on yonder lonely mountain’s side without a bed to rest upon, or sitting wearily upon Jacob’s well at Sychar and asking a sinful woman to give Him a little water to drink? The Savior was, indeed, masked and hidden so that the vulgar eye could not detect His Glory. Only such eagle-eyed men as John were able to say, “We

beheld His Glory, the Glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and truth." Our Lord's wisdom, Grace, power and all His other illustrious attributes were concealed beneath the veil of our inferior clay. Dr. Watts was right, as I reminded you just now, when he wrote—

***“Worthy is He that once was slain  
The Prince of Peace that groaned and died—  
Worthy to rise, and live, and reign  
At His almighty Father's side!  
Power and dominion are His due  
Who stood condemned at Pilate's bar.  
Wisdom belongs to Jesus, too,  
Though He was charged with madness here.  
All riches are His native right,  
Yet He sustained amazing loss!  
To Him ascribe eternal might  
Who left His weakness on the Cross.”***

So fully did He veil His Glory that some even ventured to call Him Beelzebub and to say that He was a gluttonous man and a winebibber!

Now, Christian, as you think of all this, do you wonder if worldlings do not know you and only speak of you to slander you? Do you wonder if your integrity is questioned and your most manifest virtue is misrepresented? And if the Grace which really is within you is laughed at and despised? How could the world know you when the Savior, Himself, was not discovered? As the bright gleams of His Divine Glory were almost wholly concealed, surely the weaker gleams of your earthly and human glory must be altogether hidden! That, perhaps, is the first reason why “it does not yet appear what we shall be.”

I think I may also remark, Brothers and Sisters, that *we are not yet fit to let it appear what we shall be*. “The son in the house,” says one, “is treated as if he were a servant—and even worse than if he were a servant. A servant is not chastised—he may do many wrong things and yet escape without a stripe—yet it is not as with the son. Why does not his father give him the honor and dignity which belong to his sonship?” Simply because he is at present only a child and he must be treated as a child for a time, in order that he may be fitted to adorn his sonship. It would spoil him to receive at once all that is to be his when he enters upon his inheritance. He is the heir to all his father's estates, yet he has to be thankful to his father for even a penny—and he receives his pittance week by week, as though he were a poor pensioner upon his father's bounty or a beggar at his door. Why does not the father give this heir to large estates a thousand pounds? Why does he not entrust him with a great store of wealth? Because he is in his nonage and if he were trusted with a large sum of money at so early an age, he might grow profligate and so be unfit to use his wealth rightly if he should reach riper years.

Brothers and Sisters, you and I, if we are Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, are kings—not only sons of God, but kings who are to reign with Him forever! Then why are we not treated like kings? You know that in some earthly royal families, it is thought best for the prince, the heir-

apparent to the throne, that he should be a soldier or a sailor and serve his country in that capacity, so that, when he comes to the throne, he may understand how to wield his scepter for the good of all classes of his subjects. So, Christian, is it with you. You are so childish at present—you have just lately begun to learn the nature of Divine things. You are uninstructed—you know but in part and you know that part so badly that it would not be fitting that your greatness should be revealed to you at present! You must be held back for a while till you have been better trained in the Holy Spirit's school—and *then* it shall appear what you shall be!

A third reason why it does not yet appear what we shall be is, I think, because *this is not the world in which the Christian is to appear in his glory*, for, if he did, his glory would be lost in this world. The multitude climbed to the tops of the trees, or the roofs of the houses, from where they might see Caesar or Pompey returning with the spoils of war. And the multitudes still clap their hands when a warrior has overcome his country's enemies and so become a great man. But the world cares little or nothing about self-denial, about Christian love, about consecration and devotion to Christ and His cause—yet these things are the glory of a Christian! That more excellent, that spiritual worth which flashes from the eyes of the holy angels and the saints in Glory is almost unappreciated here. Your Master has had this Glory, though it was usually veiled while He was here below, yet the people cried out, “away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!” And if you had here, to its full extent, the glory which will be revealed in you in Heaven, people would say the same concerning you! This is not the world in which you are to display your full honors. When a king is journeying through a foreign country, he does not wear his crown, nor the rest of his regal clothes—he often travels *incognito* and even when he reaches his own country, he does not put on his royal robe for fools to admire at every village wake and fair! He is not a puppet-king, strutting upon the stage to show himself to the common people—he reserves his grandeur for great public occasions and grand court ceremonies. In this poor sinful world, you Christians would be out of place if you could be what you shall yet be! You, also, must go *incognito* through this world to a large extent. But, by-and-by, you shall take off the travel-worn garments that you have worn during your earthly pilgrimage and put on your beautiful array and be manifested to the whole universe as a son or a daughter of “the King Eternal, Immortal, Invisible!”

And to close this part of the subject, “It does not yet appear what we shall be,” because *this is not the time for the display of the Christian's glory*. If I may use such an expression, time is not the time for the manifestation of a Christian's glory. Eternity is to be the period for the Christian's full development and for the sinless display of his God-given glory. Here he must expect to be unknown—it is in the hereafter that he is to be discovered as a son of the great King. At present it is with us as it is with the world during winter. If you had not seen the miracle worked again and again, you would not guess, when you look upon those black

beds in the garden, or when you walk over that snowy and frosty covering, crisp and hard beneath your feet, that the earth will yet be sown with all the colors of the rainbow and that it will be gemmed with flowers of unspeakable beauty! No, the winter is not the time when the beauty of the earth is to be best seen. And, Christian, you, also, must pass through your winter season. Yes, but let that wintry weather once be over, let the bleak December winds howl into your ears, let the cold and cheerless January come and go, let February also pass and, behold, the springtime comes! I might also say that gray hairs come upon your head like the snowflakes appear upon the earth—as the forerunner of spring and of summer—and your soul shall yet blossom “with unspeakable joy and full of glory,” and all the graces and excellence of the Christian shall be revealed in you! It is winter with you now, but the summer comes!

If you stand, as many of you have often done, at the seaside, you have noticed that at certain hours of the day there is a long expanse of mud, or of dry sand, and it may not seem to one who sees it for the first time as though the sea had ever rolled over it, or that it ever would. Ah, but “it does not yet appear” what it will be! It is ebb-tide now, but wait till the flood comes and then you will see the whole of that black mire or that yellow sand glistening in the sunshine! So, the flood of glory is rising, Christian! Can you not see the breakers in the distance, the white crests of the incoming waves? God’s great sea of eternity draws nearer and nearer! Can you not hear the booming of that mighty flood? Soon shall your ransomed spirit float and bathe in that sea of Glory where not a single wave shall cause you a moment’s grief or pain! This is not the time, Christian, in which you are to be fully revealed. You are, today, like that ugly shriveled seed—there is no beauty in it that you should desire it. Yes, but wait a little while and the sweetly-perfumed flower shall shed its fragrance in the air and make the gazer pause to admire the matchless colors with which God has been pleased to paint it! Then shall its full glory be known and seen! At present you are in your seed stage and your sowing time is coming. Tremble not that it is so. There will be a time for your poor flesh to sleep in the silent grave, but, at the voice of the archangel and the blast of the trumpet of the Resurrection, you shall arise! Just as the flower rises in spring, the dead body, which was put into the tomb, shall rise incorruptible in the image of the Savior!

So, you see, “it does not yet appear what we shall be,” because the Lord Jesus Christ was not fully revealed here, because we are not fit to appear in Glory, because we are not here in the midst of the men and women who should see us in *our glory* and because it is not yet the right time for us thus to appear. “To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heavens,” but this is not the time for the full manifestation of Christians and, therefore, “it does not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”



**II.** Having spent so much time over the previous clause, we will merely hint at the teaching of the next words of the text—"BUT WE KNOW THAT WHEN HE SHALL APPEAR."

So, then, *it is quite certain that Christ will appear.* John does not stop to prove it. He speaks of it as though it were perfectly understood that Christ would again appear and he mentions what is to be the nature of that appearing.

*Christ will appear in Person.* This is what the two angels declared to the disciples after His Ascension, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into Heaven." That is, as the Incarnate God He will come back from Heaven.

When He comes, *He will appear full of happiness.* There will be no more sorrow to wrinkle His brow, no more furrows to be plowed on His back, no fresh wounds to be made in His hands or his feet, no more offering of a Sacrifice for sin—He will come to forever rejoice with His people!

Further, when He comes, *He will appear in His Glory*—not as the Man of Nazareth to be despised and spit upon—but as "The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." If any of you are tempted to ask, "When will He come?" I give you His own assurance, "Surely I come quickly." So go your way and pray, as John did, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus," yet do not forget Paul's Inspired sentence, "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction comes upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." Christ is coming, Beloved, literally coming—not figuratively and by His Spirit, but literally, actually, really—

***"Lo! He comes with clouds descending  
Once for favored sinners slain."***

He is coming in Glory to dwell in the midst of His saints forever. This is our blessed hope, "the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

**III.** Now, passing on, "We know that when He shall appear, WE SHALL BE LIKE HIM; FOR WE SHALL SEE HIM AS HE IS."

There are other passages in His Word where we are distinctly told that His manifestation will be coincident with our manifestation. Here we are told that "when He shall appear, we shall be like Him." And the reason given for this is, "for we shall see Him as He is."

Let us, while pondering the text, then, meditate upon this great Truth of God—"We shall be like Him." This afternoon, meditating upon this glorious assurance that I shall be like Christ—and I fully believe that I shall be like Him—it did seem to me as if it were almost too good to be true!

Yet it is true that *we are to be like Christ, first, as to our body*. Here we are like the first Adam of the earth, earthy. But we shall, one day, have a body like that of the second Adam, a heavenly body! Like the first Adam, we are now mortal. Like the second Adam, we shall, by-and-by, be immortal! Christ's body is not now subject to any pains, or to any decay or disease—neither shall our body be. It is quite true that “flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God,” yet it will be this very body of ours that *will* inherit the Kingdom of God, only that which is corruptible in it, that which is mere flesh and blood, will then have been removed! As the Apostle Paul writes to the Corinthians in that wonderful chapter about the Resurrection, “It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.” It is “a spiritual body” which the Lord Jesus Christ has today. I cannot imagine how glorious the Savior is in Heaven, but I always think of Him, even when He was upon this earth, as being far fairer than any artist ever depicted Him. I have gazed a long while upon many paintings of Christ, both in England and abroad, but I have never yet seen one which appeared to me to be equal even to my ideal of the Savior! I have looked and I have said, “Oh, no! He was far fairer than that! There must have been more beauty in His face than even that great master has portrayed.” Well, Brothers and Sisters, if that is true concerning Him as He was when among the sons of men, how true it must be concerning Him as He is now! He is fairer than all the fair spirits that surround the heavenly Throne! He is “the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valleys.” Among the shining seraphim and cherubim, none can be compared with Him and, Christian, you are to be like Him! Whatever are the Characteristics of the Savior's glorified body, they are to be the characteristics of your body, also! You are to have an immortal body, a spiritual body, a body incapable of pain, suffering, decay—a body which shall be suited to your emancipated spirit, a body having a wider range than this limited earthly sphere, having greater powers at locomotion, perhaps flying, swiftly as light, from world to world, or possibly having the power even to outrun the lightning's flash! I do not know how wondrous Christ's glorified body is, but I do know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him (even in body); for we shall see Him as He is.”

But, far more important than that, *we shall also be like Christ in soul*. Have the eyes of your spiritual understanding or sanctified imagination ever looked upon Christ's spotless, perfectly-developed soul—that equably-adjusted spirit, in which no one power or passion was too prominent or predominant—but in which His whole Being was beautifully molded and rounded according to the perfect pattern of moral excellence and beauty? Now, Beloved, you are to be just like that—not quick in temper, as perhaps you now are, but meek and lowly as He was—not haughty and prone to pride, but humble and gentle as He was—not selfish and self-seeking, but as disinterested and as tender to others as He was—in fact, perfection's own self! It was said of Harry the Eighth that if all the histories of all the tyrants who ever lived had been

lost, you might have composed them all with the material from the life of that execrable monster! And I will venture to say that if all the biographies of all the good men and holy angels that have ever existed could be blotted out of existence or memory, they might all be written again with the material from the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, for in Him dwells all excellence and all goodness! What a joy it is to us to know that we shall be like Him! Brothers and Sisters in Christ, this blessed Truth of God is enough to make you stand up or even leap in the exuberance of your joy! I have heard of our enthusiastic Welsh friends dancing during some of their preachers' sermons—and if it is this or a similar Truth which makes them dance, who can wonder at it? “We shall be like Him”—like Him in soul, with no more infirmities of temper, or sloth, or undue haste. Our human nature shall be rid of all its rags and we shall be perfect, even as our Father in Heaven is perfect! Oh, that the blessed day had already come and that we were like our Lord! But “we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.”—

**“Nor does it yet appear  
How great we must be made!  
But when we see our Savior here,  
We shall be like our Head.”**

Time fails me to say what I should have liked to have said, yet I ought to add that *we shall be like Christ* not only in body and in soul, but *also in condition*. We shall be with Him where He is and we shall be as happy as He is, as far as our capacity for happiness goes. We shall be crowned even as He is crowned and we will sit upon thrones even as He sits upon His Father's Throne. He shall lead us to living fountains of water and be our constant Companion, never going away from us again. He shall call us His brethren and we shall share in His honor and Glory. The joy of which we shall partake shall be His joy, and it will be in us that our joy may be full. O Christian, think lofty thoughts concerning the Lord in Glory and remember that you shall be like Him! I cannot help repeating that quaint little ditty which Rowland Hill was so fond of humming in his old age—

**“And when I'm to die, 'Receive me,' I'll cry,  
For Jesus has loved, I cannot tell why!  
But thus I do find, we too are so joined  
He'll not live in Glory and leave me behind.”**

**IV.** So, “we shall be like Him.” And the reason why we shall be like Him is thus given by John, “FOR WE SHALL SEE HIM AS HE IS.”

How is it that we shall be like Him because of that? Partly, *by reflection*. Perhaps you are aware that in the olden time, looking-glasses (if I may use an Irishism), were not looking-glasses at all, for they were made of polished brass. If a person looked into such a mirror when the sun was shining upon that mirror, not only would the mirror itself be bright, but it would also throw a reflection on the face of the person who was looking into it. This is only according to the laws of light. When a man looks into a bright mirror, it makes him, also, bright, for it throws its own light upon his face and, in a much more wonderful fashion, when we look at Christ, who is all brightness, He throws some of His

brightness upon us! When Moses went up into the mountain to commune with God, his face shone because he had received a reflection of God's Glory upon his face. He had looked into the blazing light of Deity, as far as a created eye could look there and, therefore, that light was so brilliantly reflected in his own face that Aaron and the people were afraid to draw near him—and he had to cover his face with a veil while he spoke to them.

Further, Beloved, we get to be like Christ by seeing Him *in type and symbol*, as through a glass darkly. The Lord's Supper is one of the glasses. Believer's Baptism is another. The preaching of the Word is another. The Bible, itself, is another of these glasses. It is only a partial reflection of Christ that we get from all these glasses yet, as we look at it, as Paul writes to the Corinthians, "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," or, "by the Lord, the Spirit."

But, Brothers and Sisters, if there is such a sanctifying influence about the very reflection of Jesus Christ, *what a wondrous power it must have upon us when we see Him as He is!* When we shall gaze upon Him with unveiled vision and see Him as He is, do you wonder that John says that then, "we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is"? Oh, that amazing sight, that unique sight of Jesus as He is! It would be worthwhile to die a thousand painful deaths in order to get one brief glimpse of Him as He is! I do not think that Rutherford exaggerated when he talked of swimming through seven Hells to get at Christ if he could not get at Him any other way. A distant view of Him, as we have seen Him "leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills," has so ravished our souls that we have scarcely known whether we have been in the body or out of our body. When we have heard His voice, we have longed to be with Him. The very thought of Him has made us like the dove separated for a while from her mate, long to cleave the air with rapid wing and fly home to our dovecote and to our blessed Noah. What must it be to be there? What must it be to see our Savior as He is?

In some of the houses not far from here, I noticed some finches in cages in which there were tufts of grass, or small branches of trees as perches for the poor prisoners—yet they were singing away right merrily. I suppose that grass and those fragments of trees were meant to remind them, in this great, dirty, smoky Babylon, that there are green fields and wide forests somewhere. I thought, as I looked upon them, "Ah, you poor birds are like what I myself am! My Master has put me in a little cage and bid me bide here for a while—and He has given me my little tuft of grass as an earnest of my inheritance in the—

***"Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood."***

He graciously sends me a few comforts on the way. Ah, but that poor little tuft of grass, what is it in comparison with the fields and the hedges which are the proper home of the singing birds which have their liberty? And, Christian, you do not know what it will be for you to have your cage door opened that you may fly away to that blessed land where the true birds of Paradise forever warble, from their joyful throats, the loudest

praises to the great King who has set them free forever! Let us begin the music here! Let us try, even now, to anticipate that happy day as we sing of—

***“Jerusalem the golden,  
With milk and honey blest—***

where—

***“The daylight is serene.”—***

And where—

***“The pastures of the blessed  
Are decked in glorious sheen.”***

I leave my text with you who love the Lord. As for you who do not love Him, I dare not give it to you. Oh, that you did love Him and that you did trust Him! He waits to be gracious. Seek His face and He will be found of you. Fly to Him and He will not reject you. Trust in Him and He will wash you from all your sins and bring you to His Presence in eternal Glory, to go no more out forever! May He give you this unspeakable blessing, for His love's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
1 JOHN 2; 3:1, 2.**

**1 John 2:1.** *My little children, these things I write unto you, that you sin not.* This is one of the great objectives of all that is written by Inspiration—that we may be kept from sin. O child of God, as you would fear to drink poison, as you would flee from a serpent, dread sin!

**1.** *And if any man sins.* Is it a hopeless case then? Far from it! “If any man sins.”

**1-3.** *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. And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.* Holiness of life is the best proof that we know God. It matters not how readily we can speak about God, nor how much we suppose that we love Him—the great test is, do we keep His commandments? What a heart-searching test this is! How it should humble us before the Mercy Seat!

**4-6.** *He that says, I know Him, and keeps not His commandments, is a liar and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him. He that says he abides in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked.* When we try to be, in every respect, what God's Word tells us we ought to be, then may we know that we are in God. But if we walk carelessly, if we take no account of our actions, but do, after a random fashion, whatever comes into our foolish hearts, then have we no evidence at all that we are in God!

**7.** *Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which we had from the beginning.* The old commandment is the word which you have heard from the beginning. “From the time when Christ first began to preach, or when the Gospel was first preached in your ears.”

**8.** *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 shines.* That which is new in the Gospel, in one sense, is not new in another, for, though John was about to write what he called a new commandment, yet, at the same time, he was writing something which was not novel, something which was not grafted upon the Gospel, but which grows naturally out of it, namely, the Law of Love.

**9.** *He that says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness, even until now.* God is Love and God is Light. Therefore, love is light, and the Light of God is Love. Where enmity and hatred are still in the heart, it is proof positive that the Grace of God is not there.

**10-15.** *He that loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in him. 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. I write unto you, young men, because you have overcome the Wicked One. I write unto you, little children, because you have known the Father. I have written unto you, fathers, because you have known Him that is from the beginning. 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. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* For this sinful world is directly opposed to the Father. You cannot send your heart at the same time in two opposite ways—towards evil and towards good. You must make a choice between the two.

**16, 17.** *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. And the world passes away, and the lust thereof: but he that does the will of God abides forever.* It ought not, then, to be difficult to make a choice between these fleeting shadows and the everlasting substance.

**18.** *Little children, it is the last time.* You may read the passage, "It is the last hour," as if John wanted to show how late it was and how soon Christ would come. "It is the last hour."

**18.** *And as you have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.* How much more emphatically John might write this verse if he were writing today!

**19.** *They went out from us.* For, alas, many of the antichrists came out of the Church. They sprang up from among the followers of Christ. "They went out from us."

**19, 20.** *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. But you have an unction from the Holy One, and you know all things.* "You who know God—and even the little children, the babes in Christ, know the Father—know all things."

And you will not be led astray and deceived by these antichrists who have gone out into the world.”

**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.* The truth is all of a piece, and a lie cannot be a part of the truth. Christ does not teach us a Jesuitical system in which error and falsehood are mixed up with truth—the Gospel is all truth—and to those who believe it we may say, “You know the truth, and you also know that no lie is of the truth.”

**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. They who deny the Deity of Christ practically deny the Divine Fatherhood of God. It is not possible for us to understand the rest of the Truth of God if we do not believe in Christ, who is the Truth. As the poet says—*

**“You cannot be right in the rest  
Unless you think rightly of Him.”**

**23-28.** *[But] he that acknowledges the Son has the Father also. 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. And that is the promise that He has promised us, even eternal life. These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. 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 in truth, and is no lie, and even as it has taught you, we shall abide in Him. And now, little children, abide in Him. That which is the subject of promise is also the subject of precept. And the precepts of the Gospel are given to Christians because, in this way, God keeps His own promise and so leads me to obey His precepts.*

**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.*

**1 John 3:1, 2.** *Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knows us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.*

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

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

# THE BEATIFIC VISION

## NOS. 61, 62

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JANUARY 20, 1856,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

***“We shall see Him as He is.”  
1 John 3:2.***

IT is one of the most natural desires in all the world that when we hear of a great and a good man, we should wish to see him in person. When we read the works of any eminent author, we are accustomed to turn to the frontispiece to look for his portrait. When we hear of any wondrous deed of daring, we will crowd our windows to see the warrior ride through the streets. When we know of any man who is holy and who is eminently devoted to his work, we will not mind tarrying anywhere if we may but have a glimpse of him whom God has so highly blessed. This feeling becomes doubly powerful when we have any connection with the man—when we feel not only that he is great, but that he is great for us—not simply that he is good, but that he is good to us! Not only that he is benevolent, but that he has been a benefactor to us as individuals. Then the wish to see him rises to a craving desire and the desire is insatiable until it can satisfy itself in seeing that unknown and hitherto unseen donor who has done such wondrously good deeds for us. I am sure, my Brothers and Sisters, you will all confess that this strong desire has arisen in your minds concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. We owe to none so much! We talk of none so much, we hope and we think of none so much—at any rate, no one so constantly thinks of us! We have, I believe, all of us who love His name, a most insatiable wish to behold His Person. The thing for which I would pray above all others would be forever to behold His face, forever to lay my head upon His breast, forever to know that I am His, forever to dwell with Him! Yes, one short glimpse, one transitory vision of His Glory, one brief glance at His marred but now exalted and beaming Countenance would repay almost a world of trouble! We have a strong desire to see Him. Nor do I think that that desire is wrong. Moses, himself, asked that he might see God. Had it been a wrong wish arising out of vain curiosity, it would not have been granted. But God granted Moses his desire—He put him in the cleft of the rock, shaded him with His hands, bade him look at the skirts of His garments, because His face could not be seen. Yes, more. The earnest desire of the very best of men has been in the same direction. Job said, “I know that my Redeemer lives and though worms devour this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God”—that was his desire. The holy Psalmist said, “I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.” “I shall behold Your face in righteousness.” And most saints, on their deathbeds, have expressed



their fondest, dearest and most blessed wish for Heaven—in the expression of longing “to be with Christ, which is far better.” And not ill did our sweet singer of Israel put the words together, when he humbly said and sweetly, too—

**“Millions of years my wondering eye  
Shall over Your beauties rove.  
And endless ages I’ll adore  
The glories of Your love.”**

We are rejoiced to find such a verse as this, for it tells us that our curiosity shall be satisfied, our desire consummated, our bliss perfected. “WE SHALL SEE HIM AS HE IS.” Heaven shall be ours and all we ever dreamed of Him shall be more than in our possession!

By the help of God’s mighty Spirit, who alone can put words in our mouths, let us speak, first of all, concerning *the glorious position*—“AS HE IS.” Secondly, *His personal identity*—“we shall see HIM as *He is*.” Thirdly, *the positive vision*—“We SHALL SEE Him as He is.” And fourthly, *the actual persons*—“WE shall see Him as He is.”

**I.** First then, THE GLORIOUS POSITION. Our minds often revert to Christ as He was and as such we have desired to see Him. Ah, how often have we wished to see the Baby that slept in Bethlehem! How earnestly have we desired to see the Man who talked with the woman at the well! How frequently have we wished that we might see the blessed Physician walking among the sick and dying, giving life with His touch and healing with His breath! How frequently, too, have our thoughts retired to Gethsemane. How we have wished our eyes were strong enough to pierce through 1,850 years which part us from that wondrous spectacle, that we might see Him as He was! We shall never see Him thus—Bethlehem’s glories are gone forever. Calvary’s glooms are swept away. Gethsemane’s scene is dissolved. And even Tabor’s splendors are quenched in the past. They are as *things that were*. Nor shall they ever have a resurrection. The crown of thorns, the spear, the sponge, the nails—these are not. The manger and the rocky tomb are gone. The places are there, unsanctified by Christian feet, unblessed, unhallowed by the Presence of their Lord! We shall never see Him as He *was*. In vain our fancy tries to paint it, or our imagination to fashion it. We cannot, must not see Him as He was! Nor do we wish to, for we have a larger promise—“We shall see Him as He *is*.” Come, just look at that a few moments by way of contrast and then I am sure you will prefer to see Christ as He *is*, rather than behold Him as He was!

Consider, first of all, that we shall not see Him *abased in His Incarnation*, but *exalted in His Glory*. We are not to see the Infant of a span long. We are not to admire the youthful Boy. We are not to address the incipient Man. We are not to pity the Man wiping the hot sweat from His burning brow. We are not to behold Him shivering in the midnight air. We are not to behold Him subject to pains, weaknesses, sorrows and infirmities like ours. We are not to see His eyes wearied by sleeplessness. We are not to behold His hands tired in labor. We are not to behold His

feet bleeding with arduous journeys too long for their strength. We are not to see Him with His soul distressed. We are not to behold Him abased and sorrowful. Oh, the sight is better still! We are to see Him *exalted!* We shall see the head, but not with its crown of thorns—

***“The head that once was crowned with thorns,  
Is crowned with Glory now.”***

We shall see the hand and the nail prints, too, but not the nails. They have been drawn out and forever. We shall see His side and its pierced wound, but the blood shall not issue from it. We shall see Him not with a peasant’s garb around Him, but with the empire of the universe upon His shoulders! We shall see Him, not with a reed in His hand, but grasping a golden scepter! We shall see Him, not as mocked and spit upon and insulted, not bone of our bone, in all our agonies, afflictions and distresses—we shall see Him exalted—no longer Christ, the Man of Sorrows, the acquaintance of grief—but Christ the Man God, radiant with splendor, effulgent with light, clothed with rainbows, girded with clouds, wrapped in lightning, crowned with stars, the sun beneath His feet! Oh, glorious vision! How can we guess what *He is?* What words can tell us? Or how can we speak thereof? Yet whatever He is, with all His splendor unveiled, all His glories unclouded and Himself unclothed—*we shall see Him as He is.*

Remember again—we are not to see Christ as He *was*, the *despised*, the *tempted One*. We shall never see Christ sitting in the wilderness, while the arch-traitor says to Him, “If You are the Son of God command that these stones be made bread.” We shall not see Him standing firmly on the Temple’s pinnacle, bidding defiance to the Evil One who bids Him cast Himself down from that towering height. We shall not see Him erect on the mountain of temptation, with the earth offered to Him if He will but crouch at the feet of the demon. No! Nor shall we see Him mocked by Pharisees, tempted by Sadducees, laughed at by Herodians. We shall not behold Him with the finger of scorn pointed at Him. We shall never see Him called a “drunken Man and a winebibber.” We shall never see the calumniated, the insulted, the molested, the despised Jesus! He will not be seen as One from whom we shall hide our faces, who “was despised and we esteemed Him not.” Never shall these eyes see those blessed cheeks dripping with spit! Never shall these hands touch that blessed hand of His while stained with infamy. We shall not see Him despised of men and oppressed. But “*we shall see Him as He is*”—

***“No more the bloody spear,  
The Cross and nails no more!  
For Hell itself shakes at His name,  
And all the heavens adore!”***

No tempting devil near Him—for the dragon is beneath His feet. No insulting men, for lo, the redeemed cast their crowns before His feet! No molesting demons, for angels sound His lofty praise through every golden street! Princes bow before Him. The kings of the isles bring tribute. All nations pay Him homage, while the great God of Heaven and earth, shining on Him, gives Him mighty honor! We shall see Him, Beloved, not ab-

horred, not despised and rejected but worshipped, honored, crowned, exalted, served by flaming spirits and worshipped by cherubim and seraphim! “We shall see Him as He is.”

Mark again—We shall not see the Christ *wrestling with pain*, but Christ *as a conqueror*. We shall never see Him tread the winepress alone, but we shall see Him when we shall cry, “Who is this who comes from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength?” We shall never see Him as when He stood foot to foot with His enemy—we shall see Him when His enemy is beneath His feet! We shall never see Him as the bloody sweat streams from His whole body, but we shall see Him as He has put all things under Him and has conquered Hell, itself! We shall never see Him as the wrestler. But we shall see Him grasp the prize. We shall never see Him sealing the rampart. But we shall see Him wave the sword of victory on the top thereof! We shall not see Him fight. But we shall see Him return from the fight victorious and shall cry, “Crown Him, Crown Him! Crowns become the Victor’s brow.” *“We shall see Him as He is.”*

Yet again—We shall never see our Savior under His Father’s *displeasure*, but we shall see Him *honored by His Father’s smile*. The darkest hour of Christ’s life was when His Father forsook Him—that gloomy hour when His Father’s remorseless hand held the cup to His Son’s own lips and bitter though it was, said to Him, “Drink My Son—yes, drink.” And when the quivering Savior said, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me.” Oh, it was a dark moment when the Father’s ears were deaf to His Son’s petitions, when the Father’s eyes were closed upon His Son’s agonies. “My Father,” said the Son, “Can You not remove the cup? Is there no way else for Your severe justice? Is there no other medium for man’s salvation?” There is none! Ah, it was a terrible moment when He tasted the wormwood and the gall! And surely darker, still, was that sad midday midnight, when the sun hid his face in darkness, while Jesus cried, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Believer, you will never see that sick face. You will never see that wan, thin forehead. You will never see that poor scarred brow. You will never see those tearful eyes. You will never see that pale emaciated body. You will never see that weary, weary heart! You will never see that exceedingly sorrowful spirit—for the Father never turns His face away, now! But what will you see? You will see your Lord lit up with His Father’s light as well as with His own. You will see Him caressed by His Beloved Parent. You will see Him sitting at His Father’s right hand, glorified and exalted forever! *“We shall see Him as He is.”*

Perhaps I have not shown clearly enough the difference between the two visions—the sight of what He was and what He is. Allow me, then, a moment more and I will try and make it still clearer. When we see Christ as He was, how *astonished* we are! One of the first feelings we should have, if we could have gone to the Mount of Olives and seen our Savior sweating there, would have been astonishment. When we were told that it was the Son of God in agonies, we would have lifted up our hands and

there would have been no speech in us at the thought! But then, Beloved, here is the difference. The Believer will be as much astonished when he sees Jesus' Glories, as He sits on His Throne, as he would have been to have seen Him in His earthly sufferings! The one would have been astonishment and horror would have succeeded it. But when we see Jesus as He is, it will be *astonishment without horror*. We shall not, for one moment, feel terrified at the sight, but rather—

***“Our joys shall run eternal rounds,  
Beyond the limits of the skies  
And earth's remotest bounds.”***

If we could see Jesus as He *was*, we would see Him with *great awe*. If we had seen Him walking on the water, what awe would we have felt! If we had seen Him raising the dead, we would have thought Him a most majestic Being. So we shall feel awe when we see Christ on His Throne. But the first kind of awe is awe compounded with fear—for when they saw Jesus walking on the water, they cried out and were afraid! But when we shall see Christ as He is, we shall say—

***“Majestic sweetness sits enthroned  
Upon His amazing brow!”***

There will be no fear with the awe—it will be *awe without fear*. We shall not bow before Him with trembling, but it will be with joy! We shall not shake at His Presence, but rejoice with unspeakable joy!

Furthermore, if we had seen Christ as He was, we would have had great *love* for Him. But that love would have been compounded with *pity*. We would stand over Him and say—

***“Alas! And did my Savior bleed,  
And did my Sovereign die?  
Would He devote that sacred head  
For such a worm as I?”***

We shall love Him quite as much when we see Him in Heaven and more, too, but it will be *love without pity*. We shall not say, “Alas!” but we shall shout—

***“All hail, the power of Jesus' name!  
Let angels prostrate fall—  
Bring forth the royal diadem  
And crown Him Lord of all!”***

Once again—If we had seen Jesus Christ as He was here below, there would have been *joy* to think that He came to *save us*. But we would have had *sorrow* mingled with it to think that we *needed saving*. Our sins would make us grieve that He should die. And, “alas!” would burst from us even with a song of joy. But when we see Him up there it will be *joy without sorrow*—sin and sorrow, itself, will have gone. Ours will be a pure, unmingled, unadulterated joy!

Yet more—If we had seen our Savior as He was, it would have been a *triumph* to see how He conquered, but still there would have been *suspense* about it. We would have feared lest He might not overcome. But when we see Him up there it will be *triumph without suspense*. Sheathe the sword! The battle's won! Tis over now—“Tis finished,” has been said! The grave has been past. The gates have been opened. And now, hence—

forth and forever, He sits down at His Father's right hand, from where also He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

Here, then, is the difference. "We shall see Him as He is." We shall feel astonishment without horror, awe without fear, love without pity, joy without sorrow, triumph without suspense. That is the glorious position! Poor words, why fail you? Poor lips, why speak you not much better? If you could, you would. For these are glorious things you speak of—"WE SHALL SEE HIM AS HE IS."

**II.** Now secondly, we have PERSONAL IDENTITY. Perhaps while I have been speaking, some have said, "Ah, but I want to see *the* Savior, the Savior of Calvary, the Savior of Judea, the very One that died for me! I do not so much pant to see the *glorious* Savior you have spoken of. I want to see that very Savior who did the works of love, the suffering Savior—for Him I love." Beloved, you shall see Him! It is the same one. There is personal identity. "We shall see Him." "Our eyes shall see Him and not another." "We shall see HIM as He is." It is a charming thought that we shall see the very, very Christ. And the poet sung well, who said—

***"Oh, how the thought that I shall know  
The Man who suffered here below,  
To manifest His favor,  
For me and those whom most I love,  
Or here, or with Himself above,  
Does my delighted passion move,  
At that sweet word, 'forever.'  
Forever to behold Him shine,  
Forever more to call Him mine,  
And see Him still before me.  
Forever on His face to gaze,  
And meet His full assembled rays,  
While all the Father He displays,  
To all the saints forever."***

That is what we want—to see the same Savior. Yes, it will be the same Lord we shall see in Heaven! Our eyes shall see *HIM* and not another. We shall be sure it is He. For when we enter Heaven, we shall know Him by His *Manhood and Godhead*. We shall find Him a Man, even as much as He was on earth. We shall find Him Man and God, too, and we shall be quite sure there never was another Man God. We never read or dreamed of another! Don't suppose that when you get to Heaven you will have to ask, "Where is the Man, Christ Jesus?" You will see Him straight before you at His Throne, a Man like yourselves—

***"Bright like a Man, the Savior sits—  
The God, how bright He shines."***

And you will know Christ by His *wounds*. Have you never heard of mothers having recognized their children years after they were lost by the marks and wounds upon their bodies? Ah, Beloved, if we ever see our Savior, we shall know Him by His wounds. "But," you say, "They are all gone." Oh no. For He—

***"Looks like a Lamb that once was slain,  
And wears His priesthood still."***

The hands are still pierced, though the nails are not there. The feet have still the openings through them. And the side is still gaping wide. We shall know Him by His wounds. We have heard of some who, on the battlefield, have been seeking for the dead. They have turned their faces up and looked at them, but knew them not. But the tender wife has come and there was some deep wound, some saber cut that her husband had received upon his breast and she said, "It is he, I know him by that wound." So in Heaven we shall, in a moment, detect our Savior by His wounds and shall say "It is He! It is He—He who once said, 'They have pierced My hands and My feet.'"

But then, Beloved, Christ and we are not strangers. For we have often seen Him in this glass of the Word. When by the Holy Spirit our poor eyes have been anointed with eye salve, we have sometimes caught a sufficient glimpse of Christ to know Him by it. We have never seen Him except by reflection. When we have looked in the Bible, He has been above us and looked down upon it. And we have looked there as into a looking glass and have seen Him, "as in a glass darkly." But we have seen enough of Him to know Him. And oh, I think when I see Him, I shall say, "That is the Bridegroom I read of in Solomon's Song. I am sure it is the same Lord that David used to sing of. I know that is Jesus, for He looks even now like that Jesus who said to the poor woman, 'Neither do I condemn you'—like that blessed Jesus who said, '*Talitha Cumi*'—'Maid, I say unto you, arise.'" We shall know Him because He will be so much like the Jesus of the Bible that we shall recognize Him at once!

Yet more—Sometimes we have known Him better than by Scripture—by close and intimate *fellowship* with Him. Why, we sometimes meet Jesus in the dark. And we have sweet conversation with Him and He puts His lips against our ear and our lips go so close to His ear, when we talk with Him. Oh, we shall know Him well enough when we see Him! You may trust the Believer for knowing His Master when he finds Him. We shall not need to have Jesus Christ introduced to us when we go to Heaven! If He were off His Throne and sitting down with all the rest of the blessed spirits, we would immediately go up to Him and say—"Jesus, I know You." The devil knew Him, for he said, "Jesus I know." And I am sure God's people ought to know Him. "Jesus, I know You," we shall say at once, as we go up to Him. "How do you know Me?" asks Jesus. "Why, sweet Jesus, we are no strangers—You have manifested Yourself to me as You do not unto the world. Sometimes You have given me such tokens of Your gracious affection. Do you think I have forgotten You? Why, sometimes I have seen Your hands and Your feet by faith and I have put my hand into Your side, like Thomas of old. And do You think that I am a stranger to You? No, blessed Jesus! If You were to put Your hand before your eyes and hide Your Countenance I would still know You! "Were You blindfolded once more, my eyes could tell you, for I have known You too long to doubt Your personality." Believer, take this thought with you—"we shall see *Him*," despite all the changes in His position! It will be the same Person. We shall see the same hands that were pierced, the same

feet that were weary, the same lips that preached, the same eyes that wept, the same heart that heaved with agony—positively the same, except as to His condition. “We shall see *HIM*.” Write the word, *HIM*, as large as you like. “We shall see *HIM* as He is.”

**III.** This brings us to the third point—THE POSITIVE NATURE OF THE VISION. “We shall see Him as He is.” This is not the land of sight. It is too dark a country to see *Him* and our eyes are not good enough. We walk here by *faith*, not by sight. It is pleasant to believe His Grace, but we had rather see it. Well, “We shall see Him.” But, perhaps you think, when it says, “We shall see Him,” that it means, we shall know more about Him—we shall think more of Him—we shall get better views of Him by faith. Oh, no, it does not mean that at all! It means what it says—*positive sight*. Just as plainly as I can see my Brother there, just as plainly as I can see any of you, shall I see Christ—with these very eyes, too. With these very eyes that look on you, I shall look on the Savior. It is not a fancy that we shall see Him. Do not begin cutting these words to pieces. Do you see that gas lamp? You will see the Savior in the same fashion—naturally, positively really, actually. You will not see Him dreamily, you will not see Him in the poetical sense of the word. You will not see Him in the metaphorical meaning of the word. You will see Him positively—you shall “see Him as He is.” “See him”—mark that. Not *think* about Him and *dream* about Him. But we shall positively “see Him as He is.” How different that sight of Him will be from that which we have here. For here we see Him *by reflection*. Now I have told you before, we see Christ “through a glass darkly”—then we shall see Him face to face. Good Doctor John Owen, in one of his books, explains this passage, “Here we see through a glass darkly.” And he says that means, “Here we look through a telescope and we see Christ only darkly through it.” But the good man had forgotten that telescopes were not invented till hundreds of years after Paul wrote—so that Paul could not have meant telescopes! Others have tried to give other meanings to the word. The fact is, glass was never used to see through at that time. They used glass to see *by*, but not to see *through*. The only glass they had for seeing was a glass mirror. They had some glass which was no brighter than our black common bottle glass. “Here we see through a glass darkly.” That means, by means of a mirror, as I have told you. Jesus is represented in the Bible. There is His portrait. We look on the Bible and we see it. We see Him “through a glass darkly.” Just as sometimes when you are looking in your mirror, you see somebody going along in the street. You do not see the person. You only see him reflected. *Now* we see Christ reflected. But *then* we shall not see Him in the mirror. We shall positively see His Person. Not the reflected Christ, not Christ in the sanctuary, not the mere Christ shining out of the Bible, not Christ reflected from the sacred pulpit. But “we shall see Him as He is.”

Again—*how partially we see Christ here*. The best Believer only gets half a glimpse of Christ. While here, one Christian sees Christ’s glorious head and he delights much in the hope of His coming. Another beholds

His wounds and he always preaches the Atonement—another looks into His heart—and he glories most in Immutability and the Doctrine of Election. Another only looks at Christ's Manhood—and he speaks much concerning the sympathy of Christ with Believers. Another thinks more of His Godhead and you will always hear him asserting the Divinity of Christ. I do not think there is a Believer who has seen the whole of Christ. No. We preach as much as we can do of the Master, but we cannot paint Him wholly. Some of the best paintings, you know, only just give the head and shoulders. They do not give the full-length portrait. There is no Believer, there is no choice divine, that could paint a full-length portrait of Christ. There are some of you who could not paint much more than His little finger. And mark, if we can paint the little finger of Jesus, well, it will be worth a lifetime to be able to do that! Those who paint best, cannot paint even His face fully. Ah, He is so glorious and wondrous that we cannot fully portray Him. We have not seen Him more than partially. Come, Beloved—how much do you know of Christ? You will say, "Ah, I know some little of Him. I could join with the spouse, when she declares that He is altogether lovely. But I have not surveyed Him from head to foot. Upon His wondrous glories I cannot fully dwell." Here we see Christ partially. There we shall see Christ entirely, when "we shall see Him as He is."

Here, too, *how dimly we see Christ!* It is through many shadows that we now behold our Master. Dim enough is the vision, here. But there, "we shall see Him as He is." Have you ever stood upon the hilltops, when the mist has played on the valley? You have looked down to see the city and the streamlet below. You could just see yonder steeple and mark that pinnacle. You could see that dome in the distance. But they were all so swathed in the mist that you could scarcely discern them. Suddenly the wind blows away the mist from under you and you have seen the fair, fair valley! Ah, it is so when the Believer enters Heaven. Here he stands and looks upon Christ veiled in a mist—upon a Jesus who is shrouded. But when he gets up *there*, on Pisgah's brow, higher still, with his Jesus, then he shall not see Him dimly, but he shall see Him brightly! We shall see Jesus, then, "without a veil between"—not dimly, but face to face!

Here, too, *how distantly we see Christ!* Almost as far off as the farthest star! We see Him, but not near. We behold Him, but not near to us. We catch some glimpse of Him. But oh, what lengths and distances lie between! What hills of guilt—a heavy load! But then we shall see Him closely. We shall see Him face to face! As a man talks with his friend, even so shall we then talk with Jesus. Now we are distant from Him. Then we shall be near to Him. Away in the highlands, where Jesus dwells, there shall our hearts be, too, when heart and body shall be "present with the Lord."

And oh, *how transitory is our view of Jesus!!* It is only a little while we get a glimpse of Christ and then He seems to depart from us. Our chariots have sometimes been like Amminadib's. But in a little while the wheels are all gone and we have lost the blessed Lord. Have you not



some hours in your life, felt so to be in the Presence of Christ that you scarcely knew where you were? Talk of Elijah's chariots and horses of fire. You were on fire yourself! You could have made yourself into a horse and chariot of fire and gone to Heaven easily enough. But then, all of a sudden, did you ever feel as if a lump of ice had fallen on your heart and put the fire out and you have cried, "Where has my Beloved gone? Why has He hidden His face?" Oh how dark! How dim! But, Christians, there will be no hidings of faces in Heaven! Blessed Lord Jesus, there will be no coverings of Your eyes in Glory! Is not Your heart a sea of love where all passions roll? And there is no ebb tide of Your sea, sweet Jesus, there! Are You not everything? There will be no losing You there—no putting Your hand before Your eyes up there. But without a single alteration, without change or diminution, our unwearied, unclouded eyes shall throughout eternity perpetually behold You! "We shall see Him as He is! Blessed sight! Oh, that it were come!

Then, do you know, there will be another difference. When "we shall see Him as He is," how much better that sight will be than what we have here! When we see Christ, here, we see Him to our profit. When we see Him, there, we shall see Him to *our perfection*. I bear my Master witness, I never saw Him yet without being profited by Him. There are many men in this world whom we see very often and get very little good from seeing them—the less we see of them, the better. But of our Jesus we can say we never come near Him without receiving good by Him. I never touched His garments without feeling that my fingers did smell of myrrh, aloes and cassia out of the ivory palaces! I never did come near His lips, but what His very breath shed perfume on me. I was never near my Master, yet, but what He slew some sin for me. I never have approached Him, but His blessed eyes burned a lust out of my heart for me. I have never come near to hear Him speak, but I felt I was melting when the Beloved spoke—being conformed into His image. But, Beloved, it will not be to improve us, it will be to *perfect* us, when we see Him up there! "We shall be like He is. For we shall see Him as He is." Oh, that first sweet look on Christ, when we shall have left the body! I am clothed in rags—He looks upon me and I am clothed in robes of light! I am black. He looks upon me and I forget the tents of Kedar and become white as the curtains of Solomon! I am defiled—sin has looked upon me and there is filth upon my garments—lo, I am whiter than the driven snow, for He has looked upon me! I have evil wishes and evil thoughts, but they have fled like the demon before His face, when He said, "Get you hence, Satan. I command you to come out of the man." "We shall be like He is. For we shall see Him as He is." I know, Beloved, the Savior seems to you like a great ship and I like some small boat, trying to pull the ship out of the harbor. It is how I feel, myself. I have the oars, I am trying to pull. But it is such a glorious big ship, that I cannot pull it out! There are some subjects, the rudder of which I can take hold of and guide anywhere. They will come out of any harbor, let the passage be ever so narrow. But this is a noble ship—so big that we can hardly get it out to sea. It needs the Holy Spirit

to blow the sails for you and your whole souls to dwell upon it—and desire to think of this wondrous sight—and then I hope you will go away dissatisfied with the preacher because you will feel that the subject had altogether mastered him and you, also!

**IV.** Lastly, here are THE ACTUAL PERSONS—“*We shall see Him as He is.*” Come, now, Beloved! I do not like dividing you. It seems hard work that you and I should be split asunder when I am sure we love each other with all our hearts. Ten thousand deeds of kindness received from you, ten thousand acts of heart-felt love and sympathy knit my heart to my people. But oh, Beloved, is it not obvious that when we say, “*we shall see Him,*” that word, “*we,*” does not signify all of us—does not include everybody here? “*We shall see Him as He is!*” Come, let us divide that, “*we,*” into “*I’s.*” How many “*I’s*” are there here who will “*see Him as He is*”?

Brother, with snow upon your head, will you “*see Him as He is*”? You have had many years of fighting, trying and trouble—if you ever do “*see Him as He is,*” that will pay for all! “*Yes,*” you say, “*I know in whom I have believed.*” Well, Brother, your old dim eyes will soon need no spectacles to “*see Him as He is.*” He will give you back your youth’s bright beaming eyes, with all their luster and their fire! But are your gray hairs full of sin? And does lust tarry in your old cold blood? Ah, you shall see Him, but not near—you shall be driven from His Presence! Would God this arm were strong enough to drag you to the Savior! But it is not. I leave you in His hands. God save you!

And you, dear Brother. And you, dear Sister—who have come to middle age—struggling with the toils of life, mixed up with all its battles, enduring its ills. You are asking, it may be, shall you see Him. The text says, “*We shall.*” And can you and I put our hands on our hearts and know our union with Jesus? If so, “*We shall see Him as He is.*” Brothers and Sisters! Fight on! Up at the devil! Strike hard at him! Fear not! That sight of Christ will pay you. Soldier of the Cross, whet your sword, again, and let it cut deep. Laborer! Toil again. Delve deeper. Lift the axe higher with a brawnier and stouter arm. For the sight of your Master at last will please you well! Up, warrior! Up the rampart, for victory sits smiling on the top and you shall meet your Captain there! When your sword is reeking with the blood of your sins, it will be a Glory, indeed, to meet your Master, when you are clothed with triumph and then to “*see Him as He is.*”

Young man, my Brother in age, the text says, “*We shall see Him as He is.*” Does, “*we,*” mean that young man there in the aisle? Does it mean you, my Brother, up there? Shall *we* “*see Him as He is*”? We are not ashamed to call each other Brothers and Sisters in this House of Prayer. Young man, you have got a mother and her soul dotes upon you. Could your mother come to you, this morning, she might take hold of your arm and say to you, “*John, we shall ‘see Him as He is.’ It is not I, John, that shall see Him for myself, alone, but you and I shall see Him together! ‘We shall see Him as He is.’*” Oh, bitter, bitter thought that just now crossed

my soul! O heavens! If we ever should be separated from those we love so dearly when the Last Day of account shall come! Oh, if *we* should not see Him as He is! I think to a son's soul there can be nothing more harrowing than the thought that it possibly may happen that some of his mother's children shall see God and he shall not! I had a letter, just now, from a person who thanks God that he read the Sermon, "Many Shall Come from the East and from the West." And he hopes it has brought him to God. He says, "I am one out of a large family and all of them love God except myself. I don't know that I should have thought of it, but I took up this sermon of yours and it has brought me to the Savior." Oh, Beloved, think of bringing the last out of nine children to the Savior! Have not I made a mother's heart leap for joy? But oh, if that young man had been lost out of the nine and had seen his eight brothers and sisters in Heaven, while he himself was cast out, I think he would have had nine Hells! He would be nine times more miserable in Hell as he saw each of them and his mother and his father, too, accepted and himself cast out! It would not have been, "we," there with the whole family.

What a pleasant thought it is, that we can assemble today, some of us, and can put our hands round those we love and stand an unbroken family—father, mother, sister, brother and all else who are dear—and can say by humble faith, "We shall see Him as He is"—all of us, not one left out! Oh, my Friends, we feel like a family at Park Street! I feel, when I am away from you, that there is nothing like this place, that there is nothing on earth which can recompense the pain of absence from this hallowed spot! Somehow or other, we feel knit together by such ties of love! Last Sabbath I went into a place where the minister gave us the vilest stuff that ever was brewed. I am sure I wished I was back here, that I might preach a little godliness, or else hear it. Poor Wesleyan thing! He preached works from beginning to end, from that very beautiful text—"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy!"—telling us that whatever we do, that we should reap. He never mentioned salvation for sinners or pardon required even by saints! It was something like this—"Be good men and women and you shall have Heaven for it. Whatever you sow, you are sure to reap. And if you are very good people and do the best you can, you will all go to Heaven. But if you are very bad and wicked, then you will have to go to Hell. I am sorry to tell you so, but whatever you sow, that shall you reap." Not a morsel about Jesus Christ, from beginning to end! Not a scrap. "Well," I thought, "they say I'm rather hard upon these Arminian fellows. But if I do not drive my old sword into them worse than ever, now that I have heard them, again, then I am not a living man!" I thought they might have altered a little and not preach works so much, but I am sure there never was a sermon more full of salvation by works preached by the Pope, himself, than that was! They believe in salvation by works, whatever they may say and however they may deny it when you come to close quarters with them! They are so everlastingly telling you to be good, upright, godly—never directing you first to look to the bleeding wounds of a dying Savior—never telling you about God's

Free Grace, which has brought you out of enormous sins. But they are always talking about that goodness, goodness, goodness—which will never be found in the creature!

Well, Beloved, somehow or other, wherever we go, we seem that we must come back here—

***“Here our best friends, our kindred dwell!  
Here God our Savior reigns!”***

And the thought of losing one of you grieves me almost as much as the thought of losing any of my relatives. How often have we looked at one another with pleasure! How often have we met together, to sing the same old songs to the same old tunes! How often have we prayed together. And how dearly we, all of us, love the sound of the word, “Grace, Grace, Grace!” And yet there are some of you who I know in my heart—and you know, yourselves—will not see Him unless you have a change—unless you have a new heart and a right spirit! Well, would you like to meet your pastor at the Day of Judgment and feel that you must be parted from him because his warnings were unheeded and his invitations cast to the wind? Do you think, young man, that you would like to meet me at the Day of Judgment—there to remember what you have heard—and what you have disregarded? And do you think that you would like to stand before your God and remember how the way of salvation was preached to you—“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be baptized, and you shall be saved”—and that you disregarded the message? That were sad, indeed! But we leave the thought with you. And lest you should think that if you are not worthy, you will not see Him—if you are not good you will not see Him—if you do not do such-and-such good things, you will not see Him—let me just tell you—whoever, though he is the greatest sinner under Heaven—whoever, though his life is the most filthy and the most corrupt—WHOEVER he or she is, though he has up till now been the most abandoned and profligate—whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ shall have everlasting life! For God will blot out his sins, will give him righteousness through Jesus, accept him in the Beloved, save him by His mercy, keep him by His Grace and, at last, present him spotless and faultless before His Presence with exceedingly great joy!

My dear Friends, it is a sweet thought to close with—that with a very large part of you I can say, “We shall see Him as He is.” For you know when we sit down at the Lord’s Table, we occupy the whole ground floor of this Chapel and I believe that half of us are people of God, here, for I know that many members cannot get to the Lord’s Table in the evening. Brothers and Sisters, we have one heart, one soul—“One Lord, one faith, one Baptism.” We may be sundered here below a little while. Some may die before us, as our dear brother Mitchell has died. Some may cross the stream before the time comes for us. But we shall meet again on the other side of the river. “We shall see Him as He is.”

## EXPOSITION

### 1 John 3:1-10

1. *“Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God. therefore the world knows us not, because it knew Him not.”*

2. *“Beloved, Now are we the sons of God and it does not yet appear what we shall be. but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like He is, for we shall see Him as He is.”* As dear Dr. Hawker said concerning this, here is a Chapter in every word and a sermon in every letter. How it opens with a. “Behold!” because it is such a striking portion of sacred Scripture that the Holy Spirit would have us pay particular attention to it. *“Behold,”* He says, “read other Scriptures if you like, with a glance, but stop here! I have put up a way-mark to tell you there is something eminently worthy of attention buried beneath these words.” “Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed on *us*.” Consider who we were and who we are now. Yes, and what we feel ourselves to be even when Divine Grace is powerful in us. And yet, Beloved, we are called “the sons of God.” It is said that when one of the learned heathens was translating this, he stopped and said, “No. It cannot be! Let it be written, ‘Subjects,’ not, ‘Sons,’ for it is impossible we should be called *“the sons of God.”* What a high relationship is that of a son to his father! What privileges a son has from his father! What liberties a son may take with his father! And oh, what obedience the son owes to his father and what love the father feels towards the son! And all *that* and more than *that*, we now have through Christ! “Behold!” You angels! Stop, you seraphs! Here is a thing more wonderful than Heaven with its walls of jasper! Behold, universe! Open your eyes, O world. “Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God. Therefore the world knows us not, because it knew Him not.” Well, we are content to go with Him in His humiliation, for we are to be exalted with Him.

*“Beloved, now are we the sons of God.”* That is easy to read. But it is not so easy to feel. “Now are we the sons of God.” How is it with your heart, this morning? Are you in the lowest depths of sorrow and suffering? *“Now are you a son of God.”* Does corruption rise within your spirit and Grace seem like a poor spark trampled under foot? “Beloved, now are *you* a son of God.” Does your faith almost fail you? And are your Graces like a candle well near blown out by the wind? Fear not, Beloved. It is not *your* Graces, it is not *your* attitude, it is not *your* feelings, on which you are to live—you must live simply by naked faith on Christ. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God.” With all these things against us, with the foot of the devil on our neck and the sword in his hand ready to slay us—Beloved, *now* in the very depths of our sorrow, wherever we may be—*now*! As much in the valley, as on the mountain! As much in the dungeon as in the palace, as much when broken on the wheel of suffering as when exalted on the wings of triumph—“Beloved, now are we the sons of God.” “Ah, but,” you say, “look how I am arrayed! My Graces are

not bright. My righteousness does not shine with apparent glory.” But read the next—“*It does not yet appear what we shall be. But we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like He is.*” We are not so much like He is, now, for we have some more refining process to undergo and death, itself, that best of all friends, is yet to wash us clean. “We know that when He shall appear, we shall be like He is. For we shall see Him as He is.”

3. “*And every man that has this hope in him, purifies himself, even as He is pure.*”

4. “*Whoever commits sin, transgresses, also, the Law, for sin is the transgression of the Law.*”

5. “*And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins. And in Him is no sin.*” Believer, read these words in two senses. He was manifested to take away your sins that you have committed. And that He accomplished when, “the Just for the unjust,” He sustained the penalties of them. And He was manifested to take away the *power* of your sins. That is to say, to conquer your reigning lusts, to take away your evil imaginations, to purify you and make you like He is! Well, Beloved, what a mercy it is that someone was manifested to take away our sins from us! For some of us have been striving a long, long while to conquer our sins and we cannot do it! We thought we had driven them out, but they had “chariots of iron” and we could not overcome them. They lived “in the hill country” and we could not get near them. As often as we beat them in one battle, they came upon us thick and strong, like an army of locusts. When heaps and heaps had been destroyed, they seemed as thick as ever. Ah, but here is a thought—they shall all be taken away. “You know that He was manifested to *take away* our sins.” And so He will! The time will come when you and I shall stand without spot or blemish before the Throne of God—for they are “without fault before the Throne of God” at this moment and so *shall we* be before long!

6. “*Whoever abides in Him sins not—whichever sins has not seen Him, neither known Him.*” This plain, simple verse has been twisted by some who believe in the doctrine of sinless perfection and they have made it declare that it is possible for *some* to abide in Christ and therefore not to sin. But you will remark that it does not say, that *some* that abide in Christ do not sin. But it says that *none* who abide in Christ, sin. “*Whoever abides in Him sins not.*” Therefore this passage is not to be applied to a *few* who attain to what is called by our Arminian friends, the fourth degree—perfection. But it appertains to *all Believers*. And of every soul in Christ it may be said that he sins not. In reading the Bible, we should read it simply as we would read any other book. We ought not to read it as a preacher reads his text, with the intention of making something out of every word. But we should read it as we find it written—“Whoever abides in Christ sins not.” Now we are sure that cannot mean that he does not sin at all, but it means that he sins not habitually, he sins not designedly, he sins not finally, so as to perish. The Bible often calls a man righteous. But that does not mean that he is perfectly righteous. It calls a

man a sinner, but it does not imply that he may not have done some good deeds in his life. It means that that is the man's general character. So with the man who abides in Christ—his general character is not that he is a sinner, but that he is a saint—he sins not openly, willfully, before men. In his own heart, he has much to confess but his life before his fellow creatures is such a one that it can be said of him—“Whoever abides in Him sins not. But whoever sins [the sins of this world in which the multitude indulge] has not seen Him, neither known Him.”

7. *“Little children, let no man deceive you: he that does righteousness is righteous. Even as He is righteous.”* That is the sign of it. Works are the fruits of Grace. “He is righteous”—not in himself. For mark how Graces come in here—“he is righteous, even as HE is righteous.” It will not allow our righteousness to be our own, but it brings us again to Christ. “He that does righteousness is righteous,” not according to his own works, but “even as HE is righteous.” Good works prove that perfect righteousness in Christ. They do not help the righteousness of Christ, nor yet in any way make *me* righteous! Good works are of no use whatever in the matter of justification—the only use they are is for our comfort, for the benefit of others and for the glory of God. “He that does righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. He that commits sin is of the devil.”

8. *“He that commits sin is of the devil. For the devil sins from the beginning. For this purpose, the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.”*

9. *“Whoever is born of God does not commit sin, for His seed remains in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.”*

10. *“In this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil; whoever does not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loves not his brother.”* It were well if we always remembered that practical godliness is the sort of godliness that is not *talking* religion, but *walking* religion, which proves a man to be sincere. It is not having a religious tongue, but a religious heart. It is not a religious mouth, but a religious foot. The best evidence is the salvation of the soul. Be gone, Talker! Go your way, you mere professing Formalist! Your ways lead down to Hell and your end shall be destruction, for, “he that does righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. He that commits sin is of the devil. For the devil sins from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.”

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 HOPE THAT PURIFIES

## NO. 3235

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 1911.

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

*“And every man that has this hope in Him purifies himself, even as He is pure.  
1 John 3:3.*

THE Christian is a man of much present enjoyment. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God and, being God’s sons, we cannot be altogether unhappy.” Relationship to the ever-blessed God must bring with it a measure of joy. “Happy are you, O Israel,” sang Moses, “who is like unto you, O people saved by the Lord?” The men who can be truly called the sons of God are a blessed people! Still, the main portion of the Believer’s inheritance lies in the future. It is not so much what I have as what I *shall have* that makes me joyful. “It does not yet appear what we shall be.” To the unbeliever, all that is to come is in darkness. He may expect to go from the shades of evening to the blackness of a midnight that shall never end. But for the Christian, “light is sown.” He is now in darkness—the only darkness he shall ever know—and from the twilight of the morning he shall go on unto the perfect day, a day whose sun shall never set! We have the eyes of hope given to us and, looking across the narrow stream of death and beyond—that place where to carnal eyes hangs the curtain that shuts out the unseen—we, with these far-seeing eyes, behold the Glory which is yet to be revealed and we are blessed with the joys of hope! Let every Christian, therefore, when at any time he is downcast about the things of the present, refresh his soul with the thoughts of the future!

We have often discoursed concerning the past and I know that some of us have frequently been cheered and comforted by seeing how kindly God has dealt with us in bringing us up out of the hole of the pit from which we have been dug. Now we shall get further consolation by seeing what is to become of us in the future yet to be revealed. But still, my objective at this time will not be to impart consolation so much as to excite to holiness! Our text is a very practical one—while it deals with hope—it has more to do with the *result* of that hope in the purity of the Believer’s life.

Let us go at once to our work. We shall note, first, *the Believer’s hope*. Secondly, *the operation of that hope* and, thirdly, *the use of the operation as a test of the hope*.



I. To begin, then, let us look at THE BELIEVER'S HOPE. The text speaks of men that have hope—"hope in Him"—which I understand to mean hope in Jesus Christ.

*The Christian has a hope peculiar to himself.* As for its objective, it is the hope of being like Jesus Christ. "We shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is." Now, some would not put it in that shape—they would say that their hope, as Christians, is to pass within the pearly gates, to tread the golden streets, to listen to the harpers harping with their harps and, standing upon the sea of glass, to be forever free from sorrow, toil and pain. But those are only the lower joys of Heaven, except so far as they indicate spiritual bliss. I believe that there are some professing Christians who would like Mohammed's heaven—and be perfectly satisfied if they could sit forever on a green and flowery mountain and could drink from rivers of milk and eat from hives of honey—and so on, and so on!

But, after all, the real Truth of God, the Truth that is contained in these metaphors and figures and underlies them all—the Truth is that the Heaven a true Christian seeks after is a *spiritual one*—it is the Heaven of being like his Lord! I take it that while it will consist in our sharing in the Redeemer's power, the Redeemer's joy and the Redeemer's honor, yet from the connection of the text, it lies mainly in our being spiritually and morally like He—being purified, even as He is pure. I must frankly confess that of all my expectations of Heaven, I will cheerfully renounce ten thousand things if I can but know that I shall have perfect holiness, for if I may become like Jesus Christ as to His Character—pure and perfect—I cannot understand how any other joy can be denied me! If we shall have *that*, surely we shall have everything! This, then, is our hope—that "we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is."

Every man sees morally what he himself is. A man who is bad sees evil—he is blind to good. The man who is partially like Christ has only a partial view of Christ. You might almost know your own character by your view of Jesus. If your eye sees not inexpressible beauty in Him, it is your eyes that are to blame, for He is altogether lovely. And when the eyes of our inward nature shall come to see Jesus as He is, then we may depend upon it that we are like He is! It is the pure in heart that see God, because God, the inexpressibly Pure One, can only be seen by those who are, themselves, pure. When we shall be perfectly pure we shall be able to understand Christ—and when we understand Christ, or see Him as He is, as we shall do at His appearing, then we shall be like He—like He, free from sin! Like He, full of consecration to God! Like He, pure and perfect! Today He is Conqueror over sin, death and Hell. He is superlative in His virtue and His holiness, He has conquered all the powers of evil and one day we, too, shall put our foot on the old dragon's head! We, too, shall see sin bruised beneath us and shall come off "more than conque-

rors through Him that loved us.” This, then, is our hope—that we shall be like our Head when we shall see Him as He is!

But why do we expect this? *What is the ground of our hope?* The context shows us that we do not expect to be like Christ because of *anything that is in us* by nature, or any efforts that we ourselves can make. The basis of all is Divine Love—for observe, the chapter begins—“Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.” We expect to be like Christ, the Beloved of God, because we also are Beloved of God! It is according to the Nature and purpose of the love of God to make its object like God. We, therefore, expect that Divine Love will work with Divine Light and Divine Purity and make us into light and purity, too!

The Apostle goes on to say that we have been called the sons of God and that we really are God’s sons. [See Sermon #1934, Volume 32—“AND WE ARE”—A JEWEL FROM THE REVISED VERSION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Well, that is another ground of our hope—we hope to be like Christ because the sons of God are like each other! It is the Lord’s purpose that Jesus Christ shall be the first-born among many brethren. “Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren.” Very well, then, since we are adopted into the Divine Family and are to be made like our Elder Brother, we, therefore, believe that we shall one day be like the Lord Jesus Christ in the perfection of His excellence!

Then we have this further buttress for our hope, if it is not a main pillar of it—that we are now one with Jesus Christ and, therefore, “when He shall appear, we shall be like He is.” There is an intimate connection between our souls and Christ. He was hidden from the world and the world knew Him not and, therefore, we are hidden and the world knows us not. He is to be revealed—there is to be a day of His manifestation to angels and to men! And when He is manifested, we shall be manifested, too! Knowing that we are united to Christ by sacred, mysterious bonds, we, therefore, expect that when we shall see Him as He is, we shall be like He!

Still, for simplicity’s sake, it is well to say that the basis of our hope lies altogether in Him. “Every man that has this hope in Him purifies himself.” Beloved, all true hope is the hope in Christ. If your hope lies in yourself, it is a delusion. If your hope rests upon any earthly priest and not upon this one great Apostle and High Priest of our profession, your hope is a lie! If your hope stands with one foot upon the work of Christ and the other foot upon your own resolutions or merits, your hope will fail you! “Hope in Him” is the *only* hope which can be acceptable to God, the *only* hope which will bear the stress of your weight, the *only* hope which will stand the test of your dying hour and of the Day of Judgment!

Our hope, then, of being *like* Christ is *a hope in Christ*. We are trusting Him. We are depending upon Him. If He does not make us like Himself, our hope is gone. If ever we are to get to Heaven, it will be through Him, and through Him alone! Our hope is in Him from top to bottom. He is our Alpha and our Omega, the beginning and the end. There our hope begins and there our hope ends! You, O Christ, are all our confidence! We know of none other. This, then, is the Believer's hope—a hope to be made like Christ, a hope based upon Christ!

**II.** But, now, coming to the practical business of the sermon, our text speaks of THE OPERATION WHICH HOPE HAS UPON THE SOUL. "Every man that has this hope in Him purifies himself."

*It does not puff him up—it purifies him.* I know there are some who will say, "Well, if I had a hope, a sure hope, a full assurance and confident expectation that I would go to Heaven, I think I would feel myself to be someone very great." Yes, very likely you would. But then you do not possess such a hope and God does not intend to give it to you while you are in your present condition. But when the Lord makes a man His child—then He takes away the evil heart out of his flesh. When He shows a man His great love to him, He humbles him, He lays him low—and so the expectation of Heaven and of absolute perfection never exalts a man! If any man can say, "I am sure of Heaven, and I am proud of it," he may take my word for it that he is sure of Hell! If your religion puffs you up, puff your religion away, for it is not worth a puff! He who grows great in self-esteem through the love of God knows not the love of God in truth, for the love of God is like the fish that the Lord put into Peter's boat—the more full the boat became, the more quickly it began to sink! O Lord, the more the glories of Your love shall strike my eyes, the humbler I shall lie!

Again, a man who has this hope of Heaven in himself—let me correct myself—a man who has this hope of *perfection* in himself finds that *it does not give him license to sin*. I have heard a thoughtful person say, "If I had a good hope of being saved and knew that I would go to Heaven, I would live as I liked." Perhaps you would, but then you have not that hope—and God will not give it to you while you are in such a state that you would like to live in sin. If a Christian could live as he liked, how would he live? Why, he would live absolutely without sin! If the Lord would indulge the newborn nature of His own children with unrestricted liberty, in that unrestricted liberty they would run after happiness! The unrenewed heart would like to sin, but the *renewed heart quite as eagerly loves to obey the Lord*. When the Lord has changed you, He can give you not only a hope but a full assurance that that hope shall come true—and yet you will walk all the more carefully with your God, for, "every man that has this hope in Him purifies himself, even as He is pure."

This hope, then, does not puff up and does not lead to licentiousness. You can see why it is so. *Gratitude leads to holiness.* Any man who feels, “God has saved me and I am on the way to being made like Christ”—if he is a man at all, (and he must be to feel that), will say, “Now that I owe all this to God, how can I show forth my gratitude to Him?” He would be a brute, he would be a devil, he would be 7,000 devils in one who would say, “God is doing all this for me and, therefore, I will continue in sin.” Well did the Apostle say of such men that their damnation is just! But where there is the good hope of Heaven, the man naturally says, “O my Lord, have You loved me so much and have You provided such a glorious portion for me hereafter? Then I will obey You in everything! I will serve You with my whole heart and soul. Help me to run in the way of Your commandments.”

Such a man, when led of the Spirit, also feels that *holiness is congruous to his expectations.* He expects to be like Christ. Very well, then, he says, “I will try to be like Christ. If I am to be the possessor of a perfect nature, the most natural thing is that I should begin to seek after it now.” If the Lord intends to make you heirs of immortality to dwell at His right hand, does it seem right that you should now live as others do? Suppose you know tonight (and I hope many of you do) that, before long, you will be at God’s right hand—does it not seem a shameful thing that you should go and become a drunk, or that you should be dishonest? King Lemuel’s mother said to him, “It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink.” And surely it is not for children of God to drink the wines of sin and go after the sweets of iniquity! It is not for princes of the blood imperial, descended from the King of kings, to play with the filthy lewdnesses of this time and with the sins of earth. Surely an angel would not stoop to become a carrion crow—neither can we suppose it congruous, nor does it appear seemly, that he who is brother to the Lord Jesus Christ and who is to dwell forever where Jesus is, should be found in the haunts of sin! The very natural fitness of things, under the blessing of God’s Spirit, leads the child of God to purify himself, since he expects to be completely like Christ before long.

Now, without tarrying longer upon that part of the subject, let me notice that *the Believer is here said to purify himself.* If we are very orthodox, we can afford to use language that does not look so, but people who are heterodox usually have to be extremely guarded in their expressions. Now we do not believe that any man *actually purifies himself*, yet the text says that, “every man that has this hope in Him purifies himself.” We believe that the Holy Spirit purifies sinners by applying to them the precious blood of Jesus. We sing—

**“Let the water and the blood  
From Your riven side which flowed,  
Be of sin the double cure,**

***Cleanse me from its guilt and power.***

We look to God for all purity, believing that He is the Creator of it. Still, the text says that “every man that has this hope in Him purifies himself”—that is to say, God the Holy Spirit so works in every man who has a true hope, that he labors to become purified and uses all possible means to overcome sin and to walk in righteousness. While I am speaking upon this point, may each one of us be examining himself! When a man has a true hope in Christ, he begins to purify himself by the power of the Holy Spirit!

First, *he puts away all the grosser sins*. Perhaps before conversion, he had been unchaste. He had been lewd in language and in act, or he had been dishonest, or he had been a blasphemer. Conversion does away with all that. I have sometimes been astonished and delighted when I have seen how readily these sins are put to death. They are taken out to the block and executed! Many a man who had never lived a day without swearing, has never had a temptation to it from the moment of his conversion. So thoroughly does God renew the heart that these grosser sins go at once!

But there are sins of the flesh which, though we are purged from them, will endeavor to return—and hence the man who has a hope of Heaven will purify himself every day from them. He will hate the very thought of those sins and any expressions or actions that might tend towards them. He abhors them. He flees from them, for he knows that if he begins to dally with them, he will soon go from bad to worse. He understands that in this warfare to flee is the truest courage and, therefore, from such sins of the flesh he daily flees, like Joseph fled from Potiphar’s wife, even though he would leave his garment behind him, that he may get away from them. So he “purifies himself.”

Then *he purifies himself from all evil company*. Those spirits that he once thought choice, he now avoids. If they will go with him to Heaven, he will be glad that they should join his company. But if they will neither repent of sin nor believe in Jesus, he says to them, “You can be of no service to me.” If he can help them to Heaven, he seeks them out and tries to win them—but when they ridicule him, he is afraid lest their example may be injurious to him and he shuns them and seeks better company. So he “purifies himself.”

Then *he begins from that day forth and till he dies, to purify himself*. Perhaps, first, he does not know some things to be sin which he afterwards finds out to be so. As the Light of God gradually shines into his soul, he puts away this and that, and the other with a strong and resolute hand—and if there was some sin that pleased him much—which was to him like a right hand or a right eye, he cuts it off, or tears it out, for having a hope of Heaven in him, he knows he cannot take any sin to

Heaven—and he does not want to do so. He puts it away. He knows that he must put it away before he can enter into eternal life!

Soon, he finds out that there are certain sins in his nature which more readily overcome him than any others do. Against these he sets a double watch. Possibly he has a quick temper. Over this he grieves very much and he earnestly prays to God, “O Lord, subdue my evil temper! Guard my tongue, lest I say bitter words, and my heart, lest I indulge in unkind feelings.” He finds himself in a certain trade and if in such a trade there is sin, (and most trades have some peculiar sin), he feels, “Then I will have nothing to do with it! If I cannot make money without sin, I will lose money, or change my business, but I will not do what is wrong.” He observes some sin that runs in his family—he knows that his household has some peculiar fault. Here, again, he cries to God, “Lord, purify me and purify my house from this evil thing!” He observes that there are certain sins in the district where he lives. Against these he cries aloud. He knows that there are sins peculiar to his position. If he is a rich man, he is afraid of growing worldly. Is he a poor man? He is afraid of becoming envious. He looks at his position and he observes what the peculiar sins of that position are and then, in the power of the Eternal Spirit, he seeks to purify himself from all these sins!

Perhaps he is travelling for his health and he knows that many travellers, though they profess to be Christians, never observe the Sabbath and forget, to a large extent, the regular habits of devotion which they had at home. So he sets a double watch over himself in that respect. Is he in great trial? Then he knows the temptation to impatience and murmuring will come and he tries to purify himself from that. Has he great pleasure? Then he knows the temptation will be to make this world his home and so he tries to purify himself from that. You see, Brothers and Sisters, under the power of God’s Spirit, this purifying of the life is a great work to be done, but it is a work that every man that has this hope in Christ will do! If he is, indeed, hoping in the Lord Jesus, this will be the great struggle and warfare of his life—to get rid first of this sin, and then of that other, that he may be wholly sanctified unto the Lord—a holy man, fitted for a holy Heaven!

Now, then, how does he purify himself? I have shown you what he does, but by what means does he do it? *He does it, first, by noting the example of Christ.* The hoping man reads Christ’s life and he says, “Here is my Model, but I am far short of it. O God, give me all that there was in Christ! Take off from my character all the outgrowths, for these must be outgrowths if they were not in Christ!” Familiarizing himself with the life of his Savior and getting to commune with Christ, he is thus helped to see what sin is and where sin is—and to hate it!

Then *he prays God to give him a tender conscience.* Oh, I wish that all Christians had tender consciences! I have heard of persons who are blind

beginning to read with their fingers, but beginning late in life they have had some manual labors to perform which have hardened their fingers, so they could not read. I am afraid that some of you have hard consciences, with two or three thicknesses or skin over them. You need to have the knife used to make your conscience tender again. It is a blessed thing to have a conscience that will shiver when the very shadow of sin goes by—a conscience that is not like our great steamships at sea that do not yield to every wave, but like a cork on the water, that goes up and down with every ripple, sensitive in a moment to the very approach of sin! May God the Holy Spirit make us so! This sensitiveness the Christian endeavors to have, for he knows that if he has it not, he will never be purified from his sin. He prays—

***“Quick as the apple of an eye,  
O God, my conscience make!  
Awake my soul, when sin is near,  
And keep it still awake.  
Oh may the least omission pain  
My well-instructed soul  
And drive me to the blood again,  
Which makes the wounded whole!”***

*He always tries to keep an eye to God and not to men.* That is a great point in purity of life. I know many persons whose main thought is earning other people’s esteem. Their question is, “What will So-and-So say? What will the neighbors say? What will Mrs. Grundy say? What will be commonly thought of it?” You will never be a holy man till you do not care a fig what anybody says except your God—for a thing that is right is right anywhere! If it is right before the Lord, it is right although all the world should hiss it down! Oh, that we had more moral courage, for moral courage is essential to true holiness! The man who has this hope in him will not say, “If the door is shut and nobody hears of it, I may feel free to do evil.” Or, “I am in a foreign country where the customs differ from those at home, therefore I will do as others do.” No—such hypocrisy shows a rotten heart! The man of God will say, “This is right before the Lord and though no eyes see me to commend me, and though every tongue should speak against me to blame me, I will do the right and I will shun the evil.” This is one way in which the Christian “purifies himself.”

And then *he notes the lives of others and makes them his beacons.* If you were sailing down the Thames, and saw a boat ahead of you that had run upon a shoal, there would be no necessity for you to go there to find out where the true channel was—you would let other shipwrecks be your beacons! So the Christian, when he observes a fault in another, does not stand and say, “Ah, see how faulty that man is!” Rather he says, “Let me shun that fault.” And when he sees the virtue of another, if his heart is right, he does not begin to pick holes in it and say, “he is not as good as he looks,” but he says, “Lord, there is a sweet flower in that man’s gar-

den—give me some of the seed of it—let it grow in my soul.” So other men become both his beacon and his example!

A wise Christian tries to purify himself *by hearing a heart-searching ministry*. If the ministry never cuts you, it is no use to you. If it does not make you feel ashamed of yourself—yes, and sometimes half-angry with the preacher—it is not good for much. If it is all smoothing you the way the feathers go and making you feel happy and comfortable, be afraid of it! Be afraid of it! But if, on the other hand, it seems to open up old wounds and make the sores fester and the soul bleed before the living God, then you may hope it is a ministry which God is using for your lasting good! The true Christian not only wishes the preacher to search him, but his prayer is, “Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts.” He does not want to live in sin, thinking it not to be sin—he wants to get away from it! I am afraid some Christians do not want to know too much of Christ’s commands. There might be some very awkward ones and they do not want to attend to some of them. They are very pleased if they can get some minister to say that some of Christ’s commands are non-essential and unimportant! Ah, dear Friends, he is a traitor to his Master if he dares to say that anything that Christ says is unimportant! It is always important for a servant to do as his master tells him—and it is essential to comfort and to obedience that whatever the Lord has spoken, we should endeavor to perform in His strength.

I might continue thus to show you the way by which the Christian who has a good hope endeavors to purify himself, but I must just notice this one thing, that *he sets before himself Christ as his Standard*. He purifies himself, even as Christ is pure. My dear Friends, we shall make a mistake if we make anyone our model but the Lord Jesus Christ, for in any other life but His there will be sure to be something in excess! I am sure it will be best for us, if we are Wesleyans, not always to try and do everything as John Wesley would do it. And if we are Calvinists, as much as we honor John Calvin, we must remember that we shall go wrong if we try to season everything with the spirit of John Calvin. No man is fit to be a model for all men except the Savior who redeemed men!—

**“Lord, as to Your dear Cross we flee,  
And plead to be forgiven,  
So let Your life our pattern be,  
And form our souls for Heaven.  
Help us, through good report and ill,  
Our daily Cross to bear;  
Like You, to do our Father’s will,  
Our brethren’s griefs to share.”**

In white, all the colors are blended. A perfectly white substance combines all the colors of the rainbow merged in true proportion. But green and indigo and red are only the reflections of a part of the solar rays. So John, Peter and Paul are parts of the light of Heaven. They are differing



colors and there is a beauty in each one of them. But if you want to get the whole of the rays of light, you must get to Christ, for all light is in Him! In Him is not simply the red or the blue, but in Him is light—the blue light, the whole of light! You are sure to get a lopsided character if any man shall be the copy after which you write. If we copy Christ, we shall, through the power of His Spirit, attain to a perfect manhood! O Brothers and Sisters, what a life-task is here for you! “Every man that has this hope in Him purifies himself, even as He is pure.” We shall never be able, Beloved, to throw down our weapons and say, “Now I have no more sin to fight with, no more evil to overcome.” I have heard of some Brethren who say that, but I think it must be a mistake. If there is a possibility of getting to that condition, I mean to get to it—and I would recommend you all to try after it! But I think that till you die, you will have some evil to struggle with. As long as you are in this body, there will be enough tinder for one of the devil’s sparks to set it alight! You will have need to keep on dousing it and every moment be on the watchtower, even till you cross the Jordan! This is our life’s business and, Brothers and Sisters, I do not know that you can have a better business, for while you are contending against sin—purifying yourselves by the precious blood of Jesus—you will be bringing honor and Glory to God! Your heart will become a field in which the power and Grace of God will be displayed, for He will come and purify you! He will be the real Purifier while He is using you to purify yourself!

**III.** I must stay no longer. But in the last place, USE THE TEXT AS A TEST. “Every man that has this hope in Him purifies himself.” Dear Hearers, the question is, have we a true hope in Christ? If we have, we purify ourselves—we labor to purify ourselves even as Christ is pure!

There are some professors of religion who do the opposite to this—they *defile themselves*. I repeat it—they defile themselves! It is a shame that I should have to say it. They were baptized on profession of their faith, but they were never cleansed from their old sins. I have heard of persons who come to the Communion Table yet go to the table of the drunk, too, but he that has the true hope in Christ purifies himself! How can you be said to have that hope if you love such sin? I have heard of professed Christians and my cheek has blushed when I have heard it of them, who could sing wanton songs and do wanton acts—and yet say they had a hope of Heaven! O Sirs, do not deceive yourselves! You lie! If you are not pure and chaste, you are none of God’s children! You may fall into sin by surprise, but if you calmly and deliberately go to that which is unclean, how can the love of God dwell in you? I have known a man who liked to hear a good sermon, and also liked to mingle with those who frequent the alehouse and liked to sing “a jolly good song.” He was a good companion of the wicked. Well, labor under no mistake, Sir, “He that commits sin is of the devil.” It is no use making excuses and apologies—if you are a lov-

er of sin, you shall go where sinners go! If you who live after this fashion say that you have believed in the precious blood of Christ, I do not believe you, Sir! If you had a true faith in that precious blood, you would hate sin! If you dare to say you are trusting in the Atonement while you live in sin, you lie, Sir! You do not trust in the Atonement—for where there is a real faith in the atoning Sacrifice, it purifies the man and makes him hate the sin which shed the Redeemer's blood!

After all, holiness is *the* test. So let the great fan throw up the chaff and the wheat together—and let the wind go through it, and blow the chaff away. You come here and sit as God's people sit, and sing as God's people sing, but ah, some of you are a disgrace to the profession you make—I know you are! May God forgive you and give you Grace to repent of this, your sin, and come to Jesus Christ and find pardon in His precious blood! This is, after all, the test, “Every man that has this hope in Him purifies himself.” How can he have that hope in Him if he defiles himself?

But there are some others who, while they do not actually defile themselves, yet *they let things go very much as a matter of course*. They do not purify themselves, certainly, but they float down the stream. If there is a good song at home, they do not object to it—if there is an evil one, they do not rebuke it. If they are in the shop and someone speaks upon religion, they chime in. If anybody ridiculed it, perhaps they would not join in it, but they would get up in a corner and say nothing. They never take sides with Christ, except when everybody else is on His side. True, they do not take sides with the devil, but they mean to be “betweenites,” neutrals and slippers-in. Well, you will slip, one of these days, into your appointed place and shall, I think, ought to be a particularly low place in Hell! A sinner who sins openly and honestly is a respectable sort of a fellow, but those mean creatures who try to get enough religion to cheat the devil with, but never come straight out and acknowledge Christ—why, I think they deserve a double perdition! They know better! They prove their knowledge by a little sneaking affection to the right and yet they cleave to the evil! The dead fish that float down this stream have only one fault, but down the stream it goes for that one fault! And the man who gives himself up to the current in which he is, proves himself to be spiritually dead. What, Sir? Did you never say, “No”? Did you never put your foot down and say, “I will not do this”? Others have to fight to win the crown and you expect to get it by lying in bed? Do you think there are crowns in Heaven for those who never fight their sins? Do you believe that there are rewards in Heaven for those who never followed Christ and never endured hardship for His sake? No, make no mistake—you know not what the Truth of God is.

The truth is in that famous picture of John Bunyan's. While I tell it to you again in my own words, may some of you be moved to make that pic-

ture true! He tells us that the Pilgrim saw, in the Interpreter's house, a beautiful palace. And on the top thereof there walked many persons clothed in gold. And from the roof there came the sweetest music that mortal ear had ever heard. He felt that he would gladly be on the top of that palace with those that there so happily basked in the sun. So he went to see the way there and saw at the door that there stood a number of armed men who pushed back every person who sought to enter! Then he stood back in amazement. But he noted that there sat one at a table having a writer's ink-horn, and a brave man from the crowd, of stout countenance, came up and said, "Set down my name, Sir!" And when his name was set down on the roll, he at once drew his sword and began to cut his way through the armed men! The fight was long and cruel and he was wounded, but he gave not up the conflict till he had cut his way through, making a living lane through those that had opposed him. So he pressed his way in and the singers at the top of the palace welcomed him with sweet music, singing—

***"Come in, come in!  
Eternal Glory you shall win."***

Now, Sir, if you would go to Heaven, it is all of Grace and through the precious blood of Christ! It is all by simple faith in Christ, yet every man who gets there must fight for it. There is no crown except for warriors! There are no rewards except for those who contend for the mastery against flesh and blood, against Satan and against sin! Whose name shall we set down tonight? Is there a man of stout countenance whom God has made resolute against sin? Let us set his name down! Only, when you put down your name, remember that he that puts on his harness must not boast as though he were taking it off! There is much that you will never perform unless the Eternal God is at your back. Nevertheless, if you have this hope in you. If you have received this hope from God. If it is a hope based upon Divine Sonship, upon Divine Love—a "hope in Him," even in Christ, you shall win the day—you shall purify yourselves, even as He is pure! And when He shall appear, you shall be like He, for you shall see Him as He is!

I pray the Lord to bless this sermon to the preacher, and bless it to every one of his hearers, and He shall have the Glory! Amen and 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.**

# THE SINFUL MADE SINLESS

## NO. 2509

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 21, 1897.  
*DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,*  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 12, 1886.

***“Whoever commits sin transgresses also the Law: for sin is the transgression of the Law. And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin.”***  
***1 John 3:4, 5.***

NOTE, beloved, the special character of Believers—their Divine relationship, their heavenly privilege—they are called, “the children of God.” There is a foolish dream about the Divine Fatherhood toward *all men*, but it is a figment, a fiction, a delusion, a deception. The Fatherhood of God is toward as many as He has begotten again unto a lively hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead—these are His children. As for the rest of mankind, they are heirs of wrath, even as others. It is the special manner of God’s love that we are bidden in this chapter to “behold” as a wonder, because He has bestowed this “manner of love” upon us, “that we should be called the sons of God.” And that He has not bestowed this love upon all men is evident, for it is added, “therefore the world knows us not because it knew Him not.”

So, you see, out of the special privilege of God’s children there grows a special position which they are called to occupy. They are not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world. They become a holy people, separated unto God. I say not that *all who profess* the Christian name are so—that is what they *ought* to be, but it is to be feared that many of them have not yet reached this standard. But true Believers, the twice-born, have been regenerated by the Spirit of God. These are not of the world and the world does not understand them. They are aliens and foreigners—their manners and customs, their modes of thought and their motives are all contrary to those of the ordinary sons of men—and they have to force their way through the world as pilgrims through a Vanity Fair where there is nothing for them to purchase and nothing worthy of their attention. May God keep you, dear Brothers and Sisters, a separated people! May you obey that voice, “Come out from among them and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”

Observe also, dear Friends, as you read this chapter, what is the blessed hope of the children of God—they are looking for the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ from Heaven! As they look back by faith, they see their Lord upon the Cross and then they see Him in the tomb—and then they behold Him risen from the grave. The last glimpse they catch of Him

is as a cloud receives Him out of their sight. He has gone into Glory, but Believers have not forgotten those angelic words to the disciples, “This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into Heaven.” So we expect Him to come. And when He comes, then is to be the time of our highest joy! Even though we are now called the sons of God, “it does not yet appear what we shall be.” Our glory, our full bliss, is as yet concealed, “but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is.” So, Brothers and Sisters, our hope is that when Christ shall come, we shall be perfected—that then we shall be rid of every sin and shall become holy even as He is holy, pure even as He is pure!

What is our occupation while we are waiting for our Lord’s return? Standing on the doorstep of the better dispensation, what are we doing? The third verse of this chapter tells us that “every man that has this hope in him purifies himself even as He is pure.” Casting off every sin, mourning that it should be within us, resolving that it shall not master us, determining to go from strength to strength in holiness and true righteousness, endeavoring to perfect holiness in the fear of God—this is the present occupation of the sons of God who expect that, by-and-by, they shall be made like unto their risen and ascended Lord!

Now, in order that we may carry on this blessed work of purifying ourselves, I want you to think with me upon three matters suggested by our text. The first is, *the Christian’s view of sin*—“Sin is the transgression of the Law.” The second is, *the Christian’s hope of rescue from sin*. Where does that lie? “You know that He was manifested to take away our sins.” And the third is, *the Christian’s model*, to which he hopes before long to be conformed—“In Him is no sin” and, as we shall be like He when we shall see Him as He is, so in us there shall be no sin—

**“O glorious hope! O blest abode!  
I shall be near and like my God  
And flesh and sin no more control,  
The sacred pleasures of my soul.”**

**I.** First, then, I want you to consider for a few minutes, for I cannot go fully into such a great subject, what is THE CHRISTIAN’S VIEW OF SIN.

I know that there are some persons who understand, by the word, “sin,” some offense against their fellow men, or the outward neglect of religion. They regard sin as if it were the same thing as crime—an offense against the prosperity of the nation or the welfare of their fellow men. I am inclined to think that even some of my Brothers and Sisters in Christ do not really understand what sin is when they say that they live without it. I fancy that *they* mean by sin, something very different from what the Scripture means by that word, otherwise they would hardly talk as they do!

Sin is any lack of conformity to the perfect mind of God, or, according to our text, “sin is the transgression of the Law,” and every transgression of the Law is sin. Therefore, we say that, first, *every sin breaks God’s Law*. It does not matter what sin is committed, it breaks the Law at some point. There are ten great Commandments of God and it may be that you think you have never broken Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6, but if you have broken Nos. 7, 8, 9, or 10, you have snapped the chain asunder as really as

if you had broken all its links! It little matters to miners in a pit, if the chain is broken, at what particular link it came asunder. So, any offense against the Law of God breaks the whole Law and spoils any hope of the sinner being saved by keeping it. Every sin is an offense against the Law, as you will see if you look at the Law in another aspect. You remember that great Commandment, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself”? Now, if in anything we come short of that Commandment, or if we do anything contrary to it, we have violated the Law. This is what every kind of sin does—either by falling short of the command of God, or going beyond it, the Law is broken. This being the case, is there one among us who has not broken the Law of God?

Then take the other side of this Truth of God. *Every breach of the Law is a sin.* If you do not do what God commands you, fully, heartily, always, without fail—you have sinned. And if you do at any moment that which God commands you *not* to do, you have therein sinned against Him. And let it never be forgotten that what I am now saying about actions applies also to *words*—our Lord told His disciples that for every idle word anyone utters he must give an account in the Day of Judgment. And remember, too, that this rule applies to *thoughts and imaginations and desires*, and to those secret motives which hide away within the soul and never actually come into deeds. God shall bring these hidden things to judgment—and every thought, or word, or deed that is not in perfect conformity with the Law of God and will of God, is a sin. Who among us can stand before the Lord in his own righteousness if this is true? If God shall “lay judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet,” who among us shall not be overwhelmed when “the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies and the waters shall overflow the hiding place?”

Let me further say that *sin is mainly sin because it is a transgression of the Law.* Many a person will say, “I did no harm to anyone.” That is not the point—if you break the Law of God, you thereby sin! We must never judge sin merely by its *consequences*, or we may make great mistakes. A points man on the railway does not turn the switch aright and one train crashes into another and a hundred lives are lost. He may say to himself, “What a crime I committed by my carelessness,” and everybody denounces him for it. But suppose he forgot to turn the switch and, by a sort of miracle the two trains escaped coming into collision? If by some extraordinary coincidence the two mighty masses of matter rushing onward were stopped in their progress and no hurt came of it, the points man would be just as guilty in that case as in the other! It is not the amount of damage that results from it that makes the sin—it is *the thing itself*. If you are doing wrong, even though you should feed a nation by your wrongdoing, I say that you would still be committing sin! If you get rich by an unholy trick, it is none the less trickery and deception—and there is a curse upon your wealth!

Some sins men can see at once are sins because they bring upon the one who commits them disease of body, or they leave him in rags, or cover him with shame. Then men say, “This course of conduct is wrong,

for look what comes of it.” But that is a very imperfect way of looking at the matter—the wrong of a thing consists in this, that it is a breach of God’s Law—yet how few ever think of this! To break the Queen’s Law is bad, but to break God’s Law is far worse! I would like to look every unconverted man in the face and say to him, “I do not accuse you of this or that particular sin, but I lay the axe nearer the root than that and tell you that your great sin is that you do not serve God, you do not give to your Maker the homage which is His due. Your heart never bows itself in obedience to Him, you are a born rebel, you are at enmity against the Most High and you will not yield to Him, your Lord and Sovereign.” This is the very essence and virus of the worst possible sin. I know that some will not think much of this view of the matter, but that is because they do not think much of God—and herein is a clear proof of man’s enmity against God—in that he does not think it any great evil that he should trifle with the Law of God and live according to his own will and way.

Now let me show you that *it is a great sin to break the Law of God*, for the man who habitually breaks the Law of God is a traitor to his Sovereign—he impugns God’s right to reign. He practically says, “Who is Jehovah, that I should obey Him?” As far as he can, he dashes the scepter out of God’s hand, takes the crown from His head and makes himself to be his own king and his own lord. Is this, think you, a *little* evil?

Again, the man who prefers sin to holiness practically contradicts God’s Word. He says, “It is better not to do God’s will. God commands me to do this or that, but I prefer to do the other, judging it to be to my advantage to do so.” I say to you, Sinner, that you make out that God is a fool and that you are a wise man! You say, “My course of worldliness, my course of sinful pleasure is the better way, and God does not know what is best for me.” Do you think that your Maker will permit you thus, as it were, to give a slap in the face to His Infinite Wisdom?

The breaking of God’s Law is also a questioning of His goodness. The man seems to think that God has denied him something which it would be for his gain to have. If he did not think so, he would not desire the forbidden thing. It is the case with all of us as with mother Eve—we come to think that there is some mysterious gain to be gotten by plucking the forbidden fruit—and the dragon whispers, “God knows that in the day you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.” And so, preferring our own folly to the wisdom and goodness of the great and glorious God, we conclude that He does not wish our highest good and that our highest good is to be found in going contrary to His will! What is this but a direct insult in the face of Infinite Love and saying to God, “You do not love me, after all”?

And, once more, he who dares to break God’s Law, seeing that he cannot do it except in the immediate Presence of God, for God is everywhere—he that acts contrary to God’s Law before God’s own face does, as it were, fling down the gauntlet to his God and defy His power! By such action as that, he either means to declare that God is not almighty, or that Jehovah will not exercise His Omnipotence to defend His honor, or that he, himself, *does not care what God does*, so he will leave Him to do His worst. Every sin has this venom within its bowels—it is a defiance of

the mighty Majesty of God and, O my unpardoned Hearer, this is how you have acted thousands of times, yet the Lord has forbore to strike, and in mercy has borne with you, even to this day!

So, in the first place, that is what the Christian thinks sin to be—it is a breach of the Law of God, and that breach of the Law is full of unnumbered evil, mischief and sins against God.

**II.** Now, secondly, let us consider what is THE CHRISTIAN'S HOPE OF RESCUE FROM SIN. It is revealed in this portion of our text—"We know that He was manifested to take away our sins."

When I have been pondering upon the sin of men—and who among us has not that painful matter continually thrust before us for our consideration?—I have found no comfort except in this glorious fact, that Christ Jesus was manifested to take away our sins! This is the source of the Christian's hope, *God's appearance in human form!* If it is so that the great God Himself deigned to come to earth, and to take upon Him the form of man—if it is so that the ever-blessed Second Person of the Divine Trinity was actually born of a Virgin that He might become Man like ourselves—if it is so that He came here to fight the evil and that He has put His foot down against the advance of the enemy, then I have hope for mankind! I have hope for myself, I have hope that sin may be overcome and, as we know and are sure that God *has come* down among us and has taken upon Himself our nature, since this is the very fundamental Truth of our holy faith, therefore we see how sin can be put away! If You, great God, do undertake to put it away, it can be done! But it can be done by none else. If all the angels in Heaven had promised to cleanse this Augean stable, it would have remained as foul as ever! And if all the sons of men had resolved to purify with fire this foul and loathsome world, it would have still remained a very Gehenna. But if You undertake it, O You blessed Son of God—without whom was not anything made that was made, and by whom all things consist, upholding all things as You do, by the word of Your power—if You undertake the tremendous work, then it will be done!

So, next, our hope lies in *Christ's death*. Our sin needed to be removed in two ways. First, as to the guilt of sin. We have already sinned and, by reason of our sin, we have incurred the righteous anger of God and His just displeasure. God must punish sin. If a man stands in the track of an avalanche, he must be buried beneath it. And if a man stands in the way of the Laws of God, those laws must crush him! There was but one way of deliverance from the guilt of sin and that was for God, Himself, in human form, to take the consequences of human sin upon Himself. Would He ever think of doing such a thing? Could He ever condescend to do it? He has done it! In infinite compassion, He that possessed the royalties of Heaven has doffed His kingly mantle, laid aside His crown and He has come down here to dwell among us in human clay! And being here, He has suffered, He has bled, He has died, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." Brothers and Sisters, if He that died on Calvary's Cross was, indeed, the Son of God. If He died there to make an expiation for sin, then I can see how human guilt can be put away. Think of some of the crimes of which it is scarcely lawful for us to speak—how could



such crimson stains ever be washed out except with the blood of the Son of God? Think of your own sins, dear Friend. Even if they have not been so glaring as those of others, yet their turpitude is great. How could they ever be washed away except by the blood of the Son of God? But if You, O Christ, have bowed Your head and given up the ghost—if Your dear body has been laid in the silent tomb, bearing in it the marks of Your anguish—if You have said, “It is finished,” who shall contradict You? “It is finished.” The great Sacrifice is accomplished and You have, by Your one offering, forever put away the sin of Your people. “We know that He was manifested to take away our sins.” Do *you* know it, dear Hearer? If you do not, I am very sorry for you and I pray the Lord to teach you to believe it even now, that you may see your sin put away by Christ’s death.

But then, we need *Christ’s life in us by the gift of the Spirit*. Even if sin is pardoned, that is not enough for us. We need to have sin put right away from us, from the heart of us and from the life of us. Do you not, my Brothers and Sisters, all agree that this is what you need? I think that if we could be forgiven, and yet not wholly *sanctified*, we could never be happy while sin was still creeping and crawling over us. O you venomous reptile, if you coil yourself around my arm, or about my body anywhere, even if your deadly poison shall be taken from you, yet you do sicken me almost to death by your loathsome touch! How is this foul thing, sin, to be taken away from us? Well, our Lord Jesus Christ was manifested in order that, after His death, when He had ascended up to Heaven, the Holy Spirit might descend and come and dwell in us, to conquer every evil passion and to work in us all manner of holy desires, and so abide in us as to speak out of our mouths, to act through our lives and to make us to live after God’s manner of living, and not according to the way of the flesh as once we did! Christ was manifested in order that by His rising again from the dead and going back into Heaven, the Holy Spirit might come and dwell among the believing sons and daughters of men, that He might fashion us into newness of life!

And now, this day, the Christ who trod the soil of this poor earth, the Christ who on it died, the Christ who in it was buried, the Christ who from it ascended into Glory—I say that He, by a mighty, secret and invisible power, is this day working among the guilty children of men, creating them anew, making them new creatures in Christ Jesus! A hoary-headed sinner once said, “I wish I was like that little child, so that I could begin life again.” It is this that Jesus does for you, my aged Friend! He makes you to become a babe in Grace. Do you ask, “Can a man be born when he is old?” It is even so, for Christ can make you to be born again and to begin to live quite a new life! For this purpose was He manifested, that He might thus take away our sins and, every day, in those who believe in Him, Christ is crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts! Every day He is making the old man to die. Every day Christ is being formed in us, the hope of Glory. Every day His resurrection-life is giving us the power to rise above the old dead world and its lusts. Every day our ascended Lord is causing us also to ascend, that we may sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Every day He is working in us by His blessed Spirit, that He may make us to be perfectly free from every sin

and so to be like Himself! This, then, is our hope—is it not a blessed one? “We know that He was manifested to take away our sins.”

Oh, I wish, my dear Friends, you who have never seriously thought about this matter, that you really would turn your whole attention to it! It is your only hope. But, perhaps, you have got entangled in some vice or, if not that, a cold lethargy of carelessness is upon you, or else you have grown very worldly. There is no getting out of this condition except through one Power—and that Power is in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ! There is but one way to something better, and safer, and more Divine—and that way is Christ. Why do you not seek Him? Surely, you cannot think that it would make you wretched if you became pure and holy! If you imagine such a thing, I bear my willing testimony that, albeit I have tried to serve my Master with all my might, I have never found His service to be a servitude. There is no bondage connected with endeavoring to be like Christ! In fact, there is no joy that always sparkles in the eyes like the joy of a reconciled soul. If sin is pardoned—if evil is conquered—then what is there for me to fear?

Death has no sting for the Believer in Jesus! And life with its burdens cannot overweight us—we are fit to live and we are fit to die if our sin is taken away. Grace has prepared us to suffer, or prepared us for enjoyment. Grace has made us ready for riches, or ready for poverty. Grace makes us ready for the silent chamber of sickness, or for the grave of bereavement, or for the social joy of the little children that clamber about our knee. He is fit for anything who is made like his Lord. If sin is but put away through the manifestation of Christ, it brings nothing that can unfit us for this life or the next, but everything that shall make us fit here and fit hereafter! If I were a secularist, I would wish to be a Christian. If there were no hereafter, yet were it better to have sin forgiven, even as a mortal man, so as to live at peace with the Eternal and to feel a glow of gratitude to Him impelling to self-sacrifice and moving to intense love toward my guilty fellow men. I am sure that it is so! Christianity is the noblest of all ethics, even for the present day, and much more for the eternal world where we are hastening!

**III.** Now I conclude with just a few brief remarks upon the third point—THE CHRISTIAN’S MODEL TO WHICH HE IS TO BE CONFORMED. You see what his hope is—that the manifestation of Christ will take away his sin. What is his model?

First, it is, *Christ ever perfect*. My lips are unable to fully tell about my perfect Master, Christ Jesus, my Lord, but I may say this, His enemies have looked at Him from every side and they have never yet been able to find a joint in His harness through which to shoot their poisoned darts. Men who have flung aside the great Truth of the Inspiration of the Scriptures and have been prepared, even, to make light of Heaven and Hell, have, nevertheless, gazed with astonishment upon the Character of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is unrivalled among the sons of men—it is absolutely perfect! As one snow-white peak rises above its brother Alps, a crowned monarch, more than peer of all the highest of them, so does the life of Christ rise above that of all philanthropists and all teachers and the loftiest purity that is merely of earth. There is none like He is—there

is no defect in Christ and there is no excess! He is the joy of God's own heart! He is the delight of all the saints above! He is your joy and mine, Beloved—to us He is the Altogether-Lovely.

Mark, next, that *every saint as far as he is in Christ is perfect, too*. That part of me that is still my own, oh, how imperfect it is! That part of me that does not yet abide in Him—that old nature that struggles and sometimes breaks loose—oh, how much I grieve over it! But in so far as Christ comes into contact with us and we yield ourselves to Him, we are affected by His Divine purity so that we become pure even as He is pure! They say, sometimes, of a Christian man who does something that is not right, “He did such-and-such! That is your religion!” No, it is not! That is the point where, as yet, his religion has not thoroughly saturated him. That is *his* defect and *his* failing. Pray God that he may be forgiven for the wrong-doing and ask that the Grace of God may sanctify him wholly—spirit, soul, and body.

With this point I close. This is the resolve, the intent, the prayer, the hope, the assurance of every Believer—that one day he shall be perfectly in Christ—and then he will be perfect as Christ. O blessed, blessed hope! There is not a sin within us but must die. Out with you, Sin, out with you! You must die. There is not a Canaanite in the land, though he is a prince, but must be hanged up before the face of the sun! You know how these iniquities try to hide themselves away within our souls, as the five kings hid in the cave at Makkedah and we have, like Joshua, to roll great stones before the mouth of the cave—some self-denials that cost us a great effort—so as to keep them from coming out! But that is not enough, we cannot be satisfied with having sins hidden away as in a cave—we need to slay them as Joshua slew the five kings.

So, before the sun goes down, we cry, “Come out with you! Come out with you! You must die, every one of you.” There is not to be any wrong thought, or wrong desire, or wrong action spared! We must put all to death if we would become as perfect and pure as Christ is. “That is a hard lesson,” you say. “It is a blessed hope,” I say. “It is very difficult,” you say. I confess that it is impossible to us, but it is not impossible to Him who undertakes it for us! He was manifested to take away our sins and since the manifestation included the Incarnation, the bloody sweat and the death upon the Cross, what is there that it cannot accomplish? Believe, dear Friend, that every sin in you will yet be slain and that you shall stand before God, “without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.” “This would be my Heaven,” you say. Indeed, you cannot have a better Heaven than that! Washed completely from all defilement, delivered from every trace of past sin and from every tendency to future sin, perfectly in Christ Jesus and perfect in Christ Jesus—oh, this is Heaven, indeed! Believing this, let us struggle and fight to attain it, and let us never rest satisfied till we get it!

“Then,” says one, “we shall never rest satisfied this side of Heaven.” Of course you will not! As long as you are here, you will have to fight. As long as you are here, you will have to strive and struggle. If you have already gained the victory to a large degree, go on and get more and more of it. Sometime ago I heard a man ask, “Can we be perfect in this life?” I

smelt that he had been drinking, and I thought to myself, “Well now, you are something like a man who is covered with rags, and has not a penny in his pocket, who asks, “Do you think it is possible that every working man can be a millionaire?” Had he not better ask, first, whether *he could save five shillings?* So, when a man says, “Can I be perfect?” I say, “My dear Fellow, you need not bother your head about that matter at present. You are such a long way from it yet that you had better find out how you can even become moral, first. There are some overt sins that you can get rid of, and ought to get rid of, but there is a long, long way between a soul that has just begun to perceive the guilt of sin and to break off outward evil habits and vices—and that same soul being absolutely perfect like unto God Himself. There is so great a distance that you must have God to carry you across it, or you will never traverse it! And you must cast yourself as a sinner at the feet of Jesus, or you may never hope for it.

Come, let all of us begin at the Cross this very moment! Let us begin by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, and then He will purify us even as He is pure and, at the last, when He shall appear, we shall be like He is, for we shall see Him as He is. God bless you all, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

### **EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: 1 JOHN 3.**

**Verse 1.** *Behold*—For there is no greater wonder out of Heaven than this—“Behold.”

**1.** *What manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knows us not, because it knew Him not.* As we are called the sons of God, we are to be made like His only-begotten Son. And here is the beginning of the likeness, that, as the world did not know Him and, therefore, crucified Him, so it does not know the other sons of God and, therefore, spends its malice upon them whenever it can! Yet what a marvelous thing is this—what a wonder of Divine condescension—that we who were the slaves of Satan, the children of disobedience, the heirs of wrath, should be called the sons of God! We can well accept the consequence of such a position without any very great sorrow—“Therefore the world knows us not, because it knew Him not.”

**2.** *Beloved, now are we the sons of God.*—Not merely in Heaven, or when we come to die, but *now*, in this place, in our pain, in our sorrow, yes, notwithstanding our imperfections and infirmities, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God.”

**2.** *And it does not yet appear what we shall be.* We are made like unto Christ, but when He was here, it did not then appear what He should be. If you had seen the lowly Nazarene who was “despised and rejected of men,” could you have guessed what He will be in His glory when it shall please God to judge the world by Jesus Christ? So, in like manner, “it does not yet appear what we shall be.”

**2.** *But we know that when He shall appear, we shall see Him as He is.* Every spiritual sight of Him is transforming. Our

looking at Him, here, makes us what we are. Our looking at Him at the last shall make us like what He is. Oh, what joy to know that the medicine for our souls is taken in at the eyes of *faith* and by the sight of Christ we are healed!

**3.** *And every man that has this hope in Him purifies himself, even as He is pure.* The great object of the Christian's hope is perfect purification. If we expect to be like Christ, we look for it in the putting away of sin and in the girding on of all manner of excellence, holiness and loveliness, for therein will lie our likeness to Christ. Oh, that God would give us more and more of this Christ-likeness!

**4, 5.** *Whoever commits sin transgresses also the Law: for sin is the transgression of the Law. And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins.* Not to let us live in them at ease, not to make sin become a pardonable matter, so that we might indulge in it and yet hope to escape from its consequences. Oh, no! "He was manifested to take away our sins."

**5.** *And in Him is no sin.* Whatever He does, it does not contribute to sin, but is the deadly antagonist of sin.

**6.** *Whoever abides in Him sins not: whoever sins has not seen Him, neither known Him.* The man who dwells in Christ is the holy man, but the man who lives in sin is no child of God, for he proves by his evil conduct that he has no vital union with Christ. The fruit of Christianity is holiness and if your life is a sinful one—if that is the main run and tenor of your life—you are none of His.

**7.** *Little children, let no man deceive you: he that does righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous.* He is practically righteous, he is truly righteous. But let no man talk about being righteous before God while he is willfully indulging in sin. This cannot be! You must be divorced from sin, or you cannot be married to Christ. The Gospel demands and also *creates* holiness of character. And wherever it works effectively upon the heart and conscience, it produces purity in the life.

**8.** *He that commits sin is of the devil, for the devil sins from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.* He did not come to make us easy while under the devil's sway, but to fetch us out from the tyrant's dominion and lead us to live a godly, sober, righteous, pure life unto His praise and glory.

**9.** *Whoever is born of God does not commit sin.* That is to say, he does not *live* in it, it is not the tenor of his life. He is not outwardly so that others could convict him of it, or inwardly so that his own conscience could chide him with it, a man who loves sin.

**9.** *For His seed remains in him: and he cannot sin because he is born of God.* Immortal principles forbid the child of God to sin. The new-born life within us keeps us holy. We have our imperfections and infirmities over which we mourn, but no child of God can live in sin and love it. He hates it! He is like a sheep that may fall into the mire, but he will not wallow in it, as the swine do. As soon as possible, he is up again out of the mud and the filth. He goes sorrowing, with broken bones, when he perceives that he has grieved his God. His life as a whole is a holy life.

**10.** *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whoever does not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loves not his brother.* An unlovely spirit is also self-condemnatory as being an unholy spirit. In fact, lack of love is lack of righteousness. There are some who profess to be so righteous that they condemn everybody else and they have no heart of compassion for those who are suffering in consequence of their faults. But oh, Beloved, it is one thing to hate sin and it is another thing to hate the sinner! Let your indignation burn against everything that is evil, but still, towards him who has done the wrong always have the gentle thought of pity and for him present the prayer that he may leave his sin and turn unto his gracious God. It may be difficult to reach this point, but there should always be just that happy mixture in the mind and heart of the child of God—love to the sinner and hatred of his sin.

**11, 12.** *For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that Wicked One and slew his brother. And why did he slay him? Because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous.* And there is no hate like that—the hate of a bad man towards a good one—not for doing him any wrong, but simply for rebuking him by the silent eloquence of his holy life. Men who love sin cannot endure the sight of virtue and if they cannot kill the good man, they will try to kill his reputation. They sneer and say, “Ah, he is as bad as others, no doubt, if you could only find him out!” That is exactly the spirit of Cain, “who was of that Wicked One and slew his brother.”

**13-17.** *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hates you. We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. He that loves not his brother abides in death. Whoever hates his brother is a murderer: and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world's goods and sees his brother has need, and shuts up his heart of compassion from him, how dwells the love of God in him?* Perhaps he will do it on what he calls, “principle.” He thinks it is wrong to help his needy brother, so he says. But however he may put it, the Holy Spirit asks this searching question, “Whoever has this world's goods and sees his brother has need, and shuts up his heart of compassion from him, how dwells the love of God in him?”

**18, 19.** *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him.* Full assurance comes very much this way, by a practical carrying out of the Law of love.

**20.** *For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.* Which we do not and, therefore, our condemnation can never be so heavy as the condemnation which God will bring upon us. Let the man whose own conscience accuses him, question himself as to how he will stand in the Presence of the all-seeing God.

**21.** *Beloved, if our heart condemns us not, then have we confidence toward God.* If we can feel in our own bosoms that, by Divine Grace, we

have been led to be honest, upright and true before the Lord, “then have we confidence toward God.”

**22.** *And whatever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His Commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.* Notice those conditions of answered prayer. We cannot expect God to grant us our wishes if we do not conform to His will. Holiness has a great deal to do with power in prayer. It is not every man who prays who shall have whatever he asks for, but it is put so here, and it is notable that it is so put, “Whatever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His Commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.” This is not mere legality—this is not a matter of work-mongering. When we become God’s children, He treats us as a father treats his child. You know what you do with a boy who is disobedient. He asks you for something that he wants and you say, “No, I cannot grant you that. Your conduct is such that I cannot let you have the pleasures that otherwise I would be pleased to give you.” But you have another boy who is very careful in all things to do his father’s will—and you have marked the anxiety of his heart to be obedient to you, and you say, “Yes, my dear Child, you may have whatever you want. I know that you would not have asked for it if you had not thought that it would be agreeable to my mind. And as you have asked that which is suitable for me to give, you may have it, and I am glad to give it to you.” So is it in the fatherly discipline of the house of God—if we do those things which are pleasing in His sight, we shall have power to prevail with Him in prayer.

**23, 24.** *And this is His Commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment. And he that keeps his Commandments dwells in Him, and He in him.* That is a great mystery, for us to dwell in God, and for God to dwell in us! It is even so, but only he who knows it can understand it. Experience, alone, can explain our dwelling in God and God dwelling in us.

**24.** *And hereby we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit which He has given us.* Holy Spirit, dwell in me and teach me the meaning of this precious Word, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

### **HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—257, 561, 506.**

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

# THE WORKS OF THE DEVIL DESTROYED NO. 1728

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

*“For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.”  
1 John 3:8.*

IN this chapter John makes a sharp and clear division of mankind into two classes—he gives not even the slightest hint that there is, or ever was, or ever can be a third class. He describes men as being the children of God or else the children of the devil and tells us how the two classes are made manifest (see verse 10). Now, this distinction would not have been drawn by John so sharply if it had not existed, for he was a man of a most loving heart and gentle spirit, and if he could, somewhere or other, have found a space for neutrals, or what I call, “betweenites,” or people who come in midway between saints and sinners, I am sure he would have done it. No one could suspect John of lack of charity and, therefore, as he was convinced that no middle position was possible, we may be quite clear upon that point and at once dismiss every theory which is meant to flatter the undecided.

At this day the world is still divided into children of God and children of the Evil One. This distinction ought never to be forgotten and yet thousands of sermons are preached in which it is quite ignored—and congregations are commonly addressed as if they were all the people of God! How shall we preach the Truth of God if we begin by assuming a lie? Yet to assume that all our Hearers are Christians is to begin with an error! Is it not highly probable that men will be built up in falsehood if the very Truth which is addressed to them is stated in a false way? No, my Hearers, we cannot talk to you as all the people of God, for you are not! Some of you are the children of the Wicked One and though it may not be pleasant to be told so, yet it is no business of ours to please *you*! Our duty is to preach so as to please God and benefit the souls of men—and that can only be effected by an honest enunciation of matters of fact.

There is a definite and fixed line, in the sight of God, between the living and the dead, between those who are born-again and those who abide in their fallen estate—between the spiritual and the carnal, between the believing and the unbelieving! There is a gulf fixed between the two orders of men, which, blessed be God, can be passed, but which, nevertheless, divides the whole race as though a vast chasm had opened up in the midst of them and set them apart from each other, separating them into two camps. This important distinction ought to be observed in public prayer. And this is a point in which we are dissatisfied with most *liturgies*, because they are necessarily composed with the view of suiting both



saints and sinners and, as a necessary result, they are not suitable for either!

The joyous notes of confidence which are becoming in the children of God are left out because the ungodly could not use such expressions of exultant faith while, on the other hand, the wailing notes which are most suitable to anxious souls are put into the mouths of men who, by the Grace of God, have long ago found their Savior. Men walking in full fellowship with the Lord are *not* correctly described as “miserable sinners”—neither is it theirs to pray as if they had never found pardon and life in Christ Jesus! It is impossible that public prayer should be suitable for a mixed congregation unless a portion of it is evidently for such as fear the Lord and another portion for such as do *not* fear Him. I suppose it would be difficult, if not impossible, to compose a liturgy for common use upon strictly truthful principles—and yet that order of public prayer which ignores the distinction between the regenerate and the unregenerate must inevitably be mischievous to the souls of men! In this matter the servant of the Lord must discern between the precious and the vile, or he *cannot* be as God’s mouth.

If this distinction is to be thought of in preaching and in public prayer, it should be especially considered in our *personal* religion. We ought to know whose we are and whom we serve. We ought to know the differences, which the Lord has made by Grace, and whether or not He has made us to differ from the unrenewed. Every man in trade wishes to be sure of his position, whether he is prospering or not. And surely we ought, each one, to know our position in that one great enterprise of life which, if it finds us bankrupt at the last, must leave us so forever! It is of the utmost importance for a man to know whether he has been enlightened or abides in darkness; whether he is the slave of sin or the Lord’s free man. Each man should know that he is either saved or lost, pardoned or condemned—he may not sit down in peace in the deceitful hope that though he *may not* be a child of God, he is, nevertheless, no heir of wrath, for it cannot be—he is one thing or the other at this moment!

Everyone is under the wrath of God unless he has believed in Jesus and so has become accepted in the Beloved. There are two seeds and only two—the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent—and you, my Friend, belong to one or the other! John sums up the vital distinction when he writes, “He that has the Son has life; and he that has not the Son has not life. And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in wickedness.” Let this stand as the preface of the sermon, for the spirit of it will run through my whole discourse. And now I come to the words of the text itself—“For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.”

We shall speak of four things—the works of the devil. The purpose of God. The manifestation of the Son of God. And the experience within ourselves of the meaning of this text. Oh, for the aid of the Holy Spirit, that we may think aright and speak with power!

**I.** First, then, let us say a little upon THE WORKS OF THE DEVIL. This very strong expression is descriptive of sin, for the preceding sentence so

interprets it. I will read the whole verse—"He that commits sin is of the devil; for the devil sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil"—that is, that He might destroy *sin*. This name for sin is, first of all, a word of detestation. Sin is so abominable in the sight of God and of good men that its various forms are said to be "the works of the devil." Men do not like the idea of having any connection with the devil and yet they have a most intimate connection with him until they are made anew by the Spirit of God.

When it was supposed in a superstitious age that a man had commerce with the devil, he was abhorred or feared and, most properly so—he that is in league with Beelzebub has forfeited all right to honor. Yet let every man know that if he lives in sin, his actions are called by the Holy Spirit, "the works of the devil." Satan is "the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience." Think of that, you ungodly ones! The devil is at work in you—as a smith at his forge! Is it not a shocking thought that if I am living in sin, I am the bond slave of Satan and I am doing his work for him? If the devil is in the heart, the whole life will be, more or less, tainted by the presence of that arch-enemy of God and man! Do not laugh at sin, then! Do not dare to trifle with it! It is dangerous and deadly because it is of the devil, from whom no good thing can ever come. Oh, if men could but see the slime of the serpent upon their pleasurable sins; the venom of asps upon their dainty lusts and the smoke of Hell upon their proud and boastful thoughts, surely they would loathe that which they now delight in! If sin connects us with the devil, himself, let us flee from it as from a devouring lion. The expression is a word of detestation—may it enter into our hearts and make sin horrible to us!

Next, it is a word of distinction—it distinguishes the course of the ungodly man from the life of the man who believes in the Lord Jesus. He that is of God does the works of God—his life is the work of God—it is a life which has much that is God-like about it and he is upheld by the power of God, the ever blessed Spirit. But the ungodly man's life is very different—he lives for himself, he seeks his own pleasure—he hates all that oppose him, he is up in arms against the Lord and His Truth—and all that is pure and good. His spirit is not the spirit of God, but of the Evil One. There is a radical distinction between the gracious and the graceless—and this comes out in their works—the one works the works of God and the other the works of the devil. I know that this doctrine is not pleasant, but it is true and, therefore, it must be plainly stated.

I hear one say, "Look at me! Am I a child of the devil? I may not be much of a saint, but I am no worse than many of your professing Christians." I answer that may be the case, for *professing* Christians are sometimes horrible hypocrites! But what has that to do with *you*? Ah, my Friend, their perishing will not help your salvation! If you are not trusting in Christ and living under the power of His love, you may be as good as any hypocrite, or even better, and yet you may be widely different from a real Christian! If you have not the life of God in you, you cannot do the works of God! The mineral cannot rise into a vegetable by itself—it re-

quires another touch from the creative hand! The vegetable cannot rise into an animal unless the Creator shall work a miracle and, even so, *you*, as a carnal man, cannot become a spiritual man by any spontaneous generation—the new life must be imparted to you by the quickening Spirit!

The distinction of your works from those of the real Believer in Christ is as great as that between the works of the devil and the works of God—and this may show you how great the distinction of the natures must be by which these different fruits are produced! The language before us is, next, a word of descent. Sin is “of the devil.” It came from him. He is its parent and patron. Sin is not so of the devil that we can lay the blame of *our* sins upon him, for that is our own. You must not blame the Tempter for tempting you to do that which, without your will, he could not make you do. He may tempt you, but that would be no sin of yours if your will did not yield to the temptation. *The responsibility lies with your will.* The devil has plenty of sin of his own to answer for and yet he is often made a pack-horse to carry loads of evil which are none of his!

Mother Eve taught us that art when she said, “The serpent beguiled me and I did eat.” And since then men have become wonderfully proficient in the science of excuse-making, frequently imputing their own guilt to the devil’s guile! Yet sin, in a sadly true sense, does come of the devil. He first introduced it into the world. How or when he, himself, first sinned and fell from being an angel of light to become the Apostle of Darkness we will not conjecture. Many have thought that the pride of his lofty station, or envy of the foreseen glories of the Son of Man, may have overthrown Him. But, at any rate, he kept not his first estate, but became a rebel against his Lord and the active promoter of all evil. Being expelled from Heaven for his wickedness, he desired to wreak his revenge upon God by alienating the human race from its obedience.

He saw what an interest the Creator had taken in man and, therefore, judged that he could grieve Him greatly by seducing man from obedience. He perceived that the Maker, when He formed the earth, did not rest. When He had made the birds and fishes, He did not rest. When He had made the sun, moon and stars, He did not rest. But when He had fashioned man, He was so well content that He then took a day of rest and consecrated it forever to be a Sabbath. Thus was God’s unresting care for man made manifest. “Surely,” said the Evil One, “if I can turn this favored being into an enemy of God, then I shall bring dishonor upon the name of the Most High and have my revenge.” Therefore he alighted in the garden and tempted our first parents, thus opening the gate by which sin entered into the world with all its train of woe.

In that sense sin is truthfully described as being the work of the devil. He brought the flame which has caused so great a burning. Since then he has been, in some degree, the author of sin by often tempting men. I doubt not that he suggests to many a sinner the delights of the flesh and the pleasures of self—and that he shuts the eyes of conscience to the Truth of God and hardens the heart against the threats of God. Under these influences men doubtless rush into wild extravagances of evil, willingly yielding themselves to be led captive at his will. Doubtless, Satan not

only suggests sin to men, but as one spirit influences another spirit, he influences men strongly towards that which is evil and blinds them against that which is good. "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One," is a prayer which plainly connects the Evil One with *temptation*, as we know as a matter of fact that he is connected with it. This is his constant employment, to be *tempting*, one way or another, the sons of men. Hence sin is the work of the devil, but not so that it excuses us—it is our work because we willingly yield—let us be thoroughly ashamed of such work when we find that the devil has a hand in it. May Almighty God deliver us from the mighty spirit of Evil!

Consider, next, that we have here a word of *description*. The work of sin is the work of the devil because it is such work as he delights in. What are the works of the devil? They are such actions as are like he and exhibit his nature and spirit. Open your eyes and you will surely see "the works of the devil"—they are everywhere in this poor world. The earth is defiled with his horrible productions. How delightful it is to take a survey of the works of God. The wise men say, "The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein." I heard of a good man who went down the Rhine but took care to read a book all the way, for fear he should have his mind taken off from heavenly topics by the beauties of nature. I confess I do not understand such a spirit—I do not want to do so. If I go into an artist's home, I do that artist a displeasure if I take no notice of his works under the pretext that I am quite absorbed in him!

Why not enjoy the objects in which our heavenly Father has set forth His wisdom and power? There is nothing in any of the works of God to defile, debase, or carnalize the soul. Delight yourself in all your heavenly Father's handiwork and make it to be a ladder by which you climb to Him! But what a very different contemplation is that which lies before us in the works of the devil! Ah, me, what a picture for a painter here—the works of the devil! Yet surely, brush and color would altogether fail. Oh, Evil One, how cunning are your works—in malice have you made them all! The earth is full of your abominable things! Look abroad in the world and you see atheism—men made by God deny His existence! They could not stand upright and speak if He did not enable them to do so, and yet they cry, "There is no God!"

Into what a condition must an intelligent mind be brought before it can vent such folly! Surely this must come from that arch-fiend who, above all things desires, that there should be no God! See, also, how much there is of ignorance abroad, a leaden night of ignorance of God and of His Son. Is not this the work of the Prince of Darkness? Note, also, the abounding unbelief of the Truth of God which would be believed at once if men's minds were pure—of the Truth of God which is salvation to those who accept it and yet is rejected by many as if it were injurious to them! From where does all this indifference to God and His Grace come? And what is the origin of all this plague of doubting which is now upon us? Is it not of the same character as that which abode in the serpent's heart when he whispered, "Has God said?" and, again, "You shall not surely die." Here is

he, who was a liar from the beginning—till producing a host of lies against God Himself!

What is this idolatry which we see everywhere abroad, not only among the heathen, but among those who call themselves Christians—the worship of visible symbols instead of the spiritual adoration of the unseen Spirit? It must have come from Satan, who has made himself the god of this world, setting himself up to be God's rival. Things offered to idols are offered to devils, for a mere idol is nothing in the world—its evil lies in its representing a principle which is opposed to the one true, invisible God. The superstitions which degrade humanity—which are an insult to our manhood—all these are most pleasing to Satan and approved by him. And so they are fitly described as “the works of the devil.” And what, my Brothers and Sisters, is blasphemy—that common profanity which pollutes our streets? Who could have taught men wantonly and for no purpose whatever, to use the foul and filthy language that is so common nowadays? This must be the speech of pandemonium, the dialect of Hell!

And what is pride, my Brethren, pride in a creature that will die? Pride in a sinful worm?—the pride of dress, the pride of life, the pride of talent? What are those haughty looks? What are those presumptuous words? What are those contemptuous glances—what are all these things but works of the devil? He whom Milton describes as thinking it “better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven”—he surely is the great fomentor of all pride among mankind! As for deceit, so current everywhere and, worst of all, *religious* deceit, formalism and hypocrisy—from where come these but from the bottomless Pit—from him who transforms himself into an angel of light? Are not all liars his dear children? My list is long enough—but I see a numerous brood hatched beneath the wings of hate—envy, strife, wrath, bitterness, malice, revenge. These are as fiery flying serpents in this wilderness, inflaming men's blood. I see these accursed evils rousing nations into war, dividing communities with discords, embittering families that otherwise might be full of love.

Yes, making men to be the worst enemies of men—these all come from him who is a murderer from the beginning and is the aider and abettor of all hatred and strife. What a busy being he has been! How he has toiled incessantly, day and night, to set up a kingdom of hate in opposition to the empire of eternal love! With what diligence has he smothered the world with a pall of darkness so that men sit down to weep and rise up to torment one another. Ah me, what mischief this unclean spirit has worked! His works are evil, *only* evil and that continually! He has led the human race to become accomplices in his treason against the God of Heaven, allies in his rebellion against the sovereignty of God Most High. The works of the devil make up a black picture—it is a thick darkness over all the land—even a darkness that may be felt.

**II.** But now, secondly, and much more joyously, let us consider THE PURPOSE OF GOD—“For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.” Ring out sweetly all the silver bells of earth and all the golden harps of Heaven—God has purposed that the terrible work of the devil upon the earth shall be, every atom of it,

destroyed! Yes, mark that word, “destroyed!” Not limited, nor alleviated, nor neutralized, but destroyed! Oh, Brothers and Sisters, what could you and I do against such a power as Satan—so malicious and so strong—and withal so cunning and subtle and apt to deceive? Who among us can loosen his works and cast his cords from us? But if God has purposed it, verily the purpose of Jehovah shall stand! If this is the Divine decree, tremble, O Tophet, and you, Beelzebub, for there shall come an end to all your works if God has purposed to destroy them!

The work which lies in this purpose is assuredly a Divine work. The Lord who can create can certainly destroy. Destruction lies in the hand of Omnipotence and is a prerogative of the Eternal One. Destruction of forces so terrible must come only from the Lord. What could you and I do in this business? Ourselves originally under Satan’s power, ourselves destroyed—could we destroy the Destroyer? The image of God in us has been marred by the work of Satan! Could we restore that image? Enmity to God has been created in our hearts by Satan—could we, while yet enemies, tear out that enmity? No, another hand must make us friends—a hand outside of us. That which has been done by the powers of darkness must be undone by the Eternal Light, or else it will remain forever. It is a Divine work—this destruction of the works of the devil—and herein lies our hope of its being accomplished.

And there is, to my mind, about it the idea of a conquering work. When are the palaces and the fortifications of great kings destroyed? Not till the kings, themselves, have been overthrown in a fair fight. When their power is broken, then it is that the conquerors raze the castle and burn the stronghold! Glory be unto Jehovah, it is His purpose to win such a victory over the Prince of Darkness that every work of his shall be destroyed! “Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations He has made in the earth; He breaks the bow, and cuts the spear in sunder. He burns the chariot in the fire.” Your right hand, O Lord, has dashed the enemy in pieces. Our Almighty Champion has come forth with a shout of victory to divide the spoil with the strong. The arch-enemy is vanquished and, therefore, his works are to be destroyed!

This means also a complete work. The product of evil is not to be cut down for a time and left to grow again. The tree of the forest is felled by the axe, but the root remains—and at the scent of water it will bud and send forth branches. But the purpose of God is utterly to destroy the works of the devil and destroyed they shall be! In the heart of man, when God begins His work, He does not cease till He has utterly destroyed all sin, yes, the very tendency and *possibility* of sin! And then He conducts the purified spirit up to His right hand, having neither spot or wrinkle, nor any such thing. In the world, also, do not doubt it, oh you soldiers of Christ who are ready to turn your backs in the day of battle—He will yet drive sin out of its entrenchments—the habitations of cruelty shall become the temples of adoration!

All people shall bow before the Lord and there shall be a new Heaven and a new earth in which dwells righteousness. Up from this poor planet there shall ascend, like smoke from a great golden altar of incense, the

perpetual hallelujahs of a ransomed race, redeemed by blood and power from all the rule of the enemy! Glory be to God, He has purposed it and He will accomplish it! It is a complete work and a conclusive work, for the Lord Jesus will so break the head of the old dragon that he shall never again wear the crown! Christ has come, not to fight a battle with Satan which shall continue throughout all ages, but to win a victory which shall so crush the power of evil that it shall not molest the world again!

The powers of darkness upon this earth hang out their flags and ring out the clarions of victory, but they are too fast. Wait a little while and He that will come, shall come, and will not tarry! And when He comes, He shall lead captivity and the reign of captive goodness and truth—and love shall be established forever and ever! Rebellion shall not rise up a second time. Oh, how glorious is the text—“For this purpose the Son of God was manifest, that He might destroy the works of the devil.” Sin, in every shape and form, the Lord shall destroy from off the face of the earth forever!

**III.** Thirdly, our text plainly tells us how this is to be done—By THE MANIFESTATION OF THE SON OF GOD. “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested.” The work of the devil was so clever; the foundations of it were so deeply laid and the whole thing had such a semblance of omnipotence about it, and was, indeed, in itself so strong, that no champion was found in Heaven or on earth that could hope to destroy it. It never entered Satan’s thoughts that God, Himself, could deign to suffer and to die. He said within himself—“If I can make man to so offend God that He must justly be incensed against him, then I shall have done the work effectually. If I can make man a rebel, God’s infinite holiness cannot overlook his rebellion and He must punish him! And so I shall have made for God a perpetual race of enemies and He will have lost the love of myriads of His creatures.”

He did not know the boundless love and wisdom of Jehovah! Even his angelic intellect could never have conceived the matchless plan of atonement by a sacrifice, propitiation by substitution! The blessed fact of the Son of God becoming manifest in human flesh and dying in human form—to destroy the works of the devil—entered not into a creature’s mind. Yet this was always in God’s purpose, for the better display of His Divine attributes. Behind, under and over the works of the devil, the Lord had always the design that this evil should be permitted that He might baffle it with love and that the glory of His Grace might be revealed! My text has in it, to my mind, a majestic idea, first, of the difficulties of the case—that the Son of God must necessarily be manifested to destroy the works of the devil. And then, secondly, of the ease of His victory.

Have you been abroad at midnight when darkness has been all around you, dense and palpable? Not a star was visible, the moon had forgotten to shine. You could scarcely see your hand when you held it before your eyes. The blackness seemed to be not only above, beneath and around, but also within you! You were embedded in a thick, heavy, sensible ebony mass. How could all this be scattered? What power could lift up the veil and scatter the mass? Lo, in the east old Sol has lifted up his head and

the black walls have vanished! Not a speck remains! The works of darkness are destroyed by the manifestation of the light! That is the thought of the text—"For this purpose the Son of God was manifested." Rising up from His Divine retreat in the silences of eternity, Christ appeared in human form and scattered and utterly destroyed the works of darkness!

Let us see how this was done. First, Christ's manifestation, even in His Incarnation, was a fatal blow to the works of Satan. Did God come down to men? Was He Incarnate in the Infant that slept in Bethlehem's manger? Then the Almighty has not given up our nature to be the prey of sin! Despair may not be! If one is born on earth who is Divine as well as human, then peace be unto you, O race of Adam! Hear you not the song, "Glory, joy to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men"? It cannot be that the race is given up to perpetual night if the Son of God is manifested in such fashion as this!

Next, look to the life of Christ on earth and see how He there destroyed the works of the devil. It was a glorious duel in the wilderness when they stood feet to feet—the champions of good and evil! How dexterously the Evil One played his weapons! How cunningly he tempted the Christ of God! But the Lord Jesus used the sword of the Spirit and, "It is written!" "It is written!" struck home till the Evil One spread his dragon wings and fled away, for he had found his victor. Evil spirits had taken possession of human forms! Legions of devils were established in men! But the Lord Jesus Christ had only to speak and away they fled, glad to leap into swine and rush into the sea to escape from His Presence! They knew that He had come who was ordained "to destroy the works of the devil."

All our Lord's preaching, all His teaching, all His labor here below was in order to the pulling away the cornerstone from the great house of darkness which Satan had built up. But oh, dear Friends, it was in His *death* that Jesus chiefly overthrew Satan and destroyed his works! Satan built upon this—that man had become offensive to God and God must punish him—that punishment was his hope for the continuance of alienation. Behold, the august Son of God takes the offender's place! Marvel of marvels, the Judge stands where the criminal should have stood and is "numbered with the transgressors!" Behold, the wrath of God falls upon His Well-Beloved and Jesus suffers, that He may reconcile man to his God and heal the breach which sin had caused!

The deed was done! Man is no more offensive to Heaven, for one glorious Man's boundless merit has put away the demerit of the race! Jesus has, by His unutterable beauties, removed the deformities of all who are in Him. By His obedience unto death the Law is vindicated, justice is honored, Grace is glorified! Man, accepting this great Sacrifice, loves and adores the Father who ordained it—and so the works of the devil in his heart are destroyed! Our Lord's rising again; His ascension into Glory; His sitting at the right hand of the Father; His coming again in the latter days—all these are parts of the manifestation of the Son of God by which the works of the devil shall be destroyed! So, also, is the preaching of the Gospel.



If we want to destroy the works of the devil, our best method is to manifest more and more the Son of God! Preach up Christ and you preach down the devil! All kinds of reforms are good and we are on the side of everything that is pure, honest, temperate and righteous. Still, the best Reformer is the Christ of God! The one medicine for man's moral sickness is the Cross and nothing but the Cross. Preach the Crucified Savior! Preach the Incarnate God! Preach Christ full of forgiveness and love, reconciling the world unto Himself and you have applied the best remedy to the sore! Only let it never be forgotten that Jesus destroys the works of darkness by His Spirit. It is the *Spirit of God* who puts Divine energy into the sacred Word of God. When the Spirit manifests Christ in a man—the works of darkness are destroyed in that man! When Christ is manifested in a nation—the works of Satan begin to fall in that nation! And in proportion as the Holy Spirit shall more and more reveal Christ to hearts and consciences, bringing them into obedience to the faith—in that degree shall the works of Satan be destroyed!

Lastly, on this point, our blessed Lord is manifested in His eternal power and kingdom as enthroned in order to destroy the works of the devil, for “the government shall be upon His shoulders, and His name shall be called Wonderful, The Mighty God, The Father of the Ages.” He is such a Father and the age is made to feel His forming hand. Kings, presidents, parliaments, poets, leaders and such like these are visible powers—but there is, over them all, an invisible power. A late philosopher asserted that over all the confusion of affairs he could see a power over all which works towards righteousness. There is such a power! There is a King of kings and a Lord of lords! And who is He? It is He of whom we read, “The Father has committed all things into His hands.”

He is ruling! He is reigning even now and, despite our unbelief, things are moving on! God is being glorified! His kingdom is coming! The ultimate destruction of evil on the earth is sure and the eternal reign of the right and of good is certain. “The Lord reigns; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof.” Enthroned at the right hand of the Eternal, Jesus sits, the Man of Love, the Crucified! He has reassumed His eternal Glory and Sovereignty, and without His bidding shall not a dog move his tongue! The dominion is with the Son of God and He shall end the reign of evil. Glory be to His name forever and ever!

**IV.** Lastly, I would come close home to each dear friend as we utter a few words of inquiry as to THE EXPERIENCE OF ALL THIS IN OURSELVES. Has the Son of God been manifested to you to destroy the works of the devil in you? Come to the point and look at yourself! At first there was in your heart an enmity to God, for, “the carnal mind is enmity against God.” Is that enmity destroyed? Has the love of God in Christ Jesus appeared to you in such a way that you can truly say you no longer hate God, but love Him? Though you do not love Him as you wish to do, yet your heart is toward Him and you desire to be like He and to be with Him forever. This is a good beginning—the Son of God has destroyed your enmity—you have seen the love of God in Christ and your rebellion against God has ceased.

The next work of the devil which usually appears in the human mind is self-righteous pride. The man says, "I am no enemy to God! I am righteous! If I am not perfect, yet I am tolerably good. God, I thank You that I am not as other men are. I do this and I do that, and I do not do the other." This is our natural boasting, but the Son of God destroys it! Has the Son of God destroyed all your self-righteousness? It is a precious lot of rags! But we so constantly practice the art of patching and mending that we dream that we are clothed in royal apparel. Have all those rags gone from you? Has a strong wind blown them right away? Have you seen your own natural nakedness? Why, if I were to talk about my own righteousness, I would be a fool and a liar in one! I have no righteousness of my own! I dare not dream of such a thing!

Is that your case? Then the Lord Jesus Christ has been manifested to destroy in you the works of the devil! That is a pretty name for your righteousness, is it not? It deserves that name, for the best righteousness of man, when it is set up in opposition to the righteousness of Christ, deserves small compliments—it is one of the works of the devil. When the Lord has destroyed self-righteousness in us, the devil generally sets us forth another form of his power—and that is despair. "Ah," he says, "you see what a sinner you are—God will never be reconciled to *you*! There is no forgiveness for *you*!" Oh that ever he should have the impudence to make a man believe so gross a slander of such a God as ours, whose very name is Love and who gave His Son to die for sinners!

But, if the Lord Jesus Christ has been manifested to you, despair has gone—that work of the devil has been all destroyed—and now you have a humble hope in God and a joy in His mercy! Though you speak, sometimes, with bated breath, yet your doubt is about *yourself*, not about your Lord. You know whom you have believed and you know that He is a God that passes by transgression, iniquity and sin. Thus three sets of works of the devil are gone already—enmity is gone; self-righteousness is gone and despair is gone. What next? Have you any *unbelief* in your heart as to the promises of God? That is a favorite work of the devil—unbelief is one of his darling children. Now, I beseech you, do not say, "I must always feel this unbelief." No! Down with it! Christ was manifested to destroy the works of the devil. Grind your cutlasses and cut down these doubts!

All mistrusts must die. Not one of them must be spared. Hang them up before the face of the sun! Jesus has not come that He may lock up our sins and keep them quiet, hidden away in a dark corner. He has come to *destroy* them. Israel was not to make a league with the Canaanites, as they unwisely did with the Gibeonites—they were to sweep out the entire race, root and branch! Thus must sin be exterminated and extirpated. Cry to the Lord Jesus Christ that you may never tolerate the sin of unbelief and look upon it as a pitiable infirmity! No, it is a grievous sin—war to the knife with it—the Son of God is manifested that it may be utterly destroyed. Happy is that man who no longer doubts his God, but exercises the Abrahamic faith which staggers not at the promise through unbelief!

Do fleshly lusts arise in your heart, my Brothers and Sisters? In whose heart do they *not* arise? The brightest saint is sometimes tempted by the

foulest vice. Yes, but he yields not. By the Grace of God, he says, “Christ is manifested to destroy the works of the devil.” He will not play with these things and dally with them, and let them be his Delilah, for he knows that they will cost him his eyes, even if they do not ruin his soul. He cries, “Away with them!” It is not meet, even, to *mention* these vile things—they are works of the devil and to be destroyed! My Brothers and Sisters, do you quickly become angry? I pray God you may be angry and sin not, but if you are of a hasty temper, I entreat you to overcome it. Do not say, “I cannot help it.” You *must* help it, or rather, *Christ* must destroy it. It must not be tolerated. Does your anger ever intensify into hate? Do you ever feel envious of those who are better off than yourself, or better than yourself? Does that envy ever lead you to think harshly of them, to indulge yourself in suspicions that are groundless concerning them?

Oh, for the sword of the Lord and of Gideon! Slay all these Midianites, for Christ is revealed on purpose to clear the heart of the whole brood of them! God is Love and he that dwells in love dwells in God—and hate and sin must not live! Every form of evil must fall! Destruction is meted out to them all. Every idol must be broken. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, there is to be in every true Believer the ultimate abolition of sin! What a prospect this is! The cutting up of the very roots of evil! The sooner the better. The day shall come when every child of God shall be transformed and transfigured into the likeness of Christ—and shall be without fault before the Throne of God. This is already foreshadowed upon us, for the outlines are drawn in the fact that we hate all sin and long after perfect holiness. The great Father has put His mark upon the lump of clay and we can see from the rough draft that He will fashion it and form it into the perfect image of His dear Son!

After that image we are struggling. It is begun in us by the power of the Spirit of God and He will not fail nor be discouraged till the purpose of God shall be accomplished and all the works of Satan in us shall be destroyed! This robs death of all dread—the prospect of being totally free from sin makes us welcome, even, the grave, if by that road we are to come to the home of the perfect! Meanwhile, let us seek after sanctification. Let us labor after holiness and let us abound in it to the glory of God. Despite our failures and mistakes let us pursue holiness! Taking it by the heel, let us keep close to it. So may the Lord enable us for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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# LIFE PROVED BY LOVE

## NO. 2556

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 13, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JANUARY 18, 1883.

*“We know that we have passed from death unto life,  
because we love the brethren.”  
1 John 3:14.*

I HAVE heard it said, by those who would be thought philosophers, that in religion we must believe, but cannot know. I am not very clear about the distinction they draw between knowledge and faith, nor do I care to enquire because I assert that, in matters relating to religion, we *do* know! In the things of God, we both believe and know. If you will read this Epistle through and, with a pencil draw a line under the word, “know,” wherever it occurs, you will be astonished to see how John continually asserts about the great Truths of our faith, “We know, we know, we know, we know.” He does not admit that any one of these things is the subject of conjecture, but he asserts it to be a matter of positive knowledge. These philosophical gentlemen call themselves Agnostics—that is a word derived from the Greek and has the same meaning as the word, “ignoramus,” which comes from the Latin—and is the English equivalent for a “know-nothing.” Well, if they like to be called ignoramuses, I have not the slightest objection to their keeping the title, but they should never presume to argue with Christian men! They put themselves out of court, directly, for we say, “*We know.*” They cannot deny anything we choose to affirm, after that, because confessedly they do *not* know. If we do know and they cannot allege against us that we are deceivers—if, in any court of law they will admit that our testimony would be taken quite as quickly as theirs, and that our general repute is that we are as upright and as honest as they are—then they ought, in modesty, never to contradict us in anything, but to believe what we declare to be true.

As they do not know anything, themselves, let them be guided by those who *do* know. At any rate, whether they choose to agree with us or not, we shall always affirm that we know what we know! And there are some things about God, and about the future, and about prayer and about the work of the Spirit of God in our own souls which we do not fancy, or imagine, or even make to be merely matters of faith. We know them, we are sure of them, for we have felt them, tasted them, handled them—and we know them as surely as we know the fact of our own existence. My text seems to me to speak of four things about which Believers in Christ are and ought to be positive and certain.

**I.** First, WE KNOW THAT ONCE WE WERE DEAD IN TRESPASSES AND SINS. That is implied in the text—"We know that we have passed from death unto life." We could not have passed *from* death if we were not *in* death. Neither would there have been a change in bringing us into life if we were in life before. Herein, I believe, lies the Doctrine of the Natural Ruin of Man—his original sin, the depravity of his heart. I have heard it said that the children of some Christians are so very good—I suppose on account of their having such wonderfully good fathers and mothers—that they may be considered to have been *born* in the Church. They, I am assured, have no need of any conversion, and they never ought to need it. There are such principles within the dear little souls that you have only to nourish those blessed principles and they will turn into veritable angels! I have seen some of these children and I regret to say that I have not found them different in nature from other people's boys and girls, neither have they grown up to be better than the children of the most ungodly. I believe, concerning everybody's child, that it must be born again, that the Spirit of God must change its natural heart if it is to become a child of God. At any rate, whatever may be the theory as regards other people, we know that *we* were once dead in sin—we have no question about that!

We who have been converted and become the subjects of the work of the Spirit of God know that we were once fast bound in spiritual death—*at one time we were utterly insensible*. We heard the Word of God and were pleased, perhaps, with the oratory of the speaker, or moved by his earnestness. But we were never led, by all his pleadings, to hate sin and to believe in Christ. We were shaken, but we were not awakened. We were insensible, spiritually, to the power of the Law of God. We heard it preached and we might be, for a moment, disquieted, but we never felt the terror of the condemnation which God pronounces upon the sinner who breaks His Law. If we did feel anything of it, we strived to get away from its influence—and drowned in pleasure and in sin all thoughts of the wrath of God. We could also hear the Gospel, as well as the Law, and the sweetest note in it had no music for our ears. What cared we for Jesus and His bleeding wounds? What respect had we for Infinite Love and the invitations of the precious Word? We came and we went, yet continued just as we were. We saw our face in the glass, but we did not wash it—and the spots of sin still remained.

Some of you, dear Friends, remember that you had grown so insensible to spiritual things that you did not even care to hear the Gospel. The Sabbath was to some of you just like any other day in the week, except that, sometimes, you took most of your pleasure that day—which meant that you went further in sin than you ordinarily did—for your daily labor kept you pretty steady through the week. You know how often Sunday brought "St. Monday" after it, with all sorts of mischief in its train—the Sabbath became to you rather a door of sin than a gate of mercy. Some of you had godly parents, yet you took no notice of your father's God and your mother's Savior. You saw others go to the House of Prayer, but you were in your shirt-sleeves all the morning. And in the evening you "did not care to go," you said, "to be stirred up with a crowd to listen to dry

talk.” Just so—all this was because you were quite insensible to Divine things. Charm he ever so wisely, the charmer cannot allure the deaf adder and, for a time, the Gospel’s charming music could not reach your ears. That was one proof of your being dead—that you were spiritually insensible.

More than that, we *had not the appetites of living men and women*. You know that if a man is alive, he will be hungry, in due time. There is a bell that is sure to ring inside to tell him that it is time to coal up and set the fires going again. He will be thirsty, too. The body will need moisture and there will be a summons for him to drink if he is alive. He may be just on the borders of life, perhaps almost gone, and then hunger and thirst may be forgotten, but the healthy man has these tokens of life about him at fit seasons—that he must eat and drink. There was a time when you and I had no hunger for the Bread of Life. “Pshaw,” we said, “what cant! What nonsense!” We did not desire to drink of “the river of the Water of Life.” We did not believe in its existence and, though now every drop of the Gospel is sweet to us as honey, we cared not an atom about it once! We despised the Doctrines of Grace and we did not wish for the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself! He who is the Bread of Heaven was without any attraction for us—we did not feel any need of Him. We thought that we were strong and could find our own way into Heaven. We did not know our own weakness nor His strength. We believed that we were fat and flourishing and, therefore, we did not need to feed upon Him. It is perfectly true that with regard to Grace and all spiritual things, we were dead! “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.” But dead are they unto whom no spiritual hunger or thirst ever comes! This was the second proof of our spiritual death.

There was this further evidence that *we were without power of movement of a spiritual kind*. You remember the philosopher who was asked to prove that he lived and he did it by simply walking? *Movement* is a proof of life. Certainly, *spiritual* movement proves spiritual life. To draw near to You, my God, proves that I am alive. To approach You—though it is with faltering steps, like a tottering infant who any moment may fall—yet, to draw near to You, though I do but crawl like a baby of a few months old, proves that I am alive! The movement of godly desire, the movement of a humble hope, the movement of a holy wish, the movement of a penitential sigh or cry—if there are any of these in the soul—they are proofs of life. It is not so very long ago since some of you had none of them. I had the great delight, yesterday, of seeing many who have just lately been quickened by Divine Grace. Many of them, as they looked me in the face with holy shame, told how dead they had been towards God—they were alive, indeed, unto transgression and unrighteousness—but stone dead as to any movement of the Spirit of God who now has made them alive in Christ Jesus!

There is another sign which proves *death*, namely, *the lack of breath*. That is one of the last tokens of expiring life. You have heard of friends holding a mirror to the man’s mouth and, as long as there is a little dimness to be seen upon the glass, they say, “He still lives.” But when the breath is all gone, then the life has gone. The poet truly said—

**“Prayer is the Christian’s vital breath,”**

but there was a time with us when we did not pray. Perhaps some of you, from your childhood, always said a form of prayer and if you ever went to bed without saying it, you dared not go to sleep. Yet how much of that formality was but a mockery of God! I will not speak too harshly about the child's form of prayer, for sometimes that form has been made use of by God to lead on to true spiritual supplication. Still, it would be idle for us to imagine that the mere repetition of certain words was prayer—we know, now, that it was *not* prayer. We did not really ask anything of God, we did not truly speak to God at all—we might just as well have said our prayers backward, as forward, for any good there was in them! I have heard of some people who, even at 30 and 40 years of age, have repeated the same form of prayer that they used when they were children. I have even read of one who, at 60 or 70, used to pray God to bless his father and mother who had been dead 30 years! When men once get into the way of using a form of prayer, they are apt to keep to that form when there is positively no meaning whatever in it. That is the state in which some of us were—we used dead prayers, for there was no life in us.

Ah, but it is not so now, Beloved! Now, we *pray*. I think that some of us could more easily tell when we pray than when we do not pray. As we walk the crowded streets, we cry to God in secret, "Oh, that You would be with me!" We cannot read a book without praying that we may have help from God to spy out the meaning. We do not even go to look at a baby without pleading with God to save the soul of that dear child. We feel habitually in the spirit of prayer. If it is not so with any of us, we ought to pray that it may be so! Mark you, the *spirit* of prayer is better than any mere *act* of prayer. The act of prayer is good, the habit of prayer is good, but to have the *spirit* of prayer always with us so that we as naturally pray as we breathe—this is the highest blessing of all—and one of the surest signs of spiritual life!

I grieve to add, but it is true of some of us in a very special degree, that we know we were dead in sin because we *had begun to corrupt*. If a man has lost his life for only a certain number of hours, he may still look very much as he did and, if the eyes were the only guide, we might scarcely know whether he was a living man or not. But that appearance will not last many days—you soon perceive the signs of an inward dissolution. Corruption is beginning to take possession of the place which death has conquered and, very soon, you will have to say, "Bury my dead out of my sight." It happened to some of us to be, in our salvation, like the little girl to whom Christ went soon after the breath was out of her body. He took her by the hand and said, "Talitha, cumi"—"Maid, arise"—and she lived again before corruption had worked any great change within her. Happy are they who are saved in their youth, before the inward death has begun to show itself in outward corruption! Yet, some of us who were converted while we were yet boys, remember enough of our wanderings to make us fear what we might have been if Grace had not interposed.

I have often told the story of Rowland Hill and the good Scotchman who sat for some time looking at the preacher's face and at the strange, comic twinkling about his eyes. "What are you doing?" he asked. "I am

looking at the lines of your face,” said the Scotchman. “And what do you make of them?” “Oh, I was thinking what a bad fellow you would have become if it had not been for the Grace of God.” And some of us, as we look back at the lines of our young character before it was allowed to develop, cannot help saying to ourselves, “What great sinners we would have been but for the Grace of God!” There were already tokens of commenced corruption.

But there are others in whom the corruption has become more apparent. They have gone into actual transgression and have become familiar with what are called the pleasures of this world—its vanities, gaieties and pollutions. They have not been worse than others. Indeed, even while dead in sin, they compliment themselves that they are not so bad as others! Yet they would not like to have their secret deeds proclaimed before the face of all men, as they will be at the Judgment Day! They would be ashamed to have them known. You, my Friend, are like that young man who was carried out at the gate of Nain, whom Christ met on the way to the sepulcher and raised from the dead. You are dead, surely enough, but there are some others who are dead, like Lazarus, who had lain four days in the grave—and of whom his sister said, “Lord, by this time he stinks.” God’s Grace has come to some who will easily recognize my description of them—when they were as far gone in evil as they could be. There was not any other sin left for them to commit! They had sinned up to their neck—they had plunged into it and done as much evil as they could. Rottenness was in their very soul, corruption was in everything they said, for it was full of obscenity and blasphemy. It was in all they did, for the more nauseous the sin was in the nostrils of God, the more pleasing it was to them! There are some here who will always say, “I know that I was dead, for I was corrupt. Death had set his seal upon me with a stamp that could not be mistaken. I was, indeed, dead before God, for I had begun to be offensive even in the nostrils of good men.”

That will suffice for this part of our subject. Let us look back with shame on our original. Let us remember the hole of the pit from where we were dug and then stand fast in this one certainty—we know that we were dead.

**II.** Secondly, we know another thing and a brighter thing—**WE KNOW THAT WE HAVE UNDERGONE A VERY AMAZING CHANGE**—“We know that we have passed from death unto life.”

That passage, “from death unto life,” is *the reverse of the natural one*. We all expect to pass from life unto death. The heathen talks of a Charon to ferry men across the river into the unseen world. Long ago the poet said, “Easy is the descent to Avernus. But to retrace your steps—that is the work, *that* is the difficulty.” Yet that is just what God has done for us who believe! We have not gone from life to death, but He has brought us up from death unto life! There has been such a change in us as is altogether supernatural, such a change as never would have occurred had we been left to ourselves. We now are sure that it is so. I speak to some in whom the change is so evident to themselves that they often wonder at it. One of the surest proofs to any man of the existence of a God consists in His dealings with that man in turning him from darkness to light, and



from the power of sin and Satan, unto God. All the arguments that ever were written by Butler, or Paley, or any of the defenders of religion, will never convince a man like coming into personal dealings with God. And when those dealings assume this form—that we have passed from death unto life—they become indisputable proofs of the Godhead and of the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

I do not think that it is easy to describe the passage from life to death. I could not describe it, though I have seen many pass away. And *it is almost impossible to describe the passage from death unto life*. I know what it is, as you do, Brothers and Sisters, many of you. It has happened in your own case, yet you could not explain it. What a wonderful process it is! It is not dying—it is quite the reverse—it is being quickened. Can you tell another person how it happened? You can speak of the outward means and the external circumstances, but you cannot picture to anyone the secret way of the Spirit. His methods of quickening are deep mysteries and even he who has felt them cannot translate them into human language. Yet believe us, O Unbelievers, we are before you, men and women as different from what we used to be as though we had died and risen from the dead! We are, some of us here, so changed and altered that if we met our old selves, we would not know them! We are no longer ourselves, though now most truly we are ourselves by the effectual working of the almighty Grace of God!

We can tell you, however, that *this passing from death unto life usually begins with pain*. I have heard that when men have been nearly drowned and animation has been restored by rubbing and other processes, their first sensation was that of intense anguish. When the blood began to move, again, and the lungs began gently to heave, the first feeling was one of great pain. You know how, if your foot, “goes to sleep,” as we say, when it begins to get right, again, what pain there often is! That is, on a very small scale, what happens to a man who is being resuscitated—it is just a faint picture of the pain that is usually felt by those who pass from death to life. Yet let me lay down no hard and fast rule! I am not giving a description that is to be stereotyped, but I only say what usually happens. I do not know that the little girl, to whom the Lord Jesus said, “Talitha, cumi,” had any pain at all. I expect that she just opened her eyes and sat up, and as soon as she saw that it was Jesus, she wanted to wait upon Him, but He commanded that something should be given her to eat. And there are some dear children and some persons of older age who are brought to Jesus very gently. There are not so many pangs in their birth as there are in the births of others—yet they are as truly regenerated and born into the family of God. Still, I think that the new life usually begins with pain.

One of the first signs of it is that *it is accompanied with great self-depreciation*. The man who is passing from death to life grows very little in his own esteem. He gets to despise what he once thought to be his beauty and his comeliness. As to his supposed excellence, he is not half the man he thought he was! He would never have been able to go through the needle’s eye while he was such a size as that, so he had to

be reduced and then still further reduced till he became less than nothing in his own eyes.

At the same time, when that life really does begin in a soul, *it begins very quickly*. There may be, at first, only enough light to make the darkness visible, only enough life to incarnate itself in a sigh. The prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner," is rather a large-sized form of the heavenly life. Sometimes the poor, trembling soul cannot get as far as that. Yet, not a single spark of the Divine Life ever dies out, or ever can. The living and incorruptible seed of the Word of God lives and abides forever! If it is but as a grain of mustard seed and it falls into the ground which God has prepared for it, it must live and it must grow! But, often, it is at first exceedingly weak. The test of its reality is that the man trusts in Jesus, for "he that believes on the Son has everlasting life." That is a sure Word of God, for He has, Himself, spoken it: "Whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die." The renewed man, however feeble his life may be, does believe in Jesus and, therefore, he is saved!

When that life comes to the birth, *it is usually attended with great joy*. When at last the man has believed in Jesus, and rested in Him, then he passes from darkness to light in the sense of passing from sorrow into overflowing joy! It is not always so, but that is the general way—there is a joy unspeakable and full of glory which attends this passing from death unto life—it is a period to which a man may always look back with gratitude to God. I am always glad when our friends get a very decided conversion because, though I am not going to say a word about those who come to Christ very gradually, yet their experience is rather cloudy. No doubt they are just as safe as others, but they lack a good deal of comfort afterwards and, sometimes, persons who are very readily converted and who have no very deep sense of sin, are more apt to play with evil than others are who have had a clearer sight of its enormity. So, we know—however it came to pass—we *know* that we have undergone a very amazing change!

**III.** Thirdly, we know something else. WE KNOW THAT WE LIVE—"We know that we have passed from death unto life."

In that life, first of all, is included *non-condemnation*. A man who is condemned to die can hardly be said to live, but he who has believed in Jesus Christ knows that there is, for him, no condemnation! Nothing shall ever be laid to his charge, for all his sins were punished on Christ—a full atonement was made for them—and they were forever put away. This we know, and we rejoice to know it—it is the very glory and bliss of our life!

We live now, dear Friends, in this way—we *have entered into a new state of being*. We have made the acquaintance of a great many things that we did not know anything of before. "All things have become new." "Ah, Sir," said one to me once, "either all the world has altered, or else I have, for people I once delighted in I am now afraid of. The things that once made me glad, now make me unhappy, and those that I thought melancholy are now the very things in which I find my highest joy." Yes, we have not merely to talk about God, now, but to *know* Him! Not simply to speak about Christ, but to *live* in Him! Not now to *dream* or read

about the Spirit of God, but to *feel* Him working in us! We have come now to know the blood of Jesus as applied to our souls to make us clean—the promises are now our riches and prayer is a reality to us! We never need anybody to tell us that there is a power in prayer, for we have tokens from day to day that the Lord hears our petitions. We are living in a new world altogether, we know we are! These things were unknown and unperceived by us once, but they are perceived by us now.

Beside that, we *are now introduced into spiritual society*. I hardly know how to explain the great change to some here, but suppose you had been a pig all your life and that you were suddenly made into a man. Well, now you are a man, you look through a telescope—swine cannot do that. You look through a microscope—I never knew a pig do that in my life. Swine do not talk, but you speak, you sing, you pray, you are quite a different creature from what you were before. It is just so with some of us—we have another life than we ever possessed before, we live in a different world to what we used to live in, we know things that were unknowable to us once, we enjoy what we never had enjoyed and we have griefs that never occurred to us before we passed from death unto life. By all these things we know that we do really live.

Further, *this new life necessitates new food*. We feel, now, an appetite which nothing but Christ can satisfy! We love the House of God, we delight in God's Word, and when the Holy Spirit blesses us, then are we filled as with marrow and fatness! We believe, too, that *this life guarantees to us eternal life*—that, in fact, *it is eternal life*—life that can never die, or be taken away from us. Let me tell you, my un-converted Friend, that we are very happy! “But,” you say, “you said that you had sorrows which we do not have.” Exactly so. Men, you know, have sorrows which swine do not have. Do I compare you to swine? Well, if you do not like that image, I cannot help it. I will take any other that is true, but there is as great a difference between a living Christian and a mere man as there is between a living man and a dog. He has another life, a higher life and he has entered another realm. I would not try to teach a dog astronomy and it is impossible for an un-renewed man to know the things of God. I should not think of putting my dog into a chair and beginning to explain theology to him—and until you are born again, you will never understand the meaning of God's Grace. You must get a new life, pass from death unto life, or you cannot know these things. But we who believe in Jesus know that we have this life.

**IV.** Now, fourthly, WE KNOW THAT WE LIVE BECAUSE WE LOVE.

The enquiry as to whether we are alive or not is a very curious thing. This morning I received a letter informing me that the High Court of Chancery has ordered investigation, with affidavit, as to whether “the said Charles Haddon Spurgeon” is still alive. I replied to the lawyer that I would not make an affidavit to that effect, for I would not take an oath for any purpose, but that I was willing most solemnly to affirm that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, I am still alive. And I expect to have to do that before long. I did not say to myself, “Am I really alive or not?” But I have known some Christian people, who have so often sung—

“*Tis a point I long to know*”—

which all of us have to sing some time or other—that they are not sure whether they are alive or not! Making themselves sad, miserable and melancholy, they think is a proof of life. Perhaps it is, but there are other proofs of life beside that, and I like the one that is given in the text—“We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.”

So, Brothers and Sisters, if we can say that *we love God’s people, as God’s people, because they are God’s people*, that is a mark that we have passed from death unto life! Do you love them *for Christ’s sake*? Do you say to yourself, “That is one of Christ’s people. That is one who bears Christ’s Cross. That is one of the children of God and, therefore, I love him and take delight in his company”? Then that is an evidence that you are not of the world. If you were, you would love the world, but, belonging to Christ, you love those who are Christ’s and you love them for Christ’s sake.

Another is you love them *for the Truth of God’s sake*. We are but earthen vessels, yet there is the excellency of the treasure of God put within us, so, when you can say, “I love that man because of the Truth of God he preaches. I do not care about his talents, but I do care about his Gospel”—when you can say, “I love that woman, I delight to hear her speak of Jesus, her experience comforts me because it is full of Christ.” Or, “I love to read the writings of such a Brother because there is a savor of Christ about *every* letter that he writes”—that is a mark that you have passed from death unto life. If you love the children, you love the Father, I am pretty sure of that. And if you love Him, it is because He first loved you!

It is another mark of our passing from death unto life when we love God’s people *for their own sake*, when we wish that we were like they are, when we say to ourselves, “I would gladly be the least among them, washing their feet and filling the humblest place, so that I might share the love which is their joy.” It is a sure token that you are a child of God when you love God’s people even *when the world hates them*, taking their part, being willing to be reproached with them. When you say, “You scoff at such a saint, do you? I am one of the same family, so give me some of your scorn! If you have any rotten stuff to fling and you set this Christian man in the pillory, I will stand by his side and count it a great honor to share the contempt that comes upon a child of God.” If you thus love the saints, you need not be afraid whether you have passed from death unto life.

It is also a sure mark of Grace when *we love the company of God’s people* as a people, when we are willing to go to the little Prayer Meeting to hear them pray, when we hear them groaning and yet feel, “That is just the kind of sorrow that I would like to feel.” When we hear them joyful and say, “That is the kind of joy I want to feel.” When we hear them tell about what the Lord has done for them, and though we have not felt quite the same joy, ourselves, yet say, “I love them because the Lord has loved them. If He has not yet worked all this in me, I love them because He has worked it in them. I rejoice to see my Father’s finger anywhere, on anyone, whoever he may be.” Well, if that is your case, go your way in

peace! It seems but a very small token of the inward life that we love the Brothers and Sisters, yet it is one of the surest in the world, and it is one of which even you high and mighty saints may be glad to avail yourselves in the cloudy and dark day which, sooner or later, may come upon you.

God grant us all to have a share in this precious knowledge, for Christ's sake! Amen and Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
PSALM 32.**

A Psalm of David, giving instruction. The 32<sup>nd</sup> Psalm is a Gospel benediction. It belongs not to the law—it is a word which can only come of Sovereign Grace to the guilty. The very first sentence tells us that.

**Verse 1.** *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.* Blessed would have been the man who never transgressed, who never sinned, but, be encouraged, O Sinner, there is blessedness even for the likes of you! Blessed is he who, though he has transgressed, has had his transgression forgiven—who, though he has sinned, and sinned often, and sinned foully, yet, nevertheless, has had his sin covered. There is such blessedness in this forgiveness that scarcely can the bliss of an unfallen spirit excel it! There is a tenderness, a delicacy, a fragrance, a love about the dealings of God with pardoned sinners that even angels can scarcely tell the excessive sweetness of it! They have never known the joy of redeeming Grace and dying love and, although they are blessed, yet peculiarly and especially is he blessed “whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.”

**2.** *Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.* He is blessed twice over. God multiplies the blessing. He blesses him effectually, He blesses him emphatically, He blesses him in body, He blesses him in soul. He is blessed! He has iniquities, but God does not impute them to him. They have been of old imputed to Another who stood in the sinner's place, bore the sinner's guilt and put it all away by His own expiatory sufferings! Therefore, as these deeds were put to Christ's account, they are not laid to the account of the Lord's people! “Blessed is the man unto whom Jehovah imputes not iniquity.” But even pardon and deliverance from guilt would not be sufficient to make a man blessed if they stood alone, for, as long as our heart is full of sin and deceit and follows crooked ways, there can be no true rest to us. Therefore the blessedness comes to the man “in whose spirit there is no guile”—no falsehood. The guile and the guilt have gone together and the gall is gone, too. Now the man is truthful, so he confesses his sin. He is also trustful, so he lays hold on the sinner's Substitute and thus he finds peace. Dear Friends, do you all know this blessedness? If you do not, I pray that you may, for it is Heaven begun below—the Heaven of a poor sinner whose sin is covered and whose heart is purified from guile. Now see the way by which we come to this blessedness—

**3.** *When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.* Sin was in his heart but he would not confess it. He was silent before God in hardness of heart and then his sorrow grew worse and

worse, till not only his flesh began to fail, but his bones—the most solid part of his frame began to grow old, too. He felt like a man prematurely aged, melting away into the grave.

**4.** *For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.* When a man gets God's hand on him, I guarantee you that he will want no other burden! This hand of God goes with him wherever he goes, it is like his own shadow. Whenever you meet with persons who are self-righteous, you may pray God to lay his hand on them—that will drive the pride and unbelief out of them. David says that he was so pressed under God's hand that the very essence of his soul was squeezed out of him.

**5.** *I acknowledged my sin unto You, and my iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and You forgave the iniquity of my sins. Selah.* “And You forgave”—blessed, “and!” How very simple it was! The floods of Divine Wrath were swelling. David just pulled up the sluices of confession, the floods ran away, and all was quiet! Oh, what a simple plan this is! But pride cannot stand it—to humble oneself and confess before God that one is utterly undone and ruined and sinful—our proud spirit will not bring itself to do if it can help it. Yet that is the way of peace. Down, down, down, flat on your face! “He that is down need fear no fall.” But we do not like that going down, that acknowledgment of transgression. Still, we must come to it and the sooner, the better. The Lord bring every proud soul here to a full acknowledgment and confession of sin—and then forgiveness will surely follow.

**6.** *For this shall everyone who is godly pray unto You in a time when You may be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come near unto him.* The fact that God hears us at the first and gives us a great deliverance when we are under a sense of sin, makes us pray to Him as long as we live. We shall never forget how God heard us then—and something whispers into our heart, “He heard you then. He will hear you now.” One thing I know, if you do not—I can never come to God again in such a plight as I came to Him at the first. Whatever happens to me—if I am bereaved a thousand times—if I am covered from head to foot with sores and sit like Job on a dunghill—I can never be brought so low as I was when, in my despair, I was ready to lay violent hands on myself rather than live any longer under a sense of sin! I looked unto Him and I was lightened—and that first grand deliverance ensures that, in every other time of trial, in every other flood of great waters, when I cry unto God, He will deliver me!

**7.** *You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.* Here is a three-fold declaration. “You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall compass me about with songs of deliverance.” “Yes,” says God, “I will.” And now He speaks to His servant. When we speak to God, we may expect that God will speak to us. And what a happy dialog it is when a soul can pray, and praise, and magnify the Lord—and then the Lord condescends to speak to His poor servant after this fashion!

**8.** *I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go.* “I have led you so far. I have brought you up out of the horrible pit and out

of the miry clay. I will not let you perish, now. I will not leave you to your own folly.”

**8.** *I will guide you with My eyes.* It is a very gentle way of guidance when a mistress just turns her eyes towards her servant, who understands her without a word. So God is quite willing to guide His people with His eyes if they are willing to be so guided.

**9.** *Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto you.* Alas, there are some hard-mouthed Christians! They will not take a hint from God. They do not watch God’s eyes and so do not learn by that gentle means and, therefore, they require to have a bit and a bridle—and such things are not at all nice in one’s mouth. Some Christians must always be in trouble, or else they would be in sin. It seems as if some could never be allowed a furlough from sorrow, or else they would spend it in the tents of wickedness—“Be you not as the horse, or as the mule.” Be tender-mouthed. Be willing to be guided. Yield to the gentle admonitions of the Divine Spirit that you may have a truly happy life.

**10.** *Many sorrows shall be to the wicked.* It is all merriment with them now—they “count it one of the wisest things, to drive dull care away.” But hark to this knell of all their joys, “Many sorrows shall be to the wicked.” If not today, or tomorrow, yet by-and-by, and in that day it shall be so. All the future is dark to the wicked. The further they go, the worse they will grow.

**10.** *But he that trusts in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about.* “He that trusts in the Lord”—he is the very opposite of the wicked. Do you trust in the Lord, my Friend? If not, you will have to be put among the wicked, for there are only two sorts of people in the world—the wicked and those that trust in the Lord! If you are not a believer in Christ, you must go with the other company. “He that trusts in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about.” Mercy shall go all round him, before him, behind him, above him, beneath him, within him and around him everywhere! As you see the moon, sometimes, with a halo around it, so shall you be—you shall have brightness within and round about you, mercy shall compass you about.

**11.** *Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, you righteous: and shout for joy, all you that are upright in heart.* If anybody has a right to be glad, you have! So indulge the gladness and magnify the name of the Lord.

### **HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—30, 561, 560.**

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# THE DEATH OF CHRIST FOR HIS PEOPLE NO. 2656

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 7, 1900.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,  
ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING, IN THE WINTER OF 1857.

*“He laid down His life for us.”*  
*1 John 3:16.*

Come, Believer, and contemplate this sublime Truth of God, thus proclaimed to you in simple monosyllables—“He laid down His life for us.” There is not one long word in the sentence—it is all as simple as it can be—and it is simple because it is sublime. Sublimity in thought always needs simplicity in words to express itself. Little thoughts require great words to explain them. Little preachers need Latin words to convey their feeble ideas, but great thoughts and great expressers of those thoughts are content with little words.

“He laid down His life for us.” Here there is not much upon which any man can display his eloquence. Here is little room for metaphysical discussion or for deep thought—the text sets before us a simple yet sublime Doctrine of God. What, then, shall I do with it? If I would speak of it profitably to myself, since I need not employ my wit to dissect it, nor my oratory to proclaim it, let me exercise my adoration to worship it! Let me prostrate all my powers before the Throne of God and, like an angel when his work is done and he has nowhere else to fly at his Lord's command, let me fold the wings of my contemplation and stand before the Throne of this great Truth and meekly bow and worship Him who Was, and Is, and is to come—the great and glorious One who “laid down His life for us.”

It will be well for me, in commencing my discourse, to remind you that there is no understanding the death of Christ unless we understand the Person of Christ. If I were to tell you that *God* died for us, although I might be telling you the truth and you might possibly not misunderstand what I meant, yet I would be, at the same time, uttering an error. God cannot die! It is, of course, impossible, from His very Nature, that He could even for a moment cease to exist! God is incapable of suffering. It is true that we sometimes use words to express emotions on the part of God but, then, we speak after the manner of men. He is impassive. He cannot suffer. It is not possible for Him to endure anything, much less, then, is it possible for Him to suffer death. Yet we are told, in the verse from which our text is taken, “Hereby perceive we the love *of God*.” You notice that the words, “of God,” are inserted by the translators. They are in italics because they are not in the original. A better translation would



be, "Hereby perceive we love." But when we read, "of God," it might lead the ignorant to fancy that God could die, whereas God could not.

We must always understand and constantly remember that our Lord Jesus Christ was "very God of very God" and that, as God, He had all the attributes of the Most High and could not, therefore, be capable either of suffering or death. But then He was also Man, "Man of the substance of His mother." Man, just like ourselves, sin alone excepted. And the Lord Jesus died not as God—it was as Man that He gave up the ghost. As Man, He was nailed to the Cross. As God, He was in Heaven, even when His body was in the tomb. As God, He was swaying the scepter of all worlds even when the mock scepter of reed was in His hand. And the imperial robe of universal monarchy was on the eternal shoulders of His Godhead when the soldier's old purple cloak was wrapped about His Manhood. He did not cease to be God, He did not lose His Omnipotence and His eternal dominion when He became Man—nor did He, as God, die or suffer—it was as Man that He "laid down His life for us."

Come now, my Soul, and worship this Man, this God! Come, Believer, and behold your Savior! Come to the innermost circle of all sanctity, the circle that contains the Cross of Christ, and sit down and, while you worship, learn three lessons from the fact that "He laid down His life for us." The first lesson should be—Did He lay down His life for us? Ah, then, my Brothers and Sisters, *how great must have been our sins* that they could not have been atoned for by any other price! Secondly, did He lay down His life for us? Ah, then, Beloved, *how great must have been His love!* He would not stop short anywhere until life, itself, had been resigned. Thirdly, did He lay down His life for us? Ah, then, my Soul, be of good cheer—*how safe you are!* If such an Atonement has been offered, if such a sure satisfaction has been given to Almighty God, how secure you are! Who is he that can destroy him who has been bought with the blood of such a Redeemer?

**I.** Come, then, let me believingly meditate on the first sad fact. Did Christ lay down His life for me? Then, HOW GREAT MUST HAVE BEEN MY SINS!

Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, I will speak a little of my own experience and, in so doing, I shall also be describing yours. I have seen my sins in many different ways. I saw them once by the blazing light of Sinai and, oh, my spirit shrank within me, for my sins seemed exceedingly black! When the sound of the trumpet waxed loud and long, and the lightning and fire flashed into my heart, I saw a very Hell of iniquity within my soul—and I was ready to curse the day that I was born, that I should have had such a heart so vile and so deceitful! I thought that then I had seen the exceeding blackness of my sin. Alas, I had not seen enough of sin to make me loathe it so as to leave it, for that conviction passed away! Sinai was but a volcano and it was hushed to silence—and I began to play with sin, again—and loved it as much as ever.

I beheld another sight one day. I saw my sins by the light of Heaven. I looked up and I considered the heavens, the work of God's fingers. I perceived the purity of God's Character written on the sunbeams. I saw His

holiness engraved upon the wide world as well as revealed in Scripture and, as I compared myself with Him, I thought I saw how black I was. O God, I never knew the heinousness of my own guilt until I saw the glory of Your Character! But now I see the brightness of Your holiness, my whole soul is cast down at the thought of my sinfulness and my great departure from the living God! I thought that, then, I had seen enough. Ah, I had seen enough to make me worship *for a moment*, but my gladness was as the early cloud and as the morning dew! Soon I went my way and forgot what manner of man I was. When I had lost the sense of the majesty of God, I also lost the consciousness of my own guilt!

Then there came to me another view. I beheld God's loving kindness to me. I saw how He had dandled me upon the knee of Providence—how He had carried me all my life—how He had strewn my path with plenty and given me all things richly to enjoy. I remembered how He had been with me in the hour of trial, how He had preserved me in the day of hurricane and kept me safe at the moment of storm. I remembered all His goodness to me and, struck with surprise at His mercy, I looked upon my sin in the light of His Grace and I said, "O Sin, how base you are! What dire ingratitude do you manifest against a God so profoundly kind!" I thought, then, I had surely seen the worst of sin, when I had laid it side by side, first, with the Character of God and afterwards with His bounties. I cursed sin from my inmost heart and thought I had seen enough of it. But, ah, my Brothers and Sisters, I had not! That sense of gratitude passed away and I found myself still prone to sin—and still loving it.

But, oh, there came a thrice-happy, yet thrice-mournful hour! One day, in my wanderings, I heard a cry, a groan. I thought 'twas not a cry such as came from mortal lips—it had in it such unutterable depths of wondrous woe. I turned aside, expecting to see some great sight and it was, indeed, a great sight that I saw. Lo, there, upon a tree, all bleeding, hung a Man! I marked the misery that made His flesh all quiver on His bones! I beheld the dark clouds come rolling down from Heaven, like the chariots of misery—I saw them clothe His brow with blackness! I saw even in the thick darkness, for my eyes were opened and I perceived that His heart was as full of the gloom and horror of grief as the sky was full of blackness. Then I seemed to look into His soul and I saw torrents of unutterable anguish—wells of torment of such an awful character that mortal lips dare not sip lest they should be burned with scalding heat. I said, "Who is this mighty Sufferer? Why does He suffer thus? Has He been the greatest of all sinners, the basest of all blasphemers?" But a voice came forth from the excellent Glory and it said, "This is My beloved Son, but He took the sinner's sin upon Himself and He must bear its penalty." O God! I thought I never saw sin till that hour, when I saw it tear Christ's glories from His head—when it seemed, for a moment, even to withdraw the loving kindness of God from Him—when I saw Him covered with His own blood and plunged into the uttermost depths of oceans of grief! Then I said, "Now shall I know what you are, O Sin, as never before I knew it!" Though those other sights might teach me something of

the dire character of evil, yet never, till I saw the Savior on the Cross, did I understand how base a traitor man's guilt was to man's God!

O heir of Heaven, lift now your eyes and behold the scenes of suffering through which your Lord passed for your sake! Come in the moonlight and stand between those olives! See Him sweat great drops of blood. Go from that garden and follow Him to Pilate's bar. See your Master subjected to the grossest and filthiest insults! Gaze upon the face of spotless Beauty defiled with the spit of soldiers! See His head pierced with thorns! Mark His back, all torn, and scarred, and bruised and bleeding beneath the terrible lash! And O Christian, see Him die! Go and stand where His mother stood, and hear Him say to you, "Man, behold your Savior!" Come you tonight and stand where John stood. Hear Him cry, "I thirst," and find yourself unable either to relieve His griefs or to comprehend their bitterness. Then, when you have wept there, lift your hands and cry, "Revenge!" Bring out the traitors! Where are they? And when your sins are brought forth as the murderers of Christ, let no death be too painful for them! Though it should involve the cutting off of right arms, or the quenching of right eyes and putting out their light forever, do it! For if these murderers murdered Christ, then let them die! Die terribly they may, but die they must! Oh that God the Holy Spirit would teach you that first lesson, my Brothers and Sisters—the boundless wickedness of sin—for Christ had to lay down His life before your sin could be wiped away!

**II.** Now we will come to the second head and here we will lift up our hearts from the depths of sadness to the heights of affection. Did the Savior lay down His life for me? We will read it, now, "He laid down His life for *me*," and I pray the Lord to help each of you, by faith, to read it so, because when we say, "us," that is dealing in generalities—blessed generalities, it is true—but let us, at this time, deal in specifics and say, each one of us who can do so truthfully, "He laid down His life for *me*." Then, HOW GREATLY HE MUST HAVE LOVED ME!

Ah, Lord Jesus! I never knew Your love till I understood the meaning of Your death! Beloved, we, shall try again, if we can, to tell the story of our own experience to let you see how God's love is to be learned. Come, saint, sit down and meditate on your creation. Note how marvelously you have been formed and all your bones fitted to one another—and see love there. Mark next, that predestination which placed you where you are, for the lines have fallen unto you in pleasant places and, notwithstanding all your troubles, you have, compared with many a poor soul, "a goodly heritage." Mark, then, the love of God displayed in the predestination that has made you what you are and placed you where you are. Then look back and see the loving kindness of your Lord as displayed to you in all your journey up till now. You are getting old and your hair is whitening above your brow, but He has carried you all the days of old—not one good thing has failed of all that the Lord your God has promised! Recall your life story. Go back, now, and look at the tapestry of your life which God has been working every day with the golden filament of His love—and see what pictures of Grace there are upon it! Can you not say

that Jesus has loved you? Turn your eyes back and read the ancient rolls of the Everlasting Covenant and see your name among the first-born, the elect, the Church of the living God! Say, did He not love you when He wrote your name there? Go and remember how the eternal settlements were made and how God decreed and arranged all things so that your salvation should come to pass! Say, was there not love there?

Pause at the remembrance of your convictions. Think of your conversion. Remember your preservation and how God's Grace has been working upon you in adoption, in justification and in every item of the New Covenant. And when you have summed up all these things, let me ask you this question—Do all these things produce in you such a sense of gratitude as the one thing that I shall mention now, the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ? For, my Brothers and Sisters, if your mind is like mine, although you will think highly enough of all these things that God has given you, you will be obliged to confess that the thought of the *death of Christ upon the Cross* swallows them all up! This I know, my Brethren—I may look back, I may look forward—but whether I look back to the decrees of eternity, or look forward to the pearl-gated city and all the splendors that God has prepared for His own beloved children, I can never see my Father's love so beaming forth, in all its brilliance, as when I look at the Cross of Christ and see Him die there!

I can read the love of God in the rocky letters of the Eternal Covenant and in the blazing letters of Heaven hereafter, but, my Brothers and Sisters, in those crimson lines, those lines written in blood, there is something more striking than there is anywhere else, for they say, "He laid down His life for us." Ah, here it is you learn love! You know the old story of Damon and Pythias—how the two friends struggled together as to which should die for the other. There was love there. But, ah, there is no comparison between Damon and Pythias, and a poor sinner and his Savior! Christ laid down His life, His glorious life, for a poor worm! He stripped Himself of all His splendors, then of all His happiness, then of His own righteousness, then of His own robes till He was naked to His own shame! And then He laid down His life—that was all He had left—for our Savior had not kept anything back.

Just think of that for a moment. He had a crown in Heaven, but He laid that aside, that you and I might wear one forever. He had a belt of brightness—brighter than the stars, about His loins, but He took it off and laid it by—that you and I might eternally wear a belt of righteousness. He had listened to the holy songs of the cherubim and seraphim, but He left them all that we might forever dwell where angels sing. And then He came to earth and He had many things, even in His poverty, which might have tended to His comfort, but He laid down first one glory, and then another, at love's demand. At last it came to this—He had nothing left but one poor garment, woven from the top, throughout, and that was clinging to His back with blood—and He laid down that, also. Then there was nothing left. He had not kept back one single thing. "There," He might have said, "take an inventory of all I have, to the last farthing. I have given it all up for My people's ransom." And there was nothing left

now but His own life. O insatiable Love, could you not stay there? He had given up one hand to cancel sin and the other hand to reconcile us unto God. He had given up one foot that we might have our sinful feet forever transfixed, and nailed, and fastened—never to wander—and the other foot to be fastened to the Cross that we might have our feet at liberty to run the heavenly race! And there was nothing left but His poor heart—and He gave His heart up, too—they ripped it apart with the spear and forthwith there came out blood and water.

Ah, my Lord! What have I ever given You compared to what You have given me? Some poor things, like some rusty farthings, I have given You, but how little compared with what You have given me! Now and then, my Lord, I have given You a poor song upon an ill-toned instrument. Sometimes, my Lord, I have done some little service for You, but, alas, my fingers were so dirty they spoiled what I intended to have presented to You white as snow! It is nothing I have done for You, my Lord. No, though I have been a missionary and surrendered home and friends. No, though I have been a martyr and given my body to be burned, I will say, in the last hour, “My Master, I have done *nothing* for You, after all, in comparison with what You have done for me! And yet, what can I do more? How can I show my love to You, for Your love to me, so peerless, so matchless? What shall I do? I will do nothing but—

**“Dissolved by Your goodness, I’ll fall to the ground,  
And weep to the praise of the mercy I’ve found!”**

That is all I can do, and that, by Your Grace, I must and will do.

**III.** Now, Beloved, we will change the theme and go one note higher. We have run a long way up the gamut and now we have reached the height of the octave. But we have something else to get out of the text, “He laid down His life for us.” Did my Savior lay down His life for me? Then, HOW SAFE I AM!

We will have no controversy, tonight, with those who do not see this Truth of God—may the Lord open their blind eyes and show it to them! That is all we will say. We, who know the Gospel, see, in the fact of the death of Christ, a reason that no strength of logic can ever shake—and no power of unbelief can remove why we should be saved. There may be men with minds so distorted that they can conceive it possible that Christ could die for a man who afterwards is lost. I say, there may be such. I am sorry to say that there are still to be found some such persons whose brains have been so addled, in their childhood, that they cannot see that what they hold is both a preposterous lie and a blasphemous libel! Christ dies for a man and then God punishes that man again? Christ suffers in a sinner’s stead and then God condemns that sinner after all? Why, my Friends, I feel quite shocked in only mentioning such an awful error! And were it not so current as it is, I would certainly pass it over with the contempt that it deserves!

The Doctrine of Holy Scripture is this, that God is just, that Christ died in the stead of His people and that, as God is just, He will never punish one solitary soul of Adam’s race for whom the Savior did thus shed His blood! The Savior did, indeed, in a certain sense, die for all—all men receive many a mercy through His blood—but that He was the Sub-

stitute and Surety for *all* men is so inconsistent, both with reason and Scripture, that we are obliged to reject the doctrine with abhorrence! No, my Soul, how shall you be punished if your Lord endured your punishment for you? Did He die for you? O my Soul, if Jesus was not your Substitute and did not die in your very place, then He is no Savior to you! But if He was your Substitute. If He suffered as your Surety, in your place, then, my Soul, “Who is he that condemns?” Christ has died, yes, rather, has risen again and sits at the right hand of God, and makes intercession for us. There stands the master-argument—Christ “laid down His life for us.” And “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.” If the agonies of the Savior put our sins away, the everlasting life of the Savior, with the merits of His death added thereunto, must preserve His people, even unto the end!

This much I know—you may hear men stammer when they say it—but what I preach is the old Lutheran, Calvinistic, Augustinian, Pauline, Christian Truth of God—there is not one sin in the Book of God against anyone that believes. Our sins were numbered on the Scapegoat’s head and there is not one sin that ever a Believer did commit that has any power to damn him, for Christ has taken the damning power out of sin by allowing it—to speak by a bold metaphor—to damn Himself, for sin did condemn Him and, inasmuch as sin condemned Him, sin cannot condemn us! O Believer, this is your security—that all your sin and guilt, all your transgressions and your iniquities have been atoned for and were atoned for before they were committed—so that you may come with boldness, though red with all crimes, and black with every lust, and lay your hand on that Scapegoat’s head! And when you have put your hand there and seen that Scapegoat driven into the wilderness, you may clap your hands for joy, and say, “It is finished, sin is pardoned!”—

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

This is all I need to know—did the Savior die for *me*? Then I will not continue in sin that Grace may abound, but nothing shall stop me of thus glorying, in all the Churches of the Lord Jesus, that my sins are entirely removed from me and, in God’s sight, I may sing, as Hart did sing—

***“With Christ’s spotless vesture on,  
Holy as the Holy One!”***

O marvelous death of Christ, how securely do You set the feet of God’s people on the rocks of eternal love! And how securely do You keep them there! Come, dear Brothers and Sisters, let us suck a little honey out of this honeycomb! Was there ever anything so luscious and so sweet to the Believer’s taste as this all-glorious Truth that we are complete in Him? That in and through His death and merits, we are accepted in the Beloved? Oh, was there ever anything more sublime than this fact that He has already raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, far above all principalities and powers, just where He sits? Surely there is nothing more sublime than that, except it be that

a master-thought stamps all these things with more than their own value—that master-thought that, though the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, the Covenant of His love shall never depart from us! “For,” says Jehovah, “I will never forget you, O Zion.” “I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands; your walls are continually before Me.”

O Christian, that is a firm foundation, cemented with blood, on which you may build for eternity! Ah, my Soul! You need no other hope but this—Jesus! Your mercy, my Savior, never dies! I will plead this Truth of God when cast down with anguish—Your mercy never dies! I will plead this when Satan hurls temptations at me and when conscience casts the remembrance of my sin in my teeth! I will plead this always and I will plead it now—

**“Jesus, Your blood and righteousness  
My beauty are, my glorious dress.”**

Yes, and after I die, and even when I stand before Your eyes, You dread Supreme—

**“When from the dust of death I rise,  
To take my mansion in the skies,  
Even then shall this be all my plea,  
‘Jesus has lived and died for me.’  
Bold shall I stand in that great day,  
For who anything to my charge shall lay?  
While through Christ’s blood absolved I am  
From sin’s tremendous curse and shame?”**

Ah, Brothers and Sisters, if this is your experience, you may come to the Table of Communion now right happily—it will not be coming to a funeral, but to a feast of gladness! “He laid down His life for us.”

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
JOHN 9; 1 CORINTHIANS 10:15-33; 11:1.**

We will first read about one of our Lord’s miracles and then, as many of us will be coming to the Communion Table, we will read about the Lord’s Supper.

**John 9:1-3.** *And as Jesus passed by, He saw a man which was blind from his birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents. That is, the sin of the man or of his parents was not the cause of his being blind.*

**3.** *But that the works of God should be made manifest in him.* What a very blessed way of looking at evil—as an opportunity for God to manifest the power of His works of Grace by getting rid of it! I wish that everyone here would look upon the evil within his own heart in this very hopeful light and say, “There is something in me for God to conquer. There is some spiritual disease in me for the great Physician to heal. There is space in my poor soul for the Lord, Himself, to work some miracle of mercy.”

**4-7.** *I must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day. The night comes when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. When He had thus spoken, He spat on the ground and*

*made clay of the spittle, and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent). He went his way, therefore, and washed, and came seeing.* You notice, Brothers and Sisters, that the disciples wanted to know how the man became blind, but Christ removed his blindness and gave him sight. I have known a great many puzzle themselves about the origin of evil. Christ did not come to explain that mystery—He came to put an end to evil. That is an infinitely more practical objective than that of speculating about how evil first entered the world, or how it entered any individual soul! He will tell you how to get rid of it. What a blessed way of healing Christ used! He could have spoken and the man's eyes would have opened at once. He who said, "Let there be light," and there was light, in the first creation, could have said the same thing to this blind man—and light would at once have entered his eyes. Instead of that, He chose to use means, and the means did not appear to be very likely to effect the cure. Jesus covered the man's eyes with clay and bade him go and wash it off. Is this the way to give him sight? Yes, Our Lord often uses means that seem to be very unlikely to accomplish His purpose. But He always uses the right means. Often, when He is going to open a man's eyes, spiritually, He first makes him feel more blind than he ever was in all his life. A sense of deeper darkness hangs over him just before the dawn of eternal day! Perhaps even this very hour some words of mine, human and imperfect as they are, may, nevertheless, have the Truth of God in them, just as the clay was made efficacious by the spittle from the Savior's blessed mouth. And if so, there will be healing work worked among blind hearts tonight. God grant that it may be so!

**8, 9.** *The neighbors, therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? Some said, This is he. Others said, He is like he. But he said, I am he.* There is an end of all question about the matter! He says, "I am the very man." No one knew this better than he did and, therefore, he was the one to say it.

**10, 11.** *Therefore said they unto him, How were your eyes opened? He answered and said, A Man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed my eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam and wash. And I went and washed, and I received sight.* A very plain story, very well told. It is the story of every soul that gets the eternal light. "Christ told me to believe in Him. I did believe in Him and I received the blessing." There are not many incidents in the narrative and there is nothing very romantic—it is a simple and plain declaration of what Christ had done for him. And, blessed be God, just as sight was given to the blind man, Christ still gives salvation to all who trust Him!—

***"There is life for a look at the Crucified One!  
There is life at this moment for thee.  
Then look, sinner—look unto Him and be saved—  
Unto Him who was nailed to the tree!  
It is not your tears of repentance or prayers,  
But the blood that atones for the soul.  
On Him, then, who shed it, believing at once,  
Your weight of iniquities roll.***



***But take, with rejoicing, from Jesus at once  
The life everlasting He gives:  
And know, with assurance, you never can die,  
Since Jesus, your righteousness, lives.”***

**12-14.** *Then said they unto him, Where is He? He said, I know not. They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind. And it was the Sabbath day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. Oh, that He would do the same thing, in a spiritual sense, this Sabbath day! On another occasion, when He had worked a miracle on the Sabbath and the Jews, therefore, sought to persecute Him and slay Him, He said to them, “My Father works hitherto, and I work.” The Sabbath day was often Christ’s chief working day—may He make it to be so again now!*

**15-17.** *Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon my eyes, and I washed, and do see. Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This Man is not of God because He keeps not the Sabbath day. Others said, How can a Man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them. They said unto the blind man again, What do you say of Him, that He has opened your eyes? He said, He is a Prophet. There was no mistake about that matter in the mind of the man whom he had healed—none but a Prophet, mighty in word and deed, could have worked such a miracle as that!*

**18-21.** *But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight. And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How, then, does he now see? His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son and that he was born blind, but by what means he now sees, we know not; or who has opened his eyes, we know not. He is of age, ask him: he shall speak for himself. And so he did. He was one of those people who can speak for themselves and it is greatly to be wished that many more of those who have been cured by Christ could do the same! He was a conscientious man, who, outside fear of offending or any desire to curry favor, spoke out honestly what he knew—nothing more.*

**22-27.** *These words spoke his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had already agreed that if any man did confess that He was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him. Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise; we know that this Man is a sinner. He answered and said, Whether He is a sinner or not, I know not. One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see. Then said they to him again, What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes? He answered them, I have told you already, and you did not hear: why would you hear it again? Will you also be His disciples? He was a sharp, ready-witted man who was not to be enticed into making any rash and unguarded statements. He knew what he did know and he kept to that. And whenever any of you are assailed by the enemies of Christ, you will do well to imitate this man and neither be abashed by their frowns and sneers, nor yet be too ready to cast your pearls before swine!*

**28.** *Then they reviled him.* That is the usual way with the men of the world—when they cannot beat a man in argument, they begin to call him bad names. “They reviled him.”

**28-31.** *And said, You are His disciple; but we are Moses’ disciples. We know that God spoke unto Moses: as for this Fellow, we know not from where He is. The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvelous thing, that you know not from where He is, and yet He has opened my eyes. Now we know that God hears not sinners.* That is to say, He does not work miracles by them. He does not hear their prayers and give them the power to open blind men’s eyes.

**31-33.** *But if any man is a worshipper of God, and does His will, him He hears. Since the world began it was not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this Man were not of God, He could do nothing.* Christ could not have given sight to the blind man if He had not, Himself, come from God. This was good reasoning and it would have been convincing if the objectors had been willing to be convinced by the truth.

**34.** *They answered and said unto him, You were altogether born in sins, and do you teach us?* “Holy and learned people like us Pharisees—do you set up to be our teacher?”

**34-38.** *And they cast him out. Jesus heard that they had cast him out and when He had found him, He said unto him, Do you believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him? And Jesus said unto him, You have both seen Him, and it is He that talks with you. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped Him.* Then was his cure, indeed, complete! He had seen Christ spiritually as well as naturally, and fell at His feet and worshipped Him as the Son of God.

**39-41.** *And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind. And some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words, and said unto Him, Are we blind, also? Jesus said unto them, if you were blind, you would have no sin: but now you say, We see; therefore your sin remains.*

**1 Corinthians 10:15-19.** *I speak as to wise men; judge you what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread. Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? What say I then? That the idol is anything, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is anything? After they had offered the beasts as sacrifices to their idols, it was the custom to sell the carcasses in the shambles. Christian men, going into the market to buy meat, and asking no questions, bought and ate portions of these sacrifices, and they did no wrong whatever. But there were some in the Church who were very tender of conscience and who said, “If we eat meat which has been offered to idols, we thereby become partakers with the idolaters.” Paul therefore writes:—*

**20, 21.** *But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that you should have fellowship with devils. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils. It cannot be—there must be a separation between these two things. We cannot have any delight in idol-worship and yet worship the Christ of God.*

**21-28.** *You cannot be partakers of the Lord's Table, and of the table of devils. Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He? All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth. Whatever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof. If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and you are disposed to go; whatever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake. But if any man says unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that showed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof. So, you see, you may eat the meat if you like, for the idol is nothing at all. But still, if you are told that it is meat that has been offered to idols and that you, by eating of it, seem to join in the worship of idols, abstain from doing it—not for your own sake, but for the sake of the man who might be caused to stumble through you. This is a safe rule with regard to Christian behavior in many other things. There may be things lawful in drink as well as in meat which a man may take without sinning. But if he knows that his example leads others astray, then let him take heed that he does not set such an example! An example which is an excuse for drunkenness is not a good one. Therefore, let none of us set it before the eyes of men. If any man says to you, "This meat has been offered in sacrifice to idols, eat not for his sake that showed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof."*

**29.** *Conscience, I say, not your own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience? That man may not be able to do it without injury to himself, but I may, and I have liberty to do so. But yet, as a Christian, I am to consider his need of power, and I am not to use my liberty lest I do harm to my brother.*

**30, 31.** *For if I by Grace am a partaker, why am I evilly spoken of for that for which I give thanks? Whether therefore you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. And if anything you might do would not glorify God, do not do it!*

**32, 33.** *Give none offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: even as I please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.*

**1 Corinthians 11:1.** *Be you followers of me, even as I, also, am of Christ.*

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

# **GOD'S LOVE TO THE SAINTS**

## **NO. 2959**

*[Also see Sermon No. 2958, Volume 51— "The Saints' Love to God."]*

**A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 26, 1905.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 11, 1875.**

***"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us."  
1 John 3:16.***

TRUE love cannot long be dormant. It is like fire of an active nature—it must be at work. Love longs for expression—it cannot be dumb. Command it to be without expression and you command it not to live. And true love is not satisfied with expressing itself in words. It does use words, but it is painfully conscious of their feebleness, for the full meaning of love is not to be conveyed in any human language. It breaks the backs of words and crushes them to atoms when it lays upon them all that it means. Love must express itself in deeds, as our old proverb says, "Actions speak more loudly than words." Love delights, too, in sacrifices. She rejoices in self-denials and the more costly the sacrifice, the better is love pleased to make it. She will not offer that which costs her nothing—she loves to endure pain, losses and crosses—and thus she expresses herself best.

This is a general principle which is not only applicable to men, but it reaches even up to God, Himself, for, "God is Love," and being love, He must display love, nor can He rest with merely speaking of His love. His love must manifest itself in action. More than that, God could not rest until He had made the greatest sacrifice that He could make and had given up His only-begotten Son to die in the place of sinners. When He had done that, then He could rest in His love. God does not come to us and say, "Men and women, I love you and you must believe that I love you although I do nothing for you to prove My love." He does ask us to believe in His love and He has given us abundant proofs of it. Therefore He has a right to claim our belief in it. The Apostle of Love, who wrote the chapter from which our text is taken, tells us, "Hereby we are made to know"—for that would be the real translation of the original—"Hereby we come to know, we do know, the love of God, because He laid down His life for us." Just as we learn the love of others by seeing what they are prepared to sacrifice for us, so is it even with God, Himself, we discover, discern, perceive and are made to know the love which He bears for us by the fact that "He laid down His life for us."

**I.** First, I want to show you that THERE ARE MANY ACTS OF GOD IN WHICH HIS LOVE IS VERY CLEAR, BUT IN WHICH THE MOST OF MEN FAIL TO SEE.

There are many of His acts of which it might be said, "Hereby the love of God is manifested," yet many men fail to perceive the love which lies behind the actions. Let us examine ourselves to see how we stand with regard to this matter. There are some of us who ought to have perceived the love of God to us *in the surroundings into which we were brought at our very birth*. I am addressing many who, like myself, owe very much to Christian parents. Many of us could truly say, in the words of the children's hymn—

***"I was not born, as thousands are,  
Where God was never known  
And taught to pray a useless prayer  
To blocks of wood and stone."***

But without being born slaves or heathens, it might have happened that we would have had to spend our childhood in the slums of London. Some of you think that you have been very good, but would you have been better than the boys that fill our reformatories—would you have been better than those who crowd our prisons—if you had had the same training, or lack of training, that has been their lot? If you had had such an example as they have had—if the taste of strong drink had been familiar to you almost from your birth—if the first thing you ever heard was blasphemy—if you had lived in the thieves' kitchen—do you think that you would have been any more clear from guilt than they have been? When we look down upon others and despise them, it may be that if we knew all their temptations and the conditions of their upbringing, we might almost admire them for not being worse than they are! It costs some people a great struggle to be honest. And there are many women in this dreadful London whom we, perhaps, think ill of, who, nevertheless, have suffered almost a martyrdom and who have fought stern battles with temptation! If they have fallen somewhat, they are to be honored because they have not fallen still further!

But what a blessing it was to us that when we woke up in this world, we looked up into a face that smiled upon us and to lips that, by-and-by, spoke to us of Jesus Christ! The first example that we had was one that, to this day, we wish to follow. Our companions, from our youth up, have been of a godly order and there are some who are in Heaven, now, who had much to do with the formation of our character—and for whom we should always thank God. Now, had we been wise—had we understood the meaning of this gracious arrangement—we might, in the very conditions in which we were born and brought up, have perceived the love of God to us! Yet many of us did not. I should not wonder if some of you thought that you were badly treated because you were placed in such a strict family where you were checked and kept from what you regarded as the pleasures of life. Many a young man has felt that he has been tied to his mother's apron strings a great deal too much. He saw other young men enjoying themselves, but he could not—his father, like a grim jailer, was always looking after him too closely. That is the way

many of us put it in the days of our ignorance. But now that God has opened our eyes, we can see the love of God in it all. Yet we did not see it then and, as a general rule, young men and women who have the high privilege of Christian parents and training do not perceive the love of God in it, but often kick against it and wish they had not to endure what they regard as so great a hardship!

Then, dear Friends, the love of God may be clearly seen in reference to all of us *in His giving us a wise and judicious Law*. That Law of the Ten Commandments is a gift of great kindness to the sons of men, for it tells us the wisest and the happiest way of living. It forbids us nothing but what would be to our injury and it withholds from us nothing which would be a real pleasure to us. The commands which say, "You shall," or "You shall not," are like the signs which you sometimes see at swimming places, bearing the words, "Dangerous! Keep so many yards away from this spot." God does not make laws denying us anything that would really be for our good. There is a poisonous berry growing in your garden and your child has been told that he is not to eat it. If he is a wise child, he will understand that it is your love to him which has told him not to eat of that poisonous berry. If you had no care about him at all, he might eat what poison he chose. But because you love him, you say to him, "My child, do not do this and do not do that because it will be to your serious injury and, possibly, your death, if you disobey." We ought to see the love of God in the gift of His Law, but nobody ever does that till he is led to the love of God in other ways. We cannot say of it, though we ought to do so, "Hereby perceive we the love of God towards us."

We have also had *in the daily bounties of Divine Providence*, abundant manifestations of the love of God. If our eyes were really opened, every loaf of bread would come to us as a token of our Father's care—and every drop we drink would come as the gift of our Father's bounty. Are we not clothed by His love? The breath that is in our nostrils—who gives it to us but our Creator? Who preserves us in health but our great Benefactor? Is it not a proof of love that you are not on a sickbed tonight? That you are not in the lunatic asylum? That you are not do the borders of the grave? Yes, and that you are not in Hell? We are a mass of mercies and a mass of sins—we seem to be made of mercy and ingratitude mixed together! But if the Lord will open our eyes, we will then perceive the boundless mercies of which we are the recipients and we shall begin to perceive His love! But this is not the first place where man ever sees God's love. The Cross is the window through which the love of God is best seen, but, until that window is opened, all the bounties of God's Providence fail to convince us of His love. See how the mass of men reap their harvests and yet never thank the God who gives the harvest. See how they drive the loaded wagons to the granaries and thresh out the wheat—and send it to be sold in the markets—but did you ever hear of a song of praise being sung in the market when they brought the first new wheat to be sold? Did you ever hear of such a thing? Why, they would think we were all

gone mad if at Mark Lane, on the arrival of a sample of new wheat, we were to begin to sing—

**“Praise God from whom all blessings flow!”**

The probability is that there are many of them there cursing because the wheat has gone down a shilling or two and the poor people will, possibly, get their bread a little cheaper! Praising God seems to have gone out of fashion and we are told by philosophers, who ought to know, that the wheat springs up naturally and that God has nothing to do with it. They say that whether it rains or whether the sun shines, the processes of Nature are ruled by iron law with which God has no concern at all—and they practically imply that He has gone for a holiday and left the world to manage itself, or wound it up, like a watch, and put it under His pillow and gone to sleep! That is the philosopher's religion and, as far as I am concerned, the philosophers may keep it, for it is not mine! My religion believes in the God of the showers, the God of the sunshine and the God of the harvests. I believe in “the living God, who gives us all things to enjoy” and let His name be praised for it! Were our hearts right with Him, we would “hereby” perceive the love of God, but we do not—that perception comes to us through a stained glass window—the window that was stained crimson by the precious blood of Christ! There, and only there, do we perceive the love of God, “because He laid down His life for us.”

**II.** That brings me to my second point which is this—IN THE LAYING DOWN OF HIS LIFE, CHRIST'S LOVE IS BEST SEEN.

I have already said that in many acts of God, His love *ought* to be seen, but, according to the text, we “hereby” perceive the love of God, “because He laid down His life for us.” It is universally admitted that *there can be no greater proof of love than for a person to lay down his life for the object of that love.* All sorts of sacrifices may be taken as proofs of affection, but the relinquishment of life is the supreme proof of love which nobody doubts. A man says that he loves his country—and suppose that man should be in the condition of Curtius, in the old Roman fable, when a great chasm opened in the Forum and it was declared that it could only be closed by the most precious thing in Rome being thrown into it. The story goes on to say that Curtius, fully armed and riding his charger, leaped into the chasm, which instantly closed. Well, nobody could doubt the love of such a man for his country! If the question happened to be the love of humanity, we have the story—the true story—of the surgeon at Marseilles. And if we acted as he did, nobody could doubt our love to our fellow creatures. The plague was raging through the city and the people were dying by thousands. The good bishop remained among them, discharging the last offices to the dying and cheering the living—and many of the surgeons of the town who might have departed, lingered to wait upon the sick. At a consultation among them, it was resolved to make a *post mortem* examination of one of the worst cases of the plague and the question was who should make it, for whoever did it must certainly die of the disease within a few hours. One of them, to his honor, said, “My life is of no more value than that of any other man—why

should I not sacrifice it if I can, by doing so, discover the cause of this terrible malady and save this city?"

He finished his grim task, wrote his notes about the case and then went to his home and died. Nobody doubted that he loved Marseilles, for he had laid down his life for it. And you probably read, the other day, the story of a mother's love which nobody could doubt. In the late disastrous floods, a mother who had her two little children in a cradle, climbed a hill, carrying them with her. She reached a tree, or some other frail shelter with these two dear objects of her love and held them up till she found that the support on which she was resting was not strong enough to sustain herself and her two babies. So, placing them out of harm's way as far as she could, she leaped into the waters and soon sank. Nobody could doubt that mother's love when she laid down her life for her children! This is the crowning proof of love! Even "the devil's advocate" will not rise up to dispute this truth! They that can die for others must surely love those for whom they lay down their lives.

Now, *our Lord Jesus Christ has proved His love to sinners by dying for them.* Do you need me to tell you the story again? O my Brothers and Sisters, read it for yourselves. Read it often! You have it written four times, but not once too often—the story of the Son of God, who, for our sakes, died a felon's death, barbarously nailed to the Cross to bleed away His life. Read that story and see how He proved His love to us!

But there were certain points about Christ's death which are very extraordinary and which are better proofs of love than those I mentioned just now. The first is this—*Jesus need not have died at all.* When the Marseilles surgeon died, he only did what he would have to do a few years afterwards. When the mother perished to save her children, she did but die a few weeks, or months, or years before her appointed time, for, being mortal, she must die. If we give our life for others, we do not really give our life—we but pay the debt of Nature a little while before it is due. But it was altogether different in the Lord Jesus Christ's case. Over Him death had no power—It is of Him that Paul writes, "who only has immortality." Who could, without His consent, have laid his hands upon the Prince of Life, the Son of God, and said to Him, "You shall die"? No one could have done that! It was a purely voluntary act for Christ to die at all—not merely to die on the Cross but *ever* to die, was a voluntary act on His part and, consequently, a most singular proof of His love to us.

Remember, again, that in our Lord's case, *there were no claims upon Him on the part of those for whom He died.* I can understand a mother dying for her children. "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?" I can see some reason why a noble citizen would be willing to die for his city. When the six principal burgesses of Calais put the ropes round their necks and went out to Edward III, to offer to die instead of their fellow citizens, I can understand their action. Were they not the leaders of that community? Were they not put into a position of responsibility and honor which, if it might not exactly demand the sacrifice, yet, at least, rendered it a most



likely thing that if they were men of truly noble spirit, they would make it? But there were no such claims upon our Lord Jesus Christ! When Queen Eleanor sucked the poison from her husband's wounds at the risk of her own life, I can see reasons why she would do it. I say not that she was *bound* to do it, but I do say that the relationship of a wife accounts for what she did. But Jesus Christ, the Son of God, had no relationship to us until He chose to assume the relationship which He did assume out of infinite compassion! There was no more relation between Him and us then between the potter and the clay! And if the clay upon the wheel goes amiss, what does the potter do with it but take it and throw it into a corner? And so might the great Creator have done with us. But instead of doing so, He shed His blood that He may make us into vessels of honor fit for His own use! O Son of God, how could You stoop so low as to take upon Yourself our nature and in that nature to bleed and die, when between us and You there was a distance infinitely greater than that between an ant and a cherub, or a moth and an archangel? Yet with no claims upon You, of Your own free will, You did yield Yourself to die because of Your amazing love to us!

Another extraordinary thing about Christ's love was that *there were no appeals whatever made to Him to die*. In the other cases which I have quoted, you may remind me that there were no vocal appeals made. The little children in the cradle did not beg their mother to die for them. No, but the very sight of them was enough to plead with their mother. In the case of the city dying of pestilence, could the surgeon—who believed that by an examination he might discover the secret of the evil—go through the streets and see the doors marked with the fatal cross and hear the wailing of the widows and the children without feeling that they did make most pitiful appeals to his heart? But man made no appeal to God to die for him! Our father Adam—and he was the representative of us all, did not fall down on his knees in the Presence of God and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner. O God, whom I have offended, provide for me a Savior and deliver me from Your wrath!" No prayer came from Adam's lips, nor even a confession—only a wicked and mean attempt to cast upon God the blame for his disobedience! "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." That is all that human nature usually does—it will not acknowledge that it needs a Savior and it will not confess that it has sinned sufficiently to need an expiatory sacrifice and, consequently, the sullenness of man might have paralyzed the love of Christ if anything could have done it! You did not sue for mercy—you did not ask for an Atonement—you did not desire expiation for your sin, yet Jesus came, unasked, undesired, unsought—to lay down His life for sinners!

Notice, again, that Jesus Christ well knew that if He did lay down His life, *He would get no love in return from those for whom He died unless He, Himself, created that love*. This He has done in the hearts of His own people, but, in the hearts of others who have been left to themselves, there is no love to Jesus Christ. Here, Sabbath after Sabbath, it is our privilege to preach a dying Savior to dying sinners, but, of all themes in

the world, it seems to make the least impression upon some of our hearers! If we were to come here and talk of Howard's devotion in living and dying to relieve the woes of the prisoners in our jails, many would be moved to admiration of the philanthropist! But how little admiration have most men for our sweet Lord and Master? It is an old story, you say, and you have heard it so often that you care little for it. Now, that mother, who died to save her children, felt that they loved her. How often they had charmed her with their cooing and smiles while they were lying on her bosom—and she felt that she could freely give up her life for them. But our Lord Jesus Christ knew that He was dying for stony-hearted monsters whose return for His love, if left to themselves, would be that they would utterly reject Him! They would not believe in Him. They would trust in their own righteousness rather than in His—and they would try to find a way to Heaven by sacraments and ceremonies rather than by faith in the meritorious Sacrifice which He made when He laid down His life for sinners!

Remember, too, that our Lord died by the hands of men as well as for the sake of men. The surgeon at Marseilles was not to die by the act of his fellow citizens. The mother was not to die at the hands of her children. Curtius, leaping into the gulf, was not forced there by the anger of his fellow citizens. On the contrary, all would have been glad for them to continue to live. But it was this that made the death of Christ so sadly unique, that He came to die for men who wished that He should be made to die! "Crucify Him, crucify Him," they cried in their mad rage, foaming at the mouth. "Oh," some of you say, "but *we* never said that." No, not then, but perhaps you are saying it now—for there are still many who hate the Gospel of Christ—and to hate the Gospel is to hate Christ, Himself, for that is His very essence and heart! And to reject Christ to choose your own pleasure and to keep on delaying to repent, as some of you do, and to die at enmity against Christ is very much the same thing as crying, "Crucify Him!" And it comes to the same thing in the long run. You know that if you could be quite sure that there is no Christ and no God, and no Heaven, and no Hell, you would be perfectly happy. That is to say, you would, if you could, crucify Christ and put Him out of existence with everything that has to do with Him! Well, that is the very same spirit as that which made the Jews of old cry, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!"

Yet once more, there was this remarkable thing about Christ's death—that *in dying for us, He was taking upon Himself an awful mass of shame and dishonor, and also a most intimate connection with sin.* There was nothing shameful about the leap of Curtius into the chasm. Had I been there to see him, I would have clapped my hands and cried, "Well done, Curtius!" Who would not have said the same? But when our Lord died, men thrust out their tongues at Him and mocked Him! His was, indeed, a shameful death. And, I think when that mother put her babes up in a place of safety and herself sank into the raging flood, the angels might have smiled as well as sorrowed at such a deed of heroism. But when

Jesus sank into the raging flood to save us, even God, Himself, did not smile at Him! Among our Savior's expiring cries was that agonizing utterance, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" This was because He had, as our Representative, come into contact with human sin—and so with human shame. The just and holy Son of God was made a curse for us! Or, as Paul tells us, God "has made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

All this helps to manifest to us Christ's amazing love, so I finish my discourse by asking—as the text says, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us"—*have you and I perceived that love?* Do we know it? That is a very simple question, yet I take the liberty to press it upon you. I think it was Aristotle who said—and he was a great master of thought—that it is impossible for a person to know that he is loved without feeling some love in return. I think, as a rule, that is true. So, if you do really perceive that Christ loved you so much as to die for you, there will leap up in your heart somewhat, at any rate, of love to Him! One Sunday night I was reading, in Exeter Hall, the hymn beginning—

***"Jesus, Lover of my soul"***

And, just at that time, there strayed into the hall, a man of fashion, a man of the world, careless of all spiritual things, but that line caught his ear—

***"Jesus, Lover of my soul."***

He said to himself, "Does Jesus really love *me*? Is He the Lover of *my* soul?" And that line was the means of begetting love in his thoughtless heart—and then and there he surrendered himself to the love of Christ! Oh, that such a result as that might come of my repeating the story here—that some who have never loved the Lord Jesus Christ up till now, would say, "Did He thus love His enemies—thus strangely love them even to the death? Then we, though we have up to now been His enemies, can be His enemies no longer! We will love Him in return for His great love to us."

And you Christian people who do love Him, if you have perceived His love somewhat, try to perceive it still more, that you may love Him more! And if you really love Him more, try to show that you do. Notice the rest of the verse from which my text is taken. I did not leave out the latter part because I was afraid of it, but because I had not time to deal with it as it deserves—"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." We ought to prove our love to our God by our love to our fellow men—but especially by our love to our fellow Christians—and to prove our love by our actions! I do not know what the love of some professors is worth. I suppose they do if they put down how much it costs them in a year. I fear that it does not cost some professors nearly as much for their religion as it does for their ribbons, or for some foolish indulgence. They pay their shoeblacks better than they pay their ministers and they take care to spend upon themselves in perfect waste, a hundred times as

much as they spend upon spreading the Gospel, saving the heathen, helping the poor, or rescuing the fallen! We do not believe in such Christianity as that! And we certainly do not wish to practice it. If we profess to be Christians, let us be Christians in deed and let us especially show our love to Christ by loving our fellow Christians. If you see any of them in need, aid them to the uttermost of your power! If they need cheering and comforting, give them good cheer and comfort. But, if they need substantial aid—*financial* aid—let them have that, too!

In the old days of persecution, there were always some noble souls who tried to hide away the Christians from those who sought their lives, although they did so at the risk of their own lives. And many a Christian has given himself up to die in order to save the lives of his fellow Christians. Some of the old people came tottering before the judge because they thought that they would not be so much missed from the Church as the younger ones would be and, possibly, some of them also thought that they had more faith than the younger ones had—and if they had more faith, they were more ready to die and so to let the younger ones live on until they grew stronger in faith and hope, and love. But, on the other hand, sometimes the young men would gently push back the fathers and say to them, “No, you are old—you had better linger here awhile and teach the young. We young people are strong, so we will go and die for Christ.” And there was many a contention in the Church of God, in persecuting times, as to who should die first for Christ! They were all willing to lay down their lives for their Brothers and Sisters!

Where has this self-sacrificing love gone? I would like to see some of it! I would even wear microscopes over my eyes if I thought that I could so discover it—but I am afraid I cannot. Why, if we loved each other, now, as Christians loved each other then, we should be the talk of the town and even worldings would say, “Look how these Christians love one another!” Yet this is only what we ought to do, so, Brothers and Sisters in Christ let it be what we *will* do! God help you to do it for Christ's sake! Amen.

### **EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: 1 JOHN 3.**

**Verse 1.** *Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.* Behold it, wonder at it and never cease to admire it! Is it not one of the greatest marvels that even God, Himself, has ever worked that we should be called the sons of God?

**1.** *Therefore the world knows us not, because it knew Him not.* It does not know the Father, then how should it know the children? It did not know the elder Brother—the First-Born among many brethren—and as it did not know Him, how should it know us?

**2.** *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.* And that vision will be

transforming and transfiguring! The pure in heart see God and they are pure *because* they see God. There is both action and reaction—when God has purified us, we shall see Christ and when we see Christ as He is, our purification will be complete! When will that day arrive? Oh, for the blessed vision! Meanwhile, let us be content to look at Him by faith and to be always growing more and more prepared for that brighter vision which is yet to be ours.

**3.** *And every man that has this hope in him purifies himself, even as He is pure.* It is the nature of this Divine hope—this hope of being like Christ—that it helps us to grow day by day more like Him and so we purify ourselves, as Christ is pure.

**4.** *Whoever commits sin, also transgresses the Law, for sin is the transgression of the Law.* And there will never be a better definition of sin than this. However men may philosophically try to mar it, this simple statement will be better than any that they can give us—“Sin is the transgression of the Law.”

**5.** *And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin.* What a marvelous thing it was for Christ to bear sin as He did and yet to have upon Him or within Him no taint arising from it! You have to go into the world and you say, “How can we help sinning while we have to mix with so much that is evil?” Well, the Lord Jesus Christ had to mix with evil more than you will ever have to, for He not only lived in this sinful world, but the transgression of His people was actually laid upon Him so that He came into very close contact with sin—“He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin.”

**6.** *Whoever abides in Him sins not: whoever sins has not seen Him, neither known Him.* If this declaration is related to any one act of sin, none of us could ever say that we have seen or known Him—but it relates to the *habit of sin*—if we love sin and live in sin—if the main course of our life is sinful, then we have “not seen Him, neither known Him.”

**7.** *Little children, let no man deceive you: he that does righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous.* You must judge a tree by its fruit. If it brings forth good fruit, it is a good tree—and if it brings forth evil fruit, it is an evil tree. Do not be deceived about that matter, for there have been some who have dreamed of being righteous and of being the children of God, yet they have lived in sin as others do! They have been self-deceived! It has been a mere dream on which they have relied. Practical godliness is absolutely necessary to a true Christian character—and a man is not righteous unless he does that which is righteous.

**8.** *He that commits sin is of the devil; for the devil sins from the beginning.* Ever since he became a devil, he has continued to sin. It was sin that changed the angel into a devil—and he has always remained a sinner.

**8, 9.** *For this purpose the Son of God was manifested; that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whoever is born of God does not commit sin.* That is to say, this is not the course, habit and tenor of his life—

there is sin in much that he does, but he hates it, loathes it and flees from it.

**9-11.** *For His seed remains in him: and he cannot sin because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil, whoever does not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loves not his brother. For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.* Love is the essential mark of the true child of God. "God is Love" and, therefore, he that is born of God must love. Hatred, envy, malice, uncharitableness—these are not the things to be found in the children of God! If they are found in you, you are not one of His children.

**12.** *Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And why did he slay him? Because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous.* That was the real evil at the bottom of his great crime—it was the wickedness of Cain's character that made him hate the good that was in Abel—and, therefore, after a while he slew his brother, "because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous."

**13.** *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hates you.* This hatred is too old for you to wonder at it. If it began with the first man who was born into the world, even with Cain, do not marvel if it should spend some of its fury upon you!

**14, 15.** *We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. He that loves not his brother abides in death. Whoever hates his brother is a murderer: and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.* What a warning this is against the evil spirit of hate, revenge and all that kind of feeling! These things are not compatible with the possession of the life of God! Where hatred lives, there is no life of God in the soul. That evil must be shot to the very heart by the arrows of Almighty Grace, or else we are not free from the dominion of the devil. Every man who hates another has the venom of murder in his veins. He may never actually take the deadly weapons into his hand and destroy life, but if he *wishes* that his brother were out of the way—if he would be glad if no such person existed—that feeling amounts to murder in the judgment of God! It is not the lifting of the dagger, nor the mixing of the poison that is the essence of the crime of murder! It is the hate that prompts the commission of the deadly deed! If we never commit the crime, yet if the hate is in our heart, we are guilty of murder in the sight of God—and eternal life cannot be abiding in us.

**16, 17.** *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world's goods and sees his brother has need, and shuts up his heart of compassion from him, how dwells the love of God in him?* Indeed, it cannot be there at all! He has the love of himself and not the love of God dwelling in him!

**18, 19.** *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth and shall assure our hearts before Him.* You notice how the Apostle constantly

writes about knowing. Take your pencil and underline the word, “know,” in John’s Epistles and you will be surprised to find how frequently he uses it. He is not one of those who suppose, or fancy, or imagine, or have formed a certain hypothesis—he *knows* and he tells us what he knows in order that we, also, may know! Love has a knowledge which is peculiarly her own—a full assurance which none can take from her!

**20.** *For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart and knows all things.* If you, with your narrow knowledge of right and wrong—your imperfect understanding of your own motives—if you find reason to condemn yourself, what must be your position before the bar of the all-seeing, heart-reading God? That little flutter in your bosom, my Friend—that trembling, that uneasiness—what does it mean? Is not this a forewarning of the sounding of the trumpet of the Great Assize when you will have to stand before the Judge of all the earth and answer for yourself to Him? It is easy to deceive your fellow man—but it is impossible to deceive your God!

**21.** *Beloved, if our heart condemns us not, then have we confidence toward God.* Other people may condemn us, but that does not matter. They may impute wrong motives to us and misrepresent us, but that is no concern of ours so long as we have confidence toward God.

**22.** *And whatever we ask, we receive of Him because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.* Notice the link between confidence as to our rightness and power in prayer. When a child has done wrong and knows it, he cannot run to his father and ask for favors as he used to do—he feels timid in his father’s presence because of the sense of his guilt. But if you and I know that we have endeavored with all our heart to love the Lord and our fellow men and to act righteously in all things, we have a sacred confidence which enables us to speak with God as a man speaks with his friend! God greatly loves this kind of confidence and He listens to those who possess it. Such people may ask what they will of God—they have learned to bring their minds into conformity with the will of God’s so the desire of their heart shall be granted to them.

**23, 24.** *And this is His commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment. And he that keeps His commandments dwells in Him, and He in him. And hereby we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit which He has given us.* Oh, to be more and more under the sacred influence of that blessed Spirit!

**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—286, 293  
AND FROM “SACRED SONGS AND SOLOS”—44.**

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON  
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# THE LOWER COURTS

## NO. 3152

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 8, 1909.

*DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,*  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 23, 1873.

***“For if our heart condemns, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.”***  
***1 John 3:20, 21.***

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon, on verse 21, is #1855, Volume 31—WHAT IS THE VERDICT?—  
Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

THE fault of a very large number of persons is that they will not lay spiritual things to heart at all, but treat them in a very superficial manner—or, if they exercise any judgment concerning them, it is of the most superficial kind. Now this is very foolish because, to say the least, the soul is of some value. And if men lay to heart the loss of their bodily health or of their estate, much more ought they to lay to heart anything which concerns their soul. It is very wicked as well as very foolish because, in refusing to lay spiritual matters to heart, we virtually tell the God who made us that He is of no account to us, that we are quite indifferent to His Being, to His Character, or to His commands. It is telling Him that we do not desire to be obedient to Him and that if we have been disobedient to Him, we do not trouble ourselves about that. It is also as dangerous as it is foolish and wicked to be unconcerned about spiritual matters, for God will not be trifled with and, one of these days, those who would not lay eternal things to heart will find their souls full of anguish—and with remorse they will be visited for this lightness of theirs. Whereas, today, like those of old who were invited to the wedding of the king's son, they make light of it and go their way to their farm or to their merchandise, there will come a day when they would give all their farms and their merchandise if they might have but another hour's respite, another invitation of mercy and another opportunity to seek and find the Savior. I do pray that if any here have been among those who do not lay to heart the things that concern their immortal souls, they may not any longer be allowed to remain in the company of such vain and sinful persons, but may come out from that congregation of the foolish and begin to lay to heart the things which make for their eternal peace.

Then, beloved Friends, there is another class of persons, very much superior to those of whom I have spoken, who nevertheless make a mistake of another kind. They *do* lay the things of God to heart and they are constantly weighing themselves in the balances of conscience. They look



within again and again—they are not afraid of heart-searching—indeed, they spend the most of their time in that stern occupation. Am I about to blame these friends? I must answer, “No and yes.” I will not blame them for what they do, for they do the right thing—but I shall blame them for what they leave undone! Namely this—they forget that the tribunal of conscience, though a very important one, is not the supreme court and that, although it is well to try matters before the heart to see whether it condemns or acquits, yet there is another court, far higher than the court of the human heart—“God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.” There are some good Christian people who are always distressed because they never take their cases into the supreme court and, on the other hand, I fear that there are some ungodly professors who are always presumptuously at ease because they have been satisfied with the verdict of the lower court, which is very liable to err in its judgment—and so they have never presented their case before the great Judge who cannot by any means make a mistake.

I am going to speak of these two courts. First, of the lower court of the heart or conscience, and then of the higher court where He presides who is “greater than our heart, and knows all things.” In speaking upon this subject, I shall mention four forms of verdict which may be given in the court of the heart. The first is *a correct verdict against ourselves*. The second is *an incorrect verdict against ourselves*, (the first verse of our text applies to both of these). The third is *a correct verdict of acquittal*, (that is in the second verse of our text). And then, lastly, I will say something about *an incorrect verdict of acquittal*, which, perhaps, our heart may sometimes give.

**I.** First, then, the Apostle speaks of A CORRECT VERDICT AGAINST OURSELVES—“If our heart condemn us.”

There are some persons whose hearts justly condemn them and the voice of conscience is, in them, the Voice of God. The echo of the Divine sentence, “Depart, you cursed,” is heard by them in the halls of conscience before the Voice of God has spoken it—strangely contrary to echoes among men, which always *follow* the voice. Conscience is saying, “You will be driven, O Man, from the Presence of God!” Now, in this case, the court of conscience sits under the King’s arms with the marks of Divine Authority displayed above its head. And conscience sitting thus as a judge, judges rightly when it judges by the Word of God. Righteous judgment must not be according to man’s whim or fancy, but according to the supreme Law of God—and the verdict of conscience is worth nothing unless it is so formed. The charge against the culprits is that they have broken God’s Law and, in the case of many of them, that they have also rejected God’s mercy. They have offended against the Law and the Gospel!

There stands a prisoner at the bar and there sits conscience as the judge. And over its head I see tokens of God’s Authority permitting conscience to judge him! The first witness that is called against the prisoner is memory. I put to it certain questions. “Memory, what have you to say

concerning the life of this man? Has he kept God's Law?" And Memory answers truthfully, "No." "Has he then violated it?" "Yes, thousands of times." "How long is it since he began to violate it?" "From a child." "Has he continued to do so?" "Yes, to this very hour." "Has he not repented of his sin and craved forgiveness from God?" "No, he has pretended to repent. He has had twitches of conscience—he has been alarmed at times, but he has hardened his heart and gone back to his sin and done despite to the Spirit of God." "Memory, can you tell me how often the prisoner has broken God's Law?" "I cannot. Count the stars of the sky, or the sand by the seashore—only then can you know how often he has sinned." "Against which of the commands has he offended?" "Against them all." "Can you give us some instances?"

I will not ask Memory to expose any of you before this congregation, but I will ask your own memories to charge each one of you with your own sins whatever they may have been—that sin of licentiousness, that piece of trickery in trade, that angry thought, that hard word, that oppression of the innocent, that tempting of another to sin, that ruin of another in body and soul, that putting down of conscience on such-and-such a night when he struggled with you and would have had you cease from sin—that wicked resolve not to be melted down under a certain especially earnest sermon, that desperate determination not to feel the force of Divine Love even when it came so near to you as to graze you! Who of all the unpardoned sinners in the world has not some special sins to remember, to blush over and to weep over, yes, with tears of blood if that were possible? Ah, Memory, if you should tell all that you have recorded, your story would be too terrible for us to hear and we would have to close the court, or bid some withdraw out of hearing, for you would have much to tell which would not be fit for their ears to hear!

Another witness is called, for it would not be right to condemn a man upon the evidence of only one witness, however excellent that witness might be. So I call the man's own knowledge into the witness box, and examine it. "What do you know, Man, concerning yourself? Are you at this moment a lover of God?" "No," he says. "Are you at this moment one who loves Christ? Are you at this hour one who desires to be reconciled to your Maker? Do you desire to glorify God? Do you desire to overcome all sin and to live in perfect holiness?" The answer is a negative in every case and the Judge hears this. It is not merely what the man has done, but what the man is—not merely what he was yesterday, or in his youth, but what he is today. He is still an enemy to his God and he has no love to his Maker! He is still content to lead an unholy life. So in the mouth of these two witnesses his guilt is established.

But there are witnesses for the defense, so let them be heard. These are usually two—self-love and self-esteem. The man pleads that he is no worse than others! Yet a thief would not be allowed to escape punishment if he pleaded, "I am no worse a thief than my brother thieves." The man next says that he has done many good things, as if the keeping of one Law of God would be any excuse for having broken another. This is

as if the thief should plead before the judge that he was not a drunk, or if he had committed burglary, that he had not been a murderer. Would this be accepted as an excuse? Then the man pleads that he has attended a number of outward religious ceremonies—which is just as if a thief should say that he washed his hands every morning and took care to shave himself at certain intervals. What would all that have to do with the offense laid to his charge? If those things were right things for him to do, he did well in doing them, but they could make no atonement for his offenses! Men will sometimes plead that, after all, it was more their misfortune than their fault that they fell into any sin at all. Yet man never considers such an excuse as that in reference to wrongs done to his fellow creatures—but the law deals with the offenses as having been willfully committed—and even so does God.

The court, after having heard these two lying witnesses, whose testimony is worth nothing, considers its verdict and the heart condemns the prisoner at the bar. Now what says the text? “If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.” So, if any man or woman here feels self-condemned, how much more must such an one be condemned by God! If you feel uneasy even now, what cause for disquietude must there be in prospect of the just judgment of God! If your bleary-eyed conscience, which never yet half-opened its eyes, has condemned you, what guilt must God see in you! If conscience has decided against you, knowing only half—no, perhaps not a millionth part of your criminality, how certainly will the unerring Judge of all the earth, who knows all things, decide against you! I would like to make those four words ring again and again in your ears, “God knows all things.” Then He knows the sins that you have forgotten, or that you wish you could forget! Well, even if you have done so, they are fresh in His unfailing memory. Perhaps you cry, in the bitterness of your agony, “Cursed be the day wherein I committed them! Oh, for fountains of water to wash out the damning spots! But though I should redden the Atlantic and with the crimson ocean try to remove the accursed spots of sin, they would still remain! And even though I could not see them, yet still that Eye which through the murky night looks down on all and sees as through the brightest day, that Eye still sees my sins.”

“God knows all things.” That is, He knows all about your sins of omission, the good things that you have not done, the righteous acts which you have failed to perform. He knows what your motives have been. He knows how that apparently good action of yours was based upon sheer selfishness—how your pretended religiousness was, after all, only varnished hypocrisy! O Sirs, unless this blessed Book is all fiction, there are some of you who are great fools, for while you are condemning yourselves, you are calmly sitting down in prospect of the eternal judgment as if you thought that God would acquit you! You have lost the case in the lower court, where the judge is partial and would give a verdict in your favor if possible. How, then, will you dare to stand in the higher court, where the verdict must go against you if your case remains as it now is?

“Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” “If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.” God grant that these words may not be forgotten, but may they be words that shall awaken some here whom God intends to bless!

**II.** Now I must pass on to the second point—AN INCORRECT VERDICT AGAINST OURSELVES.

Sometimes our heart condemns us, but in doing so, it gives a wrong verdict. And then we have the satisfaction of being able to take the case into a higher court, for “God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.” This is giving another sense to the passage and almost all the great expositors say that there are two senses here—the legal sense and the evangelical sense. This evangelical sense was that which Luther was so bold in proclaiming. I will give you the meaning of the text in this way. The question before our heart is—are we Christians or not? Have we believed in Christ or not? Conscience takes knowledge of all our imperfections, failings, shortcomings—and says—“No, the man is not a Christian. He is guilty of such-and-such sins.” And many a dear child of God, yes, and some of the best of God’s children, have often had a verdict in the court of their own conscience which has been adverse to their hopes—the reason being that their conscience has been cognizant of only one side of the case, or they have forgotten some great and important Truth which ought to have been mentioned before the court—and then its verdict would have been different.

I may have here many children of God who are condemned by their own conscience. And if I only looked within my own heart, it would condemn me. If I had to bring the evidences of my salvation from my prayers, my preaching, or my daily actions, my heart would condemn me! New evidence is sometimes brought into court which completely changes the aspect of the case. I daresay you have sometimes been a juryman and you would not like to tell your brother juryman how many times you have changed your mind while you have heard the evidence. But if you have listened to it attentively, I expect you have had half a dozen different opinions during the trial. You have heard the whole case against the prisoner and you have said to yourself, “He’s certainly guilty.” And you have thought, “Ah, Mr. Foreman, you shall have my verdict against him!” Then some evidence is brought which throws more light upon the case. And then something else is said in favor of the prisoner and you have said, “Ah, I was too much in a hurry,” and before the whole case was finished, you have been quite satisfied that the man was innocent! It is just so with our heart—it condemns a man when it has only heard half the evidence. But happily, “God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.”

Here is the case. This man, a Believer in Jesus Christ, has been guilty of all these sins. He admits that he has. They are very many and very black, so it is a clear case that he should be condemned. No, it is not, for there is a circumstance that has not been mentioned yet. It is true that the man was deeply in debt to the Law of God, but his debt has been

paid for him by his glorious Surety—and there is a receipt for it signed by God, Himself! Does not that alter the case? The debt is proved, it is true—but, as soon as the debt is proved, the receipt is produced to show that the debt has been discharged! The Christian comes into court and says, “I admit my guilt, but I plead that Christ suffered in my place. I confess my sin, but I also claim that it was laid upon Christ and though my heart condemns me, God is greater than my heart and He does not condemn me, for He looks upon His dear Son and sees me in Him, “accepted in the Beloved.”

A man is tried for a certain crime, but his counsel assures the court the man who committed that crime is dead and that the prisoner at the bar is not that man at all. A reliable witness is produced who testifies that he knew the other man well and that he saw him dead and buried. And another trustworthy person declares that the prisoner at the bar is a different man altogether. So it is with us today—every true Believer in Christ can say, “I was verily guilty, but I died with Christ and was buried with Him and now I am a new creature in Christ Jesus! Old things have passed away and all things have become new. I am no longer what I once was, for I have been begotten again unto a lively hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” The case against the prisoner stands as it did before and the heart was right in condemning him—but now there is more light thrown on the subject and he can confidently ask, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.” Through the death and Resurrection of Christ and our union to Him, so that they are counted as *our* death and resurrection, we have passed into a state of justification! And through the substitutionary Sacrifice of Christ, the sin which was laid at our door has ceased to be and we are accounted righteous through the righteousness of Christ! So that, “if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.”

Have you ever had a battle (I know you have, if you are a true child of God), with your own evidences? It is usually very poor work to turn over your own evidences. I believe that lawyers enjoy poring over musty old deeds because there are generally six-and-eight-pences or guineas to come to them as the result. But I cannot say that I am much interested in “rights, easements, hereditaments,” and so on—and the experience of reading an old deed is very much like the experience of turning over your own evidences. You say, “I am a man of prayer.” But what kind of prayer was it? Why, your thoughts were wandering all the time you were praying! “But,” you say, “I do love God.” “Ah,” cries the devil, “and a precious kind of love it is! It needs a microscope to see it if there is any love there at all!” “Ah, but I do long after holiness.” “You have nobody to bear witness to that but yourself,” says the devil, “for as soon as a sin looks attractive to you, though you do not actually go to it, you know that your heart goes after it.” “But my faith is fixed on Christ.” “Ah, but where does

your unbelief go? You would like to trust to yourself, after all, if you dared to do so!" Satan can generally beat us in an argument and when our own conscience also condemns us, the best thing is to go straight away to the Court of King's Bench and say, "The devil is too strong for us, so we will go where we can leave our case in the hands of our great Advocate who is more than a match for Satan."

Then, Beloved, God can often see in His people the good which they cannot see in themselves. And I believe He likes best those people who think least of themselves. When you look into the mirror, do you see a very lovely face? Ah, then you have never really seen yourself! But if you look into the mirror and see yourself defiled and filthy—and then see the change that Christ works in you—you are one of those whom God loves because He loves those who are contrite in spirit and broken in heart—and who think little of themselves.

"Well," says one, "I never had a doubt about my state. I have always felt sure that I was all right." Then, my Friend, if you never had a doubt about yourself, allow me to doubt for you. Ah, Beloved, it is not high thoughts that prove us to be Christians—it is lying humbly in the dust before the Mercy Seat that is one of the sure signs that we are the children of God! So although your heart condemns you, as my own heart and conscience have condemned me a thousand times, I trust that you can yet say with me—

***"I do believe, I will believe  
That Jesus died for me!  
That on the Cross He shed His blood  
From sin to set me free."***

Savior, I will trust You and I do trust You. Lost and ruined, and guilty, and all but damned, I will still trust You—and so You cannot cast me away, for You have promised, "Him that came to Me I will in no wise cast out."

So, you see, there is a blessedly comforting meaning in these words of the Apostle John as well as a meaning that should awaken us all to earnest concern about our real standing in the sight of God.

**III.** Now, thirdly, we have A CORRECT VERDICT OF ACQUITTAL, "If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God."

When is it that our heart does not condemn us? Of course it always condemns us in *some* things. There may be people in the world who are perfect. I would like to have the pleasure of their acquaintance, yet I do not know whether they would like to have the pleasure of mine, for I am afraid that my imperfections and their perfections would make a quarrel, before long, and I do not know whether they would not be the people to quarrel first. Superior articles generally crack the soonest and whenever a Brother has had a very high polish on him and much varnish of the very first quality, I have generally proved him to be a hypocrite before long! Still, it is not my business to judge him—to his own Master let him stand or fall. If he is perfect, I say again that I should like to know him, for I know that I am not perfect.

But our heart does not condemn us about some things. For instance, we ask, “*Are we really sincere in our profession of religion?*” and our conscience answers, “Yes, we do not make a profession of religion in order to gain by it, nor because it makes us respectable, nor because it brings us comfort and ease. God knows that we do it because we cannot help doing it! We love Christ and we must take sides with Him and unless we are utterly deceived, we are sincere in saying that we are followers of Christ.” I am putting these words into the mouths of those of you who really feel that you ought to utter them. And I trust that each one of you will join me in saying, “I am a poor lost sinner, but I do trust in Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and I do hang upon Him as the only Savior. And if that is the faith that saves the soul, I certainly have exercised it. I have no reliance on any ceremony, or any doctrine, or anything that I can do, or feel, or say, or be—nothing but the crucified, risen and glorified Christ is my confidence.” Beloved, that is one thing in which our heart does not condemn us!

And then, it is the same when we can add, “With all our imperfections, we feel that *we do love God’s people and we do love our fellow men*. We desire to relieve their distresses as far as we can. And as much as lies in us, we desire to promote the happiness and comfort of others.” If a man cannot say this, he cannot claim to be a Christian because any man who lives for himself is no more a Christian than the devil is! The first objective of the Christian is to glorify God. And the next objective is to make other people happy. Those who never study other people in the household, but are selfish and let their narrow soul be confined within their own ribs, have nothing about them in common with a real Christian. If a man truthfully says, “I love others and I especially love the saints of God,” then he may say that his conscience does not condemn him. I am not saying this on my own authority. Let me turn your attention to a few of the verses preceding our text, reading from the 14<sup>th</sup> verse—“We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. He that loves not his brother abides in death...Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world’s good and sees his brother has need and shuts up his heart of compassion from him, how dwells the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth and shall assure our hearts before Him.” You see, this is the very evidence that God gives—that by our love to others, our hearts will be assured before Him and we shall have confidence concerning our own relationship towards God.

There is one other thing about which our hearts do not condemn us—we do feel that *we love holiness and love righteousness*. And though we do not always act as we should, and have to mourn over our sins, yet we hate them and loathe ourselves for going into sin. We would, if we could, have perfect tempers. We would, if we could, act in perfect righteousness towards man and in perfect holiness towards God.

It is the duty of a Christian to be strictly just in all his business transactions and not to ask, "What is the custom of the trade?" The customs of many trades are dishonest—and the usual modes of carrying them on are little better than systematic roguery. I have heard of men who mark a hundred as a hundred and twenty, and who mark goods as of certain lengths when they know they are not of such lengths. And they say, "It is the custom of the trade." Well, if it is the custom of your trade to lie, remember that it is God's custom to send all liars to Hell! A Christian has no right to lie even if all the world should concur in the lies! He should say, "No, I serve the God of Truth and, come what may, no lie shall defile my tongue, for Christ has cleansed it and made it His own."

Our text says, "If our heart condemn us not," and we thus know that we are God's children, "then have we confidence toward God." I wish I had an hour in which to preach upon this part of the text, though I dare say you do not! But these words are full of comfort, "then have we confidence toward God." The man who has a clear conscience, like a little bird, to sing in his heart, has confidence toward God in this way. He knows that he is the Lord's and that God loves him. He knows that God will not do him any hurt and knows that God is blessing him—and will continue to bless him. He knows that God is his Father and his Friend and he, therefore, goes to God in great confidence about his troubles and tells them all to Him. He has much confidence in prayer and he may talk to God in prayer in a way which other people may think too familiar, yet it will not be so. His heart is right with God and, therefore, he has confidence toward God. He does not doubt God's faithfulness, or God's Truth, or God's power, or God's veracity. He simply confides in God and lets things go as they will, for he knows that God is ruling and overruling all—and he walks through the world with a childlike, restful confidence—knowing that God will keep him and preserve him even to the end. And when he has to die, he will die in confidence. And when he rises from the grave, he will rise in confidence. And when the world is all ablaze, he will behold the last great conflagration without alarm. And when he stands before the Judgment Seat of Christ, he will stand there without a tremor! He has confidence toward God, for he has peace within him.

**IV.** Now I have very briefly to speak concerning AN INCORRECT VERDICT OF ACQUITTAL.

There are some persons whose hearts do not condemn them for this reason—*their hearts are hopelessly indifferent*. God save you, my dear Hearers, from a heart which is so full of pride that it is, as David says, "as fat as grease," from a heart that is harder than adamant and from a heart that knows it is guilty, but will not condemn itself, but whispers, "Peace, peace," where there is no peace! There are tens of thousands of men walking the streets of London who are living habitually in the worst of sin, yet their hearts are so petrified and rendered so perverse from everything like right judgment, that they rarely, if ever, appear to condemn them!



But I take leave to tell them that *what little heart they have left does condemn them* for this reason, that when a man's heart is right and does not condemn him, he has confidence toward God. Ask these men whether they have any confidence toward God. "God!" they say, "do not let us even hear His name! How do you know that there is a God?" Such men never feel so easy in mind and never are in such an argumentative mood as when some precious philosopher attempts to prove that there is no God—that is the very thing for them! Would not the devil's children ring all the bells for many a day if they could but prove that there was no God? What a jubilation there would be among the rogues, thieves, vagabonds and skeptics if they could once feel sure that there was no God! It would be the worst thing that could possibly happen to us who love Him, but to them it would be the best thing that could happen according to their notions. And why? Because there is something within their heart that tells them, after all, that they are not right—and as they do not want to get right, they try to persuade themselves that there is no God! That is their way of getting a little sleep for their conscience.

But they are not really as quiet as they think they are. Supposing I were to ask such a man who was so quiet and at ease, whether he would mind sitting down for half-an-hour when he got home to look into the future and see whether there is a judgment, a Heaven, and a Hell—what would be the result? "Not I," he says, "I am not going to bother myself about such things as those!" It is said that you ought not to talk about the gallows if you know that there is anybody present who had a relative who was hung. And these men, in like manner, do not like us to talk about judgment, Heaven, and Hell. O Sirs, you are like the silly ostrich that buries its head in the sand and hopes that nobody will see it! Why, if there are no such things, it will have done you good to have thought about them and to have confirmed yourself in the notions of which you boast so much!

I also ask you to do another thing. You say that your heart does not condemn you, but will you, for a little while, contemplate death? We will let judgment alone for a minute. I suppose you believe that you will die—you have not yet discovered a patent for the preservation of highly-cultured intellects from the vulgar hands of the sexton, have you? You do not expect that education will keep you out of the tomb, do you? So will you think about death? "No," says the man, "I shall do nothing of the sort! It would give me the blues for a week." Ah, I see, I see! Your conscience has not acquitted you, after all, for, if it had, you would not be so unwilling to think about death! I do not object to think of death and there is no Believer in Christ here who objects to thoughts of death, but rather we pray, "So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." There must be something radically wrong about that supposed ease and peace of mind which will not bear contemplations of death and judgment. The fact is, you are condemned by your own heart for if you were not, you would have confidence toward God! And let me assure you that those who have once experienced confidence

toward God, greatly rejoice in it! It is the joy of life and it will light up even the dark valley of death! Confidence in God is, in fact, the beginning of Heaven, and I think it is a part of the very fruition of Heaven itself!

God bless you, dear Friends! May we all be led to faith in Jesus Christ! Remember that there is salvation in Him. Whoever trusts Jesus Christ is saved! Whoever relies upon His finished work shall never come into condemnation and even though his heart may sometimes accuse him, Christ will clear him from all guilt through His own most precious blood. May this be the happy portion of each one of you here! May each one be able to say—

***“In Christ I have believed,  
And through the spotless Lamb  
Grace and salvation have received!  
In Him complete I am.”***

In closing my sermon, I ask every individual here that old and personal question, “Do *you* believe on the Son of God?” Somebody says, “Yes, I do believe in Him, glory be to His holy name.” I hope there are many in this place who can truly say, “With all our hearts we do believe in Jesus Christ our Savior. We have a thousand infirmities, but we do trust in Him.” Just a notch lower there is one who says. “I do believe in Jesus, but not as fully as I would like to.” Ah, well, dear Brother, faith grows if it is true faith! That is a good prayer, “Lord, I believe; help You my unbelief.” I expect you will get higher, by-and-by, and be able to say, “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.”

Another friend says, “I hope and trust that I do believe in Jesus.” Brother, get out of that stage, I implore you! I never like to “hope and trust” in that fashion. When I get to bed at night and say to myself, “Did I lock the door?” I am not content to lie there and say, “I hope and trust that I did.” There may be a thief in the garden, so it will not be safe for me to “hope and trust” that all doors and windows are properly fastened. We like to be sure about these less important matters—how much more ought we to be sure about the salvation of our souls! If a man owes you a hundred pounds and someone says to you, “Is he solvent?” it is not very satisfactory if you can only say, “I hope he is.” You will feel much easier in your mind when you *know* that he is solvent! And it is a great deal better to know that you are saved than to go on hoping and hoping, or saying, “I hope and trust it is all right.” You are either saved or you are not saved—do get to know which is true! Give no rest to your eyes nor slumber to your eyelids till you really know that you are trusting in Jesus and, therefore, you are saved!

Somebody a little lower down says, “I do not know whether I believe in Jesus or not.” Well, if you do not know, nobody else can tell you. And I would recommend you to begin trusting Christ now. I always find that the shortest way to deal with doubt and fear is to say, “Well, if I am not a Believer in Jesus Christ, I will believe in Him now.” So I urge you, my Friend, to go to Him and say—

***“Just as I am—without one plea  
But that Your blood was shed for me  
And that You did bid me come to You,  
O Lamb of God, I come.”***

Begin tonight, dear Friend! If you fancied you did begin once before, begin again, now! And if you never did begin before, begin now!

“Well,” says another, “I am trying to believe in Jesus.” That is another grade and it is all wrong, for a man cannot truly say that he is *trying* to believe in Jesus. What are you doing to help you to believe in Him? Are you hearing the Gospel earnestly? Are you searching the Scriptures for evidence concerning Christ? Or are you just doing nothing but saying “I am trying to believe?” Suppose I read an article in the newspaper and then say, “I am trying to believe it.” Well, if I am searching for evidence and questioning others as to whether it is true or not, I speak correctly—but if I merely put the paper away and sit down and say, “I will try to believe it”—that is absurd! The fact is, you do not believe in Jesus or you would not say, “I am trying to believe in Him.” “Well,” says one, “I do not *yet* believe in Jesus, but I wish I did.” I like to hear you say those last words, for when a man wishes to believe what is certainly true, I think he will soon believe it! There is many a man who has wished to believe a lie till he has believed it—and I think that a man who wishes to believe the Truth of God has the easier task of the two! May the ever-blessed Spirit lead you into a solemn conviction of the Truth as it is in Jesus!

If there is one here who says, “I do not believe in Jesus and I do not want to believe in Him,” may God have mercy upon that poor sinner and save him tonight—and God shall have the Glory both now and forever! 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.**

# WHAT IS THE VERDICT?

## NO. 1855

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 16, 1885,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Beloved, if our heart condemns us not,  
then have we confidence toward God.”  
1 John 3:21.*

CAREFULLY observe that this text is spoken to the people of God. It speaks to those who are called, “beloved.” These are the people who are especially loved of God and of His people. It is a very sweet and endearing title, but it evidently, in this case, belongs only to those who are of the family of Grace—these, alone, can remain uncondemned of their hearts and live in confidence towards God. I want you to observe this because there are different ways of addressing different people and these ways are instructive. To those who are not yet numbered among the beloved, we preach the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is a Gospel intended for the sinful and it talks to them of pardon bought with blood—it is a Gospel intended for the ungodly and it speaks to them of the work of the Holy Spirit, whereby their ungodly hearts may be renewed. Its tale is altogether of Grace and free favor and the passing by of transgression, iniquity and sin to all those who cast themselves believingly at Jesus’ feet. That is the voice of Scripture to those who, as yet, are not beloved. The hope is that the Lord will call them beloved who were not beloved—and that in the place where it was said, “They are not My people,” they shall be called the people of the living God!

But when we come to speak to those who are saved, to those who are the beloved of God, we deal not with the pardon of criminals, but with the conduct of children. They are saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation and, therefore, we do not so much urge them to saving faith as to the higher degree of boldness which grows out of faith—to that confidence towards God which is the right and privilege of the heirs of salvation! We want them not only to know that they have believed, but to be *assured* of it and to enjoy that holy familiarity with God, that blessed boldness towards God, that sweet joy and restfulness of spirit which are their *privilege* as the beloved of the Lord. These enjoyments may be had by them if they will be obedient to the directions of the Spirit of God which are laid down by the beloved Apostle in this Epistle.

As soon as we become children, we are freed from the condemning power of the Law. We are not under the principle and motive of the Law of Works, but yet we are not without Law unto Christ. We come under those sacred regulations which rule the household of God. We are dealt with not as mere *subjects* are ruled by a king, but as children are governed by a fa-

ther. We come from under that Law which was promulgated with thunder and lightning and the sound of a trumpet waxing exceedingly loud and long, and we listen to the gentle voice of the Man, Christ Jesus. We come from under that Law which did not permit even a beast to touch the mountain, but kept all Israel at a distance by boundaries set about the mountain, and we draw near with glad hearts unto the Lord. We come, I say, from under the Law and we feel the sway of love. "You are not under the Law, but under Grace" and, therefore, sin shall not have dominion over you. We have come into the family of God—and in that family there is a rule and discipline devised by love and carried out with infinite compassion. Upon our obedience to that discipline, our peace and prosperity depend. If we so live that our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.

It appears from the text that this child-like confidence towards God originally arises out of a certain solemn trial of our case. There is to be a trial within the heart, or conscience—a trial in which every power of the inner nature is to take its part as prosecutor, witness, jury, or judge. Out of this trial comes the non-condemnation which gives birth to "confidence toward God." At this time I shall bring before you, first, *the trial in the inward court of the heart*. Secondly, *the acquittal pronounced by this court*, "If our heart condemn us not." And thirdly, the result, *the confidence which comes of this acquittal*. "If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God." May the Holy Spirit teach us while we think on these things!

**I.** I want you to think of THE TRIAL HELD IN THE INNER COURT OF MAN'S NATURE, within his heart. It is a sort of petty session, not the Great Assize. Conscience sits within us, as judges sometimes sit in chambers, hearing cases, as they say, in *camera*. If we are righteously acquitted in this first court, then the matter is ended and we have confidence toward God. But if our heart condemn us; if in this preliminary trial we are condemned, it is an evil omen, for the probability is that the great all-knowing Judge will more than confirm the sentence. Condemnation by our own conscience is a bad sign, though there is a court of appeal. If our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart and knows all things.

I will now speak upon this trial under the heads of certain observations.

*This trial is studiously avoided by very many.* Many professors shun anything like a testing of their profession—any trying of their religion by examination. Multitudes of persons seldom think! They live the life of butterflies, flitting from flower to flower with careless wing—there is no real purpose in their lives. Many others think, and think deeply, but not about their *souls* or their God. They consider the matter of their relationship to their Creator to be a very secondary matter which can be taken up in the last few minutes of their lives, when the death sweat is on their brow and they are quite incapable of proper judgment! They leave, I say, the best things to the worst moments and think that they are wise in so doing! This is a grave folly and ought not to rule a man in his senses.

Certain Christian professors, too, who should know better, seldom examine themselves as to whether they are in the faith. They take it for

granted that all is well with them. They made a profession a great many years ago. They have been decent sort of people ever since—in fact, they have been respected among their fellow Christians—possibly they have even taken office in the Church. Are they to question their foundation? Is it necessary that they should put themselves into the scales and be weighed again? It is a very ominous sign for a man, when he is afraid of discussing his spiritual state in the chamber of his own heart. I am persuaded that many Christians are the subjects of doubts and fears about their own condition simply because they have never thought the matter out. It is a great deal better to sift an affair to the bottom than it is to be always tormented by suspicion. If I must go to sea and I suspect the soundness of the vessel, I shall demand that the ship be surveyed and that I know whether it is a rotten old coffin, or whether it is a good substantial ship.

I do not think it is a healthy state of things for man to be always singing—

**“Tis a point I long to know.”**

Brothers and Sisters, you ought to know whether you love the Lord or not! Your love must be very cold and feeble if it is a matter of question! Warmth of love proves its own existence in many ways. Friend, you should be anxious to the last degree to take stock of your spiritual estate. Your desire should be to know the very worst of your case. If your condition should turn out to be horribly bad, you had better know it—certainly your knowing it will not make it any worse! If your case should turn out to be all right, then you will have the confidence that comes of this knowledge—the confidence of which our text speaks. If our hearts, after due, deliberate and impartial trial, condemn us not, then we have confidence toward God and that confidence sweetens life! He that gets confidence through honest searching of heart shall be filled with delight and strength. But, I repeat it sadly, many avoid the inward trial of the heart—they will not bring their case into the spiritual court, even though the Judgement Seat is set up in the privacy of their own inward nature! Thus they walk on blindfolded to the brink of the precipice. God grant the bandage may be taken off before they have taken the final and fatal step.

But secondly, let us note that *genuine Christians very much frequent this court of conscience*. They long to have their condition put to a thorough test, lest they be deceived. I have known some Christians even stay too much in this court—they so often test themselves that it looks as if they would spend their lives in making trials of their state. Looking within can be easily overdone—we ought to have higher work than that of continually laying the foundation of repentance from dead works. When a ship first leaves the stocks, it is well for it to go on a trial trip, but to have a ship always being tried would be very absurd—it is time that it took voyages in real earnest and was registered in the merchant service—there will then be trial enough in the actual execution of service.

Some Christians, by a continual introspection, are always raising the point, “Am I a Christian?” Brothers and Sisters, be a Christian! “Am I a child of God?” Brothers and Sisters, be a child of God and enjoy it! And do not spend a lifetime in searching for the family register. However, it is certain that the genuine Christian is not averse to self-examination, nor to

any form of test through which he can be put. If you are right with God, your prayer will be, "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. O my God, I do not wish to be deluded with 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace! I do not want to deceive myself, or to be lulled into soft slumbers upon the dainty bed of presumption. No, let me be emptied from vessel to vessel rather than be suffered to settle upon my lees. Let me be searched with candles rather than harbor sin within me. Let me even be thrust into the fire rather than remain base metal, the counterfeit of the King's money." Make sure work for eternity. Be certain, by the witness of the Holy Spirit within you, that you are, indeed, the children of God! The spirit of the true man answers to this—he is always willing to set in order the court of conscience and make solemn trial of his heart and life.

In this court, dear Friends, *the question to be decided is a very weighty one*. What is that question, do you think? I do not think it is the question, "Am I perfect?" because we can solve that without holding a formal court. The question is not, "Am I absolutely free from sin?" for, "if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." The question is this, "Am I sincere in the truth? Is my religion true and am I true in my profession of it?" Next, "Does love rule in my nature?" All this chapter deals with love and teaches us that the possession of love is the supreme test of our state. Note the 14<sup>th</sup> verse—"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loves not his brother abides in death." The enquiry is—"Do I love God? Do I also love my brother? Is my spirit that of love—for, if not, I am not a child of God."

Then the next question is, "Do I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ?" In the verse which succeeds my text, this is put as a great test, that we believe in Jesus Christ. Faith is the main question for conscience to decide, together with the following one, "Do I also keep His Commandments? Do I obey God? Do I seek to be holy as Jesus is holy? Or am I living in known sin and tolerating that in myself which does not and cannot please God?" The verse that follows my text puts it, "We keep His Commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." And the question is, "Do we not only try to keep the Commandments, but do we do so because it is pleasing to God? Is my master motive to please God? Do I want to be an Enoch, who had this testimony, that he pleased God? Do I keep His Commandments and labor to please Him?"

These are the questions to be tried in the court of conscience and never was there a weightier issue! On this, our eternal state depends! It is not your *estate* that is now at stake; it is not your *health* that is now in question. It is your living unto God, your being *now* a child of God and so being prepared to face the mysterious solemnities of eternity. O Sirs, do not hesitate to take these matters into the court of conscience! If you have avoided that court before, attend it, now, and give your soul a solemn hearing!

*This court is guided by a mass of evidence*. That evidence has not to be sought for—it is there already! If the case were to be, "Do my fellow men think me a child of God; do they regard me as being a Believer in whom

faith works by love?” that would be a difficult question because we would have to subpoena so many to give their opinion of our private and public life. But in this case, we have nothing to do with outsiders—the *conscience* is the witness as well as the judge and jury! The whole case is carried on *within*. We cannot object to the witnesses, for they are our own heart and conscience. We must believe what these say. Nor can we object to the judgement, since our own conscience is judge and we are not at all likely to be unjust towards ourselves. We are so partial and there is so much of flattering deceit and self-love about us, that we could not wish to be tried by a more favoring judge than our own conscience! We cannot decline the jurisdiction under any pretence of prejudice against us.

And, oh, what a mass of evidence our heart can furnish—evidence even more conclusive than that of outward actions! Memory rises up and says, “I remember all you have done since your profession of conversion—your shortcomings and breaches of the Covenant.” The *will* confesses to offenses which never ripened into acts for lack of opportunity. The *passions* admit outbreaks which were concealed from human observation. The *imagination* is made to bear testimony—and what a sinful power that imagination is and how difficult it is to govern it—its tale is sad to hear! Our *tempers* confess to evil anger, our *lusts* to evil longings, our *hearts* to evil covetousness, pride and rebellion. Hopeful witness there is, also, of sin conquered, habits broken and desires repressed—all this is honestly taken in evidence and duly weighed.

Everything within us will have to tell whether it has been renewed or not, whether it has been changed from darkness to light, and come from under the power of sin and Satan into the power of Christ. Each power can give evidence of Grace or token of unregeneracy and, according to the weight of evidence, the verdict must go. The heart possesses a mass of evidence utterly unknown anywhere else, for the heart knows its own sinfulness as it knows its own bitterness and the man’s heart can reveal secrets to itself which it dare not whisper into the ear of the kindest friend! The trial cannot fail from lack of evidence bearing upon the point.

While the trial is going on, *the deliberation causes great suspense*. I stand trembling as long as I have to ask my heart, “Heart, do you condemn me, or do you acquit me?” You may have seen a picture entitled, “Waiting for the Verdict.” The artist has put into the countenances of the waiters every form of unrest, for the suspense is terrible. Blessed be God, we are not called upon to wait long for the verdict of conscience! We ought never to let the question remain in suspense at all—we should settle it and settle it in the Light of God—and then walk in the light as God is in the light. I confess I cannot understand the comfort which I see in some people’s faces when they admit that they do not know whether they are the people of God or not. If you are not saved, or are not sure of it, how dare you rest? Are you in danger of eternal wrath? Then give no sleep to your eyes till you know that you have escaped so great a peril! It looks to me as if your doubt could not be real if it does not work in your heart great misery and agony of spirit. A person in doubt about his salvation and unable to rest, I can perfectly well understand. But a person in doubt in any measure about his reconciliation to God and yet *happy*, is a mys-



tery! How can the Grace of God be in a heart which is not sure of pardon and yet is content? It is an exceedingly painful thing to have this trial going on in the soul and to be waiting for the verdict.

One thing I will observe, however, before I leave this matter—*it is not the supreme court*. If it should so happen that the verdict of the court should be against you, if your heart condemns you, remember the verdict is not final—there is still a higher court. I love the way in which Peter put it once. He had denied his Master, denied Him repeatedly with oaths, but he had bitterly repented—and when his Lord said to him, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?” His heart did not condemn him upon the question of loving his Master, but it did condemn him sorely for having denied his Lord. So, after pleading, “Lord, I do love You,” he takes his case into the Higher Court and says, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.” In moments of soul conflict, it will be wise for you to carry this question beyond yourself up to the Omniscient One! The translation of the Revised Version, though I do not like it, has a bearing on this point and so I quote it—“Hereby shall we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our heart before Him, whenever our heart condemn us, because God is greater than our heart and knows all things.”

I pray you all to remember this, that the trial by your conscience is not, after all, the ultimate and the decisive one, because your conscience may go to sleep, or make a mistake in your favor. Or your conscience may become morbid and may not take under its consideration all the facts of the case and so, may go against you. Since there may be an error of judgment, you should make your appeal to the Most High, saying, “Search me, O God.” Above all, if your conscience should now condemn you, still remember that there remains the free, full Gospel even for the chief of sinners! If you stand before God condemned in heart, this morning, throw yourself upon your face with that sense of condemnation upon you and cry, “God be merciful to me, a sinner!” Whichever verdict comes from an enlightened conscience, it will be exceedingly serviceable to you if you have regard to it. If it condemns you not, then have confidence toward God. And if it condemns you, the condemnation may drive you, at once, to flee for refuge to the Hope that is set before the guilty in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. May the Holy Spirit thus bless you!

**II.** Allow me, secondly, to speak to you upon a pleasing theme, namely, THE ACQUITTAL ISSUED FROM THIS COURT—“If our heart condemns us not.” Observe that a man may get an acquittal from the court of conscience, *for the question laid before the heart can be settled*. It can be ascertained whether I sincerely believe in Jesus Christ. It can be ascertained whether I sincerely love God and love His people. It can be ascertained whether my heart is obedient to the Commands of the Lord Jesus Christ. These are not hazy, mysterious problems which can never be solved! The case may be made clear one way or the other. The court has no difficulty before it beyond its faculty—it is quite competent to decide the question in the light of Scripture by the help of God.

*These questions, however, must be debated with great discernment.* Suppose a person to be greatly tempted, to be tempted morning, noon and night with foul temptations, yet conscience must not say, “This person is

no child of God because he is tempted.” There is no sin in being tempted, since our Lord Jesus was tempted of the devil and yet in Him was no sin. Abundance, yes, superabundance of temptation is no proof against the sincerity of our faith in our God! On the contrary, it may sometimes happen that the more we are tempted the more true is it that there is something in us to tempt, some good thing which Satan seeks to destroy.

Again, *the verdict of the heart must be given with discrimination*, or otherwise we may judge according to outward circumstances and so judge amiss. It will never do to say, “I am greatly afflicted in estate, in family, or in depression of spirits and, therefore, I cannot be a child of God.” What? Are not God’s children chastened? What son is there whom the Father chastens not? Some of the best children of God have been the most afflicted. Yes, and let me say it pointedly, some of the purest Christians that have ever lived have had the most sickness to bear and by that means they have been made more meet for Heaven, even as the sycamore fig, by being bruised becomes ripe. When, therefore, it is suggested that you are not a child of God because you are afflicted, the idea is not to be tolerated, since we are born to trouble as the sparks fly upward!

Neither, again, do our imperfections or infirmities decide against us. An enlightened conscience says, “It is true this man has sinned, but it was not of intent, but by inadvertence or surprise. His soul hates the sin into which he fell. He deeply repents of his offense.” The occurrence of sin in the life does not prove a man to be out of Grace. The prevalence of sin, the toleration of sin, the love of sin, the willful continuance in sin would do so—but the fact of imperfection, if wept over and repented of, is not condemnatory evidence! The fact that my child is little and feeble is no proof that he is not my son. The boy may be like his father and yet be only a tiny baby. Weakness and even faultiness may be confessed and yet we may have confidence towards God. So the verdict has to be given with great discrimination.

And *the verdict has to be given, mark you, upon Gospel principles*. The question before the court of conscience is not, “Have I perfectly kept the Law?” The answer to that is simple enough—“There is not a just man upon earth that does good and sins not.” “By the works of the Law shall no flesh living be justified.” The question is, “Am I a Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ? Am I resting in Him for salvation and do I prove the truth of that faith by loving God, loving the Brethren, by doing those things which are pleasing to God and avoiding those things which are displeasing to Him?” “The question is not concerning *merit*, but concerning Grace and the fruit of Grace! Salvation is of Grace and of Grace, alone—therefore my enquiry should be—“Am I partaker of that Grace? Unworthy though I am, am I washed in the blood of Jesus? Am I covered with His righteousness? Am I accepted in the Beloved?” That is the question and if ever you get to discussing it upon legal principles, you will go wrong. We are not tried in the court of the heart according to the Old Covenant, but according to the New Covenant—another book is opened which is the Book of Life.

Permit me to say, here, that *this question in the court of the heart must never be settled by our feelings*. If the heart is at all right in its judgments, it will never say, “I am a child of God because I am so happy.” Nor will it

exclaim, on the other hand, "I cannot be a child of God because I am so sad!" Holy feelings may be brought in as evidence, but they are hard to estimate. Feelings are variable as the wind—they depend so much upon the body and outward surroundings—so much, even, upon the condition of the atmosphere! I acknowledge that as to feelings, I go up and down very much according to the weather. Therefore I make small account of my feelings. If I am very happy, I say to myself, "Keep steady. Be not intoxicated with joy." If I find my spirits sink, I cry, "Come, Heart, do not play the fool! You have nothing to be down about—rejoice in God, always, and have no confidence in the flesh." Deal thus with yourselves, for the question in hand is not, "Am I happy?" but, "Am I a sincere Believer. Does my faith prove its sincerity by the effect which it produces upon my life?" Sinners can rejoice as well as saints—and saints can mourn as well as sinners! The point is not what we feel, but what we believe and do.

*This question of our state ought to be settled speedily.* As I have already said to you, it must not be allowed to hang about. We know "the law's delays," but we must not allow any delay in *this* court. No, we must press for summary justice. Does my heart condemn me, or does *not* my heart condemn me? Get a clear and plain answer, at once, to this issue. If your heart condemns any of you here, this morning—if you say, "Yes, I am a member of the Church but I ought not to be, I do not live as I should." If you are not Believers in Christ. If you feel that you have no love to the Brethren, then take the verdict and go humbly to God and ask Him to renew your hearts! The door of Free Grace is still open to you. But, on the other hand, if your conscience says, "Yes, with all my imperfections, with all my infirmities, I do love God with all my heart. I do trust in Christ, for I have nothing else to trust to. I do lean my whole weight upon His finished work. I hang on Christ as a vessel hangs on the nail. I have no dependence anywhere else. I know there is a change in me; I know that the things I once loved, I now hate, and the things I once hated, I now love. I desire perfect holiness in the fear of God"—then you are in the condition of which the Apostle says, "If our heart condemns us not, then have we confidence toward God."

Let us consider that happy state at some length and then close our discourse. May you all have the full enjoyment of holy boldness before God through the operation of the Holy Spirit.

**III.** Let us consider THE CONSEQUENCE OF THIS ACQUITTAL. Here is the man who has had his acquittal in the court of conscience. Your conscience has said, "He is a sincere man. He is a believing man. He is quickened with the life of God. He is an obedient and God-fearing man." And now you have confidence toward God, or, at least, you have a right to such confidence. What does that confidence or boldness mean? There is the confidence of *truthfulness*. When you kneel down to pray, you know that you are praying and not mocking God. When you sing, you are making melody in your heart. When you preach, you are preaching that which your soul believes. If I spoke to you, today, about things which I was not quite sure of, it would be wretched work! But I usually feel a great deal of enjoyment when I am preaching because, to me, the things which I teach are my comfort and life. If *you* do not enjoy the sermon, at least *I* do!

Sometimes I say to myself, "These doctrines are exceedingly sweet. I feed upon them, myself, and, therefore, the people ought to be fed. And if they are *not*, it is their own fault." A cook may not even get a taste of the meat, but it is not often so with me. Because I believe for myself, I feel a confidence in preaching to you! Confidence towards God is a truthfulness of spirit which prevents our being ashamed in what we do towards Him. Can you say, "Whatever I do, I do it honestly. Though I am not what I wish to be in all things, yet that which I profess before God is true"? Then you have confidence! "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." I do not put spectacles over blind eyes and make people believe that I can see, but I really see. I know I do! I know I trust, I know I love God, I know I love holiness!

This deep sincerity breeds in a man a blessed indifference to the judgments of men. Having a conscience void of offense, he feels a holy freedom as to the formalities of pretence. Look at the hypocrite—he is afraid of being found out! He has to do everything most primly and demurely lest he should be suspected. If you paint your face, you must take care neither to cry nor laugh, lest you crack the enamel! If you wear shoddy clothing, you must not run or jump, for your garments might tear! Accidents must be guarded against when you deal with shams. A hypocrite will censure you very severely for having smiled just now—and he will condemn me outright for being so wicked as to make you smile on such a day. Poor soul, he must keep up his propriety, for it is all he has.

In these times of bad trade, many who are ready to fail are afraid to lower their expenditure for fear their poverty should be suspected—and so they keep up a good appearance to stave off bankruptcy as long as they may. If they were solvent, they would not be so fearful. If your conscience condemns you not, then you enjoy a blessed ease of spirit because the Truth of God is in you.

The next kind of confidence is confidence towards God to one's *acceptance* with Him. If my heart say, "Yes, you do believe," then I know, from God's Word, that I have eternal life. The Word says, "He that believes on Me has everlasting life." Conscience says, "Yes, you have faith," and the heart concludes, there is, therefore, now no condemnation. Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Believe me, the sweetest stream that ever waters this desert world is the river of confident acceptance in the Beloved! When you know this, your life is gilded with the sunlight of the coming Glory and your heart rejoices exceedingly.

This produces and, perhaps, it is that which the Apostle most intended, *a boldness of converse*. The man who knows that he is truthful and that God has accepted him, then speaks freely with God! He feels a holy awe of God and never wishes to lose it. He exercises a sacred boldness towards Him. Is it not wonderful to see how Abraham talked with God? He went up to the place where God spoke with Him and, when God told Him that He was about to destroy Sodom, how exquisitely and yet how boldly did Abraham put it—"Will You also destroy the righteous with the wicked? That be far from You." What? Does Abraham expostulate with God? Does Abraham *dream* do an unjust thing? Oh, no! But he is bold and that is

the most forcible plea which he can think of and so he urges it again and again with God.

How he pushes his case—"I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes: perhaps there shall lack five of the 50 righteous: will You destroy all the city for lack of five?" It is wonderful pleading and it illustrates the words, "confidence toward God." Look at Job. There was a man whose heart did not condemn him, for he could say, "Lord, You know I am not wicked." He speaks with God very boldly and he says, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him: I would come even to His seat—I would order my case before Him and fill my mouth with arguments." Though the terrors of God might make Him afraid, yet, secure in the quiet of his conscience, he has confidence towards God! Not only confidence *in* God, mark you, but *toward* God, so as to speak with God as a man speaks with his friend! Do you understand this? I know you do not if you have any doubt as to your being a child of God. Suspicion makes you a coward, for when your heart does not condemn you and you know that you are right before the Lord, then you feel liberty of converse.

This leads to great *confidence in prayer*. Look at the context. "We have confidence toward God. And whatever we ask, we receive of Him because we keep His Commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." If you want power in prayer you must have purity in life! There is no promise in the Bible made to all of you that whatever you ask, God will give you—it is made to persons of a certain character! The unlimited promise is to the man of God who is so sanctified that he will not ask and does not *think* of asking anything that is not in accordance with God's will! Remember this passage—"Delight yourself, also, in the Lord; and He shall give you the desires of your heart." The desire of the man who delights in God is always in accordance with the mind of God—therefore he is the man that can get whatever he wills. When you do all things that please God and your life is sanctified and holy, then it is that you abide in His love. Has not Jesus said, "If you abide in Me, and My Words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you"? Unsatisfied desires will be graciously refused—but the will of the sincerely obedient man is conformed to the will of God and, therefore, it shall be fulfilled. "This is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will, He hears us."

Our text means, also, that such a man shall have confidence towards God *in all service for God*. Look at the man of God who has confidence towards God, as to *the perils encountered* in faithfully following His Lord. Take Daniel, for instance. Daniel does not question about what he has to do when the decree is signed that whoever shall pray, shall be cast into the den of lions. He opens his window as he was accustomed to do. He looks towards Jerusalem and bows his knees as he had done before—and he prays to God as if there were no edict! His confidence toward God is that he is safe in the path of duty. He does not count the cost and neither did the three holy children when the fiery furnace was before them, but they said, "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not,

be it known unto you, O king, that we will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up.”

Is not that a blessed confidence towards God which a man obtains when his heart does not condemn him? If Daniel had said, “I shall pray down in the cellar, or with the blinds drawn,” he would have lost all confidence towards God and would not have been the man he was. If the three children had said, “We will bow the knee, but we will make in our minds a secret protest—we will not really worship the idol, but we will worship God while we bow before the image,” they would not have had confidence in God. Alas, what foolish tricks men play with what they call their consciences, nowadays! This wonderful 19<sup>th</sup> Century is altogether incomprehensible to a simple, honest man! Consciences used to work up and down, yes or no—but now they have an eccentric action, altogether indescribable! A man serves the devil, nowadays, and gets the devil’s pay—and all the while talks of serving God! May you have a conscience void of offense, straight and clear in everything, and so have confidence towards God.

Moreover, we have this confidence towards God in the way of service so that we are sure of *receiving all necessary help*. God will help the true man and if he comes to a pinch and cannot get on by himself, he may boldly summon others of his Master’s servants to his aid. Look at Joshua fighting with the Amalekites. The day is not long enough and, therefore, he lays his command upon the sun and says to it, “Sun, stand still upon Gibeon and you, moon, in the valley of Ajalon!” He had need of longer daylight and he dared the sun and moon to move an inch till the pursuit of his foes was over. Thus may a servant of God challenge help from earth and Heaven and impress all forces into the service of his Lord. An officer, if he finds himself in straits, impresses anybody that passes by, saying, “In the King’s name, help me.” Even so, if you do your Lord’s bidding and if conscience condemns you not, you may impress into the service of the great King every angel in Heaven and every force of Nature as need requires!

I wish I had time to tell you all that confidence towards God means. It means rest, *perfect rest*. Look at your Lord when the tempest was on. Loud roaring, the billows come near to overwhelming the ship, but He is asleep! Nobody but He could dare to slumber because nobody else had such confidence in God! He knew the vessel was safe, why should He worry? True, He was Lord High Admiral of the seas and had responsibility not only for His own flagship, but for the whole fleet of little ships that sailed with Him that day—but He did not give way to sleeplessness because of that—He cast Himself on God and fell asleep! It was the best thing to do. You and I may do the same—we need not be frightened nor worried, nor troubled, but just trust in the Lord and do good and so shall we dwell in the land and, verily, we shall be fed. This is confidence towards God!

This confidence often mounts up into *joy* till the Christian man overflows with delight in God. He cannot contain his happiness. As Solomon says, he eats his bread with joy, for God has accepted his works. He lives with the wife of his youth in full contentment and his children are a bless-

ing to him. He goes to his toil rejoicing to serve God in his calling and he comes home at night to repose himself in the care of his God and Father. All is well and he knows it.

Blessed man that has confidence in God! Such a man goes up to his last bed when the message comes that the spirit must return to God who gave it—he goes *to die* without alarm—his conscience does not condemn him and, therefore, he lays himself down in patience and waits the signal to be with God. Meanwhile the light of Heaven steals over his face and they that come to cheer and comfort him hear strange words, like notes of the birds of Paradise, dropping from his lips. They see that he is in pain, but they also mark that he is baptized in enjoyment. They think that he is dying, but he testifies that he is entering into life! The pearly gates are open before him—the glitter of the golden street is meeting his failing eyes. Hear him sing, as best as his failing breath permits—

***“And when you see my eye-strings break,  
How sweet my minutes roll!  
A mortal paleness on my cheek,  
But glory in my soul!”***

Now he is gone, gone into the land of spirits! He stands before his God and he does not tremble. He has that eagle-eye which can bear the light of the eternal sun! His heart condemns him not and he has confidence towards God. Amidst the supernal splendors he cries, “My Father!” Angels are crying, “Lord and God,” but *he* says, “My Father”—and those loyal servants make room for a royal child! The shining ones escort the happy spirit to the blessed Father’s feet. There we leave him. “Beloved, if our heart condemns us not, then have we confidence toward God.” God bless you. Amen.

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# THE CONDITIONS OF POWER IN PRAYER

## NO. 1103

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 23,  
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And whatever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. And this is His commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment. And he that keeps His commandment dwells in Him, and He in him. And hereby we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit which He has given us.”*  
*1 John 3:22-24.*

I THOUGHT of addressing you this morning upon the importance of prayer and I designed earnestly to stir you up to pray for me and for the Lord's work in this place. Truly, I do not think I could have had a more weighty subject, or one which weighs more upon my soul. If I were only allowed to offer one request to you it would be this—“Brethren, pray for us.” Of what use can our ministry be without the Divine blessing and how can we expect the Divine blessing unless it is sought for by the Church of God? I would say it even with tears, “Brethren, pray for us.” Do not restrain prayer—on the contrary, be abundant in intercession, for so, and so only, can our prosperity as a Church be increased, or even continued.

But then, the question occurred to me, what if there should be something in the Church which would prevent our prayers being successful? That is an important question and one which ought to be considered most earnestly even *before* we exhort you to intercession. As we have already been taught by the first chapter of Isaiah, the prayers of an unholy people will soon become abominations to God. “When you spread forth your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; yes, when you make many prayers, I will not hear.” Churches may fall into such a state that the devotions will be an iniquity. “Even the solemn meeting” will be a weariness unto the Lord. There may be evils in the heart of any one of us which may render it impossible for God, in consistency with His own Character and attributes, to have any regard to our intercessions.

If we regard iniquity in our hearts the Lord will not hear us. According to our text there are some things which are essential to prevalence in prayer. God will hear all true prayer, but there are certain things which the people of God must possess or else their prayers will fall short of the mark. The text tells us, “Whatever we ask we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.” Now, this morning the subject of consideration will be the essentials to power in prayer—what we must do, what we must be, what we must have—if we are to prevail habitually with God in prayer, as a matter of constant fact. Let us learn how to become Elijahs and Jacobs.



I. I shall begin, first, by considering THE ESSENTIALS OF POWER IN PRAYER. We must make a few distinctions at the outset. I take it there is a great difference between the prayer of a soul that is seeking mercy and the prayer of a man who is saved. I would say to every person present, whatever his character, if you sincerely seek mercy of God through Jesus Christ you shall have it. Whatever may have been your previous condition of life, if you now *penitently* seek Jehovah's face through the appointed Mediator, He will be found of you.

If the Holy Spirit has taught you to pray, hesitate no longer but hasten to the Cross and there rest your guilty soul on Jesus. I know of no qualifications for the sinner's first prayer except sincerity, but we must speak in a different way to those of you who are saved. You have now become the people of God and while you shall be heard just as the sinner would be heard, and shall daily find the necessary Grace which every seeker receives in answer to prayer, yet you are now a child of God and you are under a special discipline peculiar to the regenerated family. In that discipline answers to prayer occupy a high position and are of eminent use.

There is something for a Believer to enjoy over and above bare salvation. There are mercies, blessings, comforts and favors which render his present life useful, happy and honorable. And these he shall have irrespective of character. They are not vital matters with regard to salvation—the Believer possesses them unconditionally, for they are Covenant blessings. But we now refer to the honors and the dainties of the house which are given or withheld according to our obedience as the Lord's *children*. If you neglect the conditions appended to these, your heavenly Father will withhold them from you. The essential blessings of the Covenant of Grace stand unconditioned—the invitation to seek for mercy is addressed to those who have no qualifications whatever, except their need.

But come inside the Divine *family* as saved men and women and you will find that other choice blessings are given or withheld according to our attention to the Lord's rules in His family. To give a common illustration—If a hungry person were at your door and asked for bread, you would give it to him whatever might be his character. You will also give your child food whatever may be his behavior—you will not deny your child anything that is necessary for life. You will never proceed in any course of discipline against him, so as to deny him his necessary food, or a garment to shield him from the cold. But there are many other things which your child may desire which you will give him if he is *obedient*, which you will not give if he is rebellious to you. I take it that this illustrates how far the paternal government of God will push this matter and where it will not go.

Understand, also, that the text refers not so much to God's hearing a prayer of His servants now and then, for that He will do, even when His servants are out of course with Him and when He is hiding His face from them. The power in prayer, here intended, is continuous and absolute power with God, so that to quote the words of the text, "*whatever* we ask of Him we receive." For this prayer there are certain prerequisites and essentials of which we have now to speak, and the first is child-like obedience—"Whatever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His com-

mandments.” If we are destitute of this the Lord may say to us as He did to His people Israel, “You have forsaken Me, and served other gods, therefore I will deliver you no more. Go and cry unto the gods which you have chosen.”

Any father will tell you that for him to grant the request of a disobedient child would be to encourage rebellion in the family and render it impossible for him to rule in his own house. It is often incumbent upon the parent to say, “My Child, you did not listen to my word just now, and, therefore, I cannot listen to yours.” Not that the father does not love, but that he *does* love the child, and because of his love he feels bound to show his displeasure by refusing the request of his erring offspring. God acts with us as we should act towards our refractory children. And if He sees that we will go into sin and transgress, it is a part of His kind paternal discipline to say, “I will shut out your prayer, when you cry unto Me; I will not hear you when you entreat of Me; I will not destroy you, you shall be saved, you shall have the bread of life, and the water of life, but you shall have no more: the luxuries of My kingdom shall be denied you, and anything like special prevalence with Me in prayer you shall not possess.”

That the Lord deals with His own people is clear from the 81<sup>st</sup> Psalm—“Oh that My people had hearkened unto Me, and Israel had walked in My ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned My hand against their adversaries. I should have fed them, also, with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out the rock should I have satisfied you.” Why, if the disobedient child of God had the promise put into his hands—“Whatever you ask in prayer, you shall receive,” he would be sure to ask for something that would bolster him up in his rebellion! He would be asking for provision for his own lust, and aids for his rebellion. This can never be tolerated! Shall God pander to our corruptions? Shall He find fuel for the flames of carnal passion?

A self-willed heart hankers after greater liberty that it may be the more obstinate. A haughty spirit longs for greater elevation that it may be prouder still. A slothful spirit asks for greater ease that it may yet be more indolent. And a domineering spirit asks for more power that it may have more opportunities of oppression. As such the man is, will his prayer be—a rebellious spirit offers self-willed and proud prayers. Shall God listen to such prayers as these? It cannot be! He will give us what we ask if we keep His commandments, but if we become disobedient and reject His government He, also, will reject our prayers and say, “If you walk contrary to Me, I also will walk contrary to you. With the stubborn, I will show Myself stubborn.” Happy shall we be if, through Divine Grace, we can say with David, “I will wash my hands in innocence; so will I compass Your altar, O Lord.” This will never be perfect innocence, but it will at least be innocence of the love of sin and of willful revolt from God.

Next to this is another essential to victorious prayer—child-like reverence. Notice the next sentence. We receive what we ask, “because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.” We do not allow children, when they have a command from their father, to question its propriety or wisdom. Obedience ends where questioning be-

gins. A child's standard of its duty must not become the measure of the father's right to command—good children say, "Father has bid us to do so-and-so, and therefore we will do it, for we delight to please him always." The weightiest reason for a loving child's action is the persuasion that it would please his parents. And the strongest thing that can be said to hold back a gracious child is to prove that such a course of action would displease his parents. It is precisely so with us towards God, who is a *perfect* Parent, and therefore we may, without fear of mistake, always make His pleasure the rule of right, while the rule of wrong may safely remain that which would displease Him.

Suppose any of us should be self-willed and say, "I shall not do what pleases God, I shall do what pleases myself." Then, observe, what would be the nature of our prayers? Our prayers might then be summed up in the request, "Let me have my own way." And can we expect God to consent to that? Are we to be not only lords over God's heritage but over God Himself? Would you have the Almighty resign His Throne to place a proud mortal there? If you have a child in your house who has no respect, whatever, for his father, but who says, "I want to have my own way in all things," if he comes to you with a request, will you stoop to him? Will you allow him to dictate to you and forget the honor due you? Will you say, "Yes, my dear Child, I recognize your importance. You shall be lord in the house and whatever you ask for you shall have"?

What kind of a house would that be? I fear there are some such houses, for there are foolish parents who suffer their children to become their masters and so make a rod for their own backs. But God's house is not ordered so! He will not listen to His self-willed children, unless it is to hear them in anger and to answer them in wrath! Remember how He heard the prayer of Israel for meat, and when the meat was yet in their mouths it became a curse to them? Many persons are chastened by obtaining their own desires, even as backsliders are filled with their own devices. We must have a child-like reverence of God, so that we feel, "Lord, if what I ask for does not please You, neither would it please me. My desires are put into Your hands to be corrected. Strike the pen through every petition that I offer which is not right and, Lord, put in whatever I have omitted even though I might not have desired it had I remembered it. Good Lord, if I ought to have desired it, hear me as if I had desired it. 'Not as I will, but as You will.'" Now I think you can see that this yielding spirit is essential to continual prevalence with God in prayer. The reverse is a sure barrier to eminence in supplication. The Lord will be revered by those who are round about Him. They must have an eye to His pleasure in all that they do and all that they ask, or He will not look upon them with favor.

In the third place, the text suggests the necessity of child-like trust—"And this is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ." Everywhere in Scripture faith in God is spoken of as necessary to successful prayer. We must believe that God is and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, or else we have not prayed at all. In proportion to our faith will be the success of our prayer. It

is a standing rule of the kingdom, "According to your faith, so be it unto you." Remember how the Holy Spirit speaks by the mouth of the Apostle James? "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. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavers is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord."

The text speaks of faith in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, which I understand to mean faith in His declared Character, faith in His Gospel, faith in the Truth concerning His Substitution and Salvation. Or it may mean faith in the authority of Christ, so that when I plead with God and say, "Do it in the name of Jesus," I mean, "Do for me as You would have done for Jesus, for I am authorized by Him to use His name. Do it for me as You would have done it for Him." He that can pray with faith in the name of Jesus cannot fail, for the Lord Jesus has said, "If you ask anything in My name, I will do it." But there must be *faith* and if there is no faith we cannot expect to be heard. Do you understand that?

Let us come back to our family similitudes again. Suppose a child in the house does not believe his father's word and is constantly saying that he finds his mind full of doubts as to his father's truthfulness? Suppose, indeed, that he tells his brothers and sisters that his faith in his father is very weak? He mentions that wretched fact and is not at all shocked that he should say such a thing, but he rather feels that he ought to be pitied, as if it were an infirmity which he could not avoid. Somehow or other he does not believe that his father speaks the truth and he declares that though he tries to believe his father's promise, yet he cannot.

I think a father so basely distrusted would not be in a very great hurry to grant such a son's requests. Indeed, it is very probable that the petitions of the mistrustful son would be such as could not be complied with, even if his father were willing to do so, since they would amount to a gratification of his own unbelief and a dishonor to his parent! For instance, suppose this child should take it into his head to doubt whether his father would provide him with his daily food? He might, then, come to his father and say, "Father, give me enough money to last for the next 10 years, for I shall then be a man and shall be able to provide for myself. Give me money down to quiet my fears, for I am in great anxiety." The father replies, "My Son, why should I do that?"

And he gets for a reply, "I am very sorry to say it, dear Father, but I cannot trust you. I have such a weak faith in you and your love that I am afraid one of these days you will leave me to starve. And therefore I should like to have something sure in the bank." Which of you fathers would listen to a child's request if he sought such a thing? You would be grieved that thoughts so dishonoring to yourself should pass through the mind of one of your own beloved ones! And you would not and could not, give way to them. Let me, then, ask you to apply the parable to yourselves. Did you never offer requests which were of much the same character? You have been unable to trust God to give you, day by day, your daily bread, and

therefore you have been craving for what you call, "some provision for the future."

You want a more trusty provider than Providence, a better security than God's promise! You are unable to trust your heavenly Father's Word. A few bonds of some half-bankrupt foreign government you consider to be far more reliable. You can trust the Sultan of Turkey, or the Viceroy of Egypt, but not the God of the whole earth! In a thousand ways we insult the Lord by imagining "the things which are seen" to be more substantial than His unseen Omnipotence. We ask God to give us, at once, what we do not require at present and may never need at all! At bottom, the reason for such desires may be found in a disgraceful distrust of Him which makes us imagine that great stores are necessary to ensure our being provided for.

Brothers and Sisters, are you not to blame, here, and do you expect the Lord to aid and abet your folly? Shall God pander to your distrust? Shall He give you a heap of cankering gold and silver for thieves to steal and chests of garments to feed moths? Would you have the Lord act as if He admitted the correctness of your suspicions and confessed to unfaithfulness? God forbid! Expect not, therefore, to be heard when your prayer is suggested by an unbelieving heart—"Commit your way unto the Lord; trust also in Him and He shall bring it to pass." The next essential to continued success in prayer is child-like love—"that we should believe on the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another as He gave us commandment."

The great commandment after faith is love. As it is said of God, "God is Love," so may we say that, "Christianity is love." If we were, each one, incarnations of love we should have attained to the complete likeness of Christ. We should abound in love to God, love to Christ, love to the Church, love to sinners and love to men everywhere! When a man has no love to God, he is in the condition of a child without love to his father. Shall his father promise absolutely to fulfill all the desires of his unloving, unfilial heart? Or, if a child has no love to his brothers and sisters, shall the father trust him with an absolute promise, and say, "Ask and it shall be given you?" Why, the unloving son would impoverish the whole family by his selfish demands! Regardless of all the rest of the household, he would only care to indulge his own passions. His request would before long be—"Father, give me all the inheritance." Or, "Father, regulate the home to suit me and make all my brothers submit to my wishes."

Vain of his personal appearance, like Absalom, who was proud of his hair, he would soon seek the kingdom for himself! Few Josephs can wear the garment of many colors and not become household tyrants. Who would allow a prodigal to run off with the estate? Who would be so unwise as to install a greedy, domineering brother in the seat of honor, above his brothers and sisters? Therefore, you see that selfishness cannot be trusted with power in prayer. Unloving spirits, that love neither God nor men, cannot be trusted with great, broad, unlimited promises. If God is to hear us we must love God and love our fellow men for, when we love God, we shall not pray for anything that would not honor God and shall not

wish to see anything happen to us which would not also bless our brethren. Our hearts will beat true to God and to His creatures and we shall not be wrapped up in ourselves. You must get rid of selfishness before God can trust you with the keys of Heaven. When *self* is dead, then He will enable you to unlock His treasures and, as a prince, shall you have power with God and prevail.

Next to this, we must have child-like ways as well. Read the next verse. "He that keeps His commandments dwells in Him, and He in him." It is one of a child's ways to love its home. The good child to whose requests its father always listens loves no place so much as the dear old house where its parents live. Now he who loves and keeps God's commandments is said to dwell in Him—he has made the Lord his dwelling place and abides in holy familiarity with God. In him our Lord's words are fulfilled, "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you." Faith and love, like two cherubic wings, have borne up the Believer's soul above the world and carried him near to the Throne of God. He has become like God and now it is that his prayers are such as God can answer—but until he is thus conformed to the Divine mind there must be some limit to the potency of his pleadings. To dwell in God is necessary to power with God.

Suppose one of you had a boy, who said, "Father, I do not like my home, I do not care for you and I will not endure the restraints of family rule. I am going to live with strangers, but mark, Father, I shall come to you every week and I shall require many things of you. And I shall expect that you will give me whatever I ask from you"? Why, if you are at all fit to be at the head of the house, you will say, "My Son, how can you speak to me in such a manner? If you are so self-willed as to leave my house, can you expect that I will do your bidding? If you utterly disregard me, can you expect me to support you in your cruel unkindness and wicked insubordination? No, my Son, if you will not remain with me and own me as a father, I cannot promise you anything."

And so is it with God. If we will dwell with Him and commune with Him, He will give us all things. If we love Him as He should be loved, and trust Him as He ought to be trusted, then He will hear our requests. But if not, it is not reasonable to expect it. Indeed, it would be a slur upon the Divine Character for Him to fulfill unholy desires and gratify evil whims. "Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart," but if you have no delight in God and He is not your dwelling place, He will not answer you. He may give you the bread of *affliction* and the water of *affliction* and make life bitter for you, but certainly He will not give you what your heart desires.

One thing more—it appears from the text that we must have a child-like spirit, for, "Hereby we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit which He has given us." What is this but the Spirit of *adoption*—the Spirit which rules in all the children of God? The willful who think and feel and act differently from God must not expect that God will come round to their way of thinking and feeling and acting! The selfish who are actuated by the spirit of pride, the slothful who are actuated by the love of ease must not

expect that God will indulge them! The Holy Spirit, if He rules in us, will subordinate our nature to His own sway and then the prayers which spring out of our renewed hearts will be in keeping with the will of God—and such prayers will naturally be heard.

No parent would think of listening to a willful child, to a child that said, “I know my father does not wish me to have this, but I will have it.” Why, as a man you would not thus be twisted about by an upstart youngster! Shall God grant us that which we ask for when it is contrary to His holy mind? It must not be! Such a possibility is not conceivable! The same mind must be in us which is also in Christ Jesus, and then we shall be able to say, “I know that You hear me always.” But we must pass on and occupy your attention, for a few minutes, with another branch of the same subject.

**II.** In the second place we shall notice THE PREVALENCE OF THESE ESSENTIAL THINGS. If they are in us and abound, our prayers cannot be barren or unprofitable. First, if we have faith in God, there is no question about God’s hearing our prayer. If we can plead, in faith, the name and blood of Jesus, we must obtain answers of peace. But a thousand arguments are suggested. Suppose these prayers concern the Laws of Nature? Then the scientific men are against us. What of that? I will glory in giving these scientific men scope enough—I had almost said scope enough.

I do not know of any prayer worth praying which does not come into contact with some natural Law or other and yet I believe in prayers being heard! It is said that God will not change the Laws of Nature for us, and I reply, “Whoever said He would?” The Lord has ways of answering our prayers irrespective of the working of miracles or suspending laws. He used to hear prayer by miracle, but as I have often said to you, that seems a rougher way of achieving His purpose—it is like stopping a vast machine for a small result—He knows how to accomplish His ends and hear our prayers by I know not what secret means.

Perhaps there are other forces and laws which He has arranged to bring into action just at times when prayer, also, acts. Laws just as fixed and forces just as natural as those which our learned theorizers have been able to discover. The wisest men know not all the laws which govern the universe, no, nor a tenth of them! We believe that the prayers of Christians are a part of the machinery of Providence, cogs in the great wheel of destiny—and when God leads His children to pray, He has already set in motion a wheel that is to produce the result prayed for and the prayers offered are moving as a part of the wheel. If there is but faith in God, God must either cease to be, or cease to be true, or else He must hear prayer!

The verse before the text says, “If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God; and whatever we ask, we receive of Him.” He who has a clear conscience comes to God with confidence and that confidence of faith ensures to him the answer of his prayer. Childlike confidence makes us pray as none else can. It makes a man pray for great things which he would never have asked for if he had not learned this confidence. It makes him pray for little things which a great many are afraid to ask for, because they have not yet felt towards God the confi-

dence of children. I have often said that it needs more confidence in God to pray to Him about a little thing than about great things. We fancy that our great things are somewhat worthy of God's regard, though in truth they are little enough to Him! And then we imagine that our little things must be so trifling that it would be almost an insult to bring them before Him, whereas we ought to know that what is very great to a child may be very little to its parent—and yet the parent does not measure the thing from his own point of view but from the child's.

You heard your little boy the other day crying bitterly. His mother called him and asked what ailed him? It was a splinter in his finger. Well, that was a small affair. You did not want to call in three surgeons to extract it, or raise a hue and cry in the public press! Bring a needle and we will soon set it right. Oh, but what a great thing it was to that pretty little sufferer as he stood there with eyes all wet with tears of anguish. It was a great concern to him! Now, did it occur to that boy that his pain was too small a thing for his mother to attend to? Not at all! What were mothers and fathers made for but to look after the little needs of little children? And God, our Father, is a good Father. He pities us as fathers pity their children and condescends to us. He knows the number of the stars, and calls them all by their names, yet He heals the broken in heart and binds up their wounds. The same God who kindles the sun has said, "I will not quench the smoking flax." If you have but confidence in God, you will take your great things and your little things to Him and He will never belie your confidence—for He has said they that trust in Him shall never be ashamed or confused, world without end. Faith must succeed!

But next, love must succeed, too, since we have already seen that the man who loves, in the Christian sense, is in accord with God. If you confine your love to your own family, you must not expect *God* to do so, and prayers narrowed within that circle He will disregard. If a man loves his own little self and hopes everybody's crop of wheat will fail, that his own produce may fetch a higher price, he certainly cannot expect the Lord to agree with such mean selfishness! If a man has heart enough to embrace *all* the creatures of God in his affection while he yet prays specially for the household of faith, his prayers will be after the Divine mind. His love and God's goodness run side by side. Though God's love is like a mighty rolling river and his is like a trickling brook, yet they both run in the same direction and will both come to the same end. God always hears the prayers of a loving man because those prayers are the shadows of His own decrees.

Again, the man of obedience is the man whom God will hear because his obedient heart leads him to pray humbly and with submission, for he feels it to be his highest desire that the Lord's will should be done. Therefore it is that the man of obedient heart prays like a Prophet—his prayers are prophecies. Is he not one with God? Does he not desire and ask for exactly what God intends? How can a prayer shot from such a bow ever fail to reach its target? If your soul gets into accord with God's soul, you will wish God's own wishes! The difficulty is that we do not keep, as the word is, in rapport with God. But if we did, then we should strike the same note as God strikes and though His would sound like thunder and



ours as a whisper, yet there would be a perfect unison—the note struck by prayer on earth would coincide with that which sounds forth from the decrees in Heaven.

Again, the man who lives in fellowship with God will assuredly prevail in prayer because, if he dwells in God, and God dwells in him, he will desire what God desires. The Believer in communion with the Lord desires man's good and so does God. He desires Christ's Glory and so does God. He desires the Church's prosperity and so does God. He desires himself to be a pattern of holiness and God desires it, too. If that man at any time has a desire which is not according to God's will, it is the result of ignorance, seeing that man is but man and not God. Even when he is at the best he must err, but he provides for this defect by the form of his prayer which always has this addendum at the end of it—"Lord, if I have asked in this, my prayer, for anything which is not according to Your mind, I beseech You, do not regard me. And if any wish which I have expressed to You—even though it is the desire which burns in my bosom above all other wishes—is a wish that is not right in Your sight, regard me not, my Father, but, in Your infinite love and compassion, do something better for Your servant than Your servant knows how to ask."

Now, when a prayer is after that fashion, how can it fail? The Lord looks out of the windows of Heaven and sees such a prayer coming to Him, just as Noah saw the dove returning to the ark, and He puts out His hand to that prayer. And as Noah plucked the dove into the ark, so does God pluck that prayer in unto Him and puts it into His own bosom, and says, "You came out of My bosom, and I welcome you back to Me—My Spirit composed you, therefore will I answer you." And here, again, let us say, our text speaks of the Christian man as being filled with God's Spirit—"We know that He abides in us, by the Spirit which He has given us." Who knows the mind of a man but the spirit of a man? So, who knows the things of God but the Spirit of God? And if the Spirit of God dwells in us, then He tells us what God's mind is. He makes intercession in the saints according to the will of God!

It is sometimes imagined that men who have prevalence in prayer can pray for what they like, but I can assure you any one of these will tell you that that is not so. You may call upon such a man and ask him to pray for you, but he cannot promise that he will. There are strange holdings back to such men when they feel they know not how or why that they cannot pray effectual fervent prayers in certain cases, though they might desire to do so. Like Paul, when he essayed to go into Bithynia and the Spirit suffered him not, so there are requests which we would naturally like to put up, but we are bound in spirit. There may apparently be nothing objectionable about the prayer, but the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him and He gives secret intimations when and where His chosen may hope to prevail. He gives you the promise that He will hear your believing prayer, you being a man that walks with Him, filled with His Spirit. But He does not, at the same time, give you faith about everything that everybody likes to put before you—on the contrary He gives you a discretion, a

judgment and a wisdom—and the Spirit makes intercession in the saints according to the will of God.

Thus I think I have laid down the doctrine pretty clearly. Now a few minutes of practical improvement, as the old Puritans used to say. I only wish it may be of improvement to many of us. The first is, we want to pray for a great blessing as a Church. I think I should command your votes if I said we intend to pray God to send a blessing on the Church at large. Very well. Have we the essentials for success? Are we believing in the name of Jesus Christ? Well, I think we are. I do not think fault could be found with the soundness of our faith, though much is to be confessed about the weakness of it.

Let us pass on to the next question. Are we full of love to God and one another? The double commandment is that we believe on the name of Jesus Christ and that we love one another. Do we love one another? Are we walking in love? There are none of us perfect in it. I will begin to confess by acknowledging I am not what I should be in that respect. Will you let the confession go round and each one think how often we have *done* unloving things, *thought* unloving things, *said* unloving things, *listened* to unloving gossip, held back our hand unlovingly when we ought to have rendered help and put forth our hand unlovingly to push down a man who was falling? If in the Church of God there is a lack of love, we cannot expect prayer to be heard, for God will say, “you ask for prosperity. What for? To add more to a community which does not already love itself? You ask for conversions. What? To bring in others to join an unloving community?”

Do you expect God to save sinners whom you do not love and to convert souls whom you do not care a bit about? We must *love* souls into Christ for, under God’s Holy Spirit, the great instrument for the conquest of the world is love! If Christians will love more than Muslims do, and Jews do, they will overcome Muslims and Jews! And if they show less love, Muslims and Jews will overcome them! The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, is the master weapon. But next to that is the loving carriage and generous conversation of Christians towards their fellow men. How much of that have we got? Shall I say, how *little*?

Next, are we doing that which is pleasing in God’s sight? We cannot expect answers to prayer if we are not. Put the enquiry to yourselves all round. Let each Church *member*, especially, answer that question. Have you been doing, lately, that which you would like Jesus Christ to see? Is your household ordered in such a way that it pleases God? Suppose Jesus Christ had visited your house this week, uninvited and unexpected—what would He have thought of that which He would have seen? “Oh,” says one, “I know so-and-so acts very inconsistently.” Sir, I pray you think of *yourself*! That is the point. Correct *yourself*. Unless the members of God’s Church do that which is pleasing in His sight, they bar the door against prosperity—they prevent the prayers of the Church from succeeding. Who wishes to be the man that stands in the way of the prosperity of God’s Church through inconsistency of conduct? Who would be so guilty? God forgive some of you! We could speak of some even weeping, for, alas,

though they profess to be the followers of Christ, they are so inconsistent that they are not friends, but enemies of the Cross of Christ!

The next question is, do we dwell in God? The text says that if we keep His commandments God dwells in us and we in Him. Is that so? I mean, during the day do we think of God? In our business are we still with God? A Christian is not to run unto God in the morning and again at night, and use Him as a shelter and a makeshift, as people do of an arch or a portico which they run under in a shower of rain. We are to dwell in God and live in Him from the rising of the sun until the going down thereof, making Him our daily meditation, and walking as in His sight, feeling evermore, "You God see me." How is it with you, dear Friends! O, let the question go from pew to pew and heart to heart, and mind—let each one answer for himself.

Lastly, does the Spirit of God actuate us, or is it another spirit? Do we wait upon God and say, "Lord, let Your Spirit tell me what to say in this case, and what to do. Rule my judgment, subdue my passions, keep down my baser impulses and let Your Spirit guide me. Lord, be You to me better than myself. Be soul and life to me and in the triple kingdom of my spirit, soul, and body, good Lord, be You supreme Master that in every province of my nature Your Law may be set up and Your will may be regarded"? We would have a mighty Church if we were all of this mind. But the mixed multitude are with us, the mixed multitude that came out of Egypt and these fall a-lusting. The mischief always begins with them. God save us as a Church from losing His Presence!

The mixed multitude must be with us to try us, for the Lord has said, "Let both grow together till the harvest," and if we try to root up the tares we should root up the wheat, also—yet, at any rate, let us pray God to make the wheat be the stronger. One of two things always happens in a Church. Either the wheat chokes the weeds or the weeds choke the wheat. God grant that the wheat may overtop the weeds in our case! God grant Grace to His servants to be strong enough to overcome the evil which surrounds them and, having done all, to stand to the praise of the glory of His Grace, who also has made us accepted in the Beloved. The Lord bless you, and be with you evermore. Amen and Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—  
1 John 3; Isaiah 1:10-20.**

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# THE WARRANT OF FAITH

## NO. 531

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 20, 1863,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

***“And this is His commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ.”***  
***1 John 3:23.***

THE old Law shines in terrible glory with its Ten Commandments. There are some who love that Law so much that they cannot pass over a Sunday without its being read in their hearing, accompanied by the mournful petition, “Lord, have mercy upon us and incline our hearts to keep this Law.” No, some are so foolish as to enter into a covenant for their children, that, “they shall keep all God’s holy commandments and walk in the same all the days of their life.” Thus they early wear a yoke which neither they nor their fathers can bear, and daily groaning under its awful weight they labor after righteousness where it never can be found.

Over the tables of the Law in every Church, I would have conspicuously printed these Gospel words, “By the deeds of the Law shall no flesh living be justified.” The true Believer has learned to look away from the killing ordinances of the old Law. He understands that “as many as are of the works of the Law are under the curse, for it is written: Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them.” He therefore turns with loathing from all trust in his own obedience to the Ten Commands and lays hold with joy upon the hope set before him in the one commandment contained in my text, “This is His commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ.”

We sing, and sing rightly, too—

***“My soul, no more attempt to draw  
Your life and comfort from the Law,”***

for from the Law death comes and not life, misery and not comfort. “To convince and to condemn is all the Law can do.” O, when will all professors, and especially all professed ministers of Christ, learn the difference between the Law and the Gospel? Most of them make a mingle-mangle, and serve out deadly potions to the people, often containing but one ounce of Gospel to a pound of Law—whereas even a grain of Law is enough to spoil the whole thing. It must be Gospel and Gospel only. “If it is of Grace, it is not of works, otherwise Grace is no more Grace. And if it is of works, then it is not of Grace, otherwise work is no more work.”

The Christian then, turning his attention to the one command of the Gospel, is very anxious to know first, *what is the matter of the believing here intended?* And secondly, *what is the sinner’s warrant for so believing in Christ?* Nor will he fail to consider *the mandate of the Gospel.*

**I.** First then, THE MATTER OF BELIEVING, or what is it that a man is to believe in order to eternal life? Is it the Athanasian creed? Is it true that if a man does not hold that confession whole and entire, he shall, without

doubt, perish everlastingly? We leave those to decide who are learned in matters of bigotry. Is it any particular form of doctrine? Is it the Calvinistic or the Arminian scheme? For our own part we are quite content with our text—believing on “His Son Jesus Christ.” That faith which saves the soul is believing on a Person, depending upon Jesus for eternal life.

To speak more at large of the things which are to be believed in order to justification by faith, they all relate to the Person and the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. We must believe Him to be God’s Son—so the text puts it—“His Son.” We must grasp with strong confidence the great fact that He is God—for nothing short of a Divine Savior can ever deliver us from the infinite wrath of God. He who rejects the true and proper Godhead of Jesus of Nazareth is not saved and *cannot* be, for he believes not on Jesus as God’s Son.

Furthermore, we must accept this Son of God as “Jesus,” the Savior. We must believe that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, became Man out of infinite love to man, that He might save His people from their sins according to that worthy saying, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,” even the chief. We must look upon Jesus as “Christ,” the Anointed of the Father, sent into this world on salvation’s errand, not that sinners might save themselves, but that He, being mighty to save, might bring many sons unto glory. We must believe that Jesus Christ, coming into the world to save sinners, did really effect His mission. That the precious blood which is shed upon Calvary is almighty to atone for sin and therefore all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, since the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s dear Son, cleans us from all sin.

We must heartily accept the great doctrine of the Atonement—regarding Jesus as standing in the place of sinful men, bearing for them the terror of the Law’s curse until justice was satisfied and could demand no more. Moreover, we should rejoice that Jesus Christ, by His dying, put away forever the sin of His people, so by His living He gave unto those who trust in Him a perfect righteousness, in which, despite their own sins, they are “accepted in the Beloved.”

We are also taught that if we heartily trust our soul with Christ, our sins, through His blood, are forgiven and His righteousness is imputed to us. The mere knowledge of these facts will not, however, save us, unless we really and truly trust our soul in the Redeemer’s hands. Faith must act in this wise—“I believe that Jesus came to save sinners and therefore, sinner though I am, I rest myself on Him. I know that His righteousness justifies the ungodly. I, therefore, though ungodly, trust in Him to be my righteousness. I know that His precious blood in Heaven prevails with God on the behalf of them that come unto Him. And since I come unto Him, I know by faith that I have an interest in His perpetual intercession.”

Now, I have enlarged the one thought of believing on God’s Son Jesus Christ. Brethren, I would not darken counsel by words without knowledge. “Believing” is most clearly explained by that simple word, “trust.” Believing is partly the intellectual operation of receiving Divine Truths, but the essence of it lies in relying upon those Truths. I believe that although I cannot swim, yonder friendly plank will support me in the flood—I grasp it and am saved—the grasp is faith. I am promised by a generous friend that if I draw upon his banker, he will supply all my needs—I joyously confide

in him and as often as I am in want I go to the bank and am enriched—my going to the bank is faith.

Thus faith is accepting God's great promise, contained in the Person of His Son. It is taking God at His word and trusting in Jesus Christ as being my salvation, although I am utterly unworthy of His regard. Sinner, if you take Christ to be your Savior this day, you are justified—though you are the biggest blasphemer and persecutor out of Hell—if you dare to trust Christ with your salvation, that faith of yours saves you. Though your whole life may have been as black and foul and devilish as you could have made it, yet if you will honor God by believing Christ is able to forgive such a wretch as you are, and will now trust in Jesus' precious blood, you are saved from Divine wrath.

**II.** The WARRANT OF BELIEVING is the point upon which I shall spend my time and strength this morning. According to my text, the warrant for a man to believe is the *Commandment* of God. This is the Commandment, that you "believe on His Son Jesus Christ."

Self-righteousness will always find a lodging somewhere or other. Drive it, my Brothers and Sisters, out of the ground of your confidence. Let the sinner see that he cannot rest on his good works. As foxes will have holes, this self-righteousness will find a refuge for itself in the warrant of our faith in Christ. It reasons thus—"You are not saved by what *you* do, but by what *Christ* did. But then, you have no right to trust in Christ unless there is something good in you which shall entitle you to trust in Him." Now this legal reasoning I oppose. I believe such teaching to contain in it the essence of Popish self-righteousness. The warrant for a sinner to believe in Christ is not in himself in *any* sense or in any manner, but in the fact that he is *commanded* then and there to believe on Jesus Christ.

Some preachers in the Puritan times, whose shoe latches I am not worthy to unloose, erred much in this matter. I refer not merely to Alleine and Baxter, who are far better preachers of the Law than of the Gospel, but I include men far sounder in the faith than they, such as Rogers of Dedham, Shepherd, the author of "The Sound Believer," and especially the American, Thomas Hooker, who has written a book upon qualifications for coming to Christ. These excellent men had a fear of preaching the Gospel to any except those whom they styled, "sensible sinners," and consequently kept hundreds of their hearers sitting in darkness when they might have rejoiced in the Light of God.

They preached repentance and hatred of sin as the warrant of a sinner's trusting to Christ. According to them, a sinner might reason thus—"I possess such-and-such a degree of sensibility on account of sin, therefore I have a right to trust in Christ." Now, I venture to affirm that such reasoning is seasoned with fatal error. Whoever preaches in this fashion may preach much of the Gospel, but the whole Gospel of the Free Grace of God in its fullness he has yet to learn. In our own day certain preachers assure us that a man must be regenerated before we may bid him believe in Jesus Christ. Some degree of a work of Grace in the heart being, in their judgment, the only warrant to believe. This also is false. It takes away a Gospel for sinners, and offers us a Gospel for saints. It is anything but a ministry of Free Grace.

Others say that the warrant for a sinner to believe in Christ is his election. Now, as his election cannot possibly be known by any man until he

has believed, this is virtually preaching that nobody has any known warrant for believing at all. If I cannot possibly know my election before I believe—and yet the minister tells me that I may only believe upon the ground of my election—how am I ever to believe at all? Election brings me faith and faith is the *evidence* of my election. But to say that my faith is to *depend* upon my *knowledge* of my election which I cannot get without faith, is to talk nonsense.

I lay down, this morning, with great boldness—because I know and am well persuaded that what I speak is the mind of the Spirit—this doctrine that the sole and only warrant for a sinner to believe in Jesus is found in the Gospel itself, and in the command which accompanies that Gospel, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” I shall deal with that matter first *negatively* and then *positively*.

1. First, **NEGATIVELY**. And here my first observation is that any other way of preaching the Gospel-warrant is *absurd*. If I am to preach faith in Christ to a man who is regenerated, then the man, being regenerated, is saved already. It is unnecessary and ridiculous for me to preach Christ to him and bid him to believe in order to be saved, when he is saved already, being regenerate. But you will tell me that I ought to preach it only to those who repent of their sins. Very well, but since true repentance of sin is the work of the Spirit, any man who has repentance is most certainly saved, because evangelical repentance never can exist in an unrenewed soul.

Where there is repentance there is faith already, for they never can be separated. So, then, I am only to preach faith to those who have it? Absurd, indeed! Is not this waiting till the man is cured and then bringing him the medicine? This is preaching Christ to the righteous and not to sinners. “No,” says one, “but we mean that a man must have some good desires towards Christ before he has any warrant to believe in Jesus.” Friend, do you not know that all good desires have some degree of holiness in them? If a sinner has any degree of true holiness in him it must be the work of the Spirit—for true holiness never exists in the carnal mind—therefore that man is already renewed and therefore saved.

Are we to go running up and down the world, proclaiming life to the living, casting bread to those who are fed already and holding up Christ on the pole of the Gospel to those who are already healed? My Brothers and Sisters, where is our inducement to labor where our efforts are so little needed? If I am to preach Christ to those who have *no* goodness, who have *nothing* in them that qualifies them for mercy, then I feel I have a Gospel so Divine that I would proclaim it with my last breath, crying aloud, that “Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*.” Sinners as sinners—not as *penitent* sinners or as *awakened* sinners—but sinners as *sinners*. Sinners “of whom I am chief.”

Secondly, to tell the sinner that he is to believe on Christ because of some warrant in himself, is *legal*—I dare to say it—**LEGAL**! Though this method is generally adopted by the higher school of Calvinists, they are herein unsound, not Calvinistic but **LEGAL**. It is strange that they who are so bold defenders of Free Grace should make common cause with Baxterians and Pelagians. I lay it down to be legal for this reason—if I believe in Jesus Christ because I feel a genuine repentance of sin, and there-

fore have a warrant for my faith, do you not perceive that the first and true ground of *my confidence* is the fact that I have repented of sin?

If I believe in Jesus because I have convictions and a spirit of prayer, then evidently the first and the most important fact is not Christ, but my *possession* of repentance, conviction and prayer—so that really my hope hinges upon my having repented. And if this is not legal I do not know what is. Put it lower. My opponents will say, “The sinner must have an awakened conscience before he is warranted to believe on Christ.” Well, then, if I trust Christ to save me because I have an awakened conscience, I say again, the most important part of the whole transaction is the alarm of *my conscience* and my real trust hangs *there*.

If I lean on Christ because I feel this and that, then I am leaning on my *feelings* and *not* on Christ alone—and this is legal, indeed. No, even if desires after Christ are to be my warrant for believing—if I am to believe in Jesus not because He bids me, but because I *feel* some desires after Him—you will again, with half an eye, perceive that the most important source of my comfort must be my *own desires*. So that we shall be always looking within—“Do I really desire? If I do, then Christ can save me. If I do not, then He cannot.” And so my desire overrides Christ and His Divine Grace. Away with such legality from the earth!

Again, any other way of preaching than that of bidding the sinner believe because God *commands* him to believe, is a *boasting* way of faith. For if my warrant to trust in Jesus is found in my experience, my loathing of sin, or my longings after Christ, then all these good things of mine are a *legitimate* ground of *boasting*, because though Christ may save me, yet these were the wedding dress which fitted me to come to Christ. If these are indispensable prerequisites and conditions, then the man who has them may truly and justly say, “Christ did save me, but I had the prerequisites and conditions first, and therefore let these share the praise.”

See, my Brothers and Sisters, those who have a faith which rests upon their own experience, what are they as a rule? Mark them and you will perceive much censorious bitterness in them. This prompts them to set up their own *experience* as the standard of saintship. And this may assuredly make us suspicious whether they ever were humbled in a Gospel manner at all. And so we see that their own best feelings and best repentances and best experiences in themselves are nothing more nor less than filthy rags in the sight of God.

My dear Brothers and Sisters, we must tell a sinner that foul and filthy as he is, without any preparation or qualification, he is to take Jesus Christ to be his All in All—that he may find in Him all that he can ever need. When we dare on the spot to bid the jailor just startled out of sleep, “Believe in Jesus”—we leave no room for self-glorification—all must be of Divine Grace. When we find the lame man lying at the temple gates, we do not bid him strengthen his own legs, or feel some life in them! We bid him in the name of Jesus rise up and walk—surely, here, when God the Spirit owns the Word, all boasting is excluded. Whether I rely on my experience or my good works makes little difference, for either of these reliances will lead to boasting since they are both legal. Law and boasting are twin brothers, but Free Grace and gratitude always go together.

Any other warrant for believing on Jesus than that which is presented in the Gospel is *changeable*. See, Brothers and Sisters, if my warrant to



believe in Christ lies in the melting of my heart and my experiences, then if today I have a melting heart and I can pour my soul out before the Lord, I have a warrant to believe in Christ. But tomorrow (who does not know this?) tomorrow my heart may be as hard as a stone, so that I can neither feel nor pray. Then, according to the qualification-theory, I have no right to trust in Christ! My warrant is gone from me.

According to the doctrine of final perseverance, the Christian's faith is continual. If so, the warrant of his faith must be always the same, or else he has sometimes an unwarranted faith, which is absurd. It follows from this that the abiding warrant of faith must lie in some immutable truth. Since everything within changes more frequently than ever does an English sky, if my warrant to believe in Christ is based within, it must change every hour. Consequently I am lost and saved alternately. Brethren, can these things be so? For my part I want a sure and immutable warrant for my faith. I want a warrant to believe in Jesus which will serve me when the devil's blasphemy comes pouring into my ears like a flood.

I want a warrant to believe which will serve me when my lusts and corruptions appear in terrible array and make me cry out, "O wretched man that I am." I want a warrant to believe in Christ which will comfort me when I have no good frames and holy feelings—when I am dead as a stone and my spirit lies cleaving to the dust. Such an unfailing warrant to belief in Jesus is found in this precious Truth of God, that His gracious Commandment, and *not* my variable experience, is my title to believe on His Son Jesus Christ.

Again, my Brothers and Sisters, any other warrant is utterly *incomprehensible*. Multitudes of my Brothers preach an impossible salvation. How often do poor sinners hunger and thirst to know the way of salvation and there is no available salvation preached to them? Personally, I do not remember to have been told from the pulpit to believe in Jesus as a sinner. I heard much of feelings which I thought I could never get, and frames after which I longed. But I found no peace until a true, Free Grace message came to me, "Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth."

See, my Brothers and Sisters, if convictions of soul are necessary qualifications for Christ, we ought to know to an ounce how much of these qualifications are needed. If you tell a poor sinner that there is a certain amount of humbling and trembling and convictions and heart-searching to be felt, in order that he may be warranted to come to Christ, I demand of all legal Gisele's distinct information as to the manner and exact degree of preparation required. Brethren, you will find when these gentlemen are pushed into a corner, they will not agree, but will everyone give a different standard, according to his own judgment.

One will say the sinner must have months of Law work. Another, that he only needs good desires. And some will demand that he possess the Graces of the Spirit—such as humility, godly sorrow and love to holiness. You will get no clear answer from them. If the sinner's warrant to come is found in the Gospel itself, the matter is clear and plain. But what a roundabout plan is that compound of Law and Gospel against which I contend! And let me ask you, my Brothers and Sisters, whether such an incomprehensible Gospel would do for a dying man? There he lies in the agonies of death. He tells me that he has no good thoughts or feelings and

asks what he must do to be saved. There is but a step between him and death—another five minutes and that man's soul may be in Hell.

What am I to tell him? Am I to be an hour explaining to him the preparation required before he may come to Christ? Brethren, I dare not. But I tell him, "Believe, Brother, even though it is the eleventh hour. Trust your soul with Jesus and you shall be saved." There is the same Gospel for a living man as for a dying man. The thief on the Cross may have had some experience, but I do not find him pleading it. He turns his eyes to Jesus, saving, "Lord, remember me!" How prompt is the reply, "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." He may have had longing desires, he may have had deep convictions, but I am quite sure he did not say, "Lord, I dare not ask You to remember me because I do not *feel* I have repented enough. I dare not trust You, because I have not been shaken over Hell's mouth."

NO! NO! NO!—He looked to Jesus as he was—and Jesus responded to his believing prayer. It must be so with you, my Brothers and Sisters, for any other plan but that of a sinner's coming to Christ *as a sinner* and resting on Jesus just as he is, is utterly incomprehensible. Or, if it is to be explained at all, will require a day or two to explain it. And that cannot be the Gospel which the Apostles preached to dying men.

Yet again, I believe that the preaching of alarms of conscience and repentance as qualifications for Christ, is *unacceptable* to the awakened sinner. I will introduce one, as Saltmarsh does in his, "Flowings of Christ's Blood Freely to the Chief of Sinners." Here is a poor Brother who dares not believe in Jesus. I will suppose him to have attended a ministry where the preaching is, "If you have *felt* this, if you have *felt* that, then you may believe." When you went to your minister in trouble, what did he say to you? "He asked me whether I felt my need of Christ, I told him I did not think I did, at least I did not feel my need enough. He told me that I ought to meditate upon the guilt of sin and consider the dreadful character of the wrath to come and I might in this way feel my need more."

Did you do so? "I did. But it seemed to me as while I meditated upon the terrors of judgment, my heart grew harder instead of softer. And I seemed to be desperately set and resolved in a kind of despair to go on in my ways. Yet, sometimes I did have some humbling and some melting of heart." What did your minister tell you to do to get comfort, then? "He said I ought to pray much." Did you pray? "I told him I could not pray. That I was such a sinner that it was of no use for me to hope for an answer if I could." What did he say then? "He told me I ought to lay hold upon the promises." Yes, did you do so? "No. I told him I could not lay hold upon the promises. That I could not see they were meant for me, for I was not the character intended. And that I could only find threats in the Word of God for such as I was."

What did he say then? "He told me to be diligent in the use of the means and to attend his ministry." What did you say to that? "I told him I was diligent, but that what I wanted was not *means*, I wanted to get my sins pardoned and forgiven." What did he say then? "Why, he said that I had better persevere and wait patiently for the Lord. I told him that I was in such a horror of great darkness, that my soul chose strangling rather than life. Well then, he said, he thought I must already be truly penitent, and was therefore safe and that sooner or later I should have hope. But I

told him, a mere hope was not enough for me, I could not be safe while sin lay so heavy upon me.

“He asked me whether I had not desires after Christ. I said I had, but they were merely selfish, carnal desires. That I sometimes thought I had desires, but they were only legal. He said if I had a desire to have a desire, it was God’s work and I was saved. That did prop me up for a time, Sir, but I went down again, for that did not do for me, I wanted something solid to rest on.” And Sinner, how is it now with you? Where are you now? “Well, Sir, I scarcely know where I am, but I pray you, tell me what I must do?” Brethren, my reply is prompt and plain. Hear it.—“Poor Soul, I have no questions to ask you. I have no advice to give you, except this—God’s command to you is, whatever you may be, trust to the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. Will you do it or not?”

If he rejects that, I must leave him. I have no more to say to him. I am clear of his blood and on him the sentence comes, “He that believes not shall be damned.” But you will find in ninety-nine cases out of one hundred, that when you begin to talk to the sinner, not about his repentings and his desires, but about Christ—and tell him that he need not fear the Law, for Christ has satisfied it. That he need not fear an angry God, for God is not angry with Believers. Tell him that all manner of iniquity was cast into the Red Sea of Jesus’ blood, and, like the Egyptians, drowned there forever—tell him that no matter however vile and wicked he may have been, “Christ is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him.”

And tell him that he has a *right* to come, be he who he may, or what he may, because God *bids* him come—you will find that the suitability of such a Gospel to the sinner’s case will prove a sweet inducement in the hand of the Holy Spirit, to lead that sinner to lay hold on Jesus Christ. O my Brothers and Sisters, I am ashamed of myself when I think of the way in which I have sometimes talked to awakened sinners! I am persuaded that the only true remedy for a broken heart is Jesus Christ’s most precious blood. Some surgeons keep a wound open too long. They keep cutting and cutting and cutting, till they cut away as much sound flesh as proud flesh.

Better than to half heal it, heal it at once, for Jesus Christ was not sent to keep open the wounds, but to bind up the broken in heart. To you, then, Sinners of every sort and hue—black, hard-hearted, insensible, impenitent—even to you is the Gospel sent, for “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners,” even the chief. I might here pause, surely, but I must add yet one other point upon this negative mode of reasoning. Any other warrant for the sinner’s faith than the Gospel itself, is *false* and *dangerous*.

It is *false*, my Brothers and Sisters, it is as false as God is true, that anything in a sinner can be his warrant for believing in Jesus. The whole tenor and run of the Gospel is absolutely contrary to it. It must be false, because there is nothing in a sinner until he believes which can be a warrant for his believing. If you tell me that a sinner has any good thing in him before he believes, I reply, impossible—“Without faith it is impossible to please God.” All the repenting and humbling and convictions that a sinner has *before* faith, must be, according to Scripture, displeasing to God. Do not tell me that his heart is broken. If it is only broken by carnal

means and trusts in its brokenness, it needs to be broken over again. Do not tell me he has been led to hate his sin. I tell you he does not hate his sin, he only hates Hell. There cannot be a true and real hatred of sin where there is not faith in Jesus. All the sinner knows and feels before faith is only an addition to his other sins and how can sin which deserves wrath be a warrant for an act which is the work of the Holy Spirit?

How *dangerous* is the sentiment I am opposing. My Hearers, it may be so mischievous as to have misled some of you. I solemnly warn you, though you have been professors of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for twenty years, if your reason for believing in Christ lies in this, that you have *felt* the terrors of the Law, that you have been alarmed and have been convicted—if your own *experience* is your warrant for believing in Christ—it is a false reason and you are really relying upon your experience and not upon Christ!

And mark you, if you rely upon your frames and feelings—no, if you rely upon your communion with Christ in any degree whatever—you are as certainly a lost sinner as though you relied upon oaths and blasphemies. You shall no more be able to enter Heaven, even by the works of the Spirit—and this is using strong language—than by your own works. For Christ, and Christ alone, is the foundation and “other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” Take care of resting in your own experience. All that is of nature’s spinning must be unraveled, and everything that gets into Christ’s place, however dear to you and however precious in itself, must be broken in pieces. And like the dust of the golden calf, must be strewed upon the water and you will be made sorrowfully to drink of it, because you made *it* your trust.

I believe that the tendency of that preaching which puts the warrant for faith anywhere but in the Gospel command, is to vex the true penitent and to console the hypocrite. The tendency of it is to make the poor soul which really repents feel that he must not believe in Christ because he sees so much of his own hardness of heart. The more spiritual a man is, the more unspiritual he sees himself to be. And the more penitent a man is, the more impenitent he discovers himself to be. Often the most penitent men are those who think themselves the most impenitent. And if I am to preach the Gospel to the penitent and not to every sinner, as a sinner, then those penitent persons, who, according to my opponents, have the most right to believe, are the very persons who will never dare to touch it, because they are conscious of their own impenitence and want of all qualification for Christ.

Sinners, let me address you with Words of Life—Jesus wants nothing of you. Nothing whatever! Nothing done, nothing felt. He wants not your works or feelings. Ragged, penniless—just as you are—lost, forsaken, desolate, with no good feelings and no good hopes. Still Jesus comes to you and in these words of pity he addresses you, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” If you believe in Him you shall never be confounded.

2. But now, POSITIVELY and as the negative part has been positive enough, we will be brief here. The Gospel command is a sufficient warrant for a sinner to believe in Jesus Christ. The *words of our text* imply this—“This is the Commandment.” My Brothers and Sisters, do you want any warrant for doing a thing better than God’s *command* to do it? The chil-

dren of Israel borrowed jewels of silver and jewels of gold from the Egyptians. Many, as they read the Bible, find fault with this transaction. But, to my mind, if God bade them do it, that was enough of justification for them. Very well—if God bids you believe—if this is His *Commandment*—that you believe, can you want a better warrant? I say, is there any necessity for any other? Surely the Lord's Word is enough.

Brethren, the command to believe in Christ must be the sinner's warrant, if you consider the nature of our commission. How runs it? "Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." It ought to run, according to the other plan, "preach the Gospel to every *regenerate* person, to every *convicted* sinner, to every *sensible* soul." But it is not so. It is to "every creature." But unless the warrant is a something in which every creature can take a share, there is no such thing as consistently preaching it to *every creature*. Then how is it put?—"He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved. He that believes not shall be damned."

Where is there a word about the prerequisites for believing. Surely the man could not be damned for not doing what he would not have been warranted in doing. Our preaching, on the theory of qualifications, should not be, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved," but, "Qualify yourselves for faith, be sensible of your sin, be regenerated, get marks and evidences, and then believe." Why, surely, if I am not to sow the good seed on the stony places and among the thorns, I had better give up being a sower and take to plowing, or some other work. When the Apostles went to Macedonia or Achaia, they ought not to have commenced with preaching Christ. They should have preached up qualifications, emotions and sensations, if these are the preparations for Jesus.

But I find that Paul, whenever he stands up, has nothing to preach but, "Christ and Him crucified." Repentance is preached as a *gift* from the exalted Savior, but it is never as the *cause* or *preparation* for believing on Jesus. These two Graces are born *together* and live with a common life—beware of making one a foundation for the other. I would like to carry one of those who only preach to sensible sinners and set him down in the capital of the kingdom of Dahomey. There are no sensible sinners there! Look at them, with their mouths stained with human blood, with their bodies smeared all over with the gore of their immolated victims—how will the preacher find any qualification there?

I know not what he could say, but I know what my message would be. My word would run thus—"Men and Brothers and Sisters, God, who made the heavens and the earth, has sent His Son Jesus Christ into the world to suffer for our sins and whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." If Christ crucified did not shake the kingdom of Dahomey, it would be its first failure. When the Moravian missionaries first went to Greenland, you remember that they were months and months teaching the poor Greenlander about the Godhead, the doctrine of the Trinity, and the doctrine of sin and the Law—and no converts were forthcoming.

But one day, by accident, one of the Greenlanders happening to read that passage, "Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God." He asked the meaning, and the missionary, hardly thinking him advanced enough to understand the Gospel, nevertheless ventured to explain it to him and the man be-

came converted—and hundreds of his countrymen received the Word. Naturally enough, they said to the missionaries, “Why did you not tell us this before? We knew all about there being a God and that did us no good. Why did you not come and tell us to believe in Jesus Christ before?” O my Brothers and Sisters, this is God’s weapon, God’s method—this is the great battering ram which will shake the gates of Hell. And we must see to it that it is brought into daily use.

I have tried, on the positive side, to show that a Free Grace warrant is consistent with the text—that it accords with Apostolic custom and is, indeed, absolutely necessary, seeing the condition in which sinners are placed. But, my Brothers and Sisters, to preach Christ to sinners, as sinners, must be right. For all the former acts of God are to sinners, as sinners. Whom did God elect? Sinners. He loved us with a great love, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins. How did He redeem us? Did He redeem us as saints? No. For while we were yet *enemies*, He reconciled us unto God by the death of His Son. Christ never shed His blood for the *good* that is in us, but for the *sin* that is in us. “He laid down His life for our sins,” says the Apostle.

If, then, in election and redemption, we find God dealing with sinners, as sinners, it is a marring and nullifying of the whole plan if the Gospel is to be preached to men as anything else but sinners. Again, it is inconsistent with the Character of God to suppose that He comes forth and proclaims, “If, O My fallen creatures, if you qualify yourselves for My mercy, I will save you. If you will feel holy emotions—if you will be conscious of sacred desires after Me, then the blood of Jesus Christ shall cleanse you.” There would be little which is godlike in that.

But when He comes out with pardons full and free and says, “Yes, when you lay in your blood, I said unto you, Live”—when He comes to you, His enemy and rebellious subject, and yet cries, “I have blotted out your sins like a cloud and like a thick cloud your iniquities”—why, this is Divine! You know what David said, “I have sinned.” What did Nathan say? “The Lord has put away your sins, you shall not die.” And that is the message of the Gospel to a sinner as a sinner. “The Lord has put away your sins. Christ has suffered. He has brought in perfect righteousness. Take Him, Trust Him and you shall live.” May that message come home to you this morning, my Beloved.

I have read with some degree of attention a book to which I owe much for this present discourse—a book by Abraham Booth, called “Glad Tidings to Perishing Sinners.” I have never heard anyone cast a suspicion upon Abraham Booth’s soundness. On the contrary, he has been generally considered as one of the most orthodox of the Divines of the last generation. If you want my views in full, read his book. If you need something more, let me say, among all the bad things which his revilers have laid at his door, I have never heard anyone blame William Huntingdon for not being high enough in doctrine.

Now, William Huntingdon prefaced in his lifetime a book by Saltmarsh, with which he was greatly pleased. And the marrow of its teaching is just this, in his own words, “The only ground for any to believe is He is faithful that has promised, not anything in themselves, for this is the Commandment, That you believe on His Son Jesus Christ.” Now, if William Huntingdon himself printed such a book as that, I marvel how the followers of

either William Huntingdon or Abraham Booth, how men calling themselves Calvinistic Divines and high Calvinists, can advocate what is not Free Grace, but a legal, graceless system of qualifications and preparations.

I might here quote Crisp, who is pat to the point and a high doctrine man, too. But I mention neither Booth nor Huntingdon as authorities upon the subject—to the Law and to the Testimony we must go! But I do mention them to show that men holding strong views on election and predestination yet did see it to be consistent to preach the Gospel to sinners as sinners—no—felt that it was *inconsistent* to preach the Gospel in any other way.

I shall only add that the blessings which flow from preaching Christ to sinners as sinners are of such a character as prove it to be right. Do you not see that this *levels us all*? We have the same warrant for believing and no one can exalt himself above his fellow. Then, my Brothers and Sisters, how it inspires men with hope and confidence! *It forbids despair*. No man can despair if this is true. Or if he does, it is a wicked, unreasonable despair, because if he has been ever so bad, yet God *commands* him to believe. What room can there be for despondency? Surely if anything could cut off Giant Despair's head, Christ preached to sinners is the sharp two-edged sword to do it!

Again, how it *makes a man live close to Christ*! If I am to come to Christ as a sinner every day, and I must do so, for the Word says, "As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk you in Him." If every day I am to come to Christ as a sinner, why then, how paltry all my doings look! What utter contempt it casts upon all my fine virtues, my preaching, my prayers, and all that comes of my flesh! And though it leads me to seek after purity and holiness, yet it teaches me to live on Christ and not on them—and so it keeps me at the Fountain Head.

My time flies and I must leave the last head, just to add, Sinner, whoever you may be, God now commands you to believe in Jesus Christ. This is His COMMANDMENT—He does not command you to *feel* anything, or *be* anything, to prepare yourself for this. Now, are you willing to incur the great guilt of making God a liar? Surely you will shrink from that—then dare to believe. You cannot say, "I have no right." You have a perfect right to do what God tells you to do. You cannot tell me you are not fit—there is no fitness wanted, the command is given and it is yours to obey, not to dispute. You cannot say it does not come to you—it is preached to every creature under Heaven.

And now Soul, it is so pleasant a thing to trust the Lord Jesus Christ that I would gladly persuade myself you need no persuading. It is so delightful a thing to accept a perfect salvation, to be saved by precious blood and to be married to so bright a Savior, that I would gladly hope the Holy Spirit has led you to cry, "Lord, I believe! Help You my unbelief."

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# LOVE'S CLIMAX

## NO. 2394

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JANUARY 6, 1895.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
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*“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us,  
and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”*  
1 John 4:10.

To find love, you have need send a lover—one whose soul is full of love is the most likely to discover it. John, with love in his heart, soars aloft and, using his eagle eyes, looks over all history and all space and, at last, he poises himself over one spot, for he has found that for which he was looking, and says, “Herein is love.” There is love in a thousand places, like the scattered drops of spray on the leaves of the forest, but as for the ocean, that is in one place, and when we reach it, we say, “Herein is water.” There is love in many places, like wandering beams of light, but as for the sun, it is in one part of the heavens and as we look at it, we say, “Herein is light.” So, “Herein,” said the Apostle, as he looked toward the Lord Jehovah, Himself, “Herein is love.” He did not point to his own heart and say, “Herein is love,” for that was but a little pool filled from the great sea of love. He did not look at the Church of God and say of all the myriads who counted not their lives dear unto them, “Herein is love,” for their love was only the *reflected brightness* of the great sun of love! No, he looked to God the Father, in the splendor of His condescension in giving His only Son to die for us, and he said “Herein is love,” as if all love were here—love at its utmost height, love at its climax, love out-doing itself—“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”

I have no time for an elaborate discourse and I have no desire to preach in such a fashion, but I do want to get at your hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit. There seem to me to be four things in the text, each of which tends to bring out the greatness of Divine Love. First, here is *love to the loveless*—“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us.” Secondly, here is *love to the sinful*—“God loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” Thirdly, here is *love providing a propitiation*, not passing by sin without atonement, but making a propitiation for sin. And, lastly, here is love surrendering the Only-Begotten—“God loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”

I. First, then, dear Friends, that we may see the love of God in its fullness, I invite you to think of His LOVE TO THE LOVELESS—“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us.”

Now, *if man had loved God, God need not have loved man.* If all of us from our earliest childhood had loved our God, it would have somewhat



lessened the wonder that He should love us. I can understand that we should marvel at God's loving us, even if we had always loved Him, for we are so insignificant that what little love we can give to Him can never deserve that He should fix His heart of love upon us. If an ant were in love with an angel, it would not, therefore, follow that the angel ought to be in love with the ant, yet there is no difference between an ant and an angel compared with the difference between us and God! We are *nothing* and He is All in All!

Yet I admit that if, from our youth up we had always loved God, it would not have seemed so extraordinary a thing, knowing what we do of God, that He should have loved us, but this is the startling word in our text—"Not that we loved God." There is a negative put there and the positive assertion is that *God did love us*, even though there is also the negative that *we did not love Him*. It is very easy for us to love those who love us. It is hard, sometimes, to love those who do *not* love us, especially if they are under great obligation to us—and I am sure that was our case with regard to God. We were deeply in debt to Him and we ought to have loved Him with all our heart, mind, soul and strength—but we did nothing of the kind! Yet, notwithstanding all that, He loved us. While we were His *enemies*, He loved us and sent His Son to save us.

Furthermore, let me remark that, *when man does love God, it is no very great wonder*. If you and I love God—and I hope that we do—if we love Him with all the fervor of which our hearts are capable, is there anything, after all, very extraordinary in such affection? Why, Brothers and Sisters, *not* to love the Lord our God is detestable! To love Him is, in one sense, commendable, but it can never be considered meritorious! Who can help loving a kind father who has cared for him all his days? Who can help loving one who has saved him from death? Who can help loving one who has laid down his life for him? Surely, if we are in a right state of heart, we cannot help loving God because He first loved us. When we do love Him, it is not at all wonderful—it would be little enough return for the great love wherewith He has loved us if we gave to Him all the love that we can ever bestow upon anyone—

***"Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a present far too small!  
Love so amazing, so Divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all!"***

And, if God's love gets all that it demands, it is even then but a *poor return* that we have made for love so magnificent as His!

But, Beloved, I have been only supposing something which is not true, for I have been supposing that we loved God. The fact is otherwise, according to the text, for the Apostle says, "Not that we loved God." Let us think a little of that terrible fact! I do not want to preach to you, but I do wish you to preach to yourselves, or rather, that the Holy Spirit may preach to you from this passage—"Not that we loved God." For many a year we were indifferent to God. He came across our path in many ways, but we did not want to see Him, or to hear about Him. Some of us were favored by godly training, yet we did our best to miss the blessing of it. We tried, as men say, to "sow our wild oats." We did not care to do what

God would have us do—we were totally indifferent to His claims! Yet now, with tears in our eyes, we can truthfully say that, “He loved us.” We know that the Lord loved us even when we were indifferent to Him!

Worse than that, there were some who were even insulting to God. I mean that they spoke ill words about Him and about His Grace, His day, His people, His cause, His Word. Some spoke exceedingly proud and exalted themselves against the Lord—yet He loved them. Oh, how it wrings the heart of a penitent sinner to think that God loved him when he was a blasphemer, loved him when he imprecated a curse upon himself, loved him when God, Himself, could not see anything in him that was lovable! Loved him when there was not a spot of merit as big as a pin's head upon which love could have rested if it had needed to rest on merit at all! Oh, wonder of wonders! “Herein is love, not that we loved God,” but that we were indifferent to Him and some even insulting to Him!

And oh, *what rebellion against God there was in some of our hearts!* How we kicked and struggled against the idea of yielding to Him! Are there not numbers of you who never think of God at all? You go to your daily work, or to your business and God is not at all in your thoughts! If there were no God, it would make no difference to some of you, except that you would feel a little more comfortable and you would then be glad that there would be no Judgment Day. But, O Sirs, this is a sad, a *miserable* state to be in! If there were no hereafter and I had to die like a dog, I would choose to love my God, for I find a peace, a strength, a joy in it that makes life worth living! There is nothing here on earth that is worth a man's pursuit except his God! If he once knew the love of God, life would wear sunbeams about it—but apart from that it is a drudgery! To the unbeliever, existence in this world is a horrible slavery.

But, Brothers and Sisters, it is very wonderful that God should love us when we try our hardest to be rid of Him, when we are at enmity against Him, when we are opposed, even, to His love, and will not listen to the Gospel of His Grace! Yet so He did—He loved us even in this condition! Perhaps some of you do not feel that there is anything very remarkable in this love of the Lord to the loveless. I should like you to try, if you could, love somebody who has nothing about him that is at all lovable. I hope, dear Christian people, that you do this, but if you learn to love the wicked, the ungodly, the injurious, the deceivers—if you even love those who vilify you, those who slander you every day, those who despise you and deride you and those who are ungrateful to you—if you do this, then you will get into some sort of sympathy with God and you will begin to understand a little of what His great love must be!

But there are some men who will never know what such an experience as that is until God's Grace renews them, for if anybody says half a word against them, their fist is soon in his eye! If anyone does them the slightest injury, they will remember it and resent it as long as they live! Yes, and I am afraid that there are some who call themselves Christians who are of this spirit, and will not forgive. I heard of a man who was driving an omnibus and who was beating one of the horses, but he never hit the other. Someone on the box said to him, “Why don't you whip the other

horse?" "Oh," he answered, "I never touch *him*, for if I did, when I put him up at night, he would kick me like a Christian." When I heard that, I supposed that there must be some so-called Christians who know how to kick when they get a cut of the whip—and I am afraid that there are. But, if you can forgive to 70 times seven and still continue to forgive, even *then* you have only done what you *ought* to do, for this is what the Lord Jesus commanded His disciples to do—and this is what God did, though He was under no obligation to do anything of the kind! Instead of bearing any resentment, He was full of Almighty Love. And there are some here, tonight, who, as they remember the years in which they lived without loving God, must feel that, "herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us."

**II.** But now, secondly, it greatly enhances the love of God that it is LOVE TO THE SINFUL.

Remember that *all sins are offenses against God*. Yet it is clear from our text that the Lord loves those who have offended Him. There are multitudes who have lived a life full of opposition to God, yet He has loved them all the while and saved them after all!

Remember, too, that *God has a very keen appreciation of what sin is*. It shocks Him, it disgusts Him—He cannot bear it. He calls it, "this abominable thing which I hate." You and I are often callous to sin, but God abhors it. His holy soul is stirred to indignation against it. Yet, notwithstanding that—

***"God loved the world of sinners lost  
And ruined by the Fall"***

and sent His Son into the world to deliver men from sin, the sin which He loathed and hated, for He determined to save them from the sin, itself, and from all its terrible results! Well might the hymn-writer I just quoted go on to sing—

***"Oh, 'twas love, 'twas wondrous love,  
The love of God to me!  
It brought my Savior from above,  
To die on Calvary."***

Do not forget, also, that *many sins are committed specially against God's Love*. That is to say, there are some who even dare to sin the more because God is merciful! There are, no doubt, many who have become hardened in their lives of sin—though it is a shocking thing that it should be so—by the very fact that they believe God is ready to forgive them. If such is the condition of your hearts, my Hearers, let me assure you that it has also been the case with many others and yet, notwithstanding such an enormity of guilt, they have been saved from their sins. Verily, "herein is love."

In the case of some persons, *these sins have been persisted in and aggravated*. There are many whom God has loved with an everlasting love and whom Christ has redeemed with His precious blood, who have lived twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy years up to their necks in sin—and that against light and knowledge! Some have gone on sinning with a high hand more and more, yet Almighty Love has come in and saved even them! Never let it be thought that any sinner is beyond the reach of

Divine Mercy so long as he is in the land of the living. I stand here to preach illimitable love, unbounded Grace to the vilest of the vile, to those who have nothing in them that can deserve consideration from God—men who ought to be swept into the bottomless pit at once if Justice meted out to them their just deserts! Even such sinners as these, in multitudes of instances, have been washed and made clean through the blood of Jesus Christ! “Herein is love.”

I do not see how God ever could have shown His love to the same extent as it is now displayed if there had never been any sin in the world. I would not dare to say, as Augustine boldly did concerning Adam's sin, “*Beata culpa!*”—“Happy fault!”—because it gave an opportunity for Divine Love to prove itself to an extraordinary degree! But I will say this—if God had made ten thousand worlds and lit them up with all His wisdom and power, I do not see how He could have manifested His matchless love, even then, as He displays it now in the fact that He has loved sinful men and women—and loved them so as to make them His sons and daughters and bring them to dwell with Him at His right hand through Jesus Christ His Son!—

**“He gave His Son, His only Son,  
To ransom rebel worms!  
‘Tis here He makes His goodness known  
In its most Divine forms.”**

I have spoken to you, therefore, of two things that enhance God's love—love to the loveless, and love to the sinful. I wish that some poor soul could creep in through the door of God's Mercy to which I have pointed and get a part and lot in these precious matters!

**III.** But now, thirdly, one of the things that make God's love seem very wonderful is that it is LOVE PROVIDING A PROPITIATION.

I have heard it asked, “Why did not God just wipe out human sin, and say to the guilty, “There, there, you have done wrong, but I have forgiven you””? Now, if He had done that, what inference would you have drawn from such action on His part? Certainly you would not have been able to say, “Herein is love,” in the sense in which you can now say it.

If the Lord had thus passed by sin, *sin would have seemed little, and Divine Love little*. Many would have said, “Oh, well, sin was nothing very great after all. It was an offense against God—He blotted it out—and there is an end of it!” Is not everybody here quite certain that we would have spoken like that? We would have concluded that sin was a very trivial matter, nothing to worry about, or God would not have passed it by so readily. But, look—it was such an awful evil that *He could not pass it by*. In His Wisdom, whose judgment is Infallible, sin was not pardonable except through a propitiatory Sacrifice! It was not possible that offenses against The Divine Majesty should be wiped out without expiation! God was the best judge of that question and now, when He says, “There must be a propitiation, but I will provide it; there must be an Atonement, but I will arrange it”—“Herein is love”—love seen at a greater height than it could have been seen in any other way!

Besides, dear Friends, by any other method of removing sin, *love would not have been seen so majestic over all other attributes*. Suppose

that the Lord had simply said, "Well, though these people have offended, I forgive them and there is an end of the quarrel"? Then there could not have been exhibited that wondrous sight which we now see! In the death of Christ, the Great Propitiation, we see Divine Wisdom planning the way, exercising itself to the fullest to devise a method by which God might be just and yet, "the Justifier of him which believes in Jesus." Then we see Divine Justice coming in fully satisfied by the death of Christ and bowing a glad assent to the pardon of the sinner—who is as justly forgiven as he would, on the other hand, have been righteously punished! In the vicarious Atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ, we see all the attributes of God sitting at the feet of Love—all looking up and saying to Love—"We will do your bidding, we will, all of us, co-act and co-work till the whole Godhead shall be seen exerting its Omniscience and putting forth its Omnipotence, in order that there might be a propitiation for sin." "Herein is love."

Again, I do not see, dear Friends, if God had pardoned us without expiation, how we ever could have *felt the security of love that we now feel*. I feel at this moment—I do not know how every Believer, here, feels—but I feel that I am absolutely safe! I am a sinner, but there is no reason on earth, or under the earth, or in Heaven, itself, why I should be sent to Hell. My sin has been forgiven me, but, what is much more than that, my Lord Jesus Christ has made such a complete Atonement for all my guilt that *it does not even exist as a charge against me!* The debt is paid and the receipt is nailed to His cross—and this gives me such a perfect peace, such an absolute rest—I do not think I could have had if I had merely read in the Scriptures that God had passed by the sin without a propitiation! He has not passed by the sin—He has exacted the full penalty for it! And the penalty having been paid, the Atonement having been offered, who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Our dead sins are buried! Christ, Himself, has put them away, and they can never rise against us in judgment any more. Looking up to our Lord, we can say, with Toplady—

***"Complete Atonement You have made,  
And to the utmost farthing paid  
Whatever Your people owed!  
Nor can His wrath on me take place,  
If sheltered in Your righteousness,  
And sprinkled with Your blood."***

And once more, *the stoop of love could never have seemed so great without expiation*, for, see, if God had pardoned sin without Atonement, He would have sat in the serene majesty of Heaven and we would have thought that sin was a trifling thing, altogether beneath His notice! But now, He that made all things and by whom all things consist, takes off the robes of His splendor and comes down to earth! What can He be going to do? Blessed spirits, who have waited around His Throne for ages, what is He doing? He is going to the earth to unite the nature of fallen humanity with His own perfect Deity! He that is God is also to be Man! What a wonder! What a marvel! But there is something more extraordinary to follow—being found in fashion as a Man, the time comes when

man's sin is *laid upon Him!* What? did He bear *sin?* Listen—"Who His own self"—that is, Christ, whom angels worship, the Incarnate Wisdom, without whom was not anything made that was made—"who His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree." "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree."

Why, do you know, sometimes, when I am thinking over this wondrous stoop of love, I wish that I could jump into this pulpit, directly, and tell you what I feel about it? Sometimes, at the dead of night, I sit up in bed, lost in wonder at the amazing Love of God in the gift of His dear Son! That I should commit a sin and that God, Himself, should bear its punishment! That my guilt should make a propitiation, necessary—and that the Divine Son of God should suffer in my place! That the necessary expiation should be made—this is surely the greatest wonder of earth or Heaven! It is the greatest marvel that ever shall be, that He, who is God over all, blessed forever, yet stoops so low as this! I can understand His stooping to poverty and being a carpenter. I can understand His stooping to hunger and to thirst. I can understand His stooping even to death—but *that He should bear our sins*—this is the greatest stoop of all! "Herein is love." O blessed Lord Jesus, how must You have loved us when You did not disdain to bear even the enormous burden of our sin! Oh, that these lips had language that I could tell this old, old story as my heart often tells it to herself! But I must leave each one of you to think it over, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, till you, also, feel, "Herein is love,"

**IV.** The last thing on which I am to speak at this time is LOVE SUR-RENDERING THE ONLY-BEGOTTEN.

I have shown you wherein God's Love excels all other loves—it is love to the loveless, love to the sinful, love providing a propitiation. Now here is the climax of the love of God in giving up His only-begotten Son—"He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

You do not need for me to say much about this part of our subject. Will you kindly recall the story of Abraham and his son Isaac going to the mount in the land of Moriah? Put the Lord God and His well-beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, in the place of the Patriarch and his son, and you can see the picture of the Atonement drawn to the life before your eyes. You remember how the Lord said to Abraham, "Take now your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and get you into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell you of."

Jesus was God's Son, His only-begotten Son, whom He loved more than any of you can ever love your sons or daughters, for the love of God towards Him is ineffable, immeasurable! It is not possible for me to tell you how much God loved His Son. But that Son who had always given Him delight, in whom He was well-pleased—that Son must endure shame, agony and *death* if sinners were ever to be saved! How could the Father give up His Son for such a purpose? I have sometimes felt as if I could almost rush in, and say, "No! It must not be! The price is too great to be paid for the rescue of such worthless worms as we are!" Yet, to ran-

som any one of us, the Son of God must be sacrificed and sacrificed, as it were, by His Father, for thus is it written, "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief." Thus, there is one point of resemblance between the offering of Isaac and the propitiatory Sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ—it was the Father who had to offer up His son whom He loved so dearly. But there are many more similarities between these two offerings.

In the 22<sup>nd</sup> chapter of the Book of Genesis, we read that, "Abraham rose up early in the morning." God also rose early to make this great propitiation for our sins. In the Everlasting Covenant, before the earth was, He ordained the Sacrifice which should tear His heart. God Himself had done as Abraham did when he cut the wood for the burnt offering, that is, the Lord prepared everything for the coming, the life and the death of His Son. All that went before in the arrangements of Providence was like the chopping of the wood and the laying of it in order—even from eternity the great Father contemplated the Sacrifice on Calvary and went on with all that was necessary for its completion.

Then there was the lifting of the sacrificial knife—"Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son." That lifting of the knife in the case of Jesus was, first, when in Gethsemane's garden, the Father permitted His Son to sweat, as it were, great drops of blood. And next, when on the Cross He allowed Him to say, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" This was the knife for the sacrificing of the Son. Then came the crushing of our Redeemer's soul beneath the mass of human sin. The great upper and nether millstones of Almighty Wrath pressed and bruised the heart of the Son of God! Omnipotence put forth all its power to deal out the vengeance due to sin! It cried to Justice to be stern, sterner than ever—"Awake, O sword." Not, "Let Me use the sword," but, "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man that is my Fellow, says the Lord of Hosts." And into the very dust of death the well-beloved Son of God was crushed!

Remember, also, that touching little sentence about Abraham and Isaac—"They went both of them together." This was true of Jesus and His Father—Jesus a willing Sacrifice—and God as willingly surrendering His dear Son for our sakes. Never forget the Father's love in giving up His Son! It used to be laid down in theology that God "has no feeling, neither parts nor passions." Others may worship a dead, unfeeling God, if they will, but I do not! The God whom I worship can feel far more than any of His creatures can! And what He felt when He gave up His Son to die, it is not for human lips to tell. This is among the things which it were unlawful and impossible for a man to utter. Just what you would have felt if you had given your only son. Just what you would have felt if you had been Abraham and you had offered up your beloved Isaac. Just that—*multiplied by infinity*—did the Eternal Father feel when He gave His Son to be the propitiation for our sins! "Herein is love." Rightly did we sing just now—

***"O love of God, how strong and true!  
Eternal, and yet always new,  
Uncomprehended and unbought,***

***Beyond all knowledge and all thought.  
We read You best in Him who came  
To bear for us the Cross of shame;  
Sent by the Father from on high,  
Our life to live, our death to die.”***

When you get home, sit down, say nothing to anybody, but just try, if you can, to realize that God actually did give up His only-begotten Son that you might live through Him, if you are a Believer in that dear Son of God and you live through Him! If He bore your griefs and carried your sorrows. If He was wounded for your transgressions and bruised for your iniquities. If He put away all your sins, then fall down at His dear feet and weep yourself away. No, rise and sing yourself away! And when you have done that, come back, again, and go forth to work for Him with all your might—and try to love your fellow men at something like the rate at which God loved you! You will never reach that climax of love, but aim at getting as near to it as you can—and God bless you in the effort!

It seems to me so sad that there should be anybody in the world who does not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. And very sad that there should be any poor sinner, here, who does not lay hold on eternal life as it is set forth in the Gospel. You self-righteous people, you who never did any wrong, I do not expect you to take any notice of this discourse—you are so wretchedly wrapped up in yourselves that you care nothing for my blessed Master! You are like the self-made man, of whom I have heard, who used to adore his own maker—his maker being himself.

But you who are poor and needy, burdened with sin and full of guilt, this is the God for you! This is the Christ for you! Come and have Him, come and trust Him and then sing with all of us who have believed in Him—“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins!”

May His blessing rest on you all, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
1 JOHN 4; PHILIPPIANS 4:1-9.**

**1 John 4:1.** *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.* If John had need to say that in the early morning of Christianity, I am sure we ought to say it with greater emphasis today! It is certainly true in these days that, “many false prophets are gone out into the world.” Therefore we, also, must, “try the spirits whether they are of God.”

**2.** *Hereby know you the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.* If the doctrine of the Incarnation of God in Christ is denied, as it was by the first heretics, we may conclude that the Spirit of God is not in such teaching. Any doctrine which dishonors Christ—whether in His Person, or His offices, or His Atonement, or in any other way—you may at once conclude is not of God, for that which comes from the Spirit of God glorifies Christ. Did not our Lord, Himself, say, concerning the Holy Spirit, “He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you”?



**3.** *And every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof you have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.* The devil is up early at his evil work! We may sleep, but he never does. This is that spirit of antichrist, whereof, "you have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world."

**4.** *You are of God, little children, and have overcome them.* How? By argument? No, but—

**4.** *Because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world.* If God's own Spirit is in you, you need not fear any of these enemies. "Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world." If it were a conflict between you and others who had the Spirit of God within them, the conflict would be grievous and the issue of it would be doubtful. But now that the struggle is between the Spirit of God who is in you and the spirit of error that is in the world, you need have no question about the ultimate result of the battle!

**5, 6.** *They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God: he that knows God hears us; he that is not of God hears not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.* If Apostolic teaching is denied, those who deny it are not of God, for the Spirit of God was in the Apostles, as He is also in all the Lord's true children. By this test we may try many of the spirits of the present day—"He that knows God hears us; He that is not of God hears not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." The Apostle now gives us another Infallible test by which we may "try the spirits."

**7, 8.** *Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and everyone that loves is born of God, and knows God. He that loves not knows not God; for God is Love.* Where there is the spirit of enmity, of envy, of pride, of contention, there is not the Spirit of God! That which makes towards love, we may depend upon it—it came forth from love! But that which makes towards division, contention, emulation and strife, is not of God, "for God is Love."

**9-12.** *In this was manifested the Love of God toward us, because that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that some might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought, also, to love one another. No man has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwells in us, and His love is perfected in us. We cannot see God, but we can love God, and love, therefore, takes the place of eyes to us. When we love God, it is because He dwells in us! That is better than seeing Him—to have Him resident within our spirit, although He is not discernible by these mortal eyes!*

**13-16.** *Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. Whoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwells in Him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God has to us. God is Love; and he that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him.* These words are very sim-

ple, but the lesson they convey is a very deep one. Most of them are monosyllables, but, oh, what marvels of meaning the Holy Spirit enabled the Apostle John to put into them!

**17, 18.** *Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear: because fear has torment. That is a servile fear, of course, but there is a fear which has no torment in it—that holy fear which even angels feel when they veil their faces in the Presence of the Most high. There is no torment in that reverent awe and, the more we have of love towards God, the more of that filial fear shall we have! But that slavish dread, that awful terror which begets within itself dislike, cannot live where true love is planted within the soul—*

**“Perfect love casts out fear.”**

**18-20.** *He that fears is not made perfect in love. We love Him, because He first loved us. If a man says, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar: for he that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God, whom he has not seen? God looked upon us with an eye that saw all our sin and misery, yet He loved us, and He wants us to have a love which, while it sees all the imperfection and all the faults in our fellow men, yet loves them notwithstanding all. If we do not love those whom we see, the Apostle says that we do but lie when we talk of loving God whom we have not seen.*

**21.** *And this commandment have we from Him, That he who loves God love his brother, also. Now let us read what another Apostle has to say, under the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit, upon this subject of Christian love. Turn to Paul's Epistle to the Philippians, the fourth chapter.*

**Philippians 4:1.** *Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved. It is a great joy to a minister, as it was to the Apostle Paul, to have converts. But that joy is greatly diminished when they do not stand fast—then, indeed, every supposed joy becomes a sorrow and, instead of the roses which yield a sweet perfume to the Lord's servant—thorns begin to prick and wound his heart.*

**2.** *I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord. Only two women and we do not know who they were, yet Paul gives each of them a, “beseech”—“I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.” If there are only two of the most obscure Sisters in the Church who are quarrelling, their differences ought to be brought to an end at once. There should be no disagreements among Christians! Love should reign, peace should predominate. If there is anything contrary to such a state as that, God grant that it may soon be brought to an end!*

**3.** *And I entreat you, also, true yoke fellow, help, those women which labored with me in the Gospel, with Clement, also, and with other of my fellow laborers, whose names are in the Book of Life. Brother, do all the good you can to help everybody else to do good! Help those whose names are in the Book of Life, even if they are not known anywhere else. Also help the “Clement” whose name is known—be sure to help him. Indeed, help everybody! There is an office in the Church of Christ which we do*

not sufficiently recognize, but which ought to be abundantly filled. Paul mentions it in writing to the Corinthians. He says, "And God has set some in the Church, first Apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." It is the office of certain Christians to be "helps." May we always have many such "helps" among us! Did you ever notice that almost every time that Bartholomew is mentioned in Scripture, we read, "and Bartholomew"? He is never spoken of alone, but it is written, "Philip, and Bartholomew," or, "Bartholomew and Matthew." It is good to have some Bartholomeus who are always helping somebody else, so that when there is any good work to be done, Bartholomew is always ready to share in it, for he shall also have a part in the reward at the last.

**4.** *Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.* The very word, "rejoice," seems to imply a reduplication. It is joy, and re-joy, joy over again! But here, you see, it is a *fourfold* rejoicing; joy, and re-joy; and again I say, joy, and re-joy! And this is to be the Christian's continual experience, for the Apostle says, "Rejoice in the Lord *always*."

**5, 6.** *Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.* Have no care, but much prayer. Prayer is the cure for care! If you are in trouble, "Let your requests be made known," not to your neighbors, but, "unto God."

**7, 8.** *And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are honest, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report; if there is any virtue, and if there is any praise, think on these things.* Be on the side of everything that is good and right, everything that helps true human progress, everything that increases virtue and purity. As a Christian, take an interest in everything that helps to make men true, honest, just, pure, and lovely.

**9.** *Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard and seen in me, do; and the God of peace shall be with you.* May the Lord fulfill that gracious Word to all of us, "The God of peace shall be with you"! Amen.

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

# **“HEREIN IS LOVE”**

## **NO. 2448**

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING,  
JANUARY 19, 1896.  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us,  
and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”  
1 John 4:10.***

As there not scenes and circumstances which, now and then, transpire before us that prompt an exclamation like that of the Apostle, “Herein is love”? When we have seen the devotedness of a mother to her children. When we have marked the affection of friend for friend and caught a glimpse in different human relationships of the kindness that exists in human hearts, we have said, “Herein is love!” Yesterday these words seemed to rise up and float upon my tongue, although I did not use them, for they seemed to be consecrated to something higher than creature affection. I had the painful duty of attending the Abney Park Cemetery, to bury a beloved Sister in Christ, one of the most useful women we had among us—and as I stood there to commit her body to the grave, I was pleased—I cannot tell you how I was beyond measure pleased, on that dark foggy day, at that distance from town, to find nearly a hundred, mostly poor people, gathered there to show their respect to their friend who had helped, in many cases, to feed them and clothe them and, in every instance, had tried to point them to Christ.

There were thousands of tears shed of the sincerest and most heavenly kind. While conducting the service, I could not help feeling not only a sympathy with her bereaved husband, but with those who had been the objects of our Sister’s care—men and women who, perhaps, had given up a day’s work and walked long dreary miles in the unpropitious weather of yesterday, that they might come and mingle their tears over the dust of one who, as a Christian woman, had served them well. I could not help thinking, and it suggested the text to me, “Herein is love!” Seeing what love had done and seeing how love comes back in return, I said within myself, when love has learned its way into one bosom, it scatters its seed and fructifies in the hearts of hundreds more! Love begets love—let it once begin and none can tell its end!

But the words were too sacred for me to use, even at that solemn service, though they came up so suddenly to the surface of my mind. The Apostle had consecrated them to another love, still higher, more profound, more perfect and more celestial. I shall ask you, tonight, to look at

and consider the wonder which the Apostle discovered and made him, with uplifted hands, exclaim, “Herein is love!”

The wonder, he tells us, which astonished him was not that we loved God, for suppose that all men had loved God—what wonder would there have been in it? God created us. We are wonderful specimens of His power and wisdom. The various devices for securing our comfort and maintaining us in life—the devices within the body and outside the body, the way in which the whole world is made to be the servant of man, so that, as George Herbert says—

**“Man is one world, and has another to attend him,”**

these tokens of benevolence ought to have made all men love God! If every creature who sprang from the loins of Adam had lived a perfect life of obedience and had continually revered the God who made him and supplied his needs, there would not have been anything so very remarkable in the fact, for God deserves the love of all His creatures. Making His sun to shine upon us and giving us fruitful seasons—keeping us in life and preserving us from going down into the Pit— we *ought* to love Him. And if we did, it would not be anything to excite astonishment.

And, beloved Brothers and Sisters, when the Grace of God comes into the human heart, casts Satan out of it and renders us capable of loving God, there is nothing very surprising in our loving Him. I shall not ask you to think of the ordinary love which there is in common Christians. Indeed, the wonder about it is that it should be so ordinary, so little, so faint! It is a great wonder—to be spoken of with tears—that God should do so much for us and that we should love Him so little in return. Watts did well to pen those lines—

**“Dear Lord! And shall we ever lie  
At this poor dying rate?  
Our love so faint, so cold to You,  
And Yours to us so great?  
Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove  
With all Your quickening powers,  
Come, shed abroad a Savior’s love,  
And that shall kindle ours.”**

But now, think of the truly earnest missionary. Think of such men as Carey, or Moffat, or John Williams—men who give up all the comforts of life, all the hopes of wealth—and go forth among a barbarous people to suffer insult, perhaps to meet with death for Christ’s sake! They brave the terrors of fever and pestilence! They pass through jungles! They dare tempestuous seas—no mountains are too high, no weathers are too stern to deter them! They force their way into the center of Africa, or high up among the Esquimau if they may but tell of the love of Jesus to dying men! It may seem very amazing to us, but if you come to think of it, compared with what *Christ has done for them*, they may, and they usually do, sit down and confess that they have done nothing whereof to glory! They have done only what it was their duty to have done and they all confess that they fall short of the service which Christ deserves.

Though we might say, in a modified sense, “Herein is love,” yet, after all, it is but faintly spoken, for it is but comparatively true.

As we have read Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*, or some other history of the saints, and marveled at the stories of their confessing Christ before the Inquisitors, singing joyful hymns when their bones were put out of joint upon the rack, or standing boldly up upon the blazing fire while their flesh was being consumed, still testifying to the preciousness of Christ, have we not said, “Herein is love”? Well might we say so as we contrasted our love with theirs, but, after all, if you will but think a minute, it is a little thing for a man to be willing to burn to death for One who saved him from everlasting burning! ‘Tis sharp work, but it is soon over, and the reward makes up for it all while Divine Grace sustains the sufferer under the fiery trial! There is nothing, even in the love of martyrs, worthy of praise when compared with the exceeding love of Christ! These are stars—let them hide their heads in the Presence of the Sun! These are all sweet flowers, yet compare them not with the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley, whose fragrance fills both earth and Heaven! Those whose spiritual senses are qualified to judge, forget all else while they stand entranced before this one gathering up of everything that is lovely and cry, “Herein is love!”

Oh, this love of Christ—it is beyond all degree, standard, or compass! In comparison with it, other love, high and noble as that other love may be, dwindles into insignificance! Then let me ask you now, somewhat more in detail, to think of the love of God in Christ Jesus towards us as the text sets it forth.

**I.** The love of God is LOVE TO THOSE WHO DO NOT LOVE HIM. “Not that we loved God, but that He loved us.” When God loves those who love Him, it seems to be according to the law of nature, but when He loves those who do *not* love Him, this must be above all laws—it is according, certainly, to the extraordinary rule of Divine Grace, and Grace alone! There was not a man on earth who loved God. There was none that did good—no, not one. And yet, the Lord fixed the eye of His electing love upon sinners in whom there was no thought of loving Him! There is no more love to God in an unrenewed heart than there is of life within a piece of granite. No more of love to God is there within the soul that is unsaved than there is of fire within the depths of the ocean’s waves! And here, indeed, is the wonder, that when we had no love to God, He should have loved us!

This is a mild way of expressing it, for instead of loving God, my Brothers and Sisters, you and I withheld from Him the poorest tribute of homage. We were careless and indifferent. Days and weeks passed over our heads in which we hardly *thought* of God. If there had not been any God, it would not have made much difference to us as to our thoughts, habits and conversation. God was not in all our thoughts and, perhaps, if somebody could have informed us that God was dead, we would have thought it a fine piece of news, for then we could live as we liked and need not be under any fear of being judged by Him! Instead of loving

God—though now we rejoice that He loves us—we rebelled against Him. Which of His Laws have we not broken? We cannot put our finger upon one command without being compelled to acknowledge that we have violated its claims, or come short of its demands.

I do not want to dilate upon a general doctrine, tonight. I rather want to press home to the conscience of every child of God here that God loves him. You know very well that God did not love you because you loved Him, for there was not—you will confess it painfully—anything like love to God in you, but much, very much, that sprang from natural enmity and aversion to Him. Why, then, did He love you? Men do not generally love those who hate them, those who spite them, those who give them ill names—and yet God loved us! Why, there are some of the Lord’s people that God loved who, before conversion, used to curse Him to His face! The Sabbath was the day they took for sensual pleasure. They were drunks; they were unclean; they were everything that is vile—and yet He loved them! Oh, the wonder of this! When they were reeking in the kennels of sin—when there was no sin too black and too vile for them to commit—God loved them! Oh, never dream that He began to love you when you began to love Him! Oh, no! But it was because He loved you hard and fast, when you were reveling in your sin, that His love put its arms around you, lifted you out of your sin and made you what you are!

Oh, but this is good tidings to some of you! Perhaps you are still, as all God’s people once were, living in sin. You hardly know why you have strayed in here, but perhaps, while you sit and listen, you may hear that God has loved you. Oh, that it may come to be true, that you may prove to be one of His chosen people whom He loves even though in sin and whom He will love till you come out of sin and turn to Christ and get pardon for it! Pray, dear Christian people, pray that it may be so! God hears prayer. Put up the prayer silently now—“Lord, attract some of Your chosen people to Christ tonight! Let some who never thought of Him, but were bent on sinning rather than of being brought to God, see Jesus and find salvation through Him.” “Herein is love!” God loved the unlovely, the hateful, the vile, the depraved—and loved them though they did not love Him!

**II.** Another part of the wonder lies in this, THAT THIS LOVE SHOULD COME FROM SUCH AN ONE AS GOD IS. “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that *He* loved us.” What does God want in loving us? You never saw a fly on the dome of St. Paul’s—it would have been too small an object for you to see when walking round the Cathedral! Now, a fly on the dome of St. Paul’s is a monstrous being, a marvelous individual compared with *you* crawling about this world. Why, it bears a much larger proportion to St. Paul’s than you do to this globe! What an insignificant little creature you are! Supposing you could love that fly—it would seem a strange thing. Or that an angel could love that fly—it were stranger still! But that *God* should love *us* is much more a wonder! Lift up your eyes to the heavens and count the stars. Listen to the astronomer, as he tells you that those little specks of light are mighty worlds, some of them

infinitely superior to this world of ours. And that there are millions upon millions of such worlds glittering in the sky and that perhaps all these millions that we can see are only like one little corner, one little sand hill of the worlds that God has made—while throughout boundless space there may be long leagues of worlds—if I may use the expression, innumerable as the sands that belt the shore around the great and mighty deep!

Now, one man in a world—how little! But one man in *myriads* of worlds, one man in the *universe*—how insignificant! And herein is love, that God should love so insignificant a creature! For what is God compared with the worlds, their number and their probable extent of space? God is infinitely greater than all the ideas we suggest by such comparisons! God Himself is greater than all space! No conception of greatness that ever crossed a mind of the most enlarged faculties can enable us to apprehend the grandeur of God as He really is! Yet this great and glorious Being who fills all things and sustains all things by the word of His power, condescends to rivet upon us—not His pity, mark you, not His thoughts, but the very love of His soul which is the essence of Himself, for He is love. “Herein is love!” An insignificant creature—vile, filthy and polluted—loved by the august Creator and loved with all the infinite affection of Jehovah’s heart! Stand still and wonder! You cannot fathom this depth! You cannot scale this height, for imagination’s utmost stretch dies away at the effort!

**III.** And is it not a point of wonder THAT THIS LOVE SHOULD BE UNSOUGHT? “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us, *and sent His Son.*” We never went to Him—He came to us. Suppose that, after we had all sinned, we had fallen on our knees and cried importunately, “Oh, Father, forgive us!”? Suppose that day after day we had been, with many piteous tears and cries, supplicating and entreating forgiveness of God? It would be great love, then, that He should devise a way of pardoning us. But no—it was the very reverse! God sent an ambassador of peace to us—we sent no embassy to Him. Man turned his back on God and went farther and farther from Him and never thought of turning his face toward his best Friend! It is not *man* that turns beggar to God for salvation! It is, if I may dare to say it, as though the Eternal God, Himself, did beg of His creatures to be saved! Jesus Christ has not come into the world to be *sought* for, but to *seek* that which is lost. It all begins with Him! Unsought, unbidden by the object of His compassion, Jesus came into the world.

Now, I wonder if it may come true, tonight, that some here shall be found of God, after whom they have never sought? Such things have happened. When John Williams was converted—I think you know the story—there had been an agreement made to go out with a little party of youths to commit sin. It was very foul sin, too—and they sent John Williams into Whitefield’s Tabernacle to look at the clock. The clock happened to be over the door, so that young Williams was obliged to go a little way up the aisle to see it. There was a crowd and something that was



being said by the preacher caught his ear and he stood and listened. His companions outside began to be vexed with him for keeping them so long, but he kept them still longer—and the deed of darkness that was to have been done that night was never done—for God had found John Williams who had never sought after Him!

I do not say this to encourage any of you to put off seeking the Lord, for the command is, "Seek you the Lord while He may be found; call you upon Him while He is near." But still, here is the mercy! It is written, "I am found of them that sought Me not; I said, Behold Me, behold Me, unto a nation that was not called by My name." The Grace of God sometimes comes in like a sheriff's officer, takes a man by the collar and says to him, "You must turn tonight." Jesus Christ sometimes comes to men as He did to Zacchaeus, who was up in the sycamore tree. He says, "Come down, for today I must abide at your house." It is not, "If you will," but, "I must! I must! It must be so!" So, O Lord, make a "must" of it tonight! Oh, make a "must" of it to many here, that You must abide in their house! Then they must give up their sins and they must turn to You!

But herein is love, the wonderful love of God in condescending thus, not only to wait for us, but to wait upon us and come to us with His effectual Grace and save us. Though I speak but feebly on these points, I hope that your hearts will not beat feebly. I trust the children of God will be praising and magnifying the Lord as they say to themselves, "That is just how He dealt with me! That is precisely how He showed His favor to me! 'Herein is love.'"

**IV.** How, too, may THE THOUGHTFULNESS OF DIVINE LOVE raise our admiration. "Not that we loved God, but that God loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Now observe the consideration and counsel this implies. We had sinned against God's Law, but His Law was not an arbitrary despotism—it was the embodiment of a constitution equitably and benevolently adapted for the government of the universe. It was framed in such wisdom that obedience involved *happiness* and violation entailed misery! And punishment for breaking God's Laws was not in any respect irrelative or unconnected with the harmony of reciprocal interests. Not to punish the guilty was to exact the penalty of suffering from the innocent! Think what an injury and injustice would be inflicted upon all the honest men in London if the thieves were never punished for their roguery. It would be making the innocent suffer if you allowed the guilty to escape. God, therefore, not out of arbitrary choice, but from very necessity of rightness, must punish us for having done wrong. How was this to be avoided? His mighty love suggested the plan! Had it not done so, a parliament of angels could not have devised a scheme! The assembled senate of all the intellects that God had ever made could not have sketched a plan by which the eternal Laws of right and wrong should stand unshaken, God's honor should be untarnished and yet He should be able to forgive us. But God's love thought out a plan, a wondrous plan, by which Jesus came to be a Substitute to stand in our place, that we might go free! But I will not pause over the design,

because there is the open manifestation of that kindness and love for us now to look at.

V. “Herein is love”—SELF-DENYING LOVE, AMAZING LOVE, UNEX-AMPLED LOVE—language fails me. I know no words by which to set forth the excellence of this love. ‘Tis Divine love, love beyond degree—God “sent His Son to be propitiation for our sins.” It was necessary that this only-begotten Son of the Father should suffer in the flesh, that He should be delivered up into the hands of sinners, cruelly treated, spit upon, nailed to a tree and put to death! Who among us would give up his son? Dear, unspeakably dear to us are the children of our loins. Well, we might give them up for our country in the day of battle. We might say, “For our hearths and for our homes let the young men go,” but it would be difficult—as many a widowed mother has known when she has read the list of the killed in battle and seen that her brave boy has fallen. The blood-stained drapery of war has had but little glory in her eyes.

But who among us would think of giving up his son to die for his *enemy*, for one who never did him a service, but treated him ungratefully, repulsed a thousand overtures of tenderness and went on perversely hardening his neck? No man could do it! Ah, think, then, what manner of love it is that God’s only-begotten Son should be willing to die, that the Holy One should be willing to become a man, willing to take our sins upon Him, willing to suffer for those sins, willing to endure the bloody sweat, willing to bare His shoulders to the lictor’s scourge, willing to give up Himself, body and soul, to the pangs of such a death as was never known before or since! “Herein is love!” If ever I have coveted powers of speech such as God has committed to some men, powers of thrilling the soul and moving the heart, I covet them tonight, for how can I speak of the wondrous tragedy of the Cross? How can I set forth the death-throes of my blessed Lord and Master?

Instead of attempting what I must certainly fail to accomplish, I do but ask you to let your mental vision look for a minute at the spectacle, itself. He who is the Lord of Glory is mocked by rough soldiers. They spit in His face! They pluck His hair; they call Him king and they bow with mimic homage before Him. He is scourged and the scourging is no child’s play. He is made to carry His Cross upon His shoulders through the streets of Jerusalem! He is brought to a rising knoll outside the city gates—the Old Bailey, the Tyburn of Jerusalem. He is thrown upon His back—the iron is driven through His hands and feet! He is lifted up—the Cross is fixed into its place with a jar that dislocate His bones! He cries, “I am poured out like water; all My bones are out of joint!” He suffers fever through the irritation of the nerves of the hands and feet till His mouth is dried up like an oven and His tongue cleaves to His jaws. He cries, “I thirst!” and they give Him vinegar mingled with gall.

Meanwhile, His soul is in tortures such as no man has ever felt! His spirit, lashed by a hurricane of Divine wrath, is like a sea when it boils as a pot, seething and tossing to and fro. Oh, the unknown depths of Jesus’ griefs! And all this for His enemies—for us who loved Him not! For

us who never asked it at His hands. For us who refused to have it. For us who, when we are brought to accept the mercy, do not understand it. For us who, even when we somewhat understand it, do not feel anything like a corresponding gratitude. For us who, even if we feel the gratitude, do not show it, but go our way and forget it! For us who are utterly unworthy of anything like such affection! “Herein is love!” Oh, stand and wonder! I can do no more than ask you to wonder with me and God grant that our wondering may end in something reciprocal by way of love to Him and something practical by means of love put into action!

**VI.** With this question I shall conclude—WHAT OUGHT TO BE THE EFFECT OF LOOKING UPON THIS GREAT WONDER?

As the Apostle tells us in the next verse, “Beloved, if God so loved us, *we ought also to love one another.*” Christian, by the love which God has manifested to you, you are bound to love your fellow Christians! You are to love them though they have many infirmities. You have some, yourself, and if you cannot love one because he has a crusty temper, perhaps he may reply that he cannot love *you* because you have a lethargic spirit. Jesus loved you with all your infirmities—then love your infirm brethren! You tell me you cannot love because you have been offended by such a Brother, but you also offended Christ. What? Shall Christ forgive you all your myriad offenses and you not forgive your Brother? What was it, after all? “Well, he did not treat me respectfully.” Ah, *that* is it—a poor worm needs to be treated respectfully! “But he spoke disparagingly of me and there is a Sister, here—she may be a Christian woman, but she said a very unkind thing of me.”

Well, yes, but what does it matter? I have often thought when people have spoken ill of me and they have been very, very false in it, perhaps, if they had known me better, they might have found something true to say—and so I must be like we sometimes say of a boy when he is beaten and does not deserve it, “Well, he did deserve it, some time or other, for something else.” Rather than get angry, smile over the offense. Who are we that we should expect everybody to honor us when nobody honored our Lord? Oh, let us be ready, at once, to forgive even to seventy times seven! A beautiful spirit worthy of a Christian was that of a man who found his horse in the pound one day and the farmer who put it in said, “I found your horse in my field and I put it in the pound. And if ever I catch it there again, I’ll put it in again.” “Well,” replied the other, “I found six of your cows in my farmyard the other night eating my hay. I just drove them out and put them into your farmyard. I didn’t pound them and if ever I catch them in my yard again, I’ll do the same.”

“Ah,” the farmer said, “you are a better man than I am.” And forthwith, he went and paid the fees and let his neighbor’s horse out of the pound, ashamed of himself. Such a generosity of disposition becomes you, especially to your Christian Brothers and Sisters. If God has such wonderful love to us, let us love those who offend us and show hearts of compassion toward the Lord’s poor people. It is easy to be courteous to those who are better off than ourselves and show deference to those who

wear respectable attire—but the thing is to love the Lord’s people who are poor—yes, and to love them all the more tenderly for their poverty, for they have, in some respects, more of the image of Christ than we have. Christ was poor and so are they.

And let us cleave close to God’s *persecuted* ones. Some people always run away from a man as soon as anybody flings a handful of dirt at him. But if God so loved us when we were sinners, we ought to love our fellow Christians when they are under a cloud. Are they persecuted for righteousness’ sake? Then every brave spirit ought to say, “I am for that man—I am for that man!” I was pleased with the remark of a Brother I met, the other day. Alluding to the love he felt for his minister, he said, “The first reason why I came to hear him and love him was that I saw him abused in all the newspapers. And I said, ‘There is something good in that man, I am sure of it, and as he is the weaker one, and all are against him, I am on his side till I find something against him.’” Oh, take care to rally round the persecuted Christian! Whenever the child of God is evilly spoken of, say, “My place shall be at his side! I will share in such an honor as that, that I may share in the honor which awaits the saints hereafter.”

I have tried to speak to some here who are not converted and to put a few very comforting thoughts before them. If they go home and seek the Lord, He will be found of them. Yes, and if they trust Jesus Christ at once, they shall be saved! A young lady was reading a newspaper and her mother said, “Have you done with it?” She said, “Yes, I have done with it. I was only looking at it to see the death of Jane \_\_\_\_\_. Poor girl, she used to be a Sunday school teacher with me.” Well, she said she had done with it, but you may depend upon it, she had not, for the fact that one was dead who had been her companion had not done with her—it would speak to her and impress her—and if she shook it off, the *responsibility* would not have done with her.

You have heard a sermon, tonight, and you may think, “Now I have done with it.” Well, it may be so, but it has not done with you! You will be called to account for every Truth of God it contains, for every reminder to your conscience and every affectionate invitation that reaches your heart. Very few sermons, alas, are ever *done*! The most of them are listened to and forgotten, but if they were all done—that is, if their counsels and admonitions were carried into effect—what a blessing it would be! No, you have not done with it and this text has not done with you!

I think—no, I seem to know—that there are some who never will have done with this text, neither in this life nor in the life to come, for the text is saying to you, tonight, “Though you love not God, now, yet you shall love Him, for He has loved you, loved you with an everlasting love.” And the thought of this text will entice you to go and seek Jesus to see if it is so. And when you find it so, you will say to your children, “There is no text in the Bible more beautiful to me than this one, ‘Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us.’” And you may tell to your children’s children that on such an evening that text seemed to get into your

soul, and to be set a ringing there like the old bell on the Inchcape Rock—the higher the storm, the louder it rang! And you shall hear it ring, ring, ring till it rings you to Christ and rings you into Heaven! And then in Heaven it will make sweet music in your ears and you will say, even there, “Herein is love, not that I loved God, but that He loved me, and gave His Son to be a propitiation for my sins.”

**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—  
454, 23 (VERSION III), 782.**

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
PSALM 23.**

I hope we all know this Psalm by heart. May we also know it by heart experience! It is a sweet pastoral song just suited to our Sabbath evening worship. There is here no din of arms, no noise of war, but there is a delicious hush, only broken by the gentle tinkling of the sheep-bell. God give us that sweet rest tonight!

**Verse 1.** *The LORD is my shepherd.* All true rest begins with Jesus, as all the comfort of the sheep is provided for them by their shepherd. “The Lord is my shepherd.” Is it so? Can you look up, poor defenseless sheep, and say, “The Lord is my shepherd”? Then comes the blessed inference—

**1.** *I shall not want.* I do not want, I cannot want. I shall never want with such a Shepherd as I have. He will provide for me. No, more, God Himself is my provision! All I need I have, for, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.” I cannot provide for myself, but I shall not want. Famine may come and others who have no God to go to may pine and perish, but in the worst season I shall not want, for, “The Lord is my shepherd.”

**2.** *He makes me to lie down in green pastures.* I am so weak that I even need God’s help to enable me to lie down, but “He makes me to lie down.” Yes, the rest of the soul is so hard to attain that nobody ever reaches it except by the power of God. He who made the heavens must *make* us to lie down if we are really to rest. What delightful rest it is when we lie down in His pastures which are always green! Did you ever find them dry? Our Shepherd makes us not only to feed, but so to feed that we lie down in the midst of the pastures. There is more than we can eat, so the Lord makes a couch of it for us—“He makes me to lie down in green pastures.”

**2.** *He leads me beside the still waters.* There is, first, contemplation—“He makes me to lie down.” Then there is activity. “He leads me.” There is also progress and there is provision for our advance in the heavenly way—“He leads me.” He leads me beside the waters of quietness, not by the rushing torrents of excitement, nor by the place of noisy strife. “He shall not strive, nor cry, neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets.” “He leads me beside the still waters.” Not, “He drives, or drags,” but He, Himself, leads, going first to show the way. It is for me to follow, happily to follow, where “He leads me beside the still waters.”

**3.** *He restores my soul.* He can do it at once. He restores now. He is a restoring God. “He restores my soul.” He brings my wandering spirit back when I forsake His ways and, having done that, He leads me, even more carefully than before. For a second time we have the Psalmist’s declaration, “He leads me.”

**3, 4.** *He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake. Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.* Though death’s shadow hovers all around me and dampens my spirit. Though I feel as though I must die and cannot bear up under present trial any longer, “Yes, though I walk,” for I do walk—I will not quicken my pace, I will not be in a flurry, I will not run for it. Though death, itself, shall overshadow me, I will keep up my walk with God. “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.” There is none, therefore I will not fear any. We often feel more afraid through our fear, itself, than through any real cause for fear. Some people seem to be always on the lookout for fear where there is none. Do not see any, nor let any enter your heart—say with the Psalmist, “I will fear no evil.”

**4.** *For You are with me.* Should a sheep fear when the shepherd is with it? What cause has it to fear if that Shepherd is Omniscient, Omnipotent and full of tenderness?

**4.** *Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.* Your rule and Your correction—Your rod, with which I sometimes am made to smart—Your staff, with which I am supported. These are my comforts, why should I fear? Are you drinking in all this precious Truth of God, dear Friends? Are you feeling it in your soul’s deepest experience? This Psalm is very good to read, but it is far better to write out from your own experience! Make it a song of your own—not merely a song in the Book, but a song for yourselves!

**5.** *You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.* There is a fight going on and there are enemies all around. You do not generally have tables set in the hour of battle, but God keeps His people so calm amid the bewildering cry, so confident of victory, that even in the presence of their enemies, a table is spread with all the state of a royal banquet. “You prepare a table.” There is a cloth on the table. There are the ornaments on it and there are all the accompaniments of a feast—“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.” They may look on if they like. They may grin, they may wish they could devour, but they cannot sit down at the table and they cannot prevent me from sitting down at it! Let them blow their trumpets, let them fire their guns—“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.” It is the very acme of security and repose that is here described. I know of no expression, not even that of lying down in green pastures, that is more full of restfulness than this—“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.”

**5.** *You anoint my head with oil.* At some feasts, they poured perfumed oil on the heads of the guests, so God will leave out nothing that is for

the joy and comfort of His people. “You anoint my head with oil.” You shall have delicacies as well as necessities. You shall have joy as well as safety. You shall be prepared for service as well as preserved from destruction.

**5.** *My cup runs over.* I have not only what I wish, but I have more! Not only all I can hold, but something to spare—“My cup runs over.” If this is the case with your cup, dear Friend, let it run over in thankful joy! And if you have more of this world’s substance than you need, ask the poor and needy to come and catch that which flows over.

**6.** *Surely*—This is another of the Psalmist’s inferences, and a very sure one. He does not say, “Perhaps,” but, “Surely.”

**6.** *Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.* Here is a prince of the blood royal of Heaven attended by two body guards—goodness and mercy—which keep close behind him. These are the grooms that ride on the horses of salvation—“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me.” “Goodness”—to provide for me. “Mercy”—to blot out my sin. “Goodness and mercy shall follow me”—not only now and then, but, “all the days of my life.” When I get gray-headed and feeble and have to lean heavily upon my staff, these twin angels shall be close behind to bear me up and bear me through.

**6.** *And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.* Even while I am here in this world, I will be—

**“No more a stranger or a guest  
But like a child at home,”**

dwelling with God! And, by-and-by, in the fullest sense, “I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” I always compare this Psalm to a lark. It begins on the ground among the sheep, but up it goes till you may hear its blessed notes echoing among the stars! “I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” It has its nest in the grass of the green pastures, but it flies up like the strains of sweetest music rising even to the skies—“I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” God grant that this may be the portion of every one of us, for His great name’s sake! Amen.

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

# **“HEREIN IS LOVE”**

## **NO. 1707**

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 18, 1883,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought, also, to love one another.”  
1 John 4:10, 11.*

THE Law commands love, indeed, all its precepts are summed up in that one word, “love.” More widely read it runs thus—“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself”—yet all this amounts only to, “You shall love.” But the Law, by reason of our depravity, never produced love. We were commanded to love, but we did no such thing. The spirit that is in us is selfish and it lusts to envy and to enmity. Why do wars and fights come among us? Come they not from our lusts? Since the Fall, man has become man’s bitterest foe upon the earth—and the world is full of hate, slandering, struggles, fighting, wounding, and slaying—all that the Law can do is to show the wrong of enmity and threaten punishment. It cannot supply an unregenerate heart with a fountain of love.

Man remains unloving and unlovable till the Gospel takes him in hand and, by Grace, accomplishes that which the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh. Love is winning many hearts to the Kingdom of God and its reign shall extend till love shall rule over the whole earth. And so the Kingdom of God shall be set up among men and God shall dwell among them. At the present moment love is the distinguishing mark of the people of God. Jesus said, “By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love, one to another.” And John said, “We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the Brethren.” The man whose spirit is selfish has not the spirit of Christ and, “if any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of His.”

The man whose spirit is that of envy and contention is evidently no follower of the lowly and loving Jesus—and those who do not follow Jesus are none of His. They that are Christ’s are filled with His love. “Everyone that loves is born of God, and knows God. He that loves not knows not God; for God is Love.” God is the center of the Believer’s love. The saints are an inner circle specially beloved and all mankind are embraced within the circumference of the ring of love. “He that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in Him” and he, alone, is a child of God whose spirit is kindly and affectionate and who seeks, wherever he is, to promote peace, goodwill towards men.

The saints begin with love to God. That must always hold the highest place, for God is the best and noblest Being, and we owe Him all our hearts. Then comes, for Jesus’ sake, love to all who are in Christ. There is



a peculiarly near and dear relationship existing between one child of God and all the rest. Loving Him that begat, we love all them that are begotten of Him! Should not a child love his brothers with a tender, peculiar affection? This principle of love, once implanted, induces in the heart of the converted man a love towards *all* mankind. Not that he can take any complacency in the wicked—God, Himself, cannot do that, for His holiness abhors all iniquity. The love desired is not the love of *complacency*, but the love of *benevolence*, so that we wish well and, to the utmost of our power, would *do* well unto all those that dwell upon the face of the earth. In this holy charity, this unselfish love, be you imitators of God as dear children.

Our heavenly Father is kind to the unthankful and to the evil, and so must we be, desiring that even the most abandoned may yet be rescued and made right and good. Love desires to create that which is lovable even in the most unlovable of mankind and, God helping the effort, she succeeds. I hear one say, "This is a vast idea. Are we to love at this rate? Where is the love to come from? Our hearts are narrow, men are unworthy, provocations are numerous, another spirit is abroad in the world—where is this love to come from? Where is this flood of love which is to cover the tops of the mountains of man's unworthiness to come from?"

Have you entered into the springs of the sea? Or have you walked in search of the depths? Yes, by the leadings of God's Spirit, we will search out the springs of the sea of love! Only in one place shall we find love enough for our supreme purpose, which is also the purpose of the Lord, Himself. There is one shoreless ocean into which we may be baptized and out of which we may be filled until we overflow! Where is the unfailing motive of Love? For Love is tried and hardly put to it to hold her own! Can we find a motive that will never fail, even towards the most provoking of mankind? Can we find an argument for affection which shall help us in times of ingratitude, when base returns threaten to freeze the very heart of charity? Yes, there is such a motive! There is a force by which even impossibilities of love can be accomplished and we shall be supplied with a perpetual constraint moving the heart to ceaseless charity!

Come with me, then, in the first place, to notice the infinite spring of love—"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us." Secondly, let us observe the marvelous outflow of that love—"God sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." And then, thirdly, let us notice the overflow of that love in us, when it fills our hearts and runs over to others. "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought, also, to love one another."

**I.** First, THE INFINITE SPRING OF LOVE. Our text has two words upon which I would place an emphasis—"not," and "but." The first is, "not." "Herein is love, not"—"not that we loved God." Very naturally many conclude that this means, "not that we loved God *first*." That is not exactly the Truth of God taught here, but still it is a weighty Truth, and is mentioned in this same chapter in express words—"We love Him because He first loved us" (v. 19). The cause of love in the universe is *not* that *man* loved God first! No being in existence could love God before God loved him, for the existence of such a being is due to God's previous love!

His plans of love were all laid and many of them carried out before we were born. And when we were born, we, none of us, loved God first so as

to seek after God before He sought after us—so as to desire reconciliation with God before He desired reconciliation with us. No, whatever may be said about free will as a *theory*, it is never found as a matter of *fact* that any man, left to himself, ever woos his God, or pines after friendship with his Maker. If he repents of sin, it is because the Spirit of God has first visited him and shown him his sin! If he desires restoration, it is because he has, first of all, been taught to dread the wrath of God and to long for holiness—

**“No sinner can be beforehand with Thee!  
Your Grace is most sovereign,  
Most rich, and most free.”**

We inscribe a negative in black capital letters upon the idea that man’s love can ever be *prior* to the love of God. That is quite out of the question. “Not that we loved God.”

Take a second sense—that is, not that any man did love God at all by nature, whether first or second; not that we, any one of us, ever did or ever could have an affection towards God while we remained in our state by nature. Instead of loving God, man is indifferent to God. “No God,” says the fool in his heart and, by nature, we are all such fools. It is the sinner’s wish that there were no God. We are atheistic by nature and if our brain does not yield to atheism, yet our heart does. We wish that we could sin according to our own will and that we were in no danger of being called to account for it. God is not in all our thoughts, or, if He does enter there, it is as a terror and a dread.

No, worse than that—man is at enmity with God by wicked works! The holiness which God admires, man has no liking for! The sin which God abominates has about it sweetness and fascination for the unrenewed heart, so that man’s ways are contrary to the ways of God. Man is perverse. He cannot walk with God, for they are not agreed. He is all evil and God is all goodness and, therefore, no love to God exists in the natural heart of man. He may say that he loves God, but then it is a god of his own inventing and not Jehovah, the God of the Bible, the only living and true God. A just God and a Savior, the natural mind cannot endure—the carnal mind is enmity against God, is not reconciled to God and, neither, indeed, can be! The unregenerate heart is, as to love, a broken cistern which can hold no water.

In our natural state, there is none that does good, no, not one. So is there, also, none that *loves* God, no, not one! We come nearer to John’s meaning when we look at this negative as applying to those who *do* love God. “Not that we loved God”—that is, that our love to God, even when it does exist, and even when it influences our lives, is not worthy to be mentioned as a fountain of supply for love. The Apostle points us away from it to something far more vast and then he cries, “Herein is love.” I am looking for “the springs of the sea,” and you point me to a little pool amid the rocks which has been filled by the flowing tide. I am glad to see that pool—how bright! how blue! how like the sea from where it came! But do not point to this as the *source* of the great water floods, for if you do, I shall smile at your childish ignorance and point you to you great rolling main which tosses its waves on high.

What is your little pool to the vast Atlantic? Do you point me to the love in the Believer’s heart and say, “Herein is love”? You make me smile. I know that there is love in that true heart, but who can mention it in the Presence of the great rolling ocean of the love of God, without bottom and without shore? The word, “not,” is not only upon my lips but in my heart as I think of the two things—“NOT that we loved God, but that God loved us.” What poor love ours is at its very best when compared with the love with which God loves us! Let me use another figure. If we had to enlighten the world, a child might point us to a bright mirror reflecting the sun. And he might cry, “Herein is light!” You and I would say, “Poor child, that is but *borrowed* brightness. The light is not there, but yonder, in the sun!”

The love of saints is nothing more than the reflection of the love of God! We *have* love, but God IS Love. When I think of the love of certain saints to Christ, I am charmed with it, for it is a trait of the Spirit not to be despised. When I think of Paul the Apostle counting all things but loss for Christ. When I think of our missionaries going, one after another, into malarious parts of the African coast and dying for Christ. And when I read the Book of Martyrs and see confessors standing on the firewood, burning quick to the death, still bearing witness to their Lord and Master—I rejoice in the love of saints to their Lord! Yet this is but a stream! The unfathomable deep, the eternal source from which all love proceeds infinitely exceeds all human affection and it is found in God, and in God alone! “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us.”

Let us contrast our love to God with His love to us. Dear Brothers and Sisters, we do love God and we may well do so, since He is infinitely lovable. When the mind is once enlightened, it sees everything that is lovable about God. He is so good, so gracious, so perfect that He commands our admiring affection. The spouse in the Song, when she thought of her Beloved, mentioned all manner of beauties and then cried, “Yes, He is altogether lovely!” It is natural, therefore, that one who sees God should love Him. But, now, think of God’s love to *us*—is it not incomparably greater, since there was *nothing* lovely in us whatever, and yet He loved us? In us there is, by nature, nothing to attract the affection of a holy God, but quite the reverse—and yet He loved us. Herein, indeed, is love! When we love God, it is an honor to us! It exalts a man to be allowed to love a Being so glorious!

A philosopher once wrote that for a man to speak of being the friend of God was too daring and, in the reverence of this thoughtful heathen, there was much to admire, for, indeed, there is an infinite difference between the glorious God and the sinful creature, man! Though God, in condescension, allows us to call Him, Friend, and Jesus says, “You are My friends,” yet this is beyond reason, and is a sweet Revelation of the Holy Spirit. What an uplifting there is in it for us! On the other hand, God’s love to us can add nothing to Him. It gives, but receives not. Divine Love can have no recompense. That He, the Infinite, should stoop to love the finite—that He, the infinitely pure, should love the guilty—this is a vast condescension.

See, moreover, what it involved, for this love rendered it necessary that in the Person of His dear Son, God should be “despised and rejected of

men," should make Himself of no reputation and should even be numbered with the transgressors. "Herein is love." When we love God, we are gainers by the deed. He that loves God does, in the most effectual manner, love himself. We are filled with riches when we abound in love to God—it is our wealth, our health, our might and our delight! But God gains nothing by loving us. I hardly like to set the two in contrast, for our love is so poor and pitiable a thing as compared with the immeasurable love of God. It is our *duty* to love God—we are bound to do it. As His creatures we ought to love our Creator! As preserved by His care, we are under obligation to love Him for His goodness! We owe Him so much that our utmost love is a mere acknowledgment of our debt.

But God loved us to whom He owed nothing at all! Whatever might have been the claims of a creature upon his Creator, we forfeited them all by our rebellion! Sinful men had no rights towards God except the right of being punished. Yet the Lord manifested boundless love to our race, which was only worthy to be destroyed. Oh words! How you fail me! I cannot utter my heart by these poor lips of clay! Oh God, how infinite was Your love which was given without any obligation on Your part—freely and unsought—and all because You will to love! Yes You love because You *are* Love! There was no cause, no constraint, no claim why You should love mankind except that Your own heart led You to do so What is man that You are mindful of him? "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us."

I have thus pointed out the wellhead of love—let us draw from it and from none other! If you go into the world and say, "I am to love my fellow men because I love God," the motive is good, but it is questionable, limited and variable. How much better to argue—"I am to love my fellow men because *God loves me.*" When my love grows cold towards God, and when, by reason of my infirmity and imperfection, I am led, even, to question whether I love God at all, then my argument and my impulse would fail me if it came from my own love to God. But if I love the fallen because God loved me, then I have an unchanging motive, an unquestionable argument and a forcible impulse not to be resisted! Therefore the Apostle cried, "The love of Christ constrains us." It is always well for a Christian to have the strongest motive and to rely upon the most potent and perpetual force and, therefore, the Apostle bids us look to Divine Love and not to our own. "Herein is love," he says, "not that we loved God, but that God loved us."

So far the "not." Let us turn to the, "but." "But that He loved us." I have nothing new to say, nor do I wish to say anything new. But I would like you to meditate on each one of these words—"He loved us." Three words, but what weight of meaning! "He," who is infinitely holy and cannot endure iniquity—"He loved us" "He," whose glory is the astonishment of the greatest of intelligent beings—"He loved us." "He," whom the Heaven of heavens cannot contain, "loved us." "He" who is God all-sufficient and needs nothing of us—neither can, indeed, receive anything at our hands—"He loved us." What joy lies sleeping here! Oh, that we could wake it up! What hope, too, for hopeless sinners because, "God loved us."

If a man could know that he was loved of all his fellow men, if he could have it for certain that he was loved by all the angels, doted on by cheru-

him and seraphim, yet these were but so many drops and all put together could not compare with the main ocean contained in the fact that, "God loved us!" Now ring that second silver bell—"He loved us." I do not think the Apostle is, here, so much speaking of God's special love to His own elect as of His love to men in general. He saw our race ruined in the Fall and He could not bear that man should be destroyed. Lord, what is man that You visit him in love? Yet He did so visit him. The Lord's love made Him lament man's revolt and cry, "I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against Me!" And He bade Heaven and earth witness to His grief.

He saw that sin had brought men into wretchedness and misery and would destroy them forever, but He would not have it so. He loved them with the love of pity, with the love of sweet and strong benevolence and He declared it with an oath—"As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but that he turn unto Me and live." "Herein is love." But if you and I are reconciled to God, we can lay the emphasis, each one for himself, upon this word, "love," and view it as special, effectual, electing love. Let each Believer say, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." Then what force is in my text, "He loved us"—it is not enough that He pitied us, or spared us, or helped us, but, "He loved us."

It has often made me rise from my seat to think that God loves me! I could not sit still and hear the thrilling Truth! Such knowledge is too wonderful for me! It is high, I cannot attain unto it. It is sweet to be loved even by a dog. It is sweet to be loved by a babe. It is sweet to be loved by a friend—it is sweet to be loved by God's people—but, oh, to be loved by *God* and to *know* it! This is paradise! Would a man need any other Heaven than to know for certain that he enjoyed the love of God? Note the third word. "He loved us"—"us"—the most insignificant of beings. There is an anthill somewhere—it is no matter to you where it is. It teems with ants. Stir the nest and they swarm in armies. Think of one of them. No, you do not need to know anything about him! His business is no concern of yours, so let him go. But that ant, after all, is more considerable to you than you are to God. "All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing."

What are you, even, in this great city?—One man, one woman in London, in England, in the population of the world—what a cipher you are! Yet what is the population of this world compared with the universe? I suppose that all these stars which we see at night, all the countless worlds within our range of vision, are but as a little dust in a lone corner of God's great house! The whole solar system and all the systems of worlds we have ever thought of, are but as a drop in a bucket compared with the boundless sea of creation! And even that is as nothing compared to the infinite God! And yet, "He loved us"—the insignificant creatures of an hour!

What is more, He loved us though in our insignificance we dared to rebel against Him! We boasted against Him. We cried, "Who is Jehovah?" We lifted up our hand to fight with Him. Ridiculous rebellion! Absurd warfare! Had He but glanced at us and annihilated us, it would have been as much as we could merit at His hands! But to think that He should love us—love

us, mark you—when we were in rebellion against Him. This is marvelous! Observe that the previous verse speaks of us as being dead in sin. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him." Then we were dead, dead to all goodness, or thought or power of goodness—criminals shut up in the condemned cell—and yet God loved us with a great love even when we were dead in trespasses and sins!

Child of God, God's love to you today is wonderful! But think of His love to you when you were far gone in rebellion against Him. When not a throb of holy, spiritual life could be found in your entire being—yet He loved you and sent His Son that you might live through Him! Moreover, He loved us when we were steeped in sin. Does not our text tell us so? For He sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins and this implies that we needed to be reconciled! Our righteous Judge was angry with us. His righteous wrath smoked against our evil and yet, even then, "He loved us." He was angry with us as a Judge, but yet He loved us! He was determined to punish and yet resolved to save! This is a world of wonders! I am utterly beaten by my text! I confess myself mastered by my theme!

But who among us can measure the unfathomable? "Herein is love," that God freely, out of the spontaneous motion of His own heart, should love us! This is the argument for love! This is the inexhaustible Fountain out of which all love must come. If we desire love, may we come and fill our vessels here and bear it out to others. Love springing from our own bosoms is feeble and scant—but the love of God is a great deep, forever fresh, full and flowing. Here are those springs of the sea of which we spoke—

***"Herein is love!"***

**II.** I need your attention a little longer while I speak as best I can upon THE MARVELOUS OUTFLOW OF THAT LOVE. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Beloved, the love of God is seen in creation! He that studies the mechanism of the human frame and of its surroundings will see much of Divine kindness there. The love of God is to be seen in Providence! He that watches the loving hand of God in daily life will not need to look far before he sees tokens of a Father's care. But if you want to know when the great deep of God's love was broken up and arose in the fullness of its strength to prevail over all. If you would see it revealed in a deluge, like Noah's flood, you must wait till you see Jesus born at Bethlehem and crucified on Calvary, for His mission to men is the most Divine manifestation of love!

Consider every word—"He sent His Son." God "sent." Love caused that mission. If there was to be reconciliation between God and man, man ought to have sent to God—the offender ought to be the first to apply for forgiveness! The weaker should apply to the greater for help. The poor man should ask of him who distributes alms. But, "Herein is love," that God "sent." He was first to send an embassy of peace. Today "we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be you reconciled to God." Oh, the wonder of this, that God should not wait till rebellious men had sent to His throne for terms of reconciliation, but should commence negotiations Himself!

Moreover, God sent such a One—He "sent His Son." If men send an embassy to a great power, they select some great one of their nation to wait upon the potent prince. But if they are dealing with a petty principality, they think a subordinate person quite sufficient for such a business. Admire, then, the true love of the infinitely gracious God, that when He sent an embassy to men, He did not commission an angel nor even the brightest spirit before His Throne, but He sent His Son—oh, the love of God to men! He sent His equal Son to rebels who would not receive Him, would not hear Him, but spat upon Him, scourged Him, stripped Him, slew Him! Yes, "He spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all." He knew what would come of that sending of Him and yet He sent Him!—

***"Jesus, commissioned from above,  
Descends to men below,  
And shows from where the springs of love  
In endless currents flow.  
He whom the boundless Heaven adores,  
Whom angels long to see,  
Quit with joy those blissful shores,  
Ambassador to me!  
To me, a worm, a sinful clod,  
A rebel all forlorn:  
A foe, a traitor, to my God,  
And of a traitor born."***

Note further, not only the grandeur of the Ambassador, but the tenderness of the relationship existing between him and the offended God. "He sent His Son." The previous verse says, "His only-begotten Son." We cannot speak of God except after the manner of men, for God, in all His Glory is incomprehensible. But speaking after the manner of men, what must it have cost Jehovah to take His only Son from His bosom to die? Christ is the Father's Self—in essence they are One—there is but one God. We do not understand the mystery of the Trinity in unity, but we believe it. It was God Himself who came here in the Person of His dear Son! He underwent all—for we are "the flock of God which He has purchased with His own blood."

Remember Abraham with the knife unsheathed and wonder as you see him obey the Voice which says, "Take, now, your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and offer him for a sacrifice." Remember yet again that the Lord actually did what Abraham, in obedience, willed to do—He gave up His Son! "It pleased the Father to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief." Christ's death was, in fact, *God* in human form suffering for human sin! God Incarnate bleeding because of our transgressions! Are we not, now, carried away with the streams of love? I speak my best, my Brothers and Sisters, but if my words were what they ought to be, they would set your souls on fire! Is not all Heaven still astounded at the death of the Only-Begotten? It has not recovered from its amazement that the Heir of all things should bow His head to death! How can I fitly tell you how much God loved the world when He gave His Only-begotten to die that sinners might live?

Go a step further. "God sent His Son to be a propitiation," that is, to be not only a reconciler, but the Reconciliation! His sacrifice of Himself as the

Atonement through which mercy is rendered possible in consistency with justice! I have heard men say with scorn that God required a sacrifice before He would be reconciled, as if that were wrong on the part of the Judge of All! But let me whisper in their ears—God required it, it is true, for He is just and holy. But God found it Himself! Remember that—Jehovah found the Ransom which He demanded! It was Himself, His own Son, one with Himself, that became the Propitiation and the Reconciliation!

It was not that God the Father was unkind and could not be placated unless He smote His Son—but that God the Father was so kind that He could not be unjust! So supremely loving that He must devise a way by which men could be justly saved! An unjust salvation would have been none at all. The Lord found the Reconciliation—I will not say in the sufferings of Christ, though that is true! I will not say in the death of Christ, though that is true! But I will put it in Scriptural words—and here we have it in 1 John 2:2! "He"—that is, Jesus, Himself—"is the propitiation for our sins." The Sent One, in Himself, as well as in all that He did and all that He suffered, is the Reconciliation between God and man! "Herein is love!" In order that there might be peace and love between man and God, God finds the Sin-Offering! He becomes, Himself, the Atonement, that love might reign supreme!

What seems to me the most wonderful thing of all is that the Lord Jesus should deal, not only with our sorrow, but with our sin, for, "He is the propitiation for our sins." That God should deal with us as to our virtues, if we had any! That He should deal with us as to our love, if we had any, might not seem so difficult. But that He should send His Son to dwell with us as *sinner*s—yes, and to come into contact with our sins, and thus to take the sword, not only by its hilt, but by its blade, and plunge it into His own heart, and die because of it—this is a miracle of miracles! O Friends, Christ never gave Himself for our righteousness, but He laid down His life for our SINS! He viewed us as sinners when He came to save us. "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners."

If I had not found Christ till this very minute, I hope I should find Him, now, as my mind drinks in this doctrine! By God's Spirit there seems to me to be such a window opened that even despair may see the light, for if the thing which God sent His Son to deal with was the sin of man, then I, even though I am nothing but a mass of loathsomeness and sin, may yet enjoy the infinite love of God! Oh, guilty ones, hear these words which are more sweet than music and more full of delight than all poetry! Even the harps of angels never rise to higher measures than these which I do so poorly and simply rehearse in your ears! Hear these glad tidings, that God, who made the heavens and the earth—whom you have offended—wills not that you die, but loves you so greatly that He opens up a road of reconciliation through the body of His own dear Son!

There was no other way by which you could be reconciled to God, for had He reconciled you to a part of Himself and not to His *justice*, you had not been, in very truth, at all reconciled to God. It is now to God completely just, holy, whose anger burns against sin! It is to Him that you are reconciled by faith in Christ Jesus, through the laying down of His life for men! Oh that God would bless this to all who hear the glad tidings!



**III.** We come at last to think of the CONSEQUENT OUTFLOW OF LOVE FROM US—"Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought, also, to love one another." Our love, then, to one another is simply God's love to us, flowing into us and flowing out again. That is all it is! "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us," and then we love others. You have seen a noble fountain in a continental city adorning a public square. Look how the water leaps into the air! And then it falls into a circular basin which fills and pours out its fullness into another, lower down, and this, again, floods a third. Hear the merry splash as the waters fall in showers and cataracts from basin to basin!

If you stand at the lower basin and look upon it and say, "Herein is water," that is true, and will be true of the next higher one and so forth. But if you would express the truth as to where the water really is, you may have to look far away, perhaps upon a mountain's side, for there is a vast reservoir from which pipes are laid to bring these waters and force them to their height that they may descend so beautifully. Thus the love we have to our fellow creatures drops from us like the descending silvery cataract from the full basin—but the first source of it is the immeasurable love of God which is hidden away in His very essence—the love which never changes and never can be diminished! "Herein is love!"

If you and I desire to love our fellow Christians and to love the fallen race of man, we must be joined on to the aqueduct which conducts love from this eternal source, or else we shall soon fail in love. Observe, Brothers and Sisters, then, that as the love of God is the source of all true love in us, so a sense of that love stimulates us. Whenever you feel that you love God, you overflow with love to all God's people! I am sure you do. It is when you get to doubt the love of God that you grow hard and cold. But when you are fired with the love of a dying Savior who gave Himself for you, you feel as if you loved every beggar in the street—and you long to bring every harlot to Christ's dear feet—you cannot help it!

Man, if Christ baptizes your heart into His love, you will be covered with it and filled with it! Your love will respect the same persons as God's love does, and for the same reasons. God loves men! So will you. God loves them when there is no good in them, and you will love them in the same way. Sometimes the wickedness of men kindles in the heart of a true Christian a stronger affection for them. The deeper down they are, the more they need a Savior. Did not our Moravian Brothers and Sisters feel, when they went out as missionaries, that they would prefer to go, first, to the most barbarous tribes? They said, "The more degraded they are, the more they need a Savior." And should not the missionary spirit make Believers feel that if men are sunk until they are as low as brutes, and as savage as devils, that this is the stronger reason for our being eager to bring them to Christ?

I hope that abominable spirit which used to come in among Christian people has been kicked away to its father, the devil, where it ought to be—I mean the spirit which despises the poor and the fallen! When I have heard people say, "What is the good of looking after such riff-raff?" I have been saddened. The Church of God feels that the souls of the meanest are precious—that to save the most foul, the most ignorant, the most de-

graded, the most brutalized man or woman that ever lives is an objective worthy of the effort of the whole Church—since God thought it worthy of the death of Jesus Christ that He might bring sinners, dead in sin, to Himself! Brothers and Sisters, we will not have grasped the Truth of God unless we feel that our love to men must be practical, because God's love to us is so. His love did not pent up like the waters in the secret caverns of the earth, but it welled up like the waters in the days of Noah, when we read that the fountains of the deep were broken up.

In the gift of the Lord Jesus we behold the reality of Divine love. When we see the poor, we must not say "Be you warmed; be you filled; I am sorry for you." But we must let our love relieve them from our funds! If we see the ignorant, we must not say, "Dear me, the Church is neglecting the masses. The Church must wake up." No, but we must bestir ourselves and struggle, *ourselves*, to warn sinners. If there are any near you who lie degraded, do not say, "I wish somebody would go after them." Go yourself! Our love ought to follow the love of God in one point, namely, in always seeking to produce reconciliation! It was to this end that God sent His Son. Has anybody offended you? Seek reconciliation. "Oh, but I am the offended party." So was God and He went straight away and sought reconciliation. Brothers and Sisters, do the same! "Oh, but I have been insulted." Just so! So was God—all the wrong was towards Him, yet, "He sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." "Oh, but the party is so unworthy." So are you. But "God loved you and sent His Son." Go and write according to that copy.

I do not mean that this love is to come out of your own heart, originally, but I do mean that it is to flow *out* of your heart because God has made it to flow *into* it. You are one of those basins of the fountain—love has poured into you from above—let it run over to those who are below. Go forth at once and try and make reconciliation, not only between yourself and your friend, but between every man and God. Let that be your objective! Christ has become man's Reconciliation and we are to try and bring this Reconciliation near to every poor sinner that comes in our path. We are to tell him that God in Christ is reconciled. We are to say to him, "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours, only, but for the sins of the whole world." Mark that word! It tallies with that other, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." God is now able to deal on Gospel terms with the whole race! We need never think that we shall meet with men to whom God will not consent to be reconciled. The propitiation is such that whoever comes to God shall be received through it. God is always within to receive every soul that comes to Him by Jesus Christ. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Your work and mine is reconciliation and everything that tends that way!

When we have done all, what then? We shall have nothing to boast of! Suppose a man should become so loving that he gave himself wholly up for his fellow creatures and actually *died* for them—would he have anything to boast of? Read my text over again. "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought, also, to love one another"—so that if you get to the highest point of self-sacrifice, you will never be able to boast, for you have only, *then*,

done what it was your duty to have done! Thus you see the highest grade of Christianity excludes all idea of salvation by works, for when we come up to its utmost pitch, if we give our body to be burned for love, yet, still, we have done no more than it was our *duty* to have done, considering the tremendous obligations under which the love of God has laid us.

If you had to manage the waterworks for the distribution of water all over this city and there was a certain pipe into which you poured water, but none ever came out at the other end, do you know what you would do? You would remove it and say, "This does not suit my purpose. I need a pipe that will give out as well as receive." That is exactly what the Lord desires of us. Do not selfishly say, "I want to sit down and enjoy the love of God. I shall never say a word to anybody about Christ. I will never give a poor creature so much as a brass farthing, but I want to sit down and be solaced with the love of God."

If you think thus, you are a plugged up pipe! You are of no use—you will have to be taken out of the system of the Church—for the system of love for the world requires open pipes through which Divine Love may freely flow. May the Lord clear you and fill you, so that out of you there may continually flow rivers of living water. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON-1 John 4.  
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—199, 782, 803.**

[***A History of Spurgeon's Tabernacle***, by Eric Hayden (1919-2001). The author pastored the Tabernacle when it was rebuilt the third time, necessitated by the damage from Nazi bombs. His own grandfather was a member under Spurgeon's ministry. He updated Spurgeon's own little history of the Tabernacle and added valuable appendixes, making this the best source of information on Spurgeon printed in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Write Pilgrim Publications, P.O. Box 66, Pasadena, TX 77501 or go to <http://members.aol.com/pilgrimpub/spurgeon.htm> (near bottom of the page, for ordering information.)]

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# SEEING AND TESTIFYING

## NO. 2383

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY,  
OCTOBER 21, 1894.  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 29, 1888.

***“And we have seen and testify that the Father sent the  
Son to be the Savior of the world.”  
1 John 4:14.***

THERE are two things joined together in the text which must never be parted—“We have seen and testify.” In the first place, never let any man testify what he has *not* seen. If you are not personally aware of it, do not tell it—it is the personality of the testimony that is the power of the testimony. That Truth of God which you have never experienced, you had better leave to somebody else to preach. This is the cause of the failure of a great many ministers—there is no personal conversion at the back of their ministry and, consequently, no Christian life within them. Their preaching is the testimony of a man who says that he heard such and such a thing and you know how a judge will stop a witness when he begins to say what others have told him. “No, no,” he says, “what did *you* see, yourself, my good man? What do you know about this business on your own account? I do not want to know what others said to you about it.” So is it with the message delivered from the pulpit—what is needed is that the preacher should bear testimony of what he has seen, tasted, felt and handled. When you try to bring others to Christ, you must do it by bearing witness of what *Christ has done for you*. If He has never done anything for you—*personally* for you—you cannot testify for Him and must not pretend to do so.

In the next place, what you have seen you should testify. If you have seen those things for yourself, do what Mary did when she had seen the risen Christ—she ran to bring His disciples the news! What right have you to see for yourself, alone? No, no, tell the glad tidings! The Light of God is not put to your candle for the candle's sake, alone—it is that men may be enlightened by its beams. If you have received Light from God, let your Light so shine before men that they may see it and glorify God for it! I am afraid that this observation ought to trouble a great many professing Christians. They say that they have seen the Lord. I have no reason to doubt the truth of what they say, but, having seen, why do they not testify? In our text, it is written, “We have seen and testify,” but in many cases, nowadays, it might be written, “We have seen and do *not* testify,” for some who profess to have seen Christ by faith do not even come forward to confess Him in Baptism, according to His Word—and many do not unite with the visible Church and do not occupy themselves in the

Sunday school, or in any form of Christian usefulness! What will become of you who, having a talent, never put it out to interest? O slothful ones, who have wrapped your talent in a napkin, how will you answer for it in the day when the Master calls your servants to give in their reckoning? If we are what we ought to be, we shall first make sure of the seeing and *then* we shall make equally sure of the testifying! What God has joined together, let no man put asunder. “We have seen and testify.” There can be no divorce in this case, no breaking of the marriage bond—“We have seen *and* testify.”

I am going to dwell upon these two topics, seeing and testifying, and first, I shall speak to you about *Apostolic seeing*, for doubtless John may be understood as referring to himself and his brother-Apostles when he says, “We have seen and testify.” That will be our first theme—Apostolic seeing. And then, secondly, *our seeing*, or, how far Christian men and women can say, “We have seen.” And then, thirdly, *Apostolic testifying and our testifying*, for they ought to be alike in a great many particulars.

**I.** First, then, dear Friends, let me speak a little about APOSTOLIC SEEING. John and his fellow-Apostles say, “We have seen and testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.”

Note that this saying was, in their case, *eminently clear*. Let me read to you the beginning of this Epistle—“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life; that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you.” These men, who were chosen to dwell with Christ, to see His miracles, and to hear His teaching, come forward with a very clear witness. They tell us that which they had seen, that which they had heard, that which they had looked upon and that which their hands had handled.

In the first place, they had *heard* Christ. This was a high privilege, for, “Never man spoke like this Man.” Never was there such hearing as when Christ preached! The Apostles had heard their Master’s voice in private as well as in public, when He expounded to them Truths of God which He did not fully explain to the multitude. What marvelous sweetness there must have been in the voice of Jesus! I have no doubt that the melody of it would ring out in the Apostles’ ears as long as they lived. They knew, from what they heard from His lips, that the Son of God, even the Lord Jesus Christ, was really before them, for they heard Him say things which no mere man could have uttered. They heard Him declare wonderful Truths such as never fell from the lips of anyone but the long-promised Messiah, the Divine Messenger, who was sent of God. They had heard from Him that which made them know that He was sent by the Father to save men!

John also says that the Apostles had *seen* Christ. For more than three years, they had seen Him daily, constantly. They had also looked upon Him, the Apostle adds, apparently meaning that sometimes they had gazed upon Him with fixed attention. You know what it is to merely see a person, but it is a different thing to look earnestly at him, to feel so struck by his appearance that you cannot help looking him up and down from head to foot. You are fascinated by him, your eyes are held captive

by him, they seem to drink him in and to photograph him on your soul! Now, John says that the Apostles did that with their Lord. They saw Him and their eyes looked upon Him. They could not be mistaken about their Lord. John had seen Him on the Mount of Transfiguration and He had also seen Him on the Cross. He says, in his Gospel, when writing of the soldier piercing Christ's side, "He that saw it bares record, and his record is true: and he knows that he says true."

The Apostles, therefore, were hearers of Christ and seers of Christ. Besides that, they had handled Him. One of them had laid his head on his Lord's bosom. After He had risen from the dead, Jesus said to them, "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I, Myself: handle Me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see I have." They were not in any doubt that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among them! They could not doubt it—all their senses testified to the real Incarnation of the Son of God. They knew that He was a real Person, clothed in real flesh and blood. Thus, they had heard, seen and *handled* the Christ of God!

Well now, perhaps some of you will say, "We wish we had their evidence. If we had been alive, then, we could speak, now, with much greater confidence." Listen to me—the mere *hearing* of Christ would not convince anybody! There were thousands and tens of thousands who heard Him, yet they heard nothing remarkable in His teaching and even turned away loathing and hating Him because of the Truth of God which they could not bear! There was not much advantage in merely *seeing* Him. Did not myriads see Him? Yet they saw not His Glory and did not understand that He was the Redeemer of men! Even when He hung on the Cross, many who saw Him only jeered, sneered, turned their backs and went their way. As to *handling* Him, did not the soldiers handle Him when they scourged Him? Did they not handle Him when they laid the Cross upon Him and when they laid Him upon the Cross? Oh, yes, there was more than enough of handling, and rough handling, too, but they were convinced of *nothing* even by *touching the precious body of Jesus*.

The fact is, Brothers and Sisters, genuine faith comes not merely by the ear, or the eye, or the hand, but it is flashed into the *soul*—perhaps, through the ear—but always directly *by the Spirit of God operating upon the heart*—and if these Apostles had not had another sense, a *spiritual* sense, they would have remained unbelievers! So, after all, they had no great advantage over you. And you, Beloved, who know the Lord *spiritually*, may also be able to truly say, "We have seen and testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world."

But mark you, next, granting that the Apostles were spiritually enlightened, their seeing was *eminently conclusive as to the mission of Christ*. What they saw was not only Christ, but, "that the Father sent the Son." Now, Beloved, this was seen in Christ's miracles. It is specially recorded of our Lord's first miracle, when He turned the water into wine, "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His Glory; and His disciples believed on Him." It was rather a simple miracle, the turning of water into wine, but Jesus did it in such a marvelous manner that the thought flashed upon the Apostles as He did it, "This is the Son of God! This is the Messiah!" A greater miracle which

followed further on, is said to have had the same effect upon those who witnessed it. When our Lord Jesus came to the grave of Lazarus, before He raised him, you remember that He said to Martha, "Said I not unto you that if you would believe, you should see the Glory of God?" And when He had called Lazarus back from the dead, those who were round about saw the Glory of God beaming out in that miracle, and we read, "Many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on Him." If any of you had been with Christ during His earthly life and *had been spiritually enlightened*, you would have seen, in His walking the waves, or in His opening the eyes of the blind, or in His healing all manner of sick folk who were brought to Him, something of His Glory, and you would have felt that the evidence as to His mission was very conclusive.

But, Beloved, the *Apostles*, also, had conclusive evidence as to the Savior's mission in His life. What a life that was! I can admire the life of Elijah without wishing to imitate it. I can admire all the lives of the saints of the Old Testament and of the New, as I find them recorded, and I can even forget their failings. But there is not one, even of the purest and best lives that we have ever read in the sacred page, that leaves upon us the impression that the life of Jesus does! It is not only perfect—it is Divine! Singularly enough, it is more worthy of imitation than any other life and yet it cannot be imitated! It is the most human of all lives, but it is superhuman to a very high degree—and yet in no one respect superhuman in the sense that it cannot be copied by our humanity. It was, indeed, an extraordinary life! One who could have seen it in its different phases and learned, by the Spirit's teaching, what it all meant, must have been convinced that none but the Son of God could have lived like this. What the Centurion said about His death, the enlightened observer would have said about His life, "Truly this was the Son of God."

I cannot stay to go into all the other proofs of this point, but I am sure of this, that those gracious men, with the Spirit of God instructing them, must have felt that Jesus Christ was sent of God when they saw His miracles and when they saw His life, which was a greater marvel than all His miracles!

Still, I have not quite hit the nail on the head until I say that what they saw was *eminently conclusive as to His being sent to save men*—"We have seen and testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world." There was nothing about Christ's life that was contrary to that declaration. He cursed no man. He called no fire from Heaven upon any man. Even when wicked men had nailed Him to the tree, He breathed a prayer for them! In every way, He was not a destroyer, but a Savior. These men were, themselves, saved—saved from known sin, saved from groveling occupations, saved from themselves—and they knew it. They knew that the Father must have sent the Son to be the Savior of the world, for He had saved them!

They had also seen Him heal the sick. What a sight it must have been to see Him going through the crowd, as He often did, when the people were laid on their beds in the streets and others came thronging about Him! When they saw Him laying a hand on one, here, and healing an-

other, there, and another, there, and yet others, yonder, as though He marched through a regiment of devils and cleared a pathway for Himself, not with sword and spear, but with His own gentle glance and with a touch of His loving, yet mighty hands, what a wonder! He came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them—and those innumerable cures, which He so freely dispensed, were clear proofs to the Apostles that the Father had sent His Son to be the Savior of the world!

But they knew it still better after they had seen Him die, after they had beheld His empty sepulcher, after they had felt the descending Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Then, when the tongues of fire were given them and they went out to speak in His name and 3,000 felt the mighty touch of Grace, they knew that the Father had sent the Son to be the Savior of the world! And when the bonds were broken which held them in as preachers to the Jews and they went throughout all Asia and boldly crossed to Europe, going everywhere preaching the Word—and Parthians, Medes and Elamites heard the Gospel, and Greeks and Romans bowed in penitence, and Philippians and Colossians flocked to Christ—then the Apostles understood that the Father had sent the Son to be the Savior of the world! All along their lives there was this clear line of evidence of which they were quite certain—and they came forth to testify that it was so!

Thus I have brought before you the first point, that is, Apostolic seeing.

**II.** The second thing is OUR SEEING. Let me put a few matters very plainly and personally, and let each person ascertain how far he can follow me.

Brothers and Sisters, some of us have seen that Jesus is sent of God to be the Savior of the world. HOW have we seen it? Well, first, *by the power of His Word*. You have noticed, I daresay, that singular incident concerning the woman of Samaria. The woman told the men of Sychar that she had met a Man who had told her all that she ever did, and she believed that He was the Messiah. They listened to her words and then they went out to hear the Savior, Himself. He preached to them and what was the result? The Samaritans said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of your saying, for we have heard Him, ourselves, and know that this is, indeed, the Christ, the Savior of the world." Do you not think that when John was writing this Epistle, the record of what the woman of Samaria said was in his mind and that he unconsciously repeated the words, "The Savior of the world," using the very same phrase as the men of Sychar had done? They were convinced of Christ's Messiahship simply by the power of His Word!

Brothers and Sisters, there are many of us who have the same evidence as these Samaritans had! We have experienced the power of Christ's Word! I do not mean that we have felt the force of human eloquence, or that we have known the weight of human argument, but we have proved the might of the Word of the Lord. There is a certain something which goes with the Word of God which is altogether independent of the mannerisms of the preacher. It is the Truth of God, itself, which thrills us, conquers us, holds us in chains, leads us captive, sets us free,



puts a new song into our mouths and makes us dance with holy joy! You know that experience, do you not? I believe that often, in this House of Prayer, my Brothers and Sisters, you have felt a power far beyond any force that human lips can possess—you know it has been so! You have gone home saying, “God has spoken to my soul, today, and I know that the Gospel is true, and that the Christ is Divine. The Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world, for I have felt the matchless power of His Holy Word.”

Then there are three evidences, mentioned by John in the latter part of this Epistle, each of which is a present power to us. He says, in the 8<sup>th</sup> verse of the last chapter, “There are three that bear witness in earth: the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.” Have you not felt *the influence of the Holy Spirit* as well as the power of the Word? Did not the Spirit come and wither your righteousness, as the Si-rocco of the desert destroys the flowers of the field? Did not the Spirit of God come and put life into you when you lay like the dead? Did He not come and point you to the Savior—even giving you eyes with which to look to Him? Has not the Spirit of God often illuminated you, quickened you, comforted you, guided you? Has He not been to you as the fire, the dew and the wind? Then, if you know the operations of the Spirit of God and, you do, unless your profession is a lie, you, also, have seen that the Father has sent His Son to be the Savior of the world!

The next witness is concerning *the purging by the water*. Now, has not the water, which flowed from Christ’s riven side, operated upon you? If you are what you profess to be, my dear Brother, you are a clean man. Once you were foul enough, but you have been washed and now you are a different man. The things you then loved are now horrible to you, and you hate them, for a great change has come over you. You have been washed from your love of filthiness and your delight in sin! Yes, and the washing process goes on every day—you are daily helped to leave off one sin and another—you are made not only to *see* the evil within you, but to conquer it. Is it not so, dear Brothers and Sisters? You know that if the Grace of God has not sanctified you, you are without one great evidence of its power—but if it has changed your character, then depend upon it, you have an evidence that it came from God. Thus, we also, “have seen and testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world,” because He has cleansed us and made us to love holy things, and to hate everything which God hates.

The third witness tells of *the cleansing by the blood*. Do you know anything about cleansing by the blood of Jesus, the blood that speaks to a conscience all in a tempest through sin? The blood that gives access to God to sinners far off from Him by wicked works? The blood which we plead in prayer? The blood which has become the foundation of all our hope? I can truly say that when I first learned the Doctrine of the Substitution of Christ, His dying in my place, and understood that I had nothing to do but to look to Him and live, it was with me as when the sun shines in Lapland after months of midnight! Oh, what a blessed dawning was that to my soul! Now, if you know the power of the blood of Jesus upon your conscience and your heart, then you, also, can say, “We have

seen.” And I hope you may truly be able to add, “and testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world!”

Besides all this—the power of the Word, the influence of the Holy Spirit, the purging by the water and the cleansing by the blood of Jesus—we have other evidence, namely, *the aspirations of our souls*. Are there not, within you, longings and desires for which you never can account if there were not a Savior for men? When God gave to humanity the appetite of hunger, you might have inferred from it that He meant to provide food to satisfy it. When He gave to us the capacity for thirst, we might be sure that, somewhere, there would be rippling rills from which that thirst might be slaked. When the Lord gave to us, as He has given, a sighing after holiness, a longing after nearness to Himself, a devout hope that we shall be caught up to be with Him where He is, these Heaven-given longings are *proofs* that they will be gratified—but they cannot be unless there is a Savior of men! Thank God there is such a Savior who will give us all that for which we are sighing! “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.”

But I need not talk of mere aspirations. As far as I am concerned, I can speak about matters of *fact* which prove to me the power of my Lord and Master, for I have seen *the triumphs of Christ*. I saw some of them last Tuesday. I am always seeing them and, God willing, I shall see some more of them next Tuesday! I have seen men who used to live in sin and drunkenness, made honest and sober! And I have seen fallen women brought to Jesus’ feet as penitents! All along what is growing to be a long ministry, the chariot of the Gospel, in which I have ridden, has had captives to grace Christ’s triumphs! All along, multitudes have decided to quit the ways of sin and have turned to the living God! And I must believe in the power of Divine Grace, I cannot doubt it! The proof of what the tree is, surely, is found in the fruit, and the fruit is most abundant. Ask the missionaries what Christ has done in the Southern Seas and they will tell you of islands, once inhabited by naked cannibals, where now men are clothed and in their right mind, sitting at the feet of Jesus! The whole world teems with trophies of Christ and shall yet more fully teem with them. “We have seen and testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world,” and we preach with the full conviction that “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”

**III.** So now I come to my last point and that is a practical one. Thirdly, let me speak about APOSTOLIC TESTIFYING AND OURS.

I trust that many of you can join in what the Apostle John said, “We have seen that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.” Now let us bear our testimony concerning it as the Apostles did and, first, *we should do it in the same manner*. What was the Apostolic manner of testifying? Well, I would say that it was very fervent and ardent. Those first preachers of the Gospel never preached cold sermons. Why, some sermons hang like icicles upon the lips of the speaker, but the Apostles preached as if they were all on fire! Their lips were like the mouth of Mount Aetna when it vomits lava—every word burnt its way into the

hearts and consciences of men! Never talk coldly of Christ who was on fire with love to you—preach the Gospel ardently!

The Apostles also proclaimed their message very simply. I do not believe there ever was an Apostolic sermon in which the preacher tried to show himself off. There is no record of any display of oratorical fireworks, no grand closing peroration. I always tell my students that this is the 12<sup>th</sup> Commandment, “You shall not perorate.” [Speak at great length, in a grand manner.] Yet many preachers will do it—there must be something very splendid at the end of the discourse to impress people with the idea of how wondrously they can do it! Do not do it, Brothers, do not do it! Tell the people the way to Heaven and point it out to them as plainly as you can—and if there are two or three little words of plain Saxon that will do it, use them, and fling the long Latin words on the dunghill where they ought to rot! They are no good, whatever, in the pulpit, for we need speech that can be easily understood by the people—the plain speech of the common folk of our day. So the Apostles spoke and so should we.

But they also spoke very boldly. You never meet with any timidity in them. We read in the Acts of the Apostles, “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.” Do not some preachers appear to apologize for what they are about to say? They trust that they will be excused for venturing to intrude their opinion. I would ask your pardon if I intruded my opinion, but in proclaiming the Gospel of Christ I have not any opinion of my own! I preach God’s Word to you, and at your peril do you reject it! You are bound to receive it as it comes from Him and no apology is to be made by the man whom God sends. So the Apostles spoke boldly in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, and Jesus Christ of Nazareth backed up their words. If God has not sent you, my Brother, go home! But if He has, in God’s name, do not apologize for His message! There is an honor put upon you by your Lord who sent you, and you must put honor upon your Master by being faithful to Him.

Thus, like the Apostles, we have to bear testimony for Christ, and *we should do it in the same power*. What was the power with which the Apostles testified? Was it the power of their superior education? They had not any, with, perhaps, the exception of Paul. They could manage a boat better than most of us can, but that was their principal attainment. Did they speak in the power of being (—what is the word, now?) “*en rapport* with the spirit of the age”? I may as well use a fine expression *sometimes!* Did they speak as men “keeping themselves abreast of the times”? Not a bit of it! They hated “the spirit of the age” in which they lived and struggled against it with all their might! What was the source of their power? Their only power was the Holy Spirit and, Brothers, we, also, must come to see that there can be no power in us to win a soul for Christ but the supernatural energy of God the Holy Spirit! If we have that, the work will be done. If we are without it, we shall be as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.

Then, again, if we are to testify as the Apostles did, *we should do it with the same message*. What was that message? “The Father sent the

Son to be the Savior of the world.” Then, the world is *lost*. We must not stammer in saying that! And every man in the world is lost by nature and by practice, lost, with a great loss, a loss from which he cannot recover himself, a loss from which only God can save him! We must bear our testimony to that Truth of God. Then we must dwell upon the Sender of the Savior—“The Father sent the Son.” That great Father against whom we have rebelled, who will bring His wandering children home, again, “The Father sent the Son.” We must also testify much about the Sent One. “the Father sent the Son,” not an angel, not a man prepared by education or training, but He sent the Son out of His own bosom, the Son out of the glories of Heaven! The Eternal Son of God, commissioned by the Father, came to earth!

And with what design did Jesus come? He came to save, to save by making such a propitiation for sin that God could be justified, and also the Justifier of him that believes. He came to save by delivering us from the dominion of sin, that henceforth we should not serve sin, but should be lifted above it, right away from the power of everything that held us as slaves to Satan. And what was the scope of Christ’s work? “The Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.” He did not come to condemn the world, but to save it, that the world, through Him, might be saved. His one mission here was to be the Savior. He will come a second time to be the Judge of all—but in His first coming, He came to be a Savior, and only a Savior. He has gone up into Heaven, but He is still the Savior, able to save to the uttermost them that come to God by Him—and He is the *only* Savior.

In a certain district there may be many who pretend to cure the sick, but only one who is qualified to act as surgeon. And there are many who pretend to save, but there is only one qualified Savior beneath the cope of Heaven, and He is the Lord Jesus Christ, who is here styled, “the Savior of the world,” because He *is* the *only* Savior in the world. As a man may be said to be the doctor of a district because he is the only doctor in the district, so is Christ the Savior of the world because He is the only Savior who ever was or ever will be in this world!

He is “the Savior of the world,” that is to say, of all ranks, classes and conditions of man. No difference of color, no difference of race, no difference of wealth, no difference of talent, no difference of standing and rank, no difference of education and attainment makes any difference to Him. Jesus Christ has come to be the Savior, not of the rich, nor of the poor. He has come to be the Savior, not of the learned, nor of the ignorant, but, “of the *world*.” He comes to save men as sinners. “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,” not merely great sinners or little sinners, open sinners or secret sinners, but plain “sinners.” This is the sort of people for whom He laid down His life. He has come to seek and to save that which was lost, not that which was lost in one particular way or in another special way, but that which was lost *any* way—lost to itself, lost to God, lost to goodness, lost to hope, lost to Heaven—yes, if lost to morality, Jesus Christ has come to seek and to save that which was lost!

He was sent to be the Savior of the world because no man, believing in Him, is excluded from the merit of His death. “God so loved the world,

that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” He will ultimately, as a matter of fact, save none but His elect. This will be the end of all His coming, and living, and dying—but that does not conflict, for a single moment, with the universal invitation that is to be given to you and to every creature under Heaven—“Whoever will, let Him take the water of life freely.” Whoever believes in Jesus has everlasting life. “Come unto Me,” says Christ, “all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” “Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.” “Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

What I am saying is the result of what I have seen and of what many here have seen. “We have seen and testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.” Will you, dear Hearers—I speak to some who have never heard me before—will you accept our testimony? If you judge us to be false, you will not receive it, but if you have judged us to be honest and true men, accept what we declare to you!

I pray you, receive our message, for to what end do we bear our testimony? I should like John to say a final word to you and then I will have done. This is why we bear our testimony, *we do it with the same design* that led John to write concerning the life of Christ, “and many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this Book: but these are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you might have life through His name.” There is salvation! There is Christ ready to save! Look to Him, blind eyes! Look to Him, dead souls! Look to Him! Say not that you cannot—He in whose power I speak will work a miracle while yet you hear the command and blind eyes shall look, and dead hearts shall spring into eternal life by His Spirit’s effectual working! God grant that it may be so, for His dear name’s sake! Amen.

### **EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: 1 John 4.**

**Verse 1.** *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.* It was so in John’s day. It is so in these days. If there were only one false prophet, we should have need to be on our guard, but, “many false prophets are gone out into the world.” If false prophets were all shut up in a cage, and we had to go to seek them, there might be some danger to be apprehended from them, but there is so much more danger, now that we can truly read, “Many false prophets are gone out into the world.”

**2.** *Hereby know you the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God. Where the Godhead and the Manhood of Christ are truly and properly confessed, so far, at any rate, the confession is of God.*

**3.** *And every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, of which you have*

*heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.* So that there were deadly errors very early in the history of the Christian Church! The loving Apostle John did not handle them with gloved hands, but he dealt with them honestly and sought to destroy them. We must not wonder if, in our days, the Church has many heresies in it—but they are *not* to be tolerated, but to be cut up—root and branch!

**4.** *You are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world.* The people of God are few, feeble, and weak, but there is a Spirit in them mightier than the spirit of the world! And, as the ultimate victory will depend upon the strength of the indwelling Spirit, the Church of God will yet overcome the world that lies in the Wicked One.

**5.** *They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world hears them.* These false prophets teach doctrines that suit carnal men—“They are of the world, therefore speak they of the world.” They take their cue from “the spirit of the age.” They speak according to the fashion of the world and, therefore, it is no wonder that the world hears them.

**6.** *We are of God: He that knows God hears us; he that is not of God hears not us.* Here is an Inspired answer to those who say that they attach no importance to the Apostles. They profess to be the followers of Christ, but they say that they do not agree with Paul and with John. Very well, John speaks in the name of *all* the Apostles when He says, “He that knows God hears us; he that is not of God hears not us.”

**6.** *Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.* If you reject any part of the Word of God, the spirit of error is within you. Truth is one, and the Revelation of God is one—let us not rend it, let us hold fast by it all—and so prove that the Spirit of truth is in us.

**7.** *Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and everyone that loves is born of God, and knows God.* The spirit of love, kindness, self-sacrifice, holy charity—this is of God. This is the distinguishing mark of the Christian dispensation, the distinguishing mark of the Christian—that he abounds in love, not in malice, anger, revenge, bitterness. “Let us love one another: for love is of God.”

**8.** *He that loves not knows not God; for God is Love.* I have known men, professing to be Christians, at enmity with their brothers. I have heard of a father and a son who have not spoken to one another for months. Did I hear of a mother and a daughter who would not speak to each other, and of sisters who had fallen out? This will not do! You must either give up your Christian profession or give up your hatred! The very attempt to combine enmity and Christianity is a sin against God—“He that loves not knows not God; for God is Love.”

**9-10.** *In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* Sometimes people say, “How can we love a person who is not lovable, one who will not love us in return?” Yet God did so—He loved us when we loved Him not! He loved us

when there was nothing lovable in us and we ought to take God as our Pattern in all things.

**11-12.** *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought, also, to love one another. No man has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwells in us, and His love is perfected in us. Though we cannot see God, yet if we love one another, that is a proof that we have Him dwelling within us.*

**13-16.** *Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. Whoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwells in Him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God has to us. The two things go together, knowing and believing.*

**16-18.** *God is Love; and he that dwells in love dwells in God and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the Day of Judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts off fear. There is no slavish dread, no spirit of bondage—perfect love casts it all out. May we all have that love and get rid of all fear!*

**18-20.** *Because fear has torment. He that fears is not made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us. If a man says I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar. That is very plain language! John does not mince matters. He is all love, but he is also all truth. Some people think that if you love, you will never use strong language, but that is not the case. Sometimes, because a surgeon loves the patient, he cuts the more deeply.*

**20, 21.** *For he that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment have we from Him, That he who loves God, loves his brother, also. Now I do not know to whom this message may specially apply in all this great congregation, but there is the Word of God as plain as a pike-staff! If you do not live in love, you do not live in God! and if any of you are harboring any animosities, ill-feelings and unkindnesses, get rid of them, get rid of them at once! The sun has well near gone down—remember the Apostle Paul's injunction, "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath," but, as God has forgiven you, forgive all others for Christ's sake, and dwell in a loving-hearted Christ-like spirit toward all mankind.*

### **HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"— 551, 408, 561.**

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# A PSALM OF REMEMBRANCE

## NO. 253

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MAY 22, 1859,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“We have known and believed the love that God has to us.”  
1 John 4:16.***

It is very pleasant to read descriptions of the Holy Land from observant travelers, who, in glowing language, have depicted its interesting scenes. I must confess that all books which speak of the land where Jesus lived and died have an attraction for me. But how much more delightful must it be to journey there one's self—to stand on the very spot where Jesus preached and prayed—and to kneel upon that blood-stained garden of Gethsemane in which He sweat that sacred sweat of blood! I can scarcely imagine what must be the sensation of a true Christian when he stands on Calvary, that spot of all others most dear to the Believer's soul. All the descriptions that the traveler can possibly give can never awaken the emotions which would be felt if we were really there ourselves.

Now, this law of nature I would transfer to matters of grace. Let me tell you this day what I may concerning the acts of God's goodness in the souls of His people. My description will be dullness itself compared with the glorious reality. If God should lend me help, so that I could, in glowing pictures, portray the amazing love of Christ Jesus to those who believe in Him—if I could tell you of their matchless experience, their Divine drinking at the fountain of life and bliss, their heavenly feastings in the banqueting-house—all this would be nothing compared with what you would feel if you yourself could taste and handle and see and know and believe.

Let me add another figure to render this truth yet more apparent. Suppose an eloquent foreigner, from a sunny clime, should endeavor to make you appreciate the fruits of his nation. He depicts them to you. He describes their luscious flavor, their cooling juice, their delicious sweetness. But how powerless will be his oration, compared with your vivid remembrance if you have yourself partaken of the dainties of his land. It is even so with the good things of God. Describe them as we may, we cannot awaken in you the joy and delight that is felt by the man who lives upon them, who makes them his daily food, his manna from Heaven and his water from the rock. 'Tis feeling, 'tis tasting, 'tis actually receiving and en-



joying, which is, after all, the highest oratory with which we can possibly explain to you the sweet and precious things of God,

Now, do you not see that John could specially speak with power, for he spoke from his own experience? And do you not perceive that his language cannot be understood except we put ourselves in his position and are able to echo His Words, when he said, "We have known and believed the love that God has to us"? There are many here, I doubt not, who can join in this declaration of the Apostle. And may the Holy Spirit help me, while I endeavor to draw out an expression of grateful thanks from those who have believed and known the love which God has to them.

First, then, I shall look upon my text as being an abstract of Christian experience. Secondly, I shall view it as the summary of Christian testimony. And after that, I shall regard it as the groundwork of Christian encouragement.

**I.** First of all, we use here THE ABSTRACT OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE. Some will object to this. If you should bring some Christians up and say, "Come now, just tell us in a few words what you think of the Christian life," they would begin with a deep fetched groan and then with the slightest possible allusion to mercy they would pass on to describe their continual exercises of soul, their deep afflictions, their desperate adversities and their tremendous corruptions. Then they would end with another groan. But I think the healthy Christian, if he is asked this question—"Can you possibly give in one short sentence a statement of your Christian experience?" would come forward joyously and say, "I will say nothing about myself but I will speak to the honor of my God and I am sweetly constrained to affirm that I have known and have believed the love that God has to note." That would be his abstract of experience and the very best, I am sure, that any child of God can present. It is true that we have our trials, but it is just as true that we are delivered out of them. It is true that we have our corruptions and mournfully do we know this to be the fact. But it is just as true that we have an all-sufficient Savior who overcomes these corruptions and enables us to tread the dragon beneath our feet.

In looking back we dare not say that we have not passed the den of leopards. It would be wrong if we were to deny that we have floundered through the Slough of Despond and have crept along the Valley of Humiliation—but we can say we have been through them. We have not remained in them. We have not left our bones bleaching in the burning sun, nor our bodies to be the prey of the lion. Our sorrows have been the heralds of mercies. Our griefs cannot mar the melody of our praise for we reckon them to be the deep bass notes of our song. The deeper our troubles the louder our thanks to God, who has assuredly led His servants through all

and has preserved us until now. Our past troubles are no disturbers of our happy worship. They do but swell the stream of our grateful affection. We put down all our trials into the account, but still we declare our one uncontradicted avowal, that “we have known and believed the love that God has to us.”

You will observe the distinction which the Apostle makes. I may not be able clearly to bring it out, but it struck my mind as being a very beautiful description of the Christian’s two-fold experience. Sometimes he knows the love that God has to him and at other times he believes it. There is a difference here—I hope I shall be able to make it plain.

**1.** Sometimes the Christian knows the love of God to him. I will mention two or three particular ways in which he knows it.

Sometimes he knows it by seeing it. He goes to his house and he finds it stored with plenty—“his bread is given him and his water is sure.” The secret of God is upon his tabernacle, the Almighty is with him and his children are about him. He washes his steps with butter and the rocks pour him out rivers of oil. His root is spread out by the river and the dew lies all night upon his branch. His glory is fresh in him and his bow is renewed in his hand. He is blessed in his going out and in his coming in. He has the blessings of Heaven above and of “the deep which lies under.” He is like Job. The Lord has set a hedge about him and all that he possesses. Now, truly, he can say, “I know the love of God to me, for I can see it. I can see a gracious Providence pouring forth out of the cornucopia of Providence—an abundance of all that my soul can desire.” This, however, might not completely convince him of God’s love if it were not that he has also a consciousness that these things are not given him as husks are cast to swine, but they are bestowed on him as love-tokens from a tender God.

His ways please the Lord and therefore He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him. The man at such a time has a joyous spirit. When he reads the Scripture it is one great transparency from beginning to end. When he meditates upon its pages it is like a bracelet set about with the rarest jewels. He goes about his Master’s service and the Lord makes him successful. He sows and he reaps, he plows and the furrows team with plenty. The sower overtakes the reaper and the reaper overtakes the sower. God gives him many harvests in a year. The work of his hands is established and his labor of love is accepted. The Lord has made him exceedingly rich, He has blessed him and his cup runs over. He has all that heart can desire. “Now,” he says, “I know the goodness of God.” This, truly, is very easy work and yet easy though it is, we ought not to forget that we have had such seasons. We have had many trials, but, in the desert of our trial, we have had sometimes an oasis like this. We can look back to

some sunny spot when we could say, "Surely the arms of love are round about me both temporally and spiritually." "He has set me upon a rock and established my goings." Then the Christian knows the love of God.

Another time in which he knows his Father's love is when he sees it after coming out of affliction. He has been sick and while he has been on his bed he has been vexed with anxious thoughts concerning those he might leave behind or even about himself. In the hour of languishing he cried to the Lord for deliverance. And at last he felt the young blood leaping through his veins anew. New health was restored to him and he trod the green sward again with light, elastic steps, singing, "The Lord has heard my cry, like Hezekiah and has lengthened my days. Now I know the love which God has to me." Or else he has incurred great losses in business. One after another the curtains of his habitation were rent, the cords were cut in two and all the tent pins pulled up by the invading enemy. He thought, at last, that nothing would be left him, "Surely I shall die in poverty," says he, for bankruptcy stares him in the face. But now and then the tide is changed, the keel of his ship almost grated on the gravel, but now it begins to float and boldly he spreads his sails and gallantly he rides the billows. Now can he exclaim, "I know the love that God has to me." He has brought His servant out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay and has again appeared to him in mercy and chased away his doubts and fears.

So also has it been with many a man when he has for years been laboring under a heavy trial and at last escapes from it. Look at old Jacob. I believe that all his life he would have put in a demurrer against what I have just declared—that this is a summary of Christian experience. He would have said, "No, young man. I tell you it is not—my experience has been one of trouble and trial ever since I left my Father's house." And we could tell him the reason of it, too, if he particularly wished to know. But surely when at last he put his aged arms round the neck of his son Joseph, when at last he saw him ruler over all Egypt and when his two grandchildren were brought to kneel before him to receive his blessing, the old man might have reversed what he said and no more have exclaimed, "Few and evil," but, "Now I know the love that God has towards me." As it was he did end his life with a song and finished by praising the angel who had blessed him and kept him from all evil. Even Jacob is no exception to the great rule—that the life of God's people is a proof of the text. "We know and believe the love that God has to us."

There are other ways in which God's children know their Father's love. Besides what they see there are some things which they *feel*. There are times when the Father takes His child into His arms, presses him to His bosom and kisses him with the kisses of His lips. These are the fond ex-

pressions to set forth the tender communing which God has with His children. John could say, "We have known," for he had laid his head on Jesus' bosom. He had been with Him in the Garden of Gethsemane, he had been with Him on the Mount of Transfiguration. He had been with Him, too, when He worked His special miracles, and therefore, from the fact that he had communion with Christ at the supper and in His sufferings and His miracles, John might say, "We know the love that He has to us."

And have not you and I—let us now speak from personal experience—have not we had fellowship with Christ? There have been times when we were not nearer to ourselves than we were to God—when we were as assured that we were having fellowship with Him as a man talks with his friend. As sure, I say, as we were of our own existence. Bitter though we sometimes think that our lives have been, yet have there been periods in them akin to Heaven, when we could say, "If this is not Glory it is next door to it. If I am not on the other side of Jordan, at least my Master is on this side of it. If I have not yet been permitted to walk the golden streets, yet these very streets on earth have been trod by heavenly footsteps while I have walked with God." Times there have been when a Christian would not have changed his blest estate for an angel's wing of fire. He has felt that he was with Christ and was as certain of it as if he had seen His pierced hands and His feet. Then could he say, "Now I know the love that God has towards me."

And at times, too, there has been another knowledge—not so high, perhaps, as communion, bringing with it less of rapture and ecstasy—but not less of solid consolation. I mean the infallible testimony of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God witnessing with our spirit, that we are born of God. I am no Believer in those dreams and visions which many persons mar their experience. I do not believe in those tales I hear people tell about hearing a voice, or seeing an angel. Such things happen now and then—now and then but when we are overdone with them, we begin to suspect them to be utterly false. But I speak not as a fanatic or enthusiast when I testify that there is such a thing as an express revelation made by the Holy Spirit to the individual man. This written Word of God, which is that on which we rely as a sure word of testimony, whereunto you do well to take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place.

There is, besides this, I say, another, a distinct, decided, infallible utterance of the Holy Spirit in the soul of man—when He bears witness with our spirit that we are born of God and at such times—and I will not stop to explain how it is—the natural man would not understand me and the spiritual man knows already—at such times the Believer says, "Now I know the love that God has to me." If the devil himself in person should

meet the Believer when he has this witness and tell him that God did not love him, he would call him a liar to his face and say, "The Spirit of God has told me so and I will believe the Spirit of God and I will not believe you, you liar from the beginning, you father of lies." Now this is a very joyous part of the Believer's experience, that both by sight and by feeling and by distinct inward witnessing, he can often say, "I know the love that God has towards me."

**2.** But there are times of thick darkness, when neither sun nor moon appear for many days, when the tempest rages exceedingly and two seas meet in dread collision. There are seasons when the Christian, dismayed and dismantled, drifts before the storm a miserable hulk, unable to grasp the rudder or to man the yards. All strength and hope are gone. He looks upward, but he sees no Helper, downward and he beholds nothing but the uttermost depths of despair. Around him there is nothing but terror and all about him everything frowns with dismay. At such a time, noble is the Christian who can say, "Now it may be I do not know the love that God has to me, but I believe it. Now I believe it," says he. "Yes, roll on, waves—tell me that you shall engulf me—but I believe you not. He who has promised to preserve me—Him I believe and on His love will I rely, even though now I see no proof of it. Now, poor vessel, drift before the storm; and you, you rocks, roar yonder with your sounding breakers. But I do not fear you, for I believe the love of God towards me. I cannot be wrecked completely. Driven before the storm I may be. Half a wreck and tempest-tossed I am—but wholly lost I never can be. And now this day, in the teeth of evidence, in opposition to everything which goes against it, *now* I believe the love which God has for me."

The first position, that of *knowing* God's love is the sweetest, but that of *believing* God's love is the grandest. To feel God's love is very precious, but to believe it when you do not feel it is the noblest. He may be but a little Christian who knows God's love, but he is a great Christian who believes it when the visible contradicts it—and the invisible withholds its witness. No one is so grand as that Prophet who sees the olive wither, the fig-tree blasted, the vines devoured by the caterpillar, the stalls emptied and the flocks destroyed—who sees famine staring him in the face—and yet rejoices in the Lord. Oh, that is honoring God! You that believe Him in the sunshine, you offer Him pence. But you that believe Him in the storm, you pay Him pounds. No revenue is so rich as that which comes from the fat, yet seemingly barren, land of affliction. God gets no honor greater than that which He receives from the trustful faith, of a cast down but not destroyed Believer. Blessed is he who is perplexed but not in despair, persecuted but not forsaken, who is poor, yet, by his faith, makes many rich—

who has nothing yet possesses all things, who cries, "I can do nothing," and yet can add, "I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me."

And now, do not these two states make up a summary of Christian experience? "We know and believe the love that God has to us." "Ah," says one "we have sometimes doubted it." No, I will leave that. You may insert it in your confession, but I will not put it into my song. Confess your doubts, but write them not in this our Psalm of praise. I am sure, in looking back, you will say, "Oh, how foolish I was ever to doubt a faithful and unchanging God." Bring all your doubts and fears this day. Hew them in pieces like Agag before the Lord, let not one escape. Take them and hang them up upon a tree till evening and then take a great stone and set it at the mouth of their sepulcher that they may rise no more. Oh, for grace from this day forward to say, "When I know not my Father's love, I will believe it and when I have His presence, then will I sing aloud 'I know that love which He has towards me.'" This, then, is my first head.

**II.** The second is—this text is A SUMMARY OF THE BELIEVERS TESTIMONY. Every Christian is to be a testifier. Everything that God has made speaks of Him. One speaks of His power, another of His majesty. The rolling sea and the bespangled sky, both tell of His power and of His strength. Others tell of His wisdom. Some of His goodness. But the saint has a peculiar testimony. He is to be a witness with heart and lips. All the other creatures speak not with words. They may sing as they shine, but they cannot sing vocally. It is the Believer's part in the great eternal chorus to lift up voice and heart at once and as an intelligent, living, loving, learning witness, to testify to God.

Now I think I can say, or rather I will speak, for the thousands of Israel gathered here this morning—we can say our testimony to a believing world and to poor despairing sinners, is just this—"we know and have believed the love that God has towards us." This is our testimony and we desire to tell it everywhere as long as we live. And, dying, we hope we shall be enabled to repeat it with our last laboring breath. We will say, when life is finished and eternity begins, "We have known and have believed the love that God has towards us."

Let me enlarge, however, upon this testimony. And in the presence of many who know nothing of God, let me give an outline of the full testimony of every Believer.

In the first place we have known that God's love to us is undeserved. This we can tell you with the tears in our eyes—

***"There was nothing in us that could merit esteem,  
Or give the Creator delight.  
'Twas even so Father, we ever must sing,  
For so it seemed good in Your sight."***

Our astonishment increases every hour when we think of His love to us, for there was nothing in us that could have caused it. Often have we asked ourselves the question—

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

And our only answer is—

***“’Twas the same love that spread the feast,  
That sweetly forced us in  
Else we had still refused to taste.”***

You poor Sinners, you think that there must be something in you before God can love you. Our testimony is that God has loved us. We are sure of this and we do not speak half-heartedly when we declare that we are equally sure that there never was anything in us by nature that He could love. We may doubt a great many doctrines, but we cannot doubt this. This is a matter of fact, that in us, that is, in our flesh, there dwells no good thing. We have known and have believed that the love of God towards us is free, sovereign, undeserved and springs entirely from the overflowing love of His own heart and is not caused by anything in us.

Another thing we can bear testimony to is this—that the love of God is unconquerable. This is my witness and the witness of all the thousands here today. We strove against God’s love at first—Jesus knocked at the door, but we would not open to Him. He invited, but we would not come. He called, but we would not hearken. We can say with deepest grief we treated our best Friend most shamefully. He knocked at our door in the night with His hair wet with dew and His locks filled with the drops of the night, but we regarded Him not. In sloth and pride we still kept the bed of indolence and self-confidence and we would not rise to let Him in. And we can testify that if His love could have been conquered, we should have conquered it, for we shot out the envenomed shafts of ingratitude. We held up against Him perpetually the shield of our hard-heartedness and if He could have been overcome, if He were not an Almighty Savior, we should have defeated Him and have been still His enemies. You Sinners, we can affirm that love Divine is a love which many waters cannot quench and which the floods cannot drown.

We can yet again bear another testimony to God’s love. We can say concerning His love that it has never been diminished by all the sins we have ever committed since we believed. We have been verily guilty and we blush to say it. We have often revolted, but we have never found Him unwilling to forgive. We have gone to Him laden with guilt, but we have come away with our burden removed. Oh, if God could ever cast away His

people, He would have cast away me. I am sure God never turns his children out of doors, or this had been my lot long ago. I am certain of the doctrine of final perseverance, because I have persevered as long as I have.

If God meant to take my name out of the Covenant, He has had mighty reasons enough long before this—

***“If ever it should come to pass,  
That sleep of Christ should fall away,  
My fickle feeble soul, alas,  
Would fall a thousand times a day.  
Were not Your love as firm as free,  
You soon would take it, Lord, from me.”***

No, we have known, we have believed the love of God to us is not to be cut asunder by our sins, nor diminished by our unworthiness.

And yet another thing we may say. We have known and we have believed the love of God to us to be perfectly immutable. We have changed, but He has changed never. We have doubted Him. But when we believed not He has remained faithful. We have sometimes been in the greatest depths, but never too low for His long arm to reach. We have sometimes, it is true, run so far from Him that we could not see Him, but He could always see us. We have never found an end to His All-sufficiency, or a limit to His Omnipotence. We have never found a change in His love—

***“Immutable His will,  
Though dark may be my grave.  
His loving heart is still  
Unchangeably the same.  
My soul through many changes goes  
His love no variation knows.”***

We have known this. We have tasted and handled this. We are not to be argued out of it. We are sure it is true. God is immutable. Because He has been immutable. To us, so far, “we have known and believed the love that God has to us.”

I will make but one other remark here and that is we can bear our willing witness that the love of God to us has been an unfailing support in all our trials. I cannot speak as a gray-headed man of the storms and troubles which many of you have endured. But I have had more joys and more sorrows in the last few years than any man in this place—for my life has been compressed as with a Bramah press—a vast mass of emotion into one year. I have gone to the very bottoms of the mountains, as some of you know, in a night that never can be erased from my memory, a night connected with this place. I have had to pass also through severe suffering and trial from the calumny and scorn of man, with abuse hailed pitilessly on my head. And I have had to pass through severe personal bodily



pain. But as far as my witness goes, I can say that He is able to save unto the uttermost and in the last extremity and He has been a good God to me.

Unfaithful I have been. He has forgiven that and will forgive. But unfaithful to me He never has been. And if I had the choosing of the rest of my life I would not choose, but let Him map my way to the end as He has done until now, for “surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” As for you gray-headed men now present, what tales you could tell! You remember the many deliverances you have had under your sharp afflictions. You have seen a wife buried, but you have seen your God living. You have seen your children carried one after another to the tomb, but you have been able to say, “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away and blessed be His name.” You have had your dearest friends sundered from you, but still have said—

***“How can I bereaved be  
Since I cannot part with You?”***

You have had attacks of Satan, you have had doubts and fears—you have been assailed by men, by earth and by Hell, but you can say—

***“When trouble like a gloomy cloud  
Has gathered thick and thundered loud;  
He near my soul has always stood,  
His loving kindness, O how good.”***

Your testimony is without a flaw. Not one good thing has failed of all that the Lord God has promised, he has never left you, never forsaken you. But to this day you can say, glory be unto the name of an unchanging God, the same yesterday, today and forever.

**III.** And now the last point is—the practical use of this great Truth of God. It is THE GROUND WORK OF CHRISTIAN ENCOURAGEMENT. Will you just think that I am coming down out of the pulpit now to you. I cannot perform much pastoral visitation in going from house to house and so let us do it wholesale this morning and may the Spirit of God make it a reality.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, there are some of you here today who have been very much and very sorely tried, for your path has been through fire and through water. You are servants of God and in looking back you can say that you have been helped up to now. Just now your health and your spirits are failing you. You are brought very low, indeed. Permit your minister to take hold of your hand and look you in the face. My dear Brother, will you dishonor your God now? You say, “No, God forbid that I should dishonor Him.” My dear Friend, you have now before you a noble opportunity—an opportunity which an angel might well envy you. You

have a noble opportunity of honoring God in the fire. I will not speak lightly of your troubles. I will suppose them to be just as great as you say they are. But will you glorify him in them all? Come, you have trusted Him many times, will you trust Him now?

Perhaps Satan has a commission from on high to try you and sift you in his sieve. He has been before God and your Lord has said to him, "Have you considered my servant Job?" "Ah," says Satan, "he serves You now, but You have set a hedge about him and blessed him, let me but touch him." And he has come down to you and he has afflicted you in your estate, afflicted you in your family and at last he has afflicted you in your body. Shall Satan be the conqueror? Shall grace give way? O, my dear Brother, stand up now and say once more, once and for all, "I tell you Satan, the Grace of God is more than a match for you. He is with me and in all this I will not utter one word against the Lord my God. He does all things well—well, even now and I do rejoice in Him."

The Lord is always pleased with His children when they can stand up for Him when circumstances seem to belie Him. Here come the witnesses into court. The devil says, "Soul, God has forgotten you, I will bring in my witness." First he summons your debts—a long bill of losses. "There," says he, "would God suffer you to fall thus, if He loved you?" Then he brings in your children—either their death, or their disobedience, or something worse and says, "Would the Lord suffer these things to come upon you, if He loved you?" At last he brings in your poor tottering body and all your doubts and fears and the hidings of Jehovah's face. "Ah," says the devil, "do you believe that God loves you now?" Oh, it is noble, if you are able to stand forth and say to all these witnesses, "I hear what you have to say, let God be true and every man and everything be a liar. I believe none of you. You all say God does not love me. But He does and if the witnesses against His love were multiplied a hundredfold, yet still would I say, "I know whom I have believed."—

***"I know that safe with Him remains,  
Protected by His power,  
What I've committed to His hands,  
'Till the decisive hour."***

He will bring me safe to Heaven at last, unhurt by the way.

I have but one other use to make of my text. In this large assembly, composed of so great a multitude of men, there is doubtless some who are saying, "I cannot think that God would have mercy on such a sinner as I am." "I cannot conceive," says another one, "though I know my guilt, I cannot conceive that the love of God can blot out such iniquity as mine." Permit me to take your hand and if mine is not enough I could take you around these galleries and down here and I could give you hundreds of

hands and hundreds of lips should speak and say, “Sinner, never think that the love of God can be exceeded, or destroyed, by your sin, for I obtained mercy.” And round the gallery the sound would go if this were a Gospel chorus—“and I,” “and I,” “and I,” and you might go up to the Brother and say, “What were you?” “I was a drunkard,” says one. “I was a swearer, I cursed God,” says another, “I loved the boxing ring and the skittle ground,” says another. “I was a whoremonger, an adulterer and yet God has forgiven me.” And O, how sweetly would we all sing in chorus, concerning the power of Christ to save, for we have all in our measure felt its might.

Now, my dear Friend, I take your hand and I say, “We have known and have believed the love that God has to us,” and we are the very chief of sinners ourselves. Will you honor God by believing that He is able to save you through the blood of Christ? For if the Lord now enables you to honor Him in believing, depend upon it, He has begun a good work in you and has set His heart upon you. Sinners, believe that God is love. O trust Him who gave His Son to die. He will deny you nothing. If you ask with humble faith, you shall assuredly receive. Our witness is given. Reject it not, “We have known, we have believed the love that God has to us.”

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

# LOVE'S LOGIC

## NO. 1008

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 27, 1871,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“We love Him because He first loved us.”  
1 John 4:19.***

THIS is a great doctrinal Truth, and I might with much propriety preach a doctrinal sermon from it, of which the sum and substance would be the Sovereign Grace of God. God's love is evidently prior to ours—“He first loved us.” It is also clear enough from the text that God's love is the cause of ours, for, “We love Him because He first loved us.” Therefore, going back to old times, or rather before all time, when we find God loving us with an everlasting love, we gather that the reason of His choice is not because we loved Him, but because He willed to love us. His reasons, and He had reasons (for we read of the counsel of His will), are known to Himself. But they are not to be found in any inherent goodness in us, or which was foreseen to be in us. We were chosen simply because He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy. He loved us because He would love us.

The gift of His dear Son, which was a close consequent upon His choice of His people, was too great a sacrifice on God's part to have been drawn from Him by any goodness in the *creature*. It was not possible for the highest piety to have deserved so vast a benefit as the gift of the Only-Begotten. It was not possible for anything in man to have merited the Incarnation and the passion of the Redeemer. Our redemption, like our election, springs from the spontaneous self-originating love of God. And our regeneration, in which we are made actual partakers of the Divine blessings in Jesus Christ, was not *of us*, nor *by us*.

We were not converted because we were already inclined that way, neither were we regenerated because some good thing was in us by nature. But we owe our new birth entirely to His potent love which dealt with us effectually, turning us from death to life, from darkness to light and from the alienation of our mind and the enmity of our spirit into that delightful path of love in which we are now traveling to the skies. As Believers on Christ's name we “were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” The sum and substance of the text is that God's uncaused love, springing up within himself, has been the sole means of bringing us into the condition of loving Him.

Our love to Him is like a trickling stream, speeding its way to the ocean because it first came from the ocean. All the rivers run into the sea, but their floods first arose from it—the clouds that were exhaled from the mighty main distilled in showers and filled the water brooks. Here was their first cause and prime origin. And, as if they recognized the obligation, they pay tribute in return to the parent source. The ocean love of

God, so broad that even the wings of imagination could not traverse it, sends forth its treasures of the rain of Grace which drop upon our hearts, which are as the pastures of the wilderness. They make our hearts to overflow, and in streams of gratitude the life imparted flows back again to God.

All good things are of You, Great God. Your goodness creates our good. Your infinite love to us draws forth our love to You. But, dear Friends, I trust after many years of instruction in the doctrines of our holy faith, I need not keep to the beaten doctrinal track—but may lead you in a parallel path—in which the same Truth of God may be seen from another point. I purpose to preach an *experimental* sermon, and possibly this will be even more in accordance with the run of the passage and the mind of its writer than a doctrinal discourse.

We shall view the text as a fact which we have tested and proved in our own consciousness. Under this aspect the statement of the text is this—a *sense of the love of God to us is the main cause of our love to Him*. When we believe, know, and *feel* that God loves us, we, as a natural result, love Him in return. And in proportion as our knowledge increases, our faith strengthens and our conviction deepens that we are really Beloved of God, we, from the very constitution of our being, are constrained to yield our hearts to God in return. The discourse of this morning, therefore, will run in that channel. God grant it may be blessed to each of us by His Holy Spirit!

**I.** At the outset we will consider THE INDISPENSABLE NECESSITY OF LOVE TO GOD IN THE HEART. There are some graces which in their vigor are not absolutely essential to the bare existence of spiritual life, though very important for its healthy growth. But love to God must be in the *heart*, or else there is no Grace there whatever. If any man loves not God, he is not a renewed man. Love of God is a mark which is always set upon Christ's sheep, and never set upon any others.

In enlarging upon this most important Truth, I would call your attention to the connection of the text. You will find in the seventh verse of this chapter, that love to God is set down as being a necessary *mark of the new birth*. "Everyone that loves is born of God, and knows God." I have no right, therefore, to believe that I am a regenerated person unless my heart truly and sincerely loves God. It is vain for me, if I love not God, to quote the register which records an ecclesiastical ceremony, and say that this regenerated me. It certainly did no such thing, or the sure result would have followed.

If I have been regenerated I may not be perfect, but this one thing I can say, "Lord You know all things, You know that I love You." When by believing we receive the privilege to become the sons of God, we receive also the nature of sons, and with filial love we cry, "Abba, Father." There is no exception to this rule. If a man loves not God, neither is he born of God. Show me a fire without heat—then show me regeneration that does not produce love to God. For as the sun must give forth its light, so must a soul that has been created anew by Divine Grace display its nature by

sincere affection towards God. "We must be born again," but you are not born again unless you love God. How indispensable, then, is love to God.

In the eighth verse we are told also that love to God is a *mark of our knowing God*. True knowledge is essential to salvation. God does not save us in the dark. He is our "light and our salvation." We are renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created us. Now, "he that loves not knows not God, for God is Love." All you have ever been taught from the pulpit, all you have ever studied from the Scriptures, all you have ever gathered from the learned, all you have collected from the libraries—all this is not knowledge of God at all unless you love God. For in true religion, to love and to know God are synonymous terms. Without love you remain in ignorance, still—ignorance of the most unhappy and ruinous kind.

All attainments are transitory, if love is not as a salt to preserve them, tongues must cease and knowledge must vanish away—love alone abides forever. This love you must have or be a fool forever. All the children of the true Zion are taught of the Lord, but you are not taught of God unless you love God. See, then, that to be devoid of love to God is to be devoid of all true knowledge of God, and so of all salvation.

Further, the chapter teaches us that love to God is the *root of love to others*. The eleventh verse says, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. If we love one another, God dwells in us, and His love is perfected in us." Now no man is a Christian who does not love Christians. He, who, being in the Church, is yet not of it heart and soul is but an intruder in the family. But since love to our Brethren springs out of love to our one common Father, it is plain that we must have love to that Father, or else we shall fail in one of the indispensable marks of the children of God. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the Brethren."

But we cannot truly love the Brethren unless we love the Father. Therefore, lacking love to God, we lack love to the Church, which is an essential mark of Grace. Again, keeping to the run of the passage, you will find by the eighteenth verse, that love to God is a chief *means of that holy peace* which is an essential mark of a Christian. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord." But where there is no love there is no such peace, for fear, which has torment, distresses the soul.

Therefore love is the indispensable companion of faith, and when they come together, peace is the result. Where there is fervent love to God there is set up a holy familiarity with God, and from this flows satisfaction, delight, and rest. Love must co-operate with faith and cast out fear so that the soul may have boldness before God. Oh, Christian, you can not have the Nature of God implanted within you by regeneration—it cannot reveal itself in love to the brotherhood, it cannot blossom with the fair flowers of peace and joy—except your affection be set upon God! Let Him, then, be your exceeding joy. Delight yourself also in the Lord. O love the Lord you, His saints!

We also see, if we turn again to St. John's Epistle and pursue his observations to the next chapter and the third verse, that love is the *spring of true obedience*. "This is the love of God, that we keep His Commandments." Now a man who is not obedient to God's Commandments is evidently not a true Believer. Although good works do not save us, yet, being saved, Believers are sure to produce good works. Though the fruit is not the root of the tree, yet a well rooted tree will, in its season, bring forth its fruits. So, though the keeping of the Commandments does not make me a child of God, yet, being a child of God, I shall be obedient to my heavenly Father.

But this I cannot be unless I love God. A mere *external* obedience, a decent formal recognition of the Laws of God, is *not* obedience in God's sight. He abhors the sacrifice where the heart is not found. I must obey because I love, or else I have not in spirit and in truth obeyed at all. See then, that to produce the indispensable fruits of saving faith there must be love to God. For without it, they would be unreal and, indeed, impossible. I hope it is not necessary for me to pursue this argument any further. Love to God is as natural to the renewed heart as love to its mother is to a babe. Who needs to reason a child into love?

As certainly as you have the life and nature of God in you, you will seek after the Lord. As the spark, because it has in it the nature of fire, ascends aloft to seek the sun, so will your new-born spirit seek her God from whom she has derived her life. Search yourselves, then, and see whether you love God or not. Put your hands on your hearts, and as in the sight of Him whose eyes are as a flame of fire, answer Him. Make Him your Confessor at this hour—answer this one question—"Do you love Me?" I trust very many of you will be able to say—

**"Yes, we love You and adore!  
Oh, for Grace to love You more."**

This much was necessary to bring us to the second step of our discourse. May the Holy Spirit lead us onward.

**II.** You see the indispensable importance of love to God—let us now learn THE SOURCE AND SPRING OF TRUE LOVE TO GOD. "We love Him because He first loved us." Love to God, wherever it really exists, has been created in the bosom by a belief of God's love to us. No man loves God till he knows that God loves him. And every Believer loves God for this reason first and chiefly, that God loves him. He has seen himself to be unworthy of Divine favor, yet he has believed God's love in the gift of His dear Son, and he has accepted the Atonement that Christ has made as a proof of God's love. And being satisfied of the Divine affection towards him, he of necessity loves his God.

Observe, then, that love to God does not begin in the heart from any disinterested admiration of the Nature of God. I believe that after we have loved God because He first loved us, we may so grow in Grace as to love God for what He is. I suppose it is possible for us to be the subjects of a state of heart in which our love spends itself upon the loveliness of God in His own Person—we may come to love Him because He is so wise, so powerful, so good, so patient, so everything that is lovable. This may be pro-

duced within us as the ripe fruit of maturity in the Divine life, but it is never the *first spring* and fountain of the Grace of love in any man's heart.

Even the Apostle John, the man who had looked within the veil and seen the excellent Glory beyond any other man, and who had leaned his head upon the bosom of the Lord, and had seen the Lord's holiness and marked the inimitable beauty of the Character of the Incarnate God—even John does not say, "We love Him because we admire Him," but, "We love Him because He first loved us." For see, Brethren, if this kind of love which I have mentioned, which is called the love of disinterested admiration, were required of a sinner, I do not see how he could readily render it.

There are two gentlemen of equal rank in society, and the one is not at all obliged to the other. Now, they, standing on an equality, can easily feel a disinterested admiration of each other's characters and a consequent disinterested affection. But I, a poor sinner, by nature sunk in the mire, full of everything that is evil, condemned, guilty of death so that my only desert is to be cast into Hell, am under such obligations to my Savior and my God that it would be idle for me to talk about a disinterested affection for Him since I owe to Him my life, my all.

Besides, until I catch the gleams of His mercy and His loving kindness to the guilty—His holy, just, and righteous Character is not loveable to me—I dread the purity which condemns my defilement, and shudder at the Justice which will consume me for my sin. Do not, O Seeker, trouble your heart with nice distinctions about disinterested love, but be content with the beloved disciple to love Christ because He first loved you.

Again, our love to God does not spring from the self-determining power of the will—I greatly question whether anything does in the world—good or bad. There are some who set up the will as a kind of deity—it does as it wills with earth and Heaven. But in truth the will is not a master but a *servant*. To the sinner his will is a slave. And in the saint, although the will is set free, it is still blessedly under bonds to God. Men do not will a thing because they will it, but because their affections, their passions, or their judgments influence their wills in that direction. No man can stand up and truly say, "I, unbiased and unaided, will to love God and I will not to love Satan."

Such proud self-assuming language would prove him a liar! The man would be clearly a worshipper of himself. A man can only love God when he has perceived some reasons for doing so. And the first argument for loving God, which influences the intellect so as to turn the affections, is the reason mentioned in the text, "We love Him because He first loved us."

Now, having thus set the text in a negative light, let us look at it in a more positive manner. It is certain, Brethren, that faith in the heart always precedes love. We first believe the love of God to us before we love God in return. And, oh, what an encouraging Truth of God this is! I, a sinner, do not believe that God loves me because I feel I love Him. But I first believe that He loves me, sinner as I am, and then having believed that gracious fact, I come to love my Benefactor in return. Perhaps some of you Seekers are saying to yourselves, "Oh, that we could love God, for then we could hope for mercy."



That is not the first step. Your first step is to believe that God *loves you*, and when that Truth is fully fixed in your soul by the Holy Spirit, a fervent love to God will spontaneously issue from your soul, even as flowers willingly pour forth their fragrance under the influence of the dew and the sun. Every man that ever was saved had to come to God not as a lover of God, but as a *sinner*, and to believe in God's love to him as a sinner. We all wish to take money in our sacks when we go down hungry to this Egypt to buy the bread of life. But it must not be—Heaven's bread is given to us freely, and we must accept it freely—without money and without price.

Do you say, "I do not feel in my heart one good emotion, I do not appear to possess one good thought. I fear I have no love to God at all." Do not remain in unbelief until you feel this love, for if you do, you will never believe at all. You ought to love God, it is true, but you never will till you *believe* Him, and especially believe in His love as revealed in His only-begotten Son. If you come to God in Christ, and believe this simple message—"God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them," you shall find your heart going out after God. "Whoever believes in Jesus Christ shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

Do you believe this? Can you now believe in Jesus, that is, trust Him? Then Christ died for you! Christ, the Son of God, in your place, suffered for your guilt. God gave His only Son to die for you. "Oh," says one, "if I believed that, how I would love God!" Yes, indeed, you would, and that is the only consideration which can make you do so. You, a sinner, must take Christ to be your Savior, and then love to God shall spring up spontaneously in your soul, as the grass after showers. Love believed is the mother of love returned. The planet reflects light, but first of all it receives it from the sun. The heliotrope turns its face to the orb of day, but first the sunbeams warm and woo it. You shall turn to God, and delight in God, and rejoice in God—but it must be because you first of all *believe*, and *know*, and confide in the love of God to you.

"Oh," says one, "it cannot be that God should love an unloving sinner, that the pure One should love the impure, that the Ruler of all should love His enemy." Hear what God says—"My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are My ways your ways, for the heavens are higher than the earth. So are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." You think that God loves men because they are godly, but listen to this—"God commends His love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." "He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." "While we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly."

Think of His "great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins." God has love in His heart towards those who have nothing in them to love. He loves you, poor Soul, who feel that you are loveable—loves you who mourn over a stony heart which will not warm or melt with love to Him. Thus says the Lord—"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins. Return

unto Me, for I have redeemed you.” O that God’s gracious voice this morning might so call some of His poor wandering ones that they may come and believe His love to them, and then cast themselves at His feet to be His servants forever!

Brethren, rest assured that in proportion as we are fully persuaded of God’s love to us, we shall be affected with love to Him. Do not let the devil tempt you to believe that God does not love you because your love is feeble. For if he can in any way weaken your belief in God’s love to you, he cuts off or diminishes the flow of the streams which feed the sacred Grace of love to God. If I lament that I do not love God as I ought, that is a holy regret. But if I, therefore, conclude that God’s love to me is less because of this, I deny the light because my eye is dim, and I deprive myself also of the power to increase in love.

Let me rather think more and more of the greatness of God’s love to me, as I see more and more my unworthiness of it. The more a sinner I am, let me the more fully see how great must be that love which embraces such a sinner as I am. And then, as I receive a deeper sense of the Divine mercy, I shall feel the more bound to gratitude and constrained to affection. O for a great wave of love to carry us right out into the ocean of love! Observe, Beloved, day by day the deeds of God’s love to you in the gift of food and raiment, and in the mercies of this life, and especially in the Covenant blessings which God gives you! Note the peace which He sheds abroad in your hearts, the communion which He vouchsafes to you with Himself and His blessed Son, and the answers to prayer which He grants you.

Note well these things, and if you consider them carefully, and weigh their value, you will be accumulating the fuel on which love feeds its consecrated flame. In proportion as you see in every good gift a new token of your Father’s love, in that proportion will you make progress in the sweet school of love. Oh, it is heavenly living to taste God’s love in every morsel of bread we eat. It is blessed living to know that we breathe an atmosphere purified and made fragrant with Divine love—that love protects us while we sleep, hanging like a silken curtain all around our bed—and that love opens the eyelids of the morning to smile upon us when we wake.

Ah, even when we are sick, it is love that chastens us. When we are impoverished, love relieves us of a burden. Love gives and love takes, love cheers and love smites. We are compassed about with love, above, beneath, around, within, without. If we could but recognize this, we should become as flames of fire, ardent and fervent towards our God. Knowledge and observation are admirable nurses of our infant love. And, ah, the soul grows rich in love to God when she rests on the bosom of Divine loving kindness.

You who are tossed about with doubts and fears as to whether you are now accepted or shall persevere to the end, you can scarcely guess the ardors of heart which inflame those saints who have learned to cast themselves wholly upon Jesus, and know beyond a doubt His immutable love. Whether I sink or swim, I have no hope but in Christ, my Life, my All—

***“I know that safe with Him remains,  
Protected by His power,  
What I’ve committed to His hands***

***Till the decisive hour.***

And in proportion as I am thus Scripturally confident, and rest in my Lord, will my love to Him engross all my heart, and consecrate my life to the Redeemer's Glory. Beloved, I desire to make this very clear. That to feel love to God we must tread along the road of *faith*. Truly, this is not a hard or perilous way, but one prepared by infinite wisdom. It is a road suitable for sinners, and, indeed, saints must come that way, too. If you would love God, do not look within *you* to see whether this Grace or that is as it ought to be, but look to your God, and read His eternal love, His boundless love, His costly love, which gave Christ for you. Then shall your love drink in fresh life and vigor.

Remember wherever there is love to God in the soul it is an argument that God loves that soul. I remember meeting once with a Christian woman who said she knew she loved God, but she was afraid God did not love her. That is a fear so preposterous that it ought never to occur to anybody. You would not love God in deed and in truth unless He had shed abroad His love in your heart in a measure. But on the other hand, our not loving God is not a conclusive argument that God does not love us—else might the sinner be afraid to come to God.

O loveless Sinner, with heart unquickened and chill, the voice of God calls even *you* to Christ! Even to the dead in sin, His voice says, "Live." While you are yet polluted in your blood, cast out in the open field to the loathing of your person, the Lord of Mercy passes by and says, "live." His mighty Sovereignty comes forth dressed in robes of love, and He touches you, the unlovable, the loveless, the depraved, degraded sinner, at enmity with God—He touches you in all your alienation and He lifts you out of it and makes you to love Him—not for your own sake but for His name's sake and for His mercy's sake. You had no love at all to Him, but all the love lay in Him alone. And therefore He began to bless you, and will continue to bless you world without end, if you are a Believer in Jesus. In the bosom of the Eternal are the deep springs of all love.

**III.** This leads us, in the third place, to consider for a moment THE REVIVAL OF OUR LOVE. It is sadly probable that there are in this house some who once loved God very earnestly, but now they have declined and become grievously indifferent. God's love to us never changes, but ours too often sinks to a low ebb. Perhaps some of you have become so cold in your affections that it is difficult to be sure that you ever did love God at all. It may be that your life has become lax, so as to deserve the censure of the Church.

You are a backslider and you are in a dangerous condition. Yet, if there is, indeed, spiritual life in you, you will wish to return. You have gone astray like a lost sheep, but your prayer is, "seek Your servant, for I do not forget Your Commandments." Now, note well, that the cause which originated your love is the same which must restore it. You went to Christ as a sinner at first, and your first act was to believe the love of God to you when there was nothing in you that evidenced it. Go the same way again. Do not stop, my dear Brothers and Sisters, to pump up love out of the dry well within yourself!

Do not think it possible that love will come at your bidding. If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be abhorred. Think of the Lord's unchanging Grace and you will feel the spring-time of love returning to your soul. Still does the Lord reserve mercy for the sinful. Still He waits to be gracious. He is as willing to receive you now that you have played the prodigal, as He was to have retained you at home in the bosom of His love. Many considerations ought to aid you, a backslider, to believe more in the love of God than you ever did. For think what love it must be that can invite you, still, to return—you who, after knowing so much—have sinned against light and knowledge.

You, who after having experienced so much, have given the lie to your profession! He might justly have cut you down, for you have cumbered the ground long enough. Surely, when Israel went astray from God, it was a clear proof to her of Jehovah's love when He graciously said, "They say if a man put away his wife, or she goes from him, and becomes another man's, shall he return to her again?" Why, the answer in every bosom is "No!" Who would love a wife who had so polluted herself? But thus says the Lord, "You have played the harlot with many lovers, yet return unto Me." What matchless love is this!

Hear yet more of these gracious words which you will find in the third chapter of Jeremiah's prophecy: "Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, you backsliding Israel, says the Lord. And I will not cause My anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, says the Lord, and I will not keep anger forever." "Turn, O backsliding children, says the Lord. For I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion." "Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." Can you hear these words without emotion? Backslider! I pray you take the wings of God's love to fly back to Him!

But I hear you enquiring, Will He still receive me? Shall I be once more—

***"To the Father's bosom pressed,  
Once again a child confessed?"***

It shall be so. Does He not declare that He is God and changes not, and therefore you are not consumed? Rekindled are the flames of love in the backslider's bosom when he feels all this to be true. He cries, "Behold, we come to You, for You are the Lord our God." I pray you, then, any of you who are conscious of gross derelictions of duty, and wanderings of heart—do not ask Moses to lead you back to Christ—he knows the way to Sinai's flames, but not to Calvary's pardoning blood. Go to Christ Himself at once!

If you go to the Law and begin to judge yourself. If you get the notion that you are to undergo a sort of spiritual quarantine—that you must pass through a mental purgatory before you may renew your faith in the Savior—you are mistaken! Come just as you are, bad as you are, hardened, cold, dead as you feel yourselves to be, come even so, and believe in the boundless love of God in Christ Jesus. Then shall come the deep repentance. Then shall come the brokenness of heart. Then shall come the holy jealousy, the sacred hatred of sin, and the refining of the soul from

all her dross—then, indeed, all good things shall come to restore your soul and lead you in the paths of righteousness.

Do not look for these first—that would be looking for the effects before the cause. The great cause of love in the restored backslider must still be the love of God to him, to whom he clings with a faith that dares not let go its hold. “But,” says one, “I think it is very dangerous to tell the backslider to believe in God’s love. Surely it will be gross presumption for him so to believe.” It is never presumptuous for a man to believe the Truth of God—whether a statement is comfortable or uncomfortable, the presumption does not lie in the matter itself, but in its untruthfulness.

I say again, it is never presumptuous to believe the Truth. And this is the Truth—that the Lord loves His prodigal sons still, and His stray sheep still, and He will devise means to bring His banished back again, that they perish not. “If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous.” Remember here that the motive power which draws back the backslider is the cord of love, the band of a man, which makes him feel he must go back to God with weeping and repentance, because God loves him still.

What man among you this morning has a son who has disobeyed him and gone from him, and is living in drunkenness, and in all manner of lust? If you have in anger told him so that he doubts it not, that you have struck his name out of your family, and will not regard him as a child any longer, do you think that your severity will induce him to return to you in love? Far from it! But suppose instead thereof, you still assure him that you love him? Suppose he knows that there is always a place at your table for him, and a bed in your house for him—yes, and better still—a warm place in your heart for him?

Suppose he sees your tears and hears your prayers for him—will not this draw him? Yes, indeed, if he is a son. It is even thus between your God and you, O Backslider! Hear the Lord as He argues your case within His own heart: “My people are bent to backsliding from Me. Though they called them to the most High, none at all would exalt Him. How shall I give you up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver you, Israel? How shall I make you as Admah? How shall I set you as Zeboim? My heart is turned within Me, My repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of My anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim. For I am God, and not man.”

Surely, if anything will draw you back, this will! “Ah,” says the wandering son, “my dear father loves me, still. I will arise and go to him. I will not vex so tender a heart. I will be his loving son again.” God does not say to you prodigals, who once professed His name, “I have disowned you, I have cast you away,” but He says, “I love you still. And for My name’s sake will I restrain my wrath that I cut you not off.” Come to your offended Father, and you shall find that He has not repented of His love, but will embrace you still.

**IV.** Time fails, but I must speak for a little, time or no time, upon the fourth point—THE PERFECTING OF OUR LOVE TO GOD. Beloved, there are few of us who know much of the deeps of the love of God. Our love is

shallow—ah, how shallow! Love to God is like a great mountain. The majority of travelers view it from afar, or traverse the valley at its base—a few climb to a halting place on one of its elevated spurs from where they see a portion of its sublimities. Here and there an adventurous traveler climbs a minor peak, and views glaciers and alps at closer range. Fewest of all are those who scale the topmost pinnacle and tread the virgin snow.

So in the Church of God. Every Christian abides under the shadow of Divine love—a few enjoy and return that love to a remarkable degree—but there are few, in this age, sadly few, who reach to seraphic love, who ascent into the hill of the Lord to stand where the eagle's eye has not seen and walk the path which the lion's whelp has never trod—the high places of complete consecration and ardent self-consuming love. Now, mark you, it may be difficult to ascend so high, but there is one sure route, and only one, which the man must follow who would gain the sacred elevation.

It is not the track of his works, nor the path of his own actions, but this, "We love Him because He first loved us." John and the Apostles confessed that thus they attained their love. For the highest love that ever glowed in human bosom there was no source but this—God first loved that man. Do you not see how this is? The knowledge that God loves me casts out my tormenting dread of God—and when this is expelled, there is room for abounding love to God. As fear goes out, love comes in at the other door. So the more faith in God the more room there is for soul-filling love.

Again, strong faith in God's love brings great enjoyment. Our heart is glad, our soul is satisfied with marrow and fatness when we know that the whole heart of God beats towards us as forcibly as if we were the only creatures He had ever made, and His whole heart were wrapt up in us. This deep enjoyment creates the flaming love of which I have just now spoken. If the ardent love of some saints often takes the shape of admiration of God, this arises from their familiarity with God, and this familiarity they never would have indulged in unless they had know that He was their friend. A man could not speak to God as to a friend unless he knew the love that God has toward him.

The more true his knowledge and the more sure, the more close his fellowship. Beloved Brothers and Sisters, if you know that God has loved you, then you will feel grateful. Every doubt will diminish your gratitude, but every grain of faith will increase it. Then as we advance in Grace, love to God in our soul will excite desire after Him. Those we love we long to be with. We count the hours that separate us—there is no place so happy as that in which we enjoy their society. And so love to God produces a desire to be with Him—a desire to be like He is—a longing to be with Him eternally in Heaven, and this breaks us away from worldliness.

This keeps us from idolatry and thus has a most blessedly sanctifying effect upon us, producing that elevated character which is now so rare, but which, wherever it exists, is powerful for the good of the Church and for the Glory of God. Oh that we had many in this Church who had reached the highest platform of piety! Would God we had a band of men full of faith and of the Holy Spirit—strong in the Lord and in the power of

His might! It may help those who aspire to mount high in Grace if they keep in mind that every step they climb they must use the ladder which Jacob saw. The love of God *to us* is the only way to climb to the love of God.

And now I must spend a minute in putting the truth of my text to the test. I want you not to listen to me so much as to listen to your own hearts. And to God's Word, a minute, if you are Believers. What is it we have been talking about? It is God's love TO US. Get the thought into your head a minute—"God loves *me*—not merely bears with me, thinks of me, feeds me, but *loves me*." Oh, it is a very sweet thing to feel that we have the love of a dear wife, or a kind husband. And there is much sweetness in the love of a fond child, or a tender mother.

But to think that *God* loves me—this is infinitely better! Who is it that loves you? God, the Maker of Heaven and earth, the Almighty, All in All. Does He love *me*? Even ME? If all men, and all angels, and all the living creatures that are before the Throne loved me, it were nothing compared to this—the Infinite loves ME! And who is it that He loves? ME! The text says, "us." "We love Him because He first loved us." But this is the personal point—He loves me, an insignificant nobody, full of sin—who deserves to be in Hell! I, who love Him so little in return—God loves ME!

Beloved Believer, does not this melt you? Does not this fire your soul? I know it does if it is really believed. It must. And how did He love me? He loved me so that He gave up His only-begotten Son for me, to be nailed to the tree, and made to bleed and die. And what will come of it? Why, because He loved me and forgave me—I am on the way to Heaven, and within a few months, perhaps days, I shall see His face and sing His praises! He loved me before I was born. Before a star began to shine He loved me, and He has never ceased to do so all these years.

When I have sinned He has loved me. When I have forgotten Him He has loved me. And when in the days of my sin I cursed Him, yet still He loved me. And He will love me when my knees tremble, and my hair is gray with age, "even to hoar hairs" He will bear and carry His servant. And He will love me when the world is on a blaze, and love me forever, and forever! Oh, chew the cud of this blessed thought! Roll it under your tongue as a dainty morsel. Sit down this afternoon, if you have leisure, and think of nothing but this—His great love wherewith He loves you.

And if you do not feel your heart bubbling up with a good matter, if you do not feel your soul yearning towards God, and heaving big with strong emotions of love to God, then I am much mistaken. This is so powerful a Truth, and you are so constituted as a Christian as to be worked upon by this Truth, that if it is believed and felt, the consequence must be that you will love Him because He first loved you. God bless you, Brothers and Sisters, for Christ's sake. Amen.

### **PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 4:1-5.**

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# LOVE'S BIRTH AND PARENTAGE

## NO. 1299

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 11, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***"We love Him because He first loved us."  
1 John 4:19.***

VERY simple words, but very full of meaning. I think I might say of this sentence what the poet says of prayer—it is "the simplest form of speech that infant lips can try"—and yet it is one of the "most sublime strains that reach the Majesty on high." Take a little believing child and ask her why she loves the Savior, and she will reply at once, "Because He loved me and died for me." Then ascend to Heaven where the saints are perfect in Christ Jesus and put the same question and with united breath the whole choir of the redeemed will reply, "He has loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood." When we begin to love Christ, we love Him because He first loved us. And when we grow in Grace till we are capable of the very highest degree of spiritual understanding and affection, we still have no better reason for loving Him than this, "Because He first loved us."

This morning, in trying to preach from the text, I would pray the Holy Spirit that every person here may first *feel* it. It is wonderful, the difference between a text read and heard and a text *felt* within the soul. Oh, that you, this morning, may be able to say from your hearts because you cannot help saying it, "*We love Him.*" If I were to say no more, but sit down in silence—and if you were all to spend the next three quarters of an hour in exercising the emotion of love to God—it would be time most profitably spent! It is, beyond measure, beneficial to the soul to take her fill of love with the Lord Jesus. It is the sweet cure for all her ailments for her to have leisure to delight herself in the Lord and faith enough to dwell at ease in His perfections. Be sure, then, to let your hearts have room, scope and opportunity for indulging and inflaming the sacred passion of love to God.

If the second part of the text shall also be made equally vivid to you by the power of faith—"He first loved us"—your hearts will be satisfied as with marrow and fatness! If the exceeding love of God in Christ Jesus shall be shed abroad in your hearts by the Holy Spirit, you will need no sermon from me—your inward experience will be better than any discourse! May your love, like a drop of dew, be exhaled and carried up into the boundless Heaven of God's love. May your heart ascend to the place where your treasure is and rest itself upon the heart of God! Blessed shall you be if, in your hearts, Christ's love and yours shall both be fully known and felt at this moment! O, blessed Spirit, cause it to be so!



Thus should we have the text in action—and that is a thousand times better than the mere quiet letter. If you have visited the picture galleries at Versailles, where you see the wars of France from the earliest ages set forth in glowing colors upon the canvas, you cannot but have been struck with the pictures and interested in the terrible scenes. Upstairs in the same palace there is a vast collection of portraits. I have traversed those galleries of portraits without much interest, only here and there pausing to notice a remarkable countenance. Very few persons linger there—everybody seems to walk on as quickly as the polished floors allow.

Now, why is it that you are interested in the portraits downstairs and not by those upstairs? They are the same people. Very many of them are in the same dress. Why do you not gaze upon them with interest? The reason lies here—the *portrait* in still life, as a rule, can never have the attraction which surrounds a scene of stirring *action*. There you see the warrior dealing a terrible blow with his battle-ax, or the senator delivering an oration in the assembly, and you think more of them than of the same bodies and faces in repose. Life is impressive! Action awakens thought! It is just so with the text. Look at it as a matter of doctrinal statement—“We love Him because He first loved us”—and if you are a thoughtful person you will consider it well. But feel the *fact* itself, *feel* the love of God—know it within your own soul and manifest it in your life—and how engrossing it becomes!

May it be so by the power of the Holy Spirit this morning! May you be loving God while you are hearing and may I be loving Him intensely while I am preaching! With this as an introduction, I shall use the text for four purposes. First, *for doctrinal instruction*. Secondly, *for experimental information*. Thirdly, *for practical direction*. And fourthly, *for argumentative defense*.

**I.** We shall use the text, briefly, for DOCTRINAL INSTRUCTION—and one point of doctrinal instruction is very clear, namely, that *God's love to His people is first*. “He first loved us.” Now, be sure of this point of doctrine, because forgetfulness about it is connected with much error and with more ignorance. The love of God to us *precedes* our love to God. According to Scripture it must be first in the most eminent sense because it is eternal. The Lord chose His people in Christ Jesus from before the foundations of the world. And to each one of His people that text may be applied—“Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love.”

His mercy is from everlasting to them that fear Him. From all eternity the Lord looked upon His people with an eye of love and, as nothing can be before eternity, His love was *first*. Certainly He loved us before we had a being, for did He not give His Son to die for us nearly 1900 years ago, long before our infant cries had saluted our mother's ears? He loved us before we had any desire to be loved by Him, yes, when we were provoking Him to His face and displaying the fierce enmity of our unrenewed hearts! Remember “His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in sin.” “God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet

sinner, Christ died for us." When we had not as yet one throb of spiritual feeling, one pulse of hope, or one breath of desire, the Lord loved us even then!

The love of God is *before* our seeking. He draws us before we run after Him. We do not seek that love—that love seeks us. We wander further and further from it, resist it and prove ourselves unworthy of it. Our nature and our practice are such that they offer nothing congenial to Divine love. But the love of God arises in its freeness and stops our mad career by its power over the conscience and the will. "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you," is the voice of Sovereign Grace! Let our response be, "By the Grace of God we are what we are!"

The Lord's love is before any repentance on our part. Impenitent sinners never would repent if God did not love them first. The Lord hates sin, but yet He loves sinners. He compassionately loved us when sin was pleasant to us, when we rolled it under our tongue as a sweet morsel, when neither the thunders of His Law nor the wooing of His Gospel could persuade us to turn from it. When in our bosoms there were no convictions of sin, when there were no evangelical lamentations because of offenses against a gracious God, He loved us!

Today, Brothers and Sisters, we are possessors of faith in Jesus Christ, but our faith in Jesus Christ did not come *before* His love. On the contrary, our faith rests in what that love has done for us of old. When we were unbelieving and hard of heart. When we resisted the testimony of the Holy Spirit and put from us the Word of eternal life, even then the Lord pitied us and had mercy upon us—and continued, still, to invite, to entreat, to persuade—until, at last, the happy hour came when we believed and entered into a sense of His love.

There are many things about you now, Beloved of the Lord, which are the objects of Divine approbation, but they were not there at first. They did not precede Divine love, but are the *fruits* of it. To use an old English word which has somewhat lost its meaning, the love of God is *preventing* love—it goes before any right motions of the soul—and in order of time it is *first*, before any desires, wishes, aspirations, or prayers on our part. Are you devout today? Yet He loved you not at the first because you were devout, for originally you were not so! His love was *before* your devotion. Are you holy today? Blessed be His name for it! But He loved you when you were unholy. Your holiness *follows* His love—He chose you that you might be holy.

You are becoming like He by the sanctifying influences of His blessed Spirit and He loves His image in you, but He loved you when that image was not there. Yes, He looked on you with infinite compassion when you were heirs of wrath even as others—and the image of the devil was conspicuous, both upon your character and your nature. However early in life you began to love the Lord, His love was first. This is very amazing, but, blessed be His name, we know that it is true and we rejoice in it! The fact is that the love of God, as far as we know anything about it, had no rea-

son derived from us upon which to ground itself. He loved us because He would love us, or, as our Lord put it, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight."

He had reasons in His own Nature. Good reasons fetched from the best conceivable place, namely from His own perfections. But those reasons He has not been pleased to communicate to us. He bids us know that He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy and will have compassion on whom He will have compassion. Thus He tries the loyal submissiveness of our hearts and I trust we are able to bow in reverent silence to His righteous will. Divine love is its own cause and does not derive its streams from anything in us. It flows spontaneously from the heart of God, finding its deep wellsprings within His own bosom. This is a great comfort to us, because, being uncreated, it is unchangeable! If it had been upon us because of some goodness in *us*, then when the goodness was diminished the love would diminish, too. If God had loved us second and not first, or had the *cause* of the love been in *us*, that cause might have altered and the supposed effect, namely, His love, would have altered, too.

But now, whatever may be the Believer's condition today—however he may have wandered and however much he may be groaning under a sense of sin—the Lord declares, "I do earnestly remember him, still." The Lord did not love you at first because you had no sin—He foreknow all the sin you would ever have—it was all present before His sacred mind and yet He loved you, and He loves you, still. "I am God. I change not, therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed." O blessed love of God, since You are first, we will give you the first place in our thoughts, the highest throne in our hearts, the royal position in our souls! We glorify You, for You are first!

Another part of the doctrine of the text is this, that *the love of God is the cause of our love to God*. A thing may be first and another second, and yet the first may not be the *cause* of the second. There may be no actual link between the two—but here we have it unmistakably—"We love Him *because* He first loved us," which signifies not merely that this is the motive of which we are conscious in our love, but that this is the force, the Divine power, which created love in us. I put it to you, should we have loved God had He not first given His Son to die for us? Had there been no redeeming Sacrifice should we have had any love to God? Unredeemed men, left to go on like fallen angels in their sin, would have had no more love of God than fallen angels have. How could they?

The great foundation of love is the Son given to redeem. God gives His Son and so reveals His own love and creates ours. Is not His love seen to be the cause of ours when we remember Calvary? But He might have given His Son to die for men, Beloved, and yet you and I might not have loved Him because we might not have been aware of the great fact. It is no small Grace on God's part that, "to you is the Word of this salvation sent." While the heathen have never heard it, by the arrangement of His gracious Providence you have been favored with the good news! You have it in your

homes in the form of the Holy Scriptures! You hear it every Sunday from the pulpit. How would you have ever come to love Him if He had not sent His Gospel to you?

The gift of His Son, Jesus, and the Providence which leads the herald of mercy to the saved one's door, are evident causes of man's love to God. But more than this, Christ died and the Gospel is preached—and yet some men do not love Him. Why not? Because of the hardness of their hearts. But others *do* love Him—shall I trace this to the natural betterness of their hearts? I dare not and much less do they! There is no Believer who would ask me to do so in his own case. I must trace it to the influence of the Holy Spirit, going with the Revelation of the love of God in Christ Jesus, affecting the heart and creating faith and love and every Grace in the soul! Beloved, if you love God, it is with no love of yours, but with the love which He has planted in your bosom!

Unrenewed human nature is a soil in which love to God will not grow. There must be a taking away of the rock and a *supernatural* change of the barren ground into good soil. And then, as a rare plant from another land, love must be planted in our hearts and sustained by Divine power or else it never will be found there. There is no love to God in this world that is of the right kind except that which was created and formed by the love of God in the soul! Put the two Truths of God together—that the love of God is *first*, and that the love of God is the *cause* of our love—and I think you will be inclined, from now on, to be Believers in what are commonly called the Doctrines of Grace.

To me it is very wonderful that they are not received by all Churches because they are practically acknowledged by all Christians when on their knees! They may preach as they like, but they all pray according to the Doctrines of Grace and those doctrines are so consistent with the Christian's experience that it is notable that the older a Believer becomes—and the more deeply he searches into Divine Truths, the more inclined he is to give the whole of the praise of his salvation to the Grace of God—and to believe in those precious Truths which magnify, not the free will of man, but the free Grace of the Ever Blessed! I need no better statement of my own doctrinal belief than this, "We love Him because He first loved us."

I know it has been said that He loved us on the foresight of our faith and love and holiness. Of course the Lord had a clear foresight of all these—but remember that He also had the foresight of our absence of love, and our lack of faith, and our wandering, and our sins! And surely His foresight in one direction must be supposed to operate as well as His foresight in the other direction! Remember, also, that God Himself did not foresee that there would be any love to Him in us arising out of *ourselves*, for there never has been any and there never will be! He only foresaw that we should believe because He *gave us faith*. He foresaw that we would repent because *His Spirit would work repentance in us*. He foresaw that we should love because *He worked that love within us!*

Is there *anything* in the foresight that He means to give us such things that can account for His giving us such things? The case is self-evident—His foresight of what *He* means to do cannot be His *reason* for doing it! His own eternal purpose has made the gracious difference between the saved and those who willfully perish in sin. Let us give all the glory to His holy name, for to Him all the glory belongs. His preventing Grace must have all the honor.

**II.** Secondly, we shall use the text FOR EXPERIMENTAL INFORMATION. First, we learn that *all true Believers love God*. “We love Him” and we all love Him for one reason, “because He first loved us.” All the children of God love their Father. I do not say that they all feel an *equal* love, or that they all feel as much love as they should. Who among us does? I will not say that they do not, sometimes, give cause to doubt their love. No, I will urge that it is well for them to examine, even as Christ examined Peter, and said, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?” But there is love in the heart of every true-born child of God—it is as necessary to spiritual life as blood is to natural life.

Rest assured there has never been born into the kingdom of God one solitary individual destitute of love for God. You may be deficient in some virtues, (you should not be), but yet the root of the matter may be in *you*. But if you are without love, you are as a sounding brass and as a tinkling cymbal. Whatever your outer works, though you give your body to be burned and all your goods to feed the poor, yet, if there is no love to God in your soul, the mark of God's sheep is not upon you and your lot is not the lot of His children. Rest assured that whoever is born of God loves God!

Observe carefully the *kind* of love which is essential to every Christian—“We love Him because He first loved us.” Much has been said about disinterested love to God. There may be such a thing and it may be very admirable, but it is not mentioned here. I trust, Beloved, we know what it is to love God because of His superlative excellence and goodness. Surely the more we know Him the more we shall love Him for what He is. But unless we love Him *because He first loved us*, whatever other sort of love we may have or think we have, it does not prove us to be children of God. *This* is the love we must have! The other form of love, if it is true, will grow up in us afterwards. That, however, is not essential nor need we unduly exalt it—loving God because *He first loved us* is sufficient evidence of Grace in the soul.

Gratitude has been vilified as a mean virtue, but, indeed it is a noble emotion and is one of the most forcible of spiritual motives! Let a man love God admiringly because of what He is, but yet there must run, side by side with it, this *grateful* love of God because He first loved him, or else he lacks that which John says is to be found in all the saints! Beloved, do not vex yourselves about any supposedly higher degrees, but see to it that you love Him because He first loved you. You may not be able to rise into those heights into which others of your Brethren have ascended because

you are as yet only a babe in Grace, but you are safe enough if your love is of this simple character—that it loves because it is loved.

Within this humble form of love, which is so essential, there dwells a gracious sense of unworthiness necessary to a true Christian. We feel that we did not deserve the love which God sheds upon us. This humility we *must* have or we lack one mark of a child of God. There is, also, in this lowly form of gracious affection, a clear recognition of the fact that the Lord's love is graciously bestowed—and this, also, is essential to a Christian and becomes to him the main source of his obedience and affection. If a man only loves me as much as I *deserve* to be loved, I do not feel under any very strong obligations and, consequently, do not feel any very intense gratitude. But because the Lord's love is all of pure Grace and comes to us as utterly undeserving, therefore we love Him in return. See whether such a humble, grateful love towards God dwells in your hearts, for it is a vital point.

*Love to God, wherever it is found, is a sure evidence of the salvation of its possessor.* If you love the Lord in the sense described, then He loved you first and loves you now. You need no other evidence but this to assure yourself that you abide in the love of God—that you love Him. I was told by a venerable Brother some little time ago a story of our famous preacher, Robert Hall. He charmed the most learned by the majesty of his eloquence, but he was as simple as he was great—and he was never happier than when conversing with poor Believers upon experimental godliness. He was accustomed to make his journeys on horseback and having been preaching at Clipstone he was on his way home when he was stopped by a heavy snowfall at the little village of Sibbertoft.

The good man who kept the "Black Swan," a little village hostelry, came to him and besought the preacher to take refuge beneath his roof, assuring him that it would give him great joy to welcome him. Mr. Hall knew him to be one of the most sincere Christians in the neighborhood and, therefore, got off his horse and went into the little inn. The good man was delighted to provide him a bed, a stool and a candlestick in the prophet's chamber, for that rustic inn contained such an apartment. After Mr. Hall had rested awhile by the fire, the landlord said. "You must stay here all night, Sir, and if you do not mind I will call in a few of my neighbors, and if you feel that you could give us a sermon in my taproom they will all be glad to hear you."

"So let it be, Sir," said Mr. Hall, and so it was! The taproom became his cathedral and the, "Black Swan," the sign of the Gospel banner! The peasants came together and the man of God poured out his soul before them wondrously. They would never forget it, for to hear Mr. Hall was an event in any man's life! After all were gone, Mr. Hall sat down and there came over him a fit of depression out of which he strove to rise by conversation with his host. "Ah, Sir," said the great preacher, "I am much burdened and am led to question my own condition before God. Tell me now, what do you think is a sure evidence that a man is a child of God." "Well, Mr.

Hall," said the plain man, "I am sorry to see you so tried. You doubt yourself, but nobody else has any doubt about you. I hope the Lord will cheer and comfort you, but I am afraid I am not qualified to do it."

"Never mind, Friend, never mind, tell me what you think is the best evidence of a child of God?" "Well, I should say, Sir," said he, "if a man loves God, he must be one of God's children." "Say you so," said the mighty preacher, "then it is well with me!" And at that signal he began to magnify the Lord at such a rate that his hearer afterwards said that it was wonderful to hear him, as for about an hour he went on with glowing earnestness, declaring the loveliness of God! "O Sir," said he who told the tale, "you should have heard him! He said, 'Love God, Sir? Why I cannot help loving Him! How could I do otherwise?'"

"And then he went on to speak about the Almighty and His love and Grace, extolling the Lord's greatness, goodness and glory in redemption, and all that He did for His people, till he said, 'Thank you, thank you, my Friend. If love to Him is an evidence of being God's child, I know I have it, for I cannot help loving Him! I take no credit to myself. He is such a lovely Being and has done so much for us that I should be more brutish than any man if I did not love and adore Him.'" That which cheered that good and great man's heart may, perhaps, cheer yours. If you are loving God, you must have been loved *of* God! True love could not have come into your heart in any other conceivable way! And you may rest assured that you are the object of His eternal choice!

But oh, *if you do not love God, dear Hearer, I invite you to think, for a minute, upon your state!* Hear of God and not love Him? You must be blind! Know anything about His Character and not adore Him? Your heart must be like the heart of Nabal when it was turned into stone! See God in Christ, bleeding on the Cross, for His enemies and not love Him? O Hell, you cannot be guilty of a worst offense than this! Here is love, shall it have no acknowledgment? It is said that a man cannot feel that he is loved without, in some measure, returning the flame. But what shall I say of a mind which beholds Christ's love but feels no love in return? It is brutish! It is devilish! God have mercy upon it! Breathe the same prayer, O unloving heart, and say, "Lord, forgive me and by Your Holy Spirit renew me and give me, from now on, to be able to say, 'I, also, in my humble fashion, love God because He first loved me.'"

**III.** Thirdly, we shall use the text as a matter OF PRACTICAL DIRECTION. I earnestly trust that there are some here who, although they do not love God at present, yet desire to do so. Well, dear Friend, *the text tells you how to love God.* You say, perhaps, "Oh, I shall love God when I have improved my character and when I have attended to the external duties of religion." But are you going to get love to God out of *yourself*? Is it there, then? "No," you say. How, then, will you get it from where it is not? You may go often to an empty iron safe before you will bring a thousand pound note out of it! And you may look a long time to your own heart before you will bring out of *it* a love to God which is not there!

What is the way by which a heart may be made to love God? The text shows us the method of the Holy Spirit. He reveals the love of God to the heart and then the heart loves God in return. If, then, you are awakened, this morning, to desire to love God, use the method which the text suggests—meditate upon the great love of God to man, especially upon this, “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” See clearly that you, by faith, trust your soul with Christ, and perceive that it is vast love which sets before you such a way of salvation in which the only thing required of you is that you be nothing and trust Christ to be *everything*—and even that faith He gives you as a *gift* of His Spirit, so that the plan of salvation is all of love.

If you want to repent, do not so much consider your sin as the love of Jesus in suffering for your sin! If you desire to believe, do not so much study the doctrine as study the Person of Jesus Christ upon the Cross! And if you desire to love, think over perpetually, till it breaks your heart, the great love of Jesus Christ in laying down His life for His worthless foes! The love of God is the birthplace of holy love! Not there in your hearts where you are attempting an absurdly impossible feat, namely, to create love in the carnal mind which cannot be reconciled to God! But there in the heart of *Jesus* must love be born and then it shall come down to you. You cannot force your mind into the condition of believing even a common thing, nor can you sit there and say, “I will love So-and-So,” of whom you know nothing.

Faith and love are second steps arising out of former steps. “Faith comes by hearing,” and love comes by contemplation. It flows out of a sense of the love of Christ in the soul even as wine flows from the clusters in the winepress. Go to the fragrant mystery of redeeming love and tarry with it till in those beds of spices your own garments shall be made to smell of myrrh and aloes and cassia! There is no way of sweetening yourself but by tasting the sweetness of Jesus Christ! The honey of His love will make your whole nature to be as a honeycomb—every cell of your manhood shall drop sweetness.

Brothers and Sisters, if we wish to sustain the love we have received, we must do the same thing. At the present moment you are loving God and desire, still, to love Him. Be wise, then, and feed love on love—it is its best food. This is the honey which will keep your sweetness sweet. This is the fire which will keep your flame flaming. Could we be separated from the love of Christ, our love would die out like a lamp in yonder streets when cut off from the main. He who quickened us into the life of love must keep us alive or we shall become loveless and lifeless. And if, perhaps, your love has grown somewhat cold. If you long to revive it, do not begin by doubting God's love to you—that is not the way of reviving, but of weakening love!

Believe in Divine love, my Brothers and Sisters, over the head of the coldness of your heart! Trust in Jesus Christ as a sinner if you cannot re-



joyce in Him as a saint, and you will get your love back. You see the flowing fountain, how it gushes with a constant stream? And here I bring a pitcher and set it down so that the stream rushes into it and fills it till it overflows. In this manner our souls ought to be filled with the love of Christ. But you have taken away your pitcher and it has become empty. And now you say to yourself, "Alas, alas, there is nothing here! What shall I do? This pitcher is empty." Do? Why do what you did at *first*—go and set it under the flowing stream and it will soon be full again! It will never get full by your removing it into a dry place.

Doubting is the death of love. Only by the hand of faith can love be fed with the Bread of Heaven. Your tears will not fill it. You may groan into it, but sighs and moans will not fill it. Only the flowing fountain can fill the vacuum. Believe that God still loves you, even if you are not a saint. Believe in the mighty love of Christ towards sinners and trust yourself with Him! And then His love will come pouring in till your heart is again full to overflowing. If you want to rise to the very highest state of love to Christ. If you desire ecstatic joy, or to be perfectly consecrated. If you aim at an Apostle's self-denial, or at a martyr's heroism, or if you would be as like to Christ as the spirits are in Heaven—no tool can engrave you to this image but love! No force can fashion you to the model of Christ Jesus but the love of Jesus Christ shed abroad in your soul by the Holy Spirit. Keep to this, then, as a matter of practical direction. Dwell in the love of God to you that you may feel intense love to God.

Once more, as a practical direction, *if you love God show it as God showed His love to you*. You cannot do so in the same degree, but you may in the same *manner*. God loved the worthless. You love the worthless. God loved His enemies. You love your enemies. The Lord loved them practically. Love not in word, only, but in deed and in truth. He loved them to self-sacrifice, so that Jesus gave Himself for us. You love to self-sacrifice, also. Love God so that you could die a thousand deaths for Him. Love Him till you make no provision for the flesh, but live only for His Glory. Let your heart burn with a flame that shall consume you till the zeal of God's house shall have eaten you up. "We love Him *because* He first loved us," therefore let us love Him as He loved us! Let His love be both motive and model to us—

***"Loved of my God, for Him again,  
With love intense I burn.  
Chosen of Him before time began  
I choose Him in return."***

**IV.** Our text suggests to us AN ARGUMENTATIVE DEFENSE. You will see what I mean when I observe, first, that our love to God seems to need an apology. We have heard of an emperor casting eyes of love upon a peasant girl. It would have been monstrous for *her* to have first looked up to *him* as likely to be her husband! Everybody would have thought her to be bereft of her senses had she done so. But when the *monarch* looked down upon *her* and asked her to be his queen, that was another thing. She might take leave to love from his love!

Often does my soul say, "O God, I cannot help loving You, but may I? Can this poor heart of mine be allowed to send up its love to You? I—polluted and defiled, nothingness and emptiness and sinfulness—may I say, 'Yet do I love You, O my God, almighty as You are?' 'Holy, holy, holy,' is the salutation of the seraphim, but may I say, 'I love You, O my God?'" Yes, I may, because *He* first loved me! *There* is love's license to soar so high—

***"Yet I may love You, too, O Lord,  
Almighty as You are,  
For you have stooped to ask of me  
The love of my poor heart!"***

Then, again, if any should enquire of us as they did of the spouse, "What is your Beloved more than another beloved, O you fairest among women? What is your Beloved more than another beloved, that you do so charge us? What is this passion that you have for God, this love you bear to His Incarnate Son?" We have a conclusive argument as against them, even as we had a quietus for our own fears. We reply, "We love Him because He first loved us. And if you did but know that He loved you. If you did but know that He had done for you what He has done for us, you would love Him, too. You would not need to ask us why—you would wonder why you do not love Him, too."—

***"His love, if all the nations knew,  
Surely the whole world would love Him, too."***

We shall not need, to all eternity, any other defense for loving God than this, "Because He first loved us."

Here is, also, an argument for the lover of the old orthodox faith. It has been said by some that the Doctrines of Grace lead to licentiousness, but our text is a most excellent shield against that attack. Brothers and Sisters, we believe that the Lord loved us, first, and most freely—not because of our tears or prayers, nor because of our foreseen faith, nor because of anything in us—but first! Well, what comes out of that? Do we, therefore, say, "If He loved us when we were in sin, let us continue in sin that Grace may abound," as some have wickedly said? God forbid! The inference we draw is, "We love Him because He first loved us."

Some can be swayed to morality by *fear*, but the Christian is sweetly drawn to holiness by *love*. We love Him not because we are afraid of being cast into Hell if we do not—that fear is gone—we who are justified by God can never be condemned! Nor because we are afraid of missing Heaven, for the inheritance is upon as many of us as are joint heirs with Jesus Christ. Does this blessed security lead us to carelessness? No, but in proportion as we see the greatness and the infinity of the love of God, we love Him in return! And that love is the basis of all holiness and the groundwork of a godly character. The Doctrines of Grace, though often maligned, have proved in the hearts of those who have believed them, the grandest stimulus to heroic virtue! And he who affirms otherwise knows not what he says!

Last of all, here is a noble argument to silence a gainsaying world. Do you see what a wonderful text we have here? It is a description of Christianity! Men say they are weary of the old faith and beg us to advance with the times—how shall we reply to them? They need something better, do they? The philosophers who pander to the age are going to give it a better religion than Christianity? Are they? Let us see. We shall, however, wait very long before their false promises will approximate to fulfillment. Let us rather look at what we have already.

Our text is a circle. Here is love *descending* from Heaven down to man—and here is love *ascending* from man to God—and so the circle is completed. The text treats only of love. We love the Lord and He loves us. The text resembles Anacreon's harp which resounded love. Here is no word of strife, selfishness, anger, or envy! All is love and love alone. Now, it comes to pass that out of this love between God and His people there grows, (see the context of my text), love to men, for, "he that loves God loves his brother, also." The ethical essence of Christianity is *love* and the great master doctrine that we preach when we preach Jesus Christ is this—"God has loved us, we love God—and now we must love one another."

O you nations, what Gospel do you desire better than this? This it is that will put aside your drums, your cannons and your swords! When men love God and love each other, what need for all the bloodstained pagentry of war? And this will end your slavery, for who will call his brother his slave when he has learned to love the image of God in every man? Who is he that will oppress and domineer when he has learned to love his God and love the creatures God has made? Behold! Christianity is the Magna Charta of the universe! Here is the true, "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity," which men will seek for in vain in politics! Here is the sacred Communism which will injure no man's rights, but will respect every man's griefs and succor every man's needs! Here is, indeed, the birth principle of the golden age of peace and joy, when the lion shall eat straw like the ox and the weaned child shall play on the cockatrice's den!

Spread it, then, and let it circulate throughout the whole earth—God's love first, our love to Him, next! And then the universal love which shuts not out a man of any color, of any class, or of any name—but calls upon itself to love both God and man because God is loved! The Lord bless this meditation to you, by His Spirit, for Christ's sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 John 4.  
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—19, 248, 810.**

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# LOVE

## NO. 229

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, DECEMBER 19, 1858,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“We love Him, because He first loved us.”  
1 John 4:19.***

DURING the last two Sabbath days I have been preaching the Gospel to the unconverted. I have earnestly exhorted the very chief of sinners to look to Jesus Christ—and have assured them that as a preparation for coming to Christ—they need no good works, or good dispositions, but that they may come, just as they are, to the foot of the Cross and receive the pardoning blood and all-sufficient merits of the Lord Jesus Christ. The thought has since occurred to me that some who were ignorant of the Gospel might, perhaps, put this query—is this likely to promote morality? If the Gospel is a proclamation of pardon to the very chief of sinners, will not this be a license to sin? In what respects can the Gospel be said to be a Gospel according to holiness? How will such preaching operate? Will it make men better? Will they be more attentive to the laws which relate to man and man? Will they be more obedient to the statutes which relate to man and God?

I thought, therefore, that we would advance a step further and endeavor to show, this morning, how the proclamation of the Gospel of God, though in the commencement addresses itself to men who are utterly destitute of any good, is, nevertheless, designed to lead these very men to the noblest heights of virtue, yes, to ultimate perfection in holiness. The text tells us that the effect of the Gospel received in the heart is that it compels and constrains such a heart to love God. “We love Him, because He first loved us.” When the Gospel comes to us it does not find us loving God, it does not expect anything of us—but coming with the Divine application of the Holy Spirit—it simply assures us that God loves us, be we ever so deeply immersed in sin. And then, the after effect of this proclamation of love is, that “we love Him because He first loved us.”

Can you imagine a being placed halfway between this world and Heaven? Can you conceive of him as having such enlarged capacities that he could easily discern what was done in Heaven and what was done on earth? I can conceive that, before the Fall, if there had been such a being, he would have been struck with the singular harmony which existed between God’s great world, called Heaven, and the little world, the earth. Whenever the chimes of Heaven rang, the great note of those massive bells

was love. And when the little bells of earth were sounded, the harmonies of this narrow sphere rang out their note, it was just the same—love. When the bright spirits gathered around the great Throne of God in Heaven to magnify the Lord, at the same time there was to be seen the world, clad in its priestly garments, offering its sacrifice of purest praise.

When the cherubim and seraphim did continually cry, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts,” there was heard a note, feebler, perhaps, but yet as sweetly musical, coming up from paradise, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts.” There was no jar, no discord. The thunder peals of Heaven’s melodies were exactly in accord with the whispers of earth’s harmonies. There was “glory to God in the highest,” and on earth there was glory, too. The heart of man was as the heart of God. God loved man and man loved God. But imagine that same great Spirit to be still standing between the heavens and the earth, how sad He must be, when He hears the jarring discord and feels it grate upon the ear! The Lord said, “I am reconciled to you, I have put away your sin.” But what is the answer of this earth? The answer of the world is, “Man is at enmity with God—God may be reconciled, but man is not. The mass of men are still enemies to God by wicked works.”

When the angels praise God, if they listen to the sounds that are to be heard on earth, they hear the trump of cruel war. They hear the bacchanalian shout and the song of the lascivious and what a discord is this in the great harmony of the spheres? The fact is this—the world was originally one great string in the harp of the universe and when the Almighty swept that harp with His gracious fingers there was nothing to be heard but praise. Now that string is snapped and where it has been reset by Grace, still it is not wholly restored to its perfect tune and the note that comes from it has but little of sweetness—and very much of discord.

But, O bright Spirit, retain your place and live on. The day is hastening with glowing wheels and the axle thereof is hot with speed. The day is coming when this world shall be a paradise again. Jesus Christ, who came the first time to bleed and suffer, that He might wash the world from its iniquity, is coming a second time to reign and conquer, that He may clothe the earth with glory. And the day shall arrive, when You, O Spirit, shall hear again the everlasting harmony. Once more the bells of earth shall be attuned to the melodies of Heaven. Once more shall the eternal chorus find that no singer is absent, but that the music is complete.

But how is this to be? How is the world to be brought back? How is it to be restored? We answer the reason why there was this original harmony between earth and Heaven was because there was love between them and our great reason for hoping that there shall be at last reestablished a perfect harmony between Heaven and earth is simply this—that God has already manifested His love towards us—and that in return, hearts touched

by His grace do even now love Him. And when they shall be multiplied and love reestablished, then shall the harmony be complete.

Having thus introduced my text, I must now plunge into it. We shall notice the parentage, the nourishment and the walk of love. And shall exhort all Believers here present, to love God, because He has first loved them.

**1.** In the first place, THE PARENTAGE OF TRUE LOVE TO GOD. There is no light in the planet but that which comes from the sun. There is no light in the moon but that which is borrowed and there is no true love in the heart but that which comes from God. Love is the light, the life and way of the universe. Now, God is Life, Light, the Way and—to crown all—God is Love. From this overflowing fountain of the infinite love of God all our love to God must spring. This must ever be a great and certain truth, that we love Him, for no other reason than because He first loved us.

There are some that think that God might be loved by simple contemplation of His works. We do not believe it. We have heard a great deal about admiring philosophers and we have felt that admiration was more than possible when studying the works of God. We have heard a great deal about wondering discoverers and we have acknowledged that the mind must be base, indeed, which does not wonder when it looks upon the works of God. We have sometimes heard about a love to God which has been engendered by the beauties of scenery, but we have never believed in its existence. We do believe that where love is already born in the heart of man, all the wonders of God's Providence and creation may excite that love again, it being there already. But we do not and we cannot believe, because we never saw such an instance, that the mere contemplation of God's works could ever raise any man to the height of love.

In fact, the great problem has been tried and it has been solved in the negative. What said the poet—

***“What though the spicy breezes blow soft over Java's isle;  
Where every prospect pleases and only man is vile.”***

Where God is most resplendent in his works and most lavish in his gifts, there man has been the vilest and God is the most forgotten. Others have taught, if not exactly in doctrine, yet their doctrine necessarily leads to it, that human nature may of itself attain unto love to God. Our simple reply is, we have never met with such an instance. We have curiously questioned the people of God and we believe that others have questioned them in every age, but we have never had but one answer to this question, “Why have you loved God?” The only answer has been, “Because He first loved me.”

I have heard men preach about free will, but I never yet heard of a Christian who exalted free will in his own experience. I have heard men say that men of their own free will may turn to God, believe, repent and love. But I have heard the same persons, when talking of their own ex-

perience, say that they did not so turn to God, but that Jesus sought them when they were strangers, wandering from the fold of God! The whole matter may look specious enough, when preached, but when *felt* it is found to be a phantom. It may seem right enough for a man to tell his fellows that his own free will may save him—but when he comes to close dealing with his own conscience—he himself, however wild in his doctrine, is compelled to say, “Oh, yes, I do love Jesus, because He first loved me.”

I have wondered at a Wesleyan brother, who has sometimes railed against the doctrine of election in the pulpit—and then has given out this very hymn and all the members of the Church have joined in singing it most heartily—while at the same time they were tolling the death-knell of their own peculiar tenets. For if that hymn is true, Arminianism must be false. If it is the certain fact, that the only reason for our loving God is that His love has been shed abroad in our hearts, then it cannot be true, that man ever did or ever will love God, until first of all God has manifested His love towards him.

But without disputing any longer, do we not all admit that our love to God is the sweet offspring of God’s love to us? Ah, Beloved, cold admiration every man may have—but the warmth of love can only be kindled by the fires of God’s Spirit. Let each Christian speak for himself, we shall all hold this great and cardinal truth that the reason of our love to God is the sweet influence of His grace. Sometimes I wonder that such as we should have been brought to love God at all. Is our love so precious that God should court our love, dressed in the crimson robes of a dying Redeemer? If we had loved God, it would have been no more than He deserved. But when we rebelled and yet He sought our love, it was surprising indeed! It was a wonder when He disrobed Himself of all His splendors and came down and wrapped Himself in a mantle of clay.

But methinks the wonder is excelled yet, for after He had died for us, still we did not love Him. We rebelled against Him. We rejected the proclamation of the Gospel. We resisted His Spirit. But He said, I will have their hearts. And He followed us day after day, hour after hour. Sometimes He laid us low and He said, “Surely they will love Me if I restore them!” At another time He filled us with corn and with wine and He said “Surely they will love Me now,” but we still revolted, still rebelled. At last He said, “I will strive no longer, I am Almighty and I will not have it that a human heart is stronger than I am. I turn the will of man as the rivers of water are turned,” and lo, He put forth His strength and in an instant the current changed and we loved Him, because we then could see the love of God, in that He sent His Son to be our Redeemer. But we must confess, Beloved, going back to the Truth of God with which we started, that never should we have had any love towards God, unless that love had been sown in us by the sweet seed of His love to us. If there is anyone here that has a love to Christ, let him differ from this doctrine *here*, if he insists, but

let him know that he shall not differ *hereafter*. For in Heaven they all sing praise to Free Grace. They all sing, "Salvation to our God and to the Lamb."

**II.** Love, then, has for its parent the love of God shed abroad in our hearts. But after it is Divinely born in our heart it must be Divinely NOURISHED. Love is an exotic. It is not a plant that will nourish naturally in human soil. Love to God is a rich and rare thing. It would die if it were left to be frostbitten by the chilly blasts of our selfishness. And if it received no nourishment but that which can be drawn from the rock of our own hard hearts it must perish. As love comes from Heaven, so it must feed on heavenly bread. It cannot exist in this wilderness, unless it is nurtured from above and fed by manna from on High. On what, then, does love feed? Why, it feeds on *love*. That which brought it forth becomes its food. "We love Him because He first loved us."

The constant motive and sustaining power of our love to God is His love to us. And here let me remark that there are different kinds of food, in this great granary of love. When we are first of all renewed, the only food on which we can live is milk, because we are but babes and as yet have not strength to feed on the higher Truths of God. The first thing, then, that our love feeds upon, when it is but an infant, is a sense of favors received. Ask a young Christian why he loves Christ and he will tell you, I love Christ because He has bought me with His blood! Why do you love God the Father? I love God the Father because He gave His Son for me. And why do you love God the Spirit? I love Him because He has renewed my heart. That is to say we love God for what He has *given* to us. Our first love feeds just on the simple food of a grateful recollection of mercies received. And mark, however much we grow in grace this will always constitute a great part of the food of our love.

But when the Christian grows older and has more grace, he loves Christ for another reason. He loves Christ because he feels Christ deserves to be loved. I trust I can say I have in my heart now a love to God. The Apostles did not merely love Christ because of what He had done for them. But you will find in their sonnets and in their letters—that their motive of love was that He had *communed* with them, He had showed them His hands and His side. They had walked with Him in the villages. They had lain with Him on the beds of spices. They had entered into the mystic circle of communion. They felt that they loved Christ because He was all over glorious and was so Divinely fair, that if all nations could behold Him, surely they must be constrained to love Him, too.

This, then, is the food of love. But when love grows rich—and it does sometimes—the most loving heart grows cold towards Christ. Do you know that the only food that ever suits sick love, is the food on which it fed at first? I have heard say by the physicians that if a man is sick there is no place so well adapted for him as the place where he was born. And if



love grows sick and cold, there is no place so fit for it to go to as the place where it was born, namely, the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Where was love born? Was she born in the midst of romantic scenery, and was she nursed with wondrous contemplations upon the lap of beauty? Ah, no. Was she born on the steeps of Sinai, when God came from Sinai and the Holy One from mount Paran and melted the mountains with the touch of His foot and made the rocks flow down like wax before His terrible presence? Ah, no. Was love born on Tabor, when the Savior was transfigured and His garment became whiter than wool, whiter than any fuller could make it? Ah, no—darkness rushed over the sight of those that looked upon Him then and they fell asleep, for the glory overpowered them.

Let me tell you where love was born. Love was born in the garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus sweat great drops of blood. It was nurtured in Pilate's hall, where Jesus bared His back to the plowing of the lash and gave His body to be spit upon and scourged. Love was nurtured at the Cross, amid the groans of an expiring God, beneath the droppings of His blood—it was there that love was nurtured. Bear me witness, children of God. Where did your love spring from, but from the foot of the Cross? Did you ever see that sweet flower growing anywhere but at the foot of Calvary? No. It was when you saw "love Divine, all loves excelling," outdoing itself. It was when you saw love in bondage to itself, dying by its own stroke, laying down its life, though it had power to retain it and to take it up again.

It was there your love was born. And if you wish your love, when it is sick, to be recovered, take it to some of those sweet places. Make it sit in the shade of the olive trees and make it stand on the pavement and gaze, while the blood is still gushing down. Take it to the Cross and bid it look and see afresh the bleeding lamb. And surely this shall make your love spring from a dwarf into a giant, and this shall fan it from a spark into a flame.

And then, when your love is thus recruited, let me bid you give your love full exercise. For it shall then grow. You say, "Where shall I exercise the contemplation of my love, to make it grow?" Oh, Sacred Dove of love, stretch Your wings and play the eagle now. Let us come! Open wide your eyes and look full into the Sun's face and soar upward, upward, upward, far above the heights of this world's creation, upwards, till you are lost in eternity. Remember, that God loved you from before the foundation of the world. Does not this strengthen your love? Ah, what a bracing air is that air of eternity? When I fly into it for a moment and think of the great doctrine of election—of—

***"That vast unmeasured love,  
Which from the days of old,  
Did all the chosen seed embrace,***

***Like sheep within the fold.”***

it makes the tears run down my cheeks to think that we should have an interest in that decree and council of the Almighty Three, when everyone that should be blood-bought had his name inscribed in God's eternal book. Come, Soul, I bid you now exercise your wings a little and see if this does not make you love God!

He thought of you before you had a being. When as yet the sun and the moon were not—when the sun, the moon and the stars slept in the mind of God, like unborn forests in an acorn cup. When the old sea was not yet born, long before this infant world lay in its swaddling bands of mist—God had inscribed your name upon the heart and upon the hands of Christ indelibly, to remain forever. And does not this make you love God? Is not this sweet exercise for your love? For here it is my text comes in, giving, as it were, the last charge in this sweet battle of love, a charge that sweeps everything before it. “We love God, because He first loved us,” seeing that He loved us before time began and when in eternity He dwelt alone.

And when you have soared backward into the past eternity, I have yet another flight for you. Soar back through all your own experience and think of the way whereby the Lord your God has led you in the wilderness. Think how He has fed and clothed you every day—how He has borne with your ill manners—how He has put up with all your murmurings and all your longings after the fleshpots of Egypt—how He has opened the rock to supply you and fed you with manna that came down from Heaven. Think of how His grace has been sufficient for you in all your troubles—how His blood has been a pardon to you in all your sins—how His rod and His staff have comforted you.

And when you have flown over this sweet field of love, you may fly further on and remember that the oath, the Covenant, the blood, have something more in them than the past, for though “He first loved us,” yet this does not mean that He shall ever cease to love, for He is Alpha and He shall be Omega—He is First and He shall be Last. And therefore remember, when you shall pass through the valley of the shadow of death, you need fear no evil, for He is with you. When you shall stand in the cold floods of Jordan, you need not fear, for Death cannot separate you from His love. And when you shall come into the mysteries of eternity you need not tremble, for “I am persuaded that neither principalities, nor powers, nor 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.”

And now, Soul, is not your love refreshed? Does not this make you love Him? Does not a flight over those illimitable plains of the ether of love inflame your heart and compel you to delight yourself in the Lord your God? Here is the food of love—“We love Him, because He first loved us,” and be-

cause in that first love there is the pledge and promise that He will love us even to the end.

**III.** And now comes the third point, the WALK OF LOVE. “We love Him.” Children of God, if Christ were here on earth, what would you do for Him? If it should be rumored tomorrow that the Son of Man had come down from Heaven, as He came at first, what would you do for Him? If there should be an infallible witness that the feet that trod the holy acres of Palestine were actually treading the roads of Great Britain, what would you do for Him? Oh, I can conceive that there would be a tumult of delighted hearts—a superabundance of liberal hands—that there would be a sea of streaming eyes to behold Him. “Do for Him?” says one, “Do for Him? Did He hunger? I would give Him meat, though it were my last crust. Did He thirst? I would give Him drink, though my own lips were parched with fire. Was He naked? I would strip myself and shiver in the cold to clothe Him. Do for Him? I should scarcely know what to do. I would hurry away and I would cast myself at His dear feet and I would beseech Him, if it would but honor Him, that He would tread upon me and crush me in the dust, if He would but be raised one inch the higher thereby. Did He want a soldier, I would enlist in His army. Did He need that someone should die, I would give my body to be burned, if He stood by to see the sacrifice and cheer me in the flames.”

O you daughters of Jerusalem! Would you not go forth to meet Him? Would you not rejoice with the taboret and in the dance? Dance, then, you might, like Miriam, by the side of Egypt’s waters, red with blood! We, the sons of men, would dance like David before the ark, exulting for joy, if Christ were come. Ah, we think we love Him so much that we should do all that. But there is a grave question about the truth of this matter after all. Do you not know that Christ’s Wife and family are here? And if you love Him, would it not follow as a natural inference that you would love His Bride and His offspring? “Ah,” says one, “Christ has no Bride on earth.” Has He not? Has He not espoused unto Himself His Church? Is not His Church, the mother of the faithful, His own chosen Wife? And did He not give His blood to be her dowry? And has He not declared that He never will be divorced from her, for He hates to put away and that He will consummate the marriage in the Last Great Day, when He shall come to reign with His people upon the earth?

And has He no children here? “The daughters of Jerusalem and the sons of Zion who have begotten Me these?” Are not they the offspring of the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, the Child born, the Son given? Surely they are. And if we love Christ, as we think we do, as we pretend we do, we shall love His Church and people. And *do* you love His Church? Perhaps you love the part to which you belong. You love the hand. It may be a hand that is garnished with many a brilliant ring of noble ceremonies and you love that. You may belong to some poor, poverty-stricken de-

nomination—it may be the foot—and you love the foot. But you speak contemptuously of the hand, because it is garnished with greater honors. While perhaps you of the hand are speaking lightly of those who are of the foot. Brethren, it is a common thing with us all to love only a part of Christ's body and not to love the whole. But if we love Him we should love *all* His people.

When we are on our knees in prayer, I fear that when we are praying for the Church we do not mean all that we say. We are praying for *our* Church, our section of it. Now, he that loves Christ, if he is a Baptist, he loves the doctrine of Baptism, because he knows it to be Scriptural. But, at the same time wherever he sees the Grace of God to be in any man's heart, he loves *him* because he is a part of the living Church and he does not withhold his heart, his hand, or his house from him because he happens to differ on some point. I pray that the Church in these days may have a more loving spirit towards herself. We ought to delight in the advance of every denomination.

Is the Church of England rousing from its sleep? Is she springing like a phoenix, from her ashes? God be with her and God bless her! Is another denomination leading the van and seeking by its ministers to entice the wanderer into the House of God? God be with it! Is the Primitive Methodist laboring in the hedge and ditch, toiling for his Master? God help him! Is the Calvinist seeking to uphold Christ crucified in all his splendors? God be with him! And does another man with far less knowledge preach much error, but still hold that "by grace are you saved through faith," then God bless *him* and may success be with him evermore. If you loved Christ better you would love all Christ's Church and all Christ's people.

Do you not know that Christ has now a mouth on earth and has left a hand on earth and a foot on earth still? if you would prove your love to Him, you would not think that you cannot feed Him—you need not imagine that you cannot fill His hand, or that you cannot wash His feet. You can do all this today. He has left His poor and afflicted people and their mouths are hungry—for they need bread—and their tongue is parched for they need water. You meet them. They come to you. They are destitute and afflicted. Do you refuse them? Do you know who it was you denied at your door? "Inasmuch as you did it not unto one of the least of these, My brethren, you did it not to Me." In rejecting the petition of the poor, when you might have helped them, you rejected Christ. Christ was virtually the man to whom you parsimoniously refused the needed alms—your Savior was thus rejected at the door of one for whom He Himself had died.

Do you want to feed Christ? Open your eyes, then and you shall see Him everywhere! In our back streets, in our lanes, in our alleys, in all our Churches, connected with every branch of Christ's people, you shall find the poor and the afflicted. If you want to feed Christ, feed them. But you say that you are willing to wash Christ's feet Ah, well and you may do it.

Has He no fallen children? Are there no Brothers and Sisters who have sinned and who are thus defiled? If Christ's feet were foul, you say you would wash them. Then if a Christian man has stepped aside, seek to restore him and lead him once more in the way of righteousness. And do you want to fill Christ's hands with your liberality? His Church is the treasure house of His alms and the hand of His Church is outstretched for help, for she always needs it. She has a work to do which must be accomplished. She is straitened because your help is withheld from her. Pour your gifts into her treasury, for all that you can give unto her is given to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Finally, to stimulate your love, let me remind you that Christ Jesus had two trials of His love which He endured with firmness, but which are often too much for us. When Christ was on high and glorious, I marvel that He loved us. I have known many a man who loved his friend when he was in the same low estate. But he has advanced and he has disdained to know the man at whose table he had fed. A lofty elevation tries the love which we bear to those who are inferior to us in rank. Now, Christ Jesus, the Lord of Heaven and the King of angels, condescended to notice us *before* He came on earth. He always called us Brethren—and since He has ascended up to Heaven and has reassumed the diadem and once more sits down at the right hand of God—He never has forgotten us. His high estate has never made Him slight a disciple.

When He rode into Jerusalem in triumph, we do not read that He disdained to confess that the humble fishermen were His followers. And “now, though He reigns exalted on high, His love is still as great.” He still calls us Brethren, Friends. He still recognizes the kinship of the one blood. And yet, strange to say, we have known many Christians who have forgotten much of their love to Christ when they have risen in the world. “Ah,” said a woman, who had been desirous to do much for Christ in poverty, and who had had a great sum left her, “I cannot do as much as I used to do.” “But how is that?” said one. Said she, “When I had a shilling purse I had a guinea heart, but now that I have a guinea purse I have only a shilling heart.” It is a sad temptation to some men to get rich. They were content to go to the meeting house and mix with the ignoble congregation while they had but little. They have grown rich, there is an Oriental carpet in the drawing room—they have arrangements now too splendid to permit them to invite the poor of the flock, as once they did. And Christ Jesus is not so fashionable as to allow them to introduce any religious topic when they meet with their new friends.

Besides this, they say they are now obliged to pay this visit and that visit—and they must spend so much time upon attire—and in maintaining their station and respectability, they cannot find time to pray as they did. The House of God has to be neglected for the party and Christ has less of their heart than ever He had. “Is this your kindness to your Friend?” And

have you risen so high that you are ashamed of Christ? And are you grown so rich, that Christ in His poverty is despised? Alas, poor wealth! alas, base wealth! Vile wealth! It were well for you if it should be all swept away, if a descent to poverty should be a restoration to the ardency of your affection.

But once again—what a trial of love was that—when Christ began to suffer for us! There are many men, I doubt not, who are true Believers and love their Savior, who would tremble to come to the test of suffering. Imagine yourself, my Brothers and Sisters, taken today into some dark dungeon of the Inquisition—conceive that all the horrors of the dark ages are revived—you are taken down a long dark staircase and hurried you know not where. At last you come to a place, far deep in the bowels of the earth and round about you see hanging on the walls the pincers, the instruments of torture of all kinds and shapes. There are two inquisitors there who say to you, “Are you prepared to renounce your heretical faith and to return to the bosom of the Church?” I conceive my Brothers and Sisters, that you would have strength of mind and grace enough to say, “I am not prepared to deny my Savior.”

But when the pincers began to tear your flesh, when the hot coals began to scorch, when the rack began to dislocate your bones—when all the instruments of torture were wreaking their hellish vengeance, unless the supernatural hand of God should be mightily upon you, I am sure that in your weakness you would deny your Master and in the hour of your peril would forsake the Lord that bought you. True, the love of Christ in the heart, when sustained by His Grace, is strong enough to bear us through—but I am afraid that with many of us here present, if we had no more love than we have now, we should come out from the inquisition miserable apostates from the faith.

But now, remember Christ. He was exposed to tortures, which were really more tremendous by far. There is no engine of Romish cruelty that can equal that dreadful torture which forced a sweat of blood from every pore. Christ was scourged and He was crucified. But there were other woes unseen by us, which were the *soul* of His agonies. Now, if Christ in the hour of sore trial had said, “I disown my disciples, I will not die,” He might have come down from the Cross. And who could accuse Him of evil? He owed us nothing. We could do nothing for Him. Poor worms would be all that He would disown. But our Master, even when the blood sweat covered Him as with a mantle of gore, never thought of disowning us—NEVER. “My Father,” He said once, “if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me.” But there was always the “*If* it is possible.” *If* it is possible to save without it, let the cup pass. But if not, Your will be done.

You never hear Him say in Pilate’s hall one word that would let you imagine that He was sorry He had undertaken so costly a sacrifice for us. And when His hands are pierced and when He is parched with fever and

His tongue is dried up like a potsherd—and His whole body is dissolved into the dust of death—you never hear a groan or a shriek that looks like going back. It is the cry of one determined to go on, though He knows He must die on His onward march. It was love that could not be stayed by death, but overcame all the horrors of the grave.

Now, what do we say to this? We who live in these gentler times—are we about to give up our Master when we are tried and tempted for Him? Young man in the workshop! It is your lot to be jeered at because you are a follower of the Savior. And will you turn back from Christ because of a jeer? Young woman! You are laughed at because you profess the religion of Christ—shall a laugh dissolve the link of love that knits your heart to Him—when all the roar of Hell could not divert His love from you? And you who are suffering because you maintain a religious principle—are you cast out from men? Will you not bear that the house should be stripped and that you shall eat the bread of poverty, rather than dishonor such a Lord? Will you not go forth from this place, by the help of God's Spirit, vowing and declaring that in life, come poverty, come wealth—in death, come pain, or come what may—you are and ever must be the Lord's? For this is written on your heart, "We love Him, because He first loved us."

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# THE SECRET OF LOVE TO GOD

## NO. 2730

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 9, 1901.

*DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,*  
AT THE, METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 15, 1880.

*“We love Him, because He first loved us.”*  
*1 John 4:19.*

THIS morning, [Sermon #1553, Volume 26—FAITH WORKING BY LOVE—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>] those of us who were here meditated upon the connection between faith and love, so I thought we had better pursue the same subject somewhat further, hoping that we might still receive Divine instruction upon that important theme.

You must have noticed how continually John blends faith with knowledge and love, as in the 16<sup>th</sup> verse of this Chapter—“We have known and believed the love that God has to us.” All through this Epistle, he constantly repeats the words, “we know,” “we know,” “we know,” “we know.” And perhaps even more frequently he uses the word, “love.” Knowledge, faith, and love are plaited together so closely that they cannot be separated. They are intertwined and united like the warp and the woof of a fabric, and so they become really one. To know Christ, to trust Christ, to love Christ—these are among the elementary principles of piety. Without all of these Graces, there is no true religion. But if these things are in us, and abound, they make us to be neither barren nor unfruitful.

When you notice that knowledge, faith, and love are placed like a set of precious jewels in one case, it leads you to see how necessary it is that all the powers of our nature should be renewed. Our intellects need to be regenerated so that we may be able to know Christ, for those who are unspiritual do not know Him. They hear about Him, but they are strangers to Him. Spiritual things are only known to spiritual men. Faith is an act partly of the intellect and partly of the affections and we must, therefore, have both head and heart renewed by the Spirit of God, or we shall not have true faith. Even though the mind may be purified, it will not suffice unless the affections are also cleansed, because love to God never comes out of a foul heart—it is a plant that will not grow on the dunghill of our corrupt nature. We must be transformed by the renewing of our minds, or else we can never know God, nor trust God, nor love God. In fact, it comes to this, as Christ told Nicodemus, “You must be born again.”

There must be a thorough, real, radical change—not of this faculty or that, but of the whole man. He that sits upon the Throne of God says,



“Behold, I make all things new.” And all who come into His Kingdom are made new creatures in Christ Jesus just as much as if they had been annihilated and had been created over again! What a solemn influence this Truth of God should exercise over us! In what a clear light is true religion thus set before us! It is no mere child’s play, no matter to be settled offhand, without thought or consideration. Search yourselves and see whether the Spirit of God has worked in you the true knowledge, the true faith, and the true love—for, otherwise, whatever you may *think* you possess of any of these things—they are not of God!

This short text is one from which I have often preached to you. I notice that there are already three sermons [Sermon #229, Volume 5—LOVE; #1008, Volume 17—LOVE’S LOGIC; #1299, Volume 22—LOVE’S BIRTH AND PARENTAGE—read/download all these sermons free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>] upon it published in my volumes—and I hope to preach from it a good many more times if I am spared, for it is one of those inexhaustible wells into which you may let down the bucket every morning—and always pull it up full! It is a mine with a good many seams of the richest ore. You may think that you have dug all its treasures out, but you have only to sink a new shaft to find that there is another seam just as rich as the former one! and when you have brought all that wealth to the surface—and that may take your whole lifetime—someone else may sink another shaft and open up a fresh vein!

**I.** I shall try to explain the text, first, by showing you that OUR LOVE TO GOD IS A FACT WHICH DESERVES AN AVOWAL.

Is it a fact with you, dear Friend, or is it not? Let every one of us answer this question for himself or herself. With some of us, blessed be God, it is a fact that we do love God—it is a fact that is worth speaking out and worth writing down. The Holy Spirit, Himself, thought it worthwhile to move John to write down for himself and for his brethren, “We love Him.” Some feel that they must honestly confess that they do *not* love the Lord and there may be others who are quite indifferent as to whether they love Him or not. But there are some who must avow their affection for Him. The very stones in the street would cry out against them if they did not confess their love to their Lord! They feel compelled to say, in the face of all the world, “We love Him.” They do not say it boastingly, for they give the reason why they love Him—“because He first loved us”—a reason drawn from the Grace of God which prevents anything like boasting concerning it. Yet, trustfully, boldly, unhesitatingly, they do say outright, so that whoever will, may hear it, “We love Him.’ Others may not, but we do, and we gather together as a company of people who are agreed upon this point, ‘We love Him.’ We love God especially as He is revealed to us in the Person of Jesus Christ, His only-begotten and well-beloved Son, who loved us and gave Himself for us.”

If you ask me, “Why ought this fact to be avowed?” I answer, first, *because there can be no good reason for concealing it.* I cannot imagine a true man saying, “I love Christ, but I do not want others to know that I love Him, lest they should laugh at me.” That is a reason to be laughed at, or rather, to be wept over! Afraid of being laughed at? O Sir, this is, indeed, a cowardly fear! Are there not some of Christ’s servants who live

in the full glare of public observation and whose names are ridiculed every hour of the day? Yet has that ridicule ever broken their bones, or their hearts? Verily, no! And if God makes men of us, we ought never to be afraid of such a thing as a sneer, or a jeer, or a jest on account of our religion.

Perhaps some will say that they do love Christ, but that if they avowed their affection for Him, they would provoke opposition. Of course you would! Did not God Himself say so to the serpent in the Garden of Eden, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed"? Did you expect the woman's seed to be loving the Lord, and yet not to be opposed by the serpent's seed? Did not Jesus say to His disciples, "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"? You know how the world treated Him—and shall the disciple be above his Master, the servant above his Lord?

So, my Brothers and Sisters, if you love the Lord, say, "We love Him," for there is no good reason why you should not avow your affection for Him. But, on the other hand, there is abundant reason why you should do so, for, first, *Jesus Christ deserves and claims that avowal*. He was not ashamed of His love for us. He left all the glories of Heaven that He might espouse our cause. And when we came to His feet, burdened and guilty, and full of woes, there was not one lovely trait in our character to attract Him toward us—yet He took pity upon us, and loved us, and saved us—and now He pleads for us in Heaven! He is not ashamed to call us brethren, so, surely, we ought—bravely and joyfully—to declare that we are on His side!

We ought not to need any urging to that avowal. But if we do, let us remember that Christ claims it, for He has said, "Whoever, therefore, shall be ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed when He comes in the Glory of His Father with the holy angels." And He also said, "Whoever shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God: but he that denies Me"—and the apposition, you see, makes that word, "deny," mean, "he that does not confess Me"—"he that denies Me before men shall be denied before the angels of God." Come, then, Brothers and Sisters, since Christ claims it, and so richly deserves it, let the avowal of this fact be made, if fact it is—"We love Him."

It ought to be made, also, *because it puts us among most blessed company*. I wish I had the tongue of the eloquent, so that I could depict for you that great cloud of witnesses up on high who, with one voice, exclaim, "We love Him." If I ask all who are in Heaven, "Who among you loves Jesus Christ?" I seem at once to hear a response, like Niagara in volume, but far sweeter in sound, "We love Him." And above all human and angelic voices comes the declaration of the eternal Father, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Look through all the pages of history and put to the noblest men and women, who seem still to live, this question, "Who loves Christ?" and, at

once, up from dark dungeons and cruel racks there rises the confessors' cry, "We love Him!" And from the fiery stake, where they clapped their hands as they were being burned to death, the same answer comes, "We love Him!" If you could walk through the miles of catacombs at Rome and if the holy dead, whose dust lies there, could suddenly wake up, they would all shout, "We love Him!" The best and bravest of men, the noblest and purest of women, have all been in this glorious company. So, surely, you are not ashamed to come forward and say, "Put my name down among them. Though meanest of them all, I wish that 'we' might comprehend—me, my children and my friends—that we all might be able to truthfully say, 'We love Him.'" Happy are they who enlist in such an army as this, which has emblazoned on its banners this grand declaration, "We love Him."

Further, dear Friends, if you love the Lord, confess that fact, *because your avowal may influence others*. It may be that some who do not yet love Him, will be encouraged to do so when they hear you say, "We love Him." Many a child has learned to love Christ through his parents' godly example. And many a stranger to true religion has been induced to yield his heart to Jesus by seeing the loving behavior of those who were Christ's disciples. So, for this poor world's sake, confess your love to your Lord! Perhaps you will never be a preacher and you need not wish to be one unless you are Divinely called to the office, but you can at least be a confessor of Christ and, by that avowal, and by living consistently with it, you will draw your one or two to the Savior, in whose sight every soul is precious beyond all value.

Besides, *it may be a great blessing to yourself to avow your love to Christ*. I always look back, with deep gratitude, to the day in which I was baptized. You know that we baptize none but those who profess to have believed in our Lord Jesus Christ, so it is absolutely certain that we attribute no saving efficacy to Baptism in water, yet, at the same time, we have proved, again and again, that there is a distinct blessing in the observance of the ordinance. It was so in my case. Up to that time I was timorous and trembling—and afraid to confess Christ. But after I went into the river and was publicly baptized into His death, I lost all fear of man and I think I can honestly say that I have never been ashamed to acknowledge my Lord from that day to this. That coming out boldly for Christ was like crossing the Rubicon, or burning the boats—no retreat was possible after that—nor have I ever wanted to go back to the world from which I then came out.

The world has had many an ill word for me from that day to this, and there is no love lost between us. I have done with the world as the world has done with me—I am crucified unto the world, and the world unto me. And you Christian people will find it good when you can also say, "We have come right out from the world and we love Christ." Perhaps somebody says, "I would not be admitted into society if I were to confess Christ." Society? Humph!—

***"In such society as this  
My weary soul would rest!"***

***The man that dwells where Jesus is,  
Must be forever blessed.***

Be out-and-out for Him! Unfurl your colors, never hide them, but nail them to the mast and say to all who ridicule the saints, "If you have any ill words for the followers of Christ, pour them out upon me! If you call us canting hypocrites, Presbyterians, Methodists—say what you like about us—I am quite prepared to bear my share of your slander. I will even glory in it, if so it must be! But know this—you shall hear it whether you like it or not—'I love Christ,' and among the people whose names are written down as lovers of the Lord, my name shall stand, unworthy though I am of such an honor." This is a fact which deserves avowal and I would rejoice if I could induce some of you who have never made that avowal, to join yourselves openly with the people of God in our Lord's appointed way!

**II.** Now we will take the text in another way and note, secondly, that OUR LOVE IS AN EFFECT FLOWING FROM A CAUSE—"We love Him, *because* He first loved us."

And, first, *it is not the result of effort.* We do not love God because we tried to do so. True love cannot come in that way. You may say, "I intend to think," and you may succeed in doing it, but you cannot act like that with regard to love. Oh, no! Love is not a slave to be at any man's beck and call—it is a master—and when even the lowest form of love comes upon a man, it carries him right away wherever it will! So, this highest type of human love—our love to God—overmasters us. It is never the result of effort on our part. Did you ever hear a mother say, "I will try to love my child"? I do not know how she would go to work to bring about such a state of things as that. Oh, no! She loves her child naturally—she cannot help loving her own offspring. I never tried to love my sons. I cannot help loving them! My love to them is not the effect of any effort on my part. It is as free as the dew that drops from Heaven—we may not know how it comes, but we know that we have not made it.

Nor is love to God produced in any heart *as a matter of duty.* We love God, not because we felt that we ought to love Him, but, "because He first loved us." A sense of duty is a very proper thing concerning many matters and I do not deny that it is our duty to love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength, for this is the very essence of the Law of the Lord. But no man ever loves as a mere matter of duty. You love even an earthly object because you cannot help yourself—and you love God because He is infinitely lovely and because He has so completely won your heart as to engross your whole affection. Because He first loved us and that love of His has been shed abroad in our hearts, we have loved Him in return as a matter of course—we cannot help doing so. The mighty deeps of His immeasurable love, high up on the eternal hills, flow down into the inmost recesses of our empty hearts and when, afterwards, a fountain of love is seen springing up out of them, the secret of its action is to be traced to that great reservoir away up on the everlasting hills!

So our love to God is not the result of effort, nor does it arise from a sense of duty—*it comes by knowledge and faith*. As John says, “We have known and believed the love that God has to us.” We have been informed by a Revelation in this Book, which we accept as Infallible, that, “God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” We have believed in Him. That is, we have trusted Him. We know, therefore, that we shall not perish, but that we have everlasting life. And now we love God for having bestowed upon us the priceless gift of His dear Son to redeem us from death and destruction.

Further, *the cause of our love to God abundantly justifies it*. People say that “love is blind,” but, in this case, the eyes of love are wide open and farseeing. Love can look the Savior in the face and point to His beauties, which fully justify all its admiration of Him and devotion to Him. We read the story of Christ—of His unique life in human flesh and His sacrificial death for our sins, and we say that if we did not love Him, we would be, of all men, the most ungrateful. As He has laid down His life for us and as He still lives to carry on the work of our salvation—as He has loved us from before the foundation of the world and will love us when this world has passed away—we must love Him. It is wasting words to argue over this matter! There is, in the natural and proper order of things, an absolute necessity that such a love as Christ’s is should have the supreme affection of our hearts in return.

We feel, also, that *such a cause is capable of producing a far larger result than we have ever yet experienced*. “Because He first loved us,” we expect to love Him much more than we do at present. And we believe that if we loved Him so much that men called us fanatics, we would be perfectly justified and that, if our heart were all taken up with Him—if we lived for nothing else but to serve Him—if we had not a breath or a pulse that was not devoted to Him—if we laid down our lives for Him—yes, if we had ten thousand lives and laid them all down for Him—we think that such love as that which He spontaneously showed to us when we were His enemies would perfectly justify us for doing all that, and ten thousand times more if it were possible!

See you, then, dear Brothers and Sisters, that our love to our Lord Jesus Christ is an effect produced by a great cause, namely, His eternal love to us! Oh, if you do really believe that He has loved you so, sit down and turn the subject over in your mind, and say to yourself, “Jesus loves *me*! Jesus chose *me*! Jesus redeemed *me*! Jesus called *me*! Jesus has pardoned *me*! Jesus has taken *me* into union with Himself! Jesus has made *me* to be a part of the bride, the Lamb’s wife! I shall be one with Him forever! He will put a crown upon my head and I shall sit with Him upon His Throne! And this may happen within a week—perhaps I shall spend next Sabbath seeing Him face to face.” With such a hope as this, you must love Him, must you not? Can your hearts resist His charms?—

***“Hard is the heart that does not feel  
Some sweet affection move”***

whenever the love of Christ is proclaimed! Yet we must not try to make ourselves love our Lord, but first look to Christ's love, for His love to us will beget in us, love to Him. I know that some of you are greatly distressed because you cannot love Christ as much as you would like to do—and you keep on fretting because it is so. Now, just forget your own love to Him and think of His great love to you! And then, immediately, your love will come to something more like that which you would desire it to be.

**III.** But now, thirdly—and I must speak but briefly upon each point—OUR LOVE IS A SIMPLICITY FOUNDED UPON A MYSTERY. “We love Him.” That is simple enough. “Because He first loved us.” Ah, *there* is a great mystery which none of us can fully understand!

I say that our love to Christ is a simplicity and I want you to keep it so, because *some people treat it metaphysically*. Now, what is love? Will somebody give us a clear definition of it? Yes. Now, will somebody else give us another? By the time that we have two or three hundred definitions of love and put them all together, it is very probable that we shall have lost all idea of what love really is! It is delight, it is complacency, it is longing for association, it is—well, you know what it is, do you not?—for if not, I cannot tell you what it is! We get into the region of metaphysics when we begin to talk about love—and there we lose ourselves. And I have known people try to describe what love to Christ is, and, very soon, they have gone down in that sea. They could not explain it, for it does not go to be explained.

Sometimes I meet with persons in trouble of this sort. One says, “I read that I ought to love Christ with a disinterested love. Does not Francis Xavier say—

**“Not with the hope of gaining anything,  
Not seeking a reward”—**

and so on—teaching us that we ought to love Christ simply for His own sake?” Yes, I know that is his teaching, and that many holy men have thought they kept to that, and I daresay they have. But I also know that love may be perfectly genuine and yet be as far as possible from being disinterested. For instance, do you doubt the reality of the love of that little babe to its mother? No. If there is love anywhere, it is in that tiny child towards its parent. But is that love disinterested? Certainly not! Is not the love of dear kind children to their father and mother true love, and very sweet love, too? Of course it is, and we delight in it—but is it disinterested? No, they love us because, for years, they have received kindnesses at our hands and they expect we shall treat them in the same fashion in the future.

And I think that you and I will never be able to talk about being disinterested in our love to God when the very breath we breathe is His gift! His daily mercy supplies us with food and we are clothed and cared for by His love. We are debtors—so deeply drowned in debt to Him that we must leave off talking about being disinterested! Why, we are always receiving something or other from our God and so we shall be till we die! We are beggars at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple, receiving daily alms

from Christ and, inasmuch as John, who was, perhaps, the noblest of all the saints, only got so far as to say, "We love Him, because He first loved us," I am quite satisfied if I can get as far as John did! And if you cannot say anymore than that, you may be well content if you can join with John and the rest of the disciples of Christ in saying, "We love Him, because He first loved us." Do not trouble yourself about the metaphysical distinctions which some try to draw! If you love Christ, it is a simple thing, though you may not be able to explain it to others, or even to yourself.

Further, *you must not always expect to display that love to the same extent.* We are sometimes very foolish about that matter. You have an intense affection for your child, but you are busy all day long in your shop or your warehouse and, perhaps, throughout the whole day not one thought of your boy has crossed your mind. Does anybody say that you do not love him? No. Your love was just as true as ever, but there were other things that claimed your attention. Possibly you are away on a long journey and, one evening, as you are sitting down to rest, there comes a letter from your child. And as you read it, you say, "Bless his little heart, I wish I had him on my knee at this moment." Something has come, you see, to awaken the love that was there all the while, for true love in our heart is often like the partridge or the pheasant in the shooting time. When somebody comes near, up they go! Yes, but they were there before—they would not have flown up if they had not been under cover. So, often, do the Graces of Christians hide themselves away for a time till the occasion for their display arises. And then, up they start, but they would not have started up if they had not been there!

We were singing, a few minutes ago—

***"If ever I loved You, my Jesus, 'tis now."***

Well, if you meant it, then, you will still love Him tomorrow when your hands are busily occupied at your toilsome task, or your brain is counting up the long rows of figures which make your eyes ache, or you have to wait upon so many customers that you get utterly weary. You may not be able to be always thinking about Divine subjects, but if your heart is right, your love to your Lord is there all the while. We cannot always tell, during the day, where the rooks live, for they fly all over the fields. But at night we see which way they go to where their nests are built in the old rookery. So, your thoughts may fly here and there during the day, but when you get home they come back to your blessed Lord and Master. That is where the home of your heart is, for when it gets the opportunity—when it is let go, as the Apostles were—it goes to its own company. So may it always be with you, Beloved!

But *our love to Christ*, though it is, in itself, a simplicity, *is based upon a great mystery.* The mystery is that He should ever have loved us at all. Can anybody tell us how it was that Christ ever began to love us? I sometimes fancy that I could explain why Jesus Christ loved some of you, but I cannot make out why He ever loved me—that is a matter which I must leave until I see Him. But I suppose it was because He would do it—because His own Sovereign Will so determined. Certainly, I cannot con-

ceive of any other cause. And if any of you ever think that you were saved because you were better than other people, or that you owe the first advances towards being saved to your own free will—well, I am glad if there are any such good people about, but I know that it was not so with me! And I think that the most of God's people will say, "No, no, no, no! If there is any difference between us and others, it is the Grace of God that has made it, so let Him have all the glory of it." There is a difference between some of us and others whom we know—and whoever made it ought to have the crown for it. If you made it yourself, Brother, you can claim the crown. But I know that you will not do that if you are really a lover of the Lord, but that you will cry with us, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Your name give Glory, for Your mercy, and for Your truth's sake." So I conclude that we are all agreed that the difference between us and our former selves, and our old companions, is one which Sovereign Grace has made—and that this is a great mystery—although our love in return for it is a simplicity.

**IV.** I can only give you just a few sentences upon our last point, which is this—OUR LOVE IS A FORCE SUSTAINED BY A HIGHER FORCE.

Our love is a force. If you truly love God, you feel it to be so. *It is a force that comforts and emboldens us.* Out of love to God, we feel that we can even dare the devil to do his worst against us. When love fills us to the fullest, it makes us courageous.

*Love to God also constrains us.* With the Apostle Paul, we cry, "For the love of Christ constrains us." Because of this love, we often do things which we would never have chosen to do of ourselves—and we leave undone the things we should once have liked to do. "Love is strong as death." And when once it gets full possession of a man, you know how completely it will carry him away—and love to God is indeed a mighty force of which, perhaps, we have not any of us proved the full power as yet.

But *it is a force which is kept up by a higher force*—namely, the love of God to us! What a force that is! Who can ever estimate its power? The love of God to men was so strong that when death and Hell strove against it, they were driven away like chaff before the wind! All our sins stood like a mighty mountain, barring our way to God, but His love leveled every hill and made a plain path by which we might approach His Mercy Seat. The love of God to His people is Omnipotent—there is no force in nature that can, for a single moment, be compared with it! It is irresistible, for the love of God conquered God, Himself, and brought Him down to earth in Human form—

***"First, in our mortal flesh, to serve.  
Then, in that flesh, to die!"***

"Found guilty of excess of love," our Savior was put to death that He might redeem us! He could lose His life *for us*, but He could not lose His love *to us*. O mighty force!

Then, do you not see, Brothers and Sisters, if there is such a force as this to draw upon, that the love of God, when it is shed abroad in our hearts, can give our love a greater force than it has ever had? With that



greater force there can be put into our lives an energy which we have never known! It is possible for us to rise to something far higher than our past poor little selves—we can do something more than we have ever dreamed of doing—and God can use us to perform nobler deeds of self-denial, to rise to greater heights of daring and to stoop to deeper depths of humiliation than we have ever yet ventured!

Strong Son of God—immortal love, nor pain, nor grief, nor bloody sweat, nor death, itself, could stop You and, by Your sacred passion, we implore You to let Your love drop into our souls till we, too, shall become strong, like Yourself, according to our measure, and shall be able to contend for You, to suffer for You, to live for You and to die for You, all the while giving this as the explanation of it all—“We love Him, because He first loved us”! God bless you, Beloved, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
1 JOHN 4.**

**Verse 1.** *Beloved, believe not every spirit.* A simpleton believes every word that he hears, but “the wise man’s eyes are in his head,” so he examines what he sees and hears, and does not blindly accept whatever may be told to him. So John says, “Believe not every spirit.”

**1-3.** *But try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know you the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God.* If there is any question raised about the Deity and the Humanity of Christ, do not listen any longer. When you taste the first morsel of meat from a joint and you find that it is tainted, there is no necessity for you to eat all the rest to see if it is good! And if any man questions the true Divinity and the real Humanity of Christ, have nothing to do with him, and give no heed to what he says, for he “is not of God.”

**3, 4.** *And this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof you have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. You are of God, little children.* You who are trusting in Jesus and are born again of His Spirit, though you may have only a small influence with others and are but as little children in your own esteem, yet, “you are of God.”

**4.** *And have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world.* There are two spirits—the Holy Spirit dwells in Believers—the evil spirit dwells in the ungodly. But the Holy Spirit is stronger than the evil spirit and will certainly overcome him.

**5.** *They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world hears them.* When people say to you, “Everybody says such-and-such,” that is not the reason why you should believe it! “All the men of advanced thought—all the scholars of the age, speak thus.” Yes, just so—“They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world hears them.”

**6.** *We are of God: he that knows God hears us; he that is not of God hears us not.* The Apostles spoke as men sent from God, for the Spirit of

God dwelt in them and they alone know the Truth of God who keep to that which has been revealed to us through His holy Apostles and Prophets.

**6, 7.** *Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error. Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and everyone that loves is born of God, and knows God.* From the abundance of love which was in John's heart, we might almost be startled at the very strong things that he writes against those who are in error, did we not remember that it is only a false charity which winks at error! He is the most loving man who has honesty enough to tell the truth and to speak out boldly against falsehood. It is very easy to pass through this world believing and saying that everybody is right. That is the way to make a soft path for your own feet and to show that you only have love to yourself. But sometimes to speak as John the Baptist spoke, or as Martin Luther spoke is the way to prove that you have true love to others.

**8-10.** *He that loves not knows not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* By nature we had no love to God—we were His enemies. We loved sin and we had ruined ourselves by it. But God took out of His own bosom the only Son He had, that He might make reconciliation for us and put away our sin. "Herein is love," says the Apostle, as though you could find it nowhere else as it is here. Here is the height and depth of immeasurable love. Here is love summed up, here is love's climax! "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

**11.** *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.* If such was His great kindness toward us that He denied Himself His own Son for our sake, ought we not to be kindly affectionate, one toward another?

**12.** *No man has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwells in us, and His love is perfected in us.* "God dwells in us" though we do not see Him. The nearest approach we can have to God is by this golden way of love.

**13, 14.** *Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.* John is speaking for himself and the rest of the Apostles, for they were eyewitnesses who had seen Christ and, therefore, could testify of Him.

**15, 16.** *Whoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwells in Him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God has to us. God is love and he that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him.* Is there anyone here who is full of anger, enmity, malice and envy? If so, let him know that God dwells not in the heart that harbors such abominations! Until these base passions are expelled and we feel love to all mankind for Christ's sake, God is not in us, for, "He that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him." The old method, according to Jew-

ish tradition, was, “You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.” But Christ’s new rule is, “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that you may be the children of your Father who is in Heaven.” This is the point in which our likeness to God will be seen, for He loved us when we were His enemies—and He expects His children to love their enemies! May He graciously teach us that sacred art!

**17.** *Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the Day of Judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world.* If we can be to the world, in our poor feeble measure, what God is to it—fountains of love, dispensaries of goodness—then we need not be afraid of the verdict even of the great Day of Judgment.

**18.** *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear.* If a man is conscious that he intends no harm to anyone, that he wishes good to all mankind, that he loves his God and loves his fellow men for God’s sake, what has he to fear? He becomes the bravest of the brave and often finds himself safe and unharmed in places where others dare not go.

**18-20.** *Because fear has torment. He that fears is not made perfect in love. We love Him, because He first loved us. If a man says, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar.* John! John! John! This is a very strong expression! Did we not always understand that John was full of affection? Yes, but he was not one of those oily, sugary sort of people who cannot speak the truth! There is no real love in that kind of man—he has only the mere pretense of love. John speaks sharply because he loves ardently. True love hates that which is unlovely. It is inevitable that a man who is full of love should feel intense indignation against that which is contrary to love. Hence the Apostle says, “If a man says, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar.”

**20, 21.** *For he that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment have we from Him, That he who loves God must love his brother also.* And the word, “brother,” is to be understood in the widest possible sense! We are all brothers, springing from the same common parent and, therefore, we ought to be philanthropists, lovers of man, loving even the guilty and the worthless, having an earnest desire to do good even to those who do us evil. If we have not yet reached that spirit, we had best begin our true Christian life at the foot of the Cross by trusting and loving Him who died there out of love for sinners—for only there can we learn, in the Person of Christ Jesus our Lord—this Divine philosophy of love to God and men!

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# LOVE'S GREAT REASON

## NO. 3398

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 19, 1914.

*DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON*  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 27, 1868.

*"We love Him because He first loved us."  
1 John 4:19.*

This is the point where all genuine Christians meet. They can all say, without exception, "We love Him." They do not agree in doctrine—it is a pity, but I suppose that as long as we are in this body, we shall, none of us, see all the Truths of God at once, and each man, seeing only a portion of the Truth, is most likely to think that what he does not see is not true—whereas it may be just as important as that which he is able to perceive. Well, well, amidst a thousand controversies between Calvinism and Arminianism, and all the forms that various systems have taken with regard to this, and that, and the other, still, all the elect of God, being quickened by Divine Grace, unite in this one declaration, "Whatever we do not believe, we do love Him." There are great diversities of experience, as well as of doctrine. Some are down in the gloom and some never seem to leave the cellars of the Lord's house—they have deep spiritual exercises, they doubt, they fear, they tremble and are afraid. Others climb up to the very roof of the Palace Beautiful and look abroad upon the fair scene around. Their feet are used to dancing with spiritual delight and their hearts sing sweetly before the Lord. Theirs is an experience of communion rather than of corruption. They have been with Jesus and their faces are made to shine with His company. Perhaps if I told my experience, it might differ from yours from an experimental point of view—in that we might stand wide as the poles asunder—but if we are in Christ, we can, each of us, say with equal truth and intensity, "We love Him." There we join hands! Whatever we have not felt, tasted, or known, we *do* love Him!

And you will notice, too, in this short expression that there is a force, a power in it, principally derived from the fact of the Personality of this love. "We love *Him*." You know, to love an, "it," is hard work. It seems contrary to the nature and all the instincts of love. Love always seeks a living person to grasp. But when it is put, "we love Him," it reads so naturally that we feel that we can love, through the force of the Divine Nature within us, with all the vitality and intensity of our godliness!

We can love Him—that blessed Son of God, that condescending One, that sacrificing, dying Lamb—that ascended, reigning, coming Savior, towards whom our hearts are drawn out. “We love Him.” Depend upon it, we must have more preaching about the Person of Christ and our hearts must assume more and more a trustfulness and affection towards Him. A merely doctrinal religion is pretty sure to degenerate into bigotry. An experimental religion will sooner or later sink into gloom. Understand what I mean. I am not speaking either against doctrine or experience. On the contrary, I would say all I could in favor of both—and they do enter into all men’s lives who live near to Christ—but still make either the one or the other the great master-thought, brood over either of them, contend for them, live for them, throw your whole force into them and you may degenerate! But when you live as unto Him. When He is the Truth that you believe in. When He is the Way that you tread. When He is the Life that you experience and when the doctrine and practice and experience all meet in Him as lines in a center—then you shall not be degraded, you shall not degenerate—but you shall rise! You shall go from glory to glory, being changed by the Presence of the Lord. “We love Him,” then.

But I must make one observation before I plunge into the text, namely, that in order to love this blessed Person, being a Person, it is clear to everyone who thinks, that there must, first of all, have been some *acquaintance* with Him and then some deep conviction concerning His excellency. We cannot love whom we do not know or esteem. If we know nothing about Christ, have no understanding of Him, have not in any degree occupied our minds with Him, we may talk about love to Him, but it will be mere talk. And after we have known Christ, by the reading or hearing of the Word, blessed to us by His Holy Spirit, it will be necessary for us to be brought into an admiring confidence in Him, believing that He is the altogether lovely, the chief among ten thousand, worthy of all our reliance, worthy of all our adoration and service! Then it is, when knowledge has produced faith, that faith gives birth to love!

I make this remark because I have sometimes noticed that in addressing Sunday school children, it is not uncommon to tell them that the way to be saved is to love Jesus, which is not true. The way to be saved for man, woman, or child is to trust Jesus for the pardon of sin—and then, trusting Jesus, love comes as a fruit! Love is by no means the root. Faith, alone, occupies that place. And I think I have heard young persons, too, talking always about the question, “Do I love the Lord or no?”—a very proper question, but it is not the first, but the second! The question that should always come first is, “Do I *trust* the Lord or no? Do I rest entirely in what He has done for me? Am I depending upon Him for eternal life and salvation?” If that first question is answered, the second will not long remain a matter of doubt! But if you begin with the second, and neglect the first, you may involve yourselves in very serious consequences. The great Gospel precept is not, “Love Christ,” but, “Believe in the Lord Jesus

Christ and you shall be saved”—not that love is less than faith, but that love, though, perhaps, first in point of excellence in some respects, comes second in point of *order*—and that faith is first to be looked to in the soul and then love will inevitably and necessarily follow.

But now to come to the text. I shall treat the first part of the sentence as *the great general confession of the whole Church*—“We love Him.” And the second first part of the sentence as *the most glorious reason for that love*—“because He first loved us.” I am not going to preach this evening, but only to stir you up about these points.

### I. THE GREAT GENERAL CONFESSION, “WE LOVE HIM.”

Now, if you are a child of God, you will say, or if you do not say it, it will be true, “We love Him.” As sure as ever you have passed from darkness to light, whether you are an Episcopalian, or a Presbyterian, or a Baptist, or whatever you may be, you will agree with this utterance of the one mouth of the one Church! We all, without exception, who have believed in Him, love Him.

But how do we love Him? We love Him, first, *not at all as we ought to love Him*. We confess that much with shame—and *not at all as we wish to love Him*. Our conception of what is due to Christ is, no doubt, very short of what is due to Him, but we fall short even of our own conception! I am afraid that many of us are like the children at school who have a good, fair copy set them at the top of the page, and the next line is written to imitate the copy, and the next imitates the imitation of the copy and as it gets to the bottom of the page—alas, poor writing—how unlike it is to the perfect copy at the top! So what is due to Christ stands at the top—what I believe about Christ in my best moments stands next. What I actually give to Christ comes next to that—and then far down the page, how badly do I write and how far do I fall short of what my love knows I ought to give Him!—

**“Yes, I love You and adore,  
Oh, for Grace to love You more!”**

Now, remember, we never make ourselves love Christ more by flogging ourselves for not loving Him more. We come to love those better whom we love by *knowing* them better, not by talking to ourselves about the duty of loving them, for love and duty, somehow or other, do not work well together. I mean that to talk of love being squeezed and pressed out by duty is not at all congruous. Love is like the generous first drops of the honeycomb—the virgin honey which drips spontaneously because the comb is full to bursting. Such is true, genuine love. If you want to love Christ more, *think* more of Him, think more of what you have received from Him. Study His Character more in the Word of God. Draw more often near to Him in prayer. Live more in holy fellowship with Him. These are the logs that shall make that oven blaze. This is the secret fuel that shall

make our soul on fire with love to Jesus! We do not love Him as we ought, nor as we wish.

But for all that, in the next place, *we do really love Him*. The devil tells us we do not, but when it comes to close quarters, we can turn to One who knows better than the devil, and we can say, "Lord, You know all things, You know that I love You." What a mercy it is that Jesus Christ does not believe our actions, for they very often say, "Jesus, we do not love You." But He reads our hearts, and our hearts still beat with this, "Oh, my God! In my very soul I do love Christ, and if it were possible I would never sin against Him! Oh, wretched man that I am, that I should live so contrary to my true life and that the thing that I would, I do not, and what I would not, that I do, for I find this law in my members, bringing me into captivity. For I have tasted of freedom and am, indeed, free, and will not be the servant of any, but will be the espoused one, the free espoused one of Christ Jesus my Lord." Yes, we do really love Him!

And we also, if we are saints at all, *love Him practically*. We delight and that is the true standard and gauge of the man—in that in which he delights. We delight in His service, in His company, in His friends. There is nothing—I feel sure some of us can say this without egotism—there is nothing that makes our soul feel so full of bliss as when we have opportunities of glorifying the name of Jesus Christ! And if we had the offer of all the kingdoms of the world, and but a grain of glory put into our hand that we might give to Christ—we would sooner have it than all the wealth of the Indies and all the royalties of all the empires! To glorify Christ is a lasting treasure which shall abide with us when the world is on a-blaze. To teach one little child the name of Jesus. To bring the tear into its little eyes about the dying Lord is better and sweeter work to us than statesmanship, itself, could be if it were dissociated from Him—

***"Is there a lamb among Your flock,  
I would disdain to feed?  
Is there a foe before whose face,  
I'd fear Your cause to plead?"***

Some of you are very busy preaching for my Lord and I know that when you are preaching, your main desire is that He may be extolled in your hearers' hearts. Do you not pine and sigh after this? Would you not give up all the graces of oratory, and talk in the most vulgar style, if necessary, if you could win one soul for Him? I know you would, my Brothers, for this is every true minister's desire! And you, too, who have been standing in the streets today, preaching at the corners, I hope—no, I feel it must be so with you if you are His at all—that you spoke out of love to His dear name and when you would have preferred to have been silent, it was love that unloosened that tongue of yours! Do you not wish you could speak better? Do you not wish you could command attention better? And it is all for Him, for His dear sake that you might paint Him better before the eyes of men! And you, dear teachers in the classes, you

who have been engaged in the Sunday school, if you are right at all, and I trust you are, you have been teaching because you wanted to make Him famous and to let Him see of the travail of His soul. And you who cannot come to the school, but have been praying for your children and talking with them, you who have been dropping your pence into the box and have each been trying to do your share of something for the Master—well, if His life is in your hearts and His blood is sprinkled on you, you can say that you desire to do all this as a practical evidence that you so love Him! All the works that you have done today, done in His Spirit, have been a repetition of this verse, “We love Him.”

Now, will you do the same in your ordinary lives, for in this I fear we sometimes fail? As a servant, live as one who loves Jesus! As a master, as a workman, as a merchant, as a man of retirement and property, still let this be the guide of your steps, the order of your life, the model by which you shape your conversation, “We love Him.” Let every breath prove it! Let every heaving of the lungs, every motion of the tongue and of the hand, prove the great and blessed reality of the fact that we love Him!

Brothers and Sisters, we can go a step further. I trust we love Jesus Christ not only really and practically, but we *love Him supremely*. That point has often vexed good hearts. They have said, “I cannot say that I love Jesus Christ better than father, or mother, or husband, or wife, or child.” No, you cannot say it, and there are a great many things we cannot say, which it were better not for us to say, which would be immodest for us to say, but they may be true for all that! They who are beautiful, talk not of their beauty, and those who love most are usually the most diffident about their love. Now, you cannot contrast loves, the one to another, as you can contrast five to eight and say which may be the greater. It is not an arithmetical problem, but I will put it to the proof with you in this way—if you had to lose that dear husband, or else lose Jesus Christ, what would you do? Why, it does not take two minutes to consider! You would not put them in the scale together for a single second! He stands out of sight, above all husbands and dearest wives! We cannot consider Him in such a relation as that. Or, put it thus—if you had to give up your hope of Heaven and your interest in Christ tonight, or to lose all that you have—what would you do? Why, I think you would not need to go into that little chamber to calculate. “No,” you say, “all that I have, why it is so little! It is a thing of care to me, and if it were not, if I had more, as I would be very glad to have that I might give up more, I would put it all away and say, ‘Lord, I have left all that I might follow You. But in leaving it, I did but gain a greater consciousness of Your love to me and a far greater and deeper enjoyment of that love.’”

Sometimes, however, some of you young people get an opportunity of showing which you love best—whether you do love Jesus better than all things else, or not. In the case of marriage, that test often comes. And



ah, how lamentable is the fact that many a young Sister, and many a Brother, too, will break through Christ's law, "Be you not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." I know this is a perplexing and solemn point, mark you. You do, in fact, give Christ up when you take that ungodly man! And you, young man, when you seek after that Christless woman, you deny your Lord and Master—as far as you can do it, you deny Him and give Him up for the sake of earthly pleasures! For such an act as that, your conscience may well prick you, and if you are, indeed, the Lord's servant, the rod will follow you, and in your household the Lord's hand will go out against you as long as you live. You there came to the test and could not stand it! But I hope there are many, many here who could say, "Yes, with everything that beauty could present to attract my heart, and all that wealth could lay at my feet to win my regard. With all that honor could put before me to dazzle my desires, I feel that I must obey my Lord and Master. I must be a chaste virgin unto Him, and give myself to Christ and to Him alone." We love Christ, Brothers and Sisters—I trust we do supremely!

"We love Him," also, *always*. The love of a Believer to Christ is not a thing of Sundays, nor of public meetings and Prayer Meetings. "We love Him"—it is the utterance of the man sitting at the desk penning a letter, or standing in the market selling his corn, or on the exchange, dealing in his shares and stocks. "We love Him." Our love is not a spasm. It is not a mere emotion, a thing of excitement. It does not, like the Salamander, live in the fire, but then die when the fire dies out. "We love Him," soberly, steadily, constantly, persistently, after a real and serious, and business-like spirit. "We love Him"—it is intertwined with our daily life! It is part of our inmost being! It flows in the blood, it breathes in the lungs, it is everywhere about us and we could as soon cease to exist as to cease to be lovers of Christ. I mean, of course, if we are, indeed, the saved sons of God. We love Him, then, constantly.

And yet another thing, dearly Beloved—*we love Him increasingly*. We do not always think so, but it is true, if we are right with God. We love Him more than ever. When we are first converted we think we shall love Jesus Christ a great deal more than we really prove to do, and much of that love, afterwards, departs, but it is only the superficial and half-fictitious love that vanishes.

Look! Mary is lighting the fire and as the straw or paper takes light at the bottom, what a great blaze there is! No sooner is the match put to it than the flames rush up the chimney. But come again in half an hour—why, there is not half the blaze, nor any crackling, nor noise! But is there less heat? Why, see, the coals have caught and the whole grate has become one glowing mass of fire! There is not half the blaze and the crackling, but there is more real, solid heat. And so is it with the growing Believer! At the first, there is much of excitement, much of novelty, but afterwards there is the steady, calm warmth of a glowing soul! I can only

say, Brothers and Sisters, that if we do not love Christ, growingly, we ought to do so. He is One that grows upon Believers. The more they know Him, the better they must love Him. The longer is their experience of His faithfulness, His fullness, His freeness, His goodness and greatness, the deeper, and firmer, and broader, and higher ought to be their love of Him! And I trust that it is so.

And another thing—we love Him *and we are not ashamed to love Him—and we are not ashamed to confess it and we do not blush to bear the shame which may come to us after the avowal.* Ah, perhaps I am addressing some here—I do not know where they are—who love my Lord, but they have never said so. Oh, you that are on the rock, in the secret places of the stair, come forth and let Him hear your voice, for that voice is sweet to Him, and your face is comely in His eyes. Oh, be not ashamed to confess that you love Him! There is nothing in it of which to be ashamed. It might make an angel proud to be permitted to love Christ and to declare His love. Ashamed of saying that I love Him? No! Let the earth hear it and let it rage! Let Hell hear it and let it boil over with fury! Yet is He such an One that as I cry, “I love Him,” I feel it to be the grandest, greatest statement that Divine Grace can enable us to make! Yes, never, in any circumstances make this a thing to be shy about, but avow it in your actions and declare it by your public profession, “We love Him!”

Brothers and Sisters, we bless God that the day is coming *when we shall love Him best of all.* This tenement of our body is falling away by degrees. These fetters of the flesh are rusting off. We shall soon be free and when the emancipated spirit shall see Him without a veil to hide Him, then shall our love to Him be perfected! Or if He comes before our death arrives, we shall see Him as He is and shall be like He—and then, too, shall our love rise to its transcendent maturity! It is a mercy that while other loves die like lilies, broken at the stalk, or fall like rosebuds when they burst and are full-blown, our love to Christ shall go on forever and forever increasing! And when Heaven and earth shall pass away, immortal love, eternal love, shall still abide! As long as God exists, the love of God shall be shed abroad in us and our hearts shall continually love Him in return.

I might pause here to say—if it is true that you love Him, dear Brothers and Sisters—love His people better, love His poor better, love His cause better, love His Truth better, love poor blood-bought sinners better, love the assemblies of His saints better, love His Word better, keep His commandments better, draw nearer to Him, aim to be more like He! May these practical Truths, though unspoken by me, yet be lived out in your conversation. But now for the second head. We can only afford a few minutes upon it, but it is a subject which might well occupy eternity in our meditation—

## II. THE GLORIOUS REASON FOR OUR LOVE.

"We love Him—because He first loved us." It is personal, again, you see, personal again. "We"—"Him"—two persons—and here is the reason for it—"because He first loved us"—persons again! We do not love Christ because the minister preached, or we received his doctrines, or because we can understand that such-and-such things are in our Lord's teachings. The reason for the love springs from Himself, as it goes out after Himself. It is because of something that He did and something that He said, prior to anything that He did. "We love Him because He *first* loved us." Love is the cause of love! He loves—we love. We love second and after Him because He loves first and before us. He *first*. Now, that is an experimental Truth of God. We know that He loved us before we loved Him. Just look back on your life before conversion. He loved you then. What made you love Him at all? It was because you were told that He loved you and you believed it. Law and terrors never made you love Him—they hardened you. It was a sense of blood-bought pardon that dissolved you and you saw the love of Christ in that pardon! And so, you could not help loving Him in return. This is no novelty—this is no mere theory—it is a great Truth of God! I pray you turn it over. Jesus loved you when you lived carelessly, when you neglected His Word, when the knee was unbent in prayer. Ah, He loved some of you when you were in the dancing saloon, when you were in the playhouse—yes, even when you were in the brothel! He loved you when you stood at Hell's gate and drank damnation at every draught! He loved you when you could not have been worse or further from Him than you were! Marvelous, O Christ, is Your strange love! What love is this that shone on us when we were the serfs and slaves of Satan, the dishwashers in the kitchen of iniquity? When nothing was too hard for some of us to do if we might but sin—and yet He loved us! And others there were of us who were as bad as this—proud, hypocritical, rotten-hearted professors who were boasting of our own self-righteousness, as proud as Lucifer, when there was not even a good thing in us—and yet we were loved with His great love, wherewith He loved us even when we were dead in trespass and in sins! Blessed be His name!

Now, that is a matter of experience, and it is also a matter of our firm belief and joyous confidence that Jesus loved us *before* that—in that tremendous day, the center of the two eternities, the end of one dispensation and the beginning of the next—that day in which the sun was darkened and yet for the first time began to shine, that day in which the earth did shake and Heaven was established—that day in which the dead arose and the thoughts of men were discovered—in that day when He, the appointed Substitute, went up to Calvary with all the sins of all His people upon Him, piled like a tremendous world—when, like another Atlas, He bore that overwhelming load upon His shoulders and afterwards heaved the whole infinite weight into forgetfulness! In that day He gave the supreme proof of His love to us. Look at those eyes red with weeping—see how He loves! Look at those cheeks defiled with the filthy spit

and bruised where the fists of the scoffers struck Him! See how He loved! Look to that dear head still scarred with the jagged wounds of the crown of thorns! Look to that matchless mouth and that tongue so parched. Look to the whole face, so marred as to be sorrow's dwelling place. Look to the whole body so utterly agonized, tortured and languishing. Look to the tender gracious hands—those crimson fountains tell the tale! Look at the feet—those scarlet rivulets declare how deep is His love! Yes, look to His side, sliced open by the soldier's spear—that precious stream of blood and water declares with double and indisputable force that Jesus loves! And we were not born then—we were not here! He loved us first.

But this grand old Book bids us go farther back than that day! He loved us when, in the Garden, our first parents spoiled us all and a promise was given that He should come to bruise the serpent's head. Yes, when yonder mountains were infants, when the gray old world and its ruins that speak of ages were as yet but newly formed, yes, and before that—before the sun's great flame was lit by the Divine torch, before stars began to whirl in their all but boundless revolutions—when time was not, when there was no day but the Ancient of Days and He dwelt alone, the Infinite Jehovah—even then, Jesus loved His people! His prescient eyes had seen them. His Sovereign choice had separated them. His distinguishing Grace had discriminated them and His eternal purpose had decreed them to be His forever and ever! He loved us first.

Well, if this is not a good reason for loving Him, where could such reason be found? He first loved us. Oh, cold hearts! Oh, slabs of marble! Oh, blocks of granite! Oh, icebergs! If we melt not now, when will we melt? He loved us first! That glorious thought like fire rushes through and through and through our very deepest nature and refines it, and sets us all on a glow. We *must* love Him because He *first* loved us!

Words fail me to speak about that love of His. It was a love so condescending that He stooped from Heaven to reach us, laid aside the royalties of Glory and took upon Himself the infirmities of earth! It was a love so lasting that the ages have never dimmed it, nor lessened it by so much as a single atom. It was a love so enduring that the ten thousand provocations of our unbelief and of our sin have never quenched it! Many waters could not quench it, neither could the floods drown it. It was a love so generous that Jesus gave us all! He gave us even His Father and His God, for did He not say, "My Father and your Father, My God and your God"? He gave us and He gives us this day Himself! He gives us communion with Himself. He gives us His blood to wash us. He gives us His righteousness to clothe us. He gives us His life for our example, His Throne for our rest at the last. Oh, generous Love, nothing do You withhold! You reserve nothing for Yourself! You give all to the beloved object. It was a love that was quite disinterested. Jesus had nothing to gain. The gain was ours. It was a love most self-sacrificing. His sufferings, how in-

tense! His griefs, how terrible! And all for His sweet love of us who were His enemies!

I would I had a seraph's tongue but for one moment—a tongue of flame with which to speak of my Master! As I cannot have this, I must be content to say that this ocean of Christ's love is one that is not to be measured. Plunge into it! Ask that you may be swallowed up in it! Pray that it may baptize you, that you may be lost in its overwhelming floods and that henceforth for you to live may be Christ and to die may be gain! Brothers and Sisters, the Lord's love is over you, and in you, and in the power of His quickening Spirit may you live through another week! And when we come together again, may our hearts retain some of the glow of the affection which I trust we have felt burning within our hearts tonight. To His name be praise! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
ROMANS 8:26-39.**

**Verse 26.** *Likewise the Spirit also helps our infirmities.* Our weaknesses, our insufficiencies, our inability—the Spirit of God comes to be a Helper to the children of God!

**26.** *For we know not what we should pray for as we ought.* We do not know our own infirmities. Perhaps we think that we are strong while we are exceedingly weak. The Spirit of God spies out the infirmities and puts the help where the strength is required. "We know not what we should pray for as we ought."

**26.** *But the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groans which cannot be uttered.* Those great things in prayer that we cannot ask for, which can never be expressed in human language, the Holy Spirit translates into groans. And so we are made to groan when we cannot speak—and those groans bring us blessings which words cannot compass. Have you been into your prayer chamber lately, pleading with God, and have you felt as if you could not pray? We often pray best when we think that we are praying worst! When there is the most anguish, sighing and crying in prayer, there is most of the very essence of prayer.

**27.** *And He who searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.* The Spirit knows what we need. God knows what the Spirit is asking for—and so our prayer makes the complete round and God sends us the blessing!

**28.** *And we know—We know—we are sure of it.*

**28.** *That all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.* We know this for we have proved it in our own experience. "All things work." There is nothing inactive in the Providence of God. "All things work together." There is a unity in Providence. God sets one thing over against another. Blessed be

the name of God, all things work together for good! The purpose of God to His people is good and only good—and though this or that might be injurious—yet, all put together, they work for good to those who love God. Come, my Soul, do you love God? Can you say tonight, “You know all things. You know that I love You”? All things work together for your good! Not only shall they work, but they are working—they work for your good now! And learn another sweet lesson. You are one of those whom God calls according to the sweet purpose of His electing love, for so it stands—they that love God are the same as those who are called according to His purpose! If you love God, God loves you. Your love to God, poor and faint though it is, is the assured token that He loves you with an everlasting love and, therefore, with bands of loving kindness has He drawn you.

**29.** *For whom He did foreknow.* That is, look upon with pleasure and delight from before all worlds. Whom He did love and call to be His own. Christ is *the Man*, the archetype. He is not to be a lone Man. It is not good for man to be alone, not even for *the Man*! And there are to be other men called by God's Grace who are to be made like He, who are to be His Brothers and Sisters. These, whom God foreknew, with fore-love He has ordained, determined and predestinated to be made like His Son.

**29-30.** *He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the First-Born among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called.* Not with the common call with which He calls other men, but with the special call! The hen, when she is about in the yard, keeps on calling, but when she wants her own little ones to come and run beneath her wings, then she has a special cluck for them and they know it—and they come and run and hide beneath her.

**30.** *And whom He called, them He also justified.* He regarded them as just. He made them just through the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ.

**30.** *And whom He justified, them He also glorified.* There is no break in this chain. The foreknown are predestinated, the predestinated are called, the called are justified, the justified are glorified. It is a wondrous chain! He that gets a hold of it anywhere has a hold of the whole of it, for this Scripture cannot be broken! If you are called by Grace into the fellowship of eternal life, you shall be justified and glorified!

**31.** *What shall we then say to these things?* I do not know what we can say. Wonders of Grace, mountains of mercy, mercy without limit—what shall we say to these things? This, at least we, can say—

**31.** *If God is for us, who can be against us?* A great many can be against us, but we reckon them as nothing at all if God is for us!

**32.** *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?* There can be no

end to the bounty of God after He has given His Son. He that has given the jewel of the universe, the very eye of Heaven—will He not give to us all else really needed—and give freely, too?

**33-35.** *Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes, rather who is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Dear children of God, feed on these words! They are like wafers made with honey, like cold waters from the Rock! Eat, drink and be filled. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"*

**35.** *Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Well, these things have been tried. As it is written, "For Your sake we are killed all the day long. We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." In Paul's day they were being hunted to the death by the thousands and tens of thousands. Were they separated from Christ's love? The enemy grew tired of persecution before the saints were wearied by it! You remember how, in the days of the Roman Empire, the Christians came to the judgment seat and confessed Christ even when they were not sought after—as if tempting their enemies to throw them to the lions, or put them to death! They were destitute of all fear and though Emperors were worse than brutes, these Christians defied them, outbraved them, vanquished them! They could not put down the Christians.*

**36-39.** *As it is written, For Your sake we are killed all the day long, we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor 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.*

—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.**

# FAITH AND REGENERATION

## NO. 979

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 5, 1871,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

***“Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot loves Him also who is begotten of Him.”***  
**1 John 5:1.**

FOR the preacher of the Gospel to make full proof of his ministry will be a task requiring much Divine teaching. Besides much care in the manner and spirit, he will need guidance as to his matter. One point of difficulty will be to preach the whole Truth in fair proportion, never exaggerating one doctrine, never enforcing one point at the expense of another, never keeping back any part, nor allowing it undue prominence. For practical result much will depend upon an equal balance and a right dividing of the word.

In one case this matter assumes immense importance because it affects vital Truths of God, and may lead to very serious results unless rightly attended to. I refer to the elementary facts involved in the work of Christ for us, and the operations of the Holy Spirit in us. Justification by faith is a matter about which there must be no obscurity, much less equivocation. And at the same time we must distinctly and determinately insist upon it that regeneration is necessary to every soul that shall enter Heaven.

“You must be born again” is as much a Truth as that clear Gospel statement, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” It is to be feared that some zealous Brethren have preached the doctrine of justification by faith not only so boldly and so plainly, but also so badly and so out of all connection with other Truth, that they have led men into presumptuous confidences and have appeared to lend their countenance to a species of Antinomianism very much to be dreaded.

From a dead, fruitless, inoperative faith we may earnestly pray, “Good Lord, deliver us,” yet may we be unconsciously fostering it. Moreover, to stand up and cry, “Believe, believe, believe,” without explaining what is to be believed. To lay the whole stress of salvation upon faith without explaining what salvation is, and showing that it means deliverance from the *power* as well as from the *guilt* of sin—may seem to a fervent revivalist to be the proper thing for the occasion—but those who have watched the result of such teaching have had grave cause to question whether as much hurt may not be done by it as good.

On the other hand, it is our sincere conviction that there is equal danger in the other extreme. We are most certain that a man must be made a new creature in Christ Jesus, or he is not saved. But some have seen so clearly the importance of this Truth that they are forever and always dwelling upon the great *change* of conversion—its fruits, and its consequences—and they hardly appear to remember the glad tidings that whoever *believes* on Christ Jesus has everlasting life.



Such teachers are apt to set up so high a standard of *experience*, and to be so exacting as to the marks and signs of a true born child of God, that they greatly discourage sincere seekers and fall into a species of legality from which we may again say, "Good Lord, deliver us." Never let us fail most plainly to testify to the undoubted Truth of God that true faith in Jesus Christ saves the soul! If we do not, we shall hold in legal bondage many who ought long ago to have enjoyed peace, and to have entered into the liberty of the children of God.

It may not be easy to keep these two things in their proper position, but we must aim at it if we would be wise builders. John did so in his teaching. If you turn to the third chapter of his Gospel it is very significant that while he records at length our Savior's exposition of the new birth to Nicodemus, yet in that very same chapter he gives us what is perhaps the most plain piece of Gospel in all the Scriptures—"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

So, too, in the chapter before us he insists upon a man's being born of God. He brings that up again and again, but evermore does he ascribe wondrous efficacy to faith. He mentions faith as the index of our being born again, faith as overcoming the world, faith as possessing the inward witness, faith as having eternal life—indeed, he seems as if he could not heap honor enough upon *believing*, while at the same time he insists upon the grave importance of the inward experience connected with the new birth.

Now, if such a difficulty occurs to the *preacher*, we need not wonder that it also arises with the hearer, and causes him much questioning. We have known many who, by hearing continually the most precious doctrine that belief in Christ Jesus is saving, have forgotten other Truths of God, and have concluded that they were saved when they were not. They have fancied they believed when as yet they were total strangers to the experience which always attends true faith. They have imagined faith to be the same thing as a presumptuous confidence of safety in Christ—not grounded upon the Divine Word when rightly understood—nor proved by any facts in their own souls.

Whenever self-examination has been proposed to them they have avoided it as an assault upon their assurance, and when they have been urged to try themselves by Gospel tests, they have defended their false peace by the notion that to raise a question about their certain salvation would be unbelief. Thus, I fear, the conceit of supposed faith in Christ has placed them in an almost hopeless position. To them the warnings and admonitions of the Gospel have been set aside by their fatal persuasion that it is needless to attend to them.

They think it only necessary to cling tenaciously to the belief that all has been done long ago for us by Christ Jesus, and that godly fear and careful walking are superfluities, if not actually an offense against the Gospel. On the other hand, we have known others who have received the doctrine of justification by faith as a part of their creed, and yet have not accepted it as a practical fact that the Believer is saved. They so much feel that they must be renewed in the spirit of their minds, that they are always looking within themselves for evidences, and are the subjects of perpetual doubts. Their natural and frequent song is—

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

These are a class of people to be much more pitied than condemned. Though I would be the very last to spread unbelief, I would be the very first to inculcate holy anxiety. It is one thing for a person to be careful to know that he is really in Christ, and quite another thing for him to doubt the *promises of Christ*—supposing that they are not really made to him. There is a tendency in some hearts to look too much within, and spend more time in studying their outward evidences and their inward feelings, than in learning the fullness, freeness, and all sufficiency of the Grace of God in Christ Jesus.

They too much obscure the grand evangelical Truth that the Believer’s acceptance with God is not in *himself*, but in Christ Jesus—that we are cleansed through the blood of Jesus, that we are clothed in the righteousness of Jesus—and are, in a word, “accepted in the Beloved.” I earnestly long that these two doctrines may be well balanced in your souls. Only the Holy Spirit can teach you this. This is a narrow path which the eagle’s eye has not seen, and the lion’s whelp has not trod. He whom the Holy Spirit shall instruct will not give way to presumption and despise the Spirit’s work within, neither will he forget that salvation is of the Lord Jesus Christ, “who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”

The text appears to me to blend these two truths in a very delightful harmony, and we will try to speak of them, God helping us. “He that believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.” We shall consider this morning, first of all, *the believing which is here intended*. And then, secondly, *how it is a sure proof of regeneration*. And then, thirdly, dwelling for awhile upon the closing part of the verse we shall *show how it becomes an argument for Christian love*—“Everyone that loves Him who begot loves Him also who is begotten of Him.”

**I. WHAT IS THE BELIEVING intended IN THE TEXT?** We are persuaded, first of all, that *the believing here intended is that which our Lord and His Apostles exhorted men to exercise*, and to which the promise of salvation is always appended in the Word of God. As, for instance that faith which Peter inculcated when he said to Cornelius, “To Him give all the Prophets witness, that through His name whoever believes in Him shall receive remission of sins.” And which our Lord commanded when He came into Galilee, saying to men, “Repent, and believe in the Gospel” (Mark 1:15). Certain persons have been obliged to admit that the Apostles commanded, exhorted, and besought men to believe, but they tell us that the kind of believing which the Apostles bade men exercise was not a *saving* faith.

Now God forbid we should ever, in our zeal to defend a favorite position, be driven to an assertion so monstrous! Can we imagine for a moment Apostles with burning zeal and ardor, inspired by the Spirit of God within them, going about the world exhorting men to exercise a faith which, after all, would not save them? To what purpose did they run on so fruitless an errand, so tantalizing to human need, so barren of results?

When our Lord bade His disciples go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, and added, "he that believes and is baptized shall be saved," the faith which was to be preached was evidently none other than a saving faith, and it is frivolous to say otherwise. I must confess that I felt shocked the other day to read in a certain sermon the remark that the words of Paul to the jailor, "were spoken in a conversation held at midnight under peculiar circumstances, and the Evangelist who wrote them was not present at the interview."

Why, had it been at high noon, and had the whole world been present, the Apostle could have given no fitter answer to the question, "What must I do to be saved?" than the one he did give, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved"! It is, I repeat, a mere frivolity, or worse, to say that the faith enjoined by the Apostles was a mere human faith which does not save, and that there is no certainty that such faith saves the soul. That cause must be desperate which calls for such a defense.

Furthermore, *the faith here intended is the duty of all men*. Read the text again—"Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." It can never be less than man's duty to believe the Truth of God. That Jesus is the Christ is the Truth, and it is the duty of every man to believe it. I understand here by "believing," confidence in Christ, and it is surely the duty of men to confide in that which is worthy of confidence. That Jesus Christ is worthy of the confidence of all men is certain—it is therefore the duty of men to confide in Him. Inasmuch as the Gospel command, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved," is addressed by Divine authority to every creature, it is the duty of every man to do so.

What says John—"This is His commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and our Lord Himself assures us, 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." I know there are some who will deny this, and deny it upon the grounds that man has not the spiritual ability to believe in Jesus, to which I reply that it is altogether an error to imagine that the measure of the sinner's moral *ability* is the measure of his *duty*.

There are many things which men ought to do which they have now lost the moral and spiritual—though not the physical power to do. A man ought to be chaste, but if he has been so long immoral that he cannot restrain his passions, he is not thereby free from the obligation! It is the duty of a debtor to pay his debts, but if he has been such a spendthrift that he has brought himself into hopeless poverty, he is not thereby exonerated from his debts! Every man ought to believe that which is true, but if his mind has become so depraved that he loves a lie and will not receive the Truth, is he thereby excused?

If the Law of God is to be lowered according to the moral condition of sinners, you would have a Law graduated upon a sliding-scale to suit the degrees of human sinfulness. In fact, the worst man would then be under the least Law, and become, consequently, the least guilty! God's requirements would be a variable quantity, and, in truth, we should be under no rule at all. The command of Christ stands good however bad men may be, and when He commands all men everywhere to repent, they are *bound* to repent, whether their sinfulness renders it impossible for them to be willing to do so or not.

In every case it is man's duty to do what God bids him. At the same time, *this faith, wherever it exists, is in every case, without exception, the gift of God and the work of the Holy Spirit.* Never yet did a man believe in Jesus with the faith here intended, except the Holy Spirit led him to do so. He has worked all our works in us, and our faith, too. Faith is too celestial a Grace to spring up in human nature till it is renewed—faith is in every Believer “the gift of God.” You will say to me, “Are these two things consistent?” I reply, “Certainly, for they are both true.” “How consistent?” you say. “How inconsistent?” say I, and you shall have as much difficulty to prove them inconsistent as I to prove them consistent.

Experience makes them consistent, if theory does not. Men are convicted of sin by the Holy Spirit. “Of sin,” says Christ, “because they believe not on Me.” Here is one of the Truths of God. But the selfsame hearts are taught by the same Spirit that faith is of the operation of God (Col. 2:12). Brethren, be willing to see both sides of the shield of Truth. Rise above the babyhood which cannot believe two doctrines until it sees the connecting link. Have you not two eyes? Must you put one of them out in order to see clearly? Is it impossible to you to use a spiritual binocular, and look at two views of Truth until they melt into one, and that one becomes more real and actual because it is made up of two?

Many men refuse to see more than one side of a doctrine and persistently fight against anything which is not on its very surface consistent with their own ideas. In the present case I do not find it difficult to believe faith to be at the same time the duty of man and the gift of God. And if others cannot accept the two Truths, I am not responsible for their rejection of them. My duty is performed when I have honestly borne witness to them. Up to now we have only been clearing the way. Let us advance.

The faith intended in the text *evidently rests upon a Person*—upon Jesus. “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.” It is not belief about a *doctrine*, nor an *opinion*, nor a *formula*, but belief concerning a *Person*. Translate the words, “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ,” and they stand thus—“Whoever believes that the Savior is the Anointed, is born of God.” By which is assuredly not meant, whoever *professes* to believe that He is so—for many do that whose lives prove that they are not regenerate—but, whoever believes it to be the fact, as truly and in very deed to receive Jesus as God has set Him forth and anointed Him, is a regenerate man.

What is meant by, “Jesus is the Christ,” or, Jesus is the Anointed? First, that He is the Prophet. Secondly, that He is the Priest. Thirdly, that He is the King of the Church, for in all these three senses He is the Anointed. Now, I may ask myself this question—Do I this day believe that Jesus is the great Prophet anointed of God to reveal to me the way of salvation? Do I accept Him as my Teacher, and admit that He has the Words of eternal life? If I so believe, I shall obey His Gospel and possess eternal life.

Do I accept Him to be, from now, on the Revealer of God to my soul, the Messenger of the Covenant, the Anointed Prophet of the Most High? But He is also a Priest. Now a priest is ordained from among men to offer sacrifices—do I firmly believe that Jesus was ordained to offer His one Sacrifice for the sins of mankind, by the offering of which sacrifice, once and for all, He has finished atonement and made complete expiation? Do I ac-

cept His Atonement as an atonement for *me*, and receive His death as an expiation upon which I rest my hope for forgiveness of all my transgressions?

Do I, in fact, believe Jesus to be the one sole, only propitiating Priest, and accept Him to act as Priest for me? If so, then I have in part believed that Jesus is the Anointed. But He is also King, and if I desire to know whether I possess the right faith, I further must ask myself, "Is Jesus, who is now exalted in Heaven, who once bled on the Cross, is He King to me? Is His Law my Law? Do I desire entirely to submit myself to His government? Do I hate what He hates, and love what He loves? Do I live to praise Him? Do I, as a loyal subject, desire to see His kingdom come and His will done on earth as it is in Heaven?"

My dear Friend, if you can heartily and earnestly say, "I accept Jesus Christ of Nazareth to be Prophet, Priest, and King to me because God has anointed Him to exercise those three offices. And in each of these three Characters I unfeignedly trust Him," then, dear Friend, you have the faith of God's elect, for it is written, "He that believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God."

Now we will go a little further. *True faith is reliance*. Look at any Greek lexicon you like and you will find that the word *pisteuein* does not merely mean to believe, but to *trust*, to confide in, to commit to, entrust with, and so forth. And the marrow of the meaning of faith is confidence in, reliance upon. Let me ask, then, every Professor in Christ here who professes to have faith—is your faith the faith of reliance? You give credit to certain statements—do you also place trust in the one glorious Person who alone can redeem? Have you confidence as well as credence? A creed will not save you, but reliance upon the Anointed Savior is the way of salvation!

Remember, I beseech you, that if you could be taught an orthodoxy unadulterated with error, and could learn a creed written by the pen of the Eternal God Himself, yet a mere notional faith, such as men exercise when they believe in the existence of men in the moon, or nebulae in space, could not save your soul! Of this we are sure, because we see around us many who have such a faith, and yet evidently are not children of God. Moreover, true faith is not a flattering presumption, by which a man says, "I believe I am saved, for I have such delightful feelings. I have had a marvelous dream, I have felt very wonderful sensations."

All such confidence may be nothing but sheer assumption. Presumption, instead of being *faith*, is the reverse of faith—instead of being the substance of things hoped for, it is a mere mirage. Faith is as correct as reason, and if her arguments are considered, she is as secure in her conclusions as though she drew them by mathematical rules. Beware, I pray you, of a faith which has no basis but your own fancy!

Faith, again, is not the assurance that Jesus died for me. I sometimes feel myself a little at variance with that verse—

***"Just as I am: without one plea  
But that Your blood was shed for me."***

It is eminently suitable for a child of God, but I am not so sure as to its being the precise way for putting the matter for a sinner. I do not believe in Jesus because I am persuaded that His blood was shed for me, but rather I discover that His blood was shed especially for me from the fact that I have been led to believe in HIM. I fear there are thousands of people

who believe that Jesus died for them, who are not born of God, but rather are hardened in their sin by their groundless hopes of mercy. There is no particular efficacy in a man's assuming that Christ has died for him. For it is a mere truism, if it is true, as some teach, that Jesus died for everybody.

On such a theory every believer in a universal atonement would necessarily be born of God, which is very far from being the case. When the Holy Spirit leads us to rely upon the Lord Jesus, then the Truth that God gave His Only-Begotten Son that whoever believes in Him might be saved, is opened up to our souls. And then we see that for us who are Believers Jesus died with the special intent that we should be saved. For the Holy Spirit to assure us that Jesus shed His blood for us in particular is one thing, but merely to conclude that Jesus died for us on the notion that He died for everybody is as far as the east is from the west from being real faith in Jesus Christ.

Neither is it faith for me to be confident that I am saved, for it may be the case that I am not saved, and it can never be faith to believe a lie. Many have concluded rashly that they were saved when they were still in the gall of bitterness. That was not the exhibition of confidence in Christ but the exhibition of a base presumption destructive to the last degree. To come back to where we started from, faith, in a word, is reliance upon Jesus Christ. Whether the Redeemer died in special and particular for me or not, is not the question to be raised in the first place. I find that He came into the world to save *sinners*—under that general character I come to Him.

I find that whoever trusts Him shall be saved, I therefore trust Him, and having done so, I learn from His Word that I am the object of His special love, and that I am born of God. In my first coming to Jesus I can have no knowledge of any personal and special interest in the blood of Jesus. But since it is written, "God has set Him forth to be a Propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world," I come and trust myself to that Propitiation—sink or swim I cast myself on the Savior.

Great Son of God, You have lived and died! You have bled and suffered, and made atonement for sin for all such as trust You! And, by Your Grace, I trust you, I lean upon You, I cast myself upon You. Now, whoever has such faith as this is born of God. He has true faith which is proof positive of the new birth. Judge yourselves, therefore, whether you have this faith or not.

Let me tarry just one minute longer over this. The true faith is set forth in Scripture by figures, and one or two of these we will mention. It was an eminent type of faith when the Hebrew father in Egypt slew the lamb and caught the warm blood in the basin. He then took a bunch of hyssop and dipped it in the blood and marked the two posts of his door. Then he struck a red mark across the lintel. That smearing of the door represented *faith*. The deliverance was worked by the blood. And the blood availed through the householder's own personally striking it upon his door.

Faith does that. It takes of the things of Christ, makes them its own, sprinkles the soul, as it were, with the precious blood, accepts the way of mercy by which the Lord passes over us and exempts His people from destruction. Faith was shown to the Jews in another way. When a beast was

offered in sacrifice for sin, the priest, and sometimes the representatives of the tribes, or the individual laid their hands upon the victim in token that they desired their sins to be transferred to it, that it might suffer for them as a type of the Great Substitute. Faith lays her hands on Jesus, desiring to receive the benefit of His substitutionary death.

A still more remarkable representation of faith was that of the healing look of the serpent-bitten Israelites. On the great standard in the midst of the camp, Moses lifted up a serpent of brass! High overhead above all the tents this serpent gleamed in the sun, and whomever, of all the dying host, would but look to it was made to live. Looking was a very simple act, but it indicated that the person was obedient to God's command. He looked as he was bid, and the virtue of healing came from the bronze serpent through a look.

Such is faith. It is the simplest thing in the world, but it indicates a great deal more than is seen upon its surface—

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

To believe in Jesus is but to glance the eye of faith to Him, to trust Him with your soul. That poor woman who came behind our Savior in the crowd offers us another figure of what faith is. She said, “If I may but touch the hem of His garment I shall be made whole.” Taking no medicines, making no profession, and performing no ceremonies, she simply touched the hem of the Savior's robe, and she was healed at once!

O Soul, if you can get into contact with Christ by simply trusting Him, though that trust is ever so feeble you have the faith of God's elect! You have the faith which is in every case the token of the new birth.

**II.** We must now pass on to show that WHEREVER IT EXISTS IT IS THE PROOF OF REGENERATION. There never was a grain of such faith as this in this world, except in a *regenerate* soul, and there never will be while the world stands. It is so according to the text, and if we had no other testimony, this one passage would be quite enough to prove it. “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.”

“Ah,” I hear you say, poor Soul, “the new birth is a great mystery. I do not understand it. I am afraid I am not a partaker in it.” You are born again if you believe that Jesus is the Christ, if you are relying upon a crucified Savior you are assuredly begotten again unto a lively hope. Mystery or no mystery, the new birth is yours if you are a Believer. Have you ever noticed that the greatest mysteries in the world reveal themselves by the simplest indications? The simplicity and apparent easiness of faith is no reason why I should not regard its existence as an infallible indication of the new birth within.

How do we know that the new-born child lives except by its cry? Yet a child's cry—what a simple sound it is! How readily could it be imitated! A clever workman could, with pipes and strings, easily deceive us. Yet was there ever a child's cry in the world but what it indicated the mysteries of breathing, heart-beating, blood-flowing, and all the other wonders which come with life itself? Do you see yonder person just drawn out of the river? Does she live? Yes, life is there. Why? Because the lungs still heave. But does it not seem an easy thing to make lungs heave? A pair of bellows blown into them—might not that produce the motion?

Ah, yes, the thing is easily imitated after a sort. But no lungs heave except where life is, no blood is pumped to and from the heart except where

life is. Take another illustration. Go into a telegraph office at any time and you will see certain needles moving right and left with unceasing clicks. Electricity is a great mystery, and you cannot see or feel it. But the operator tells you that the electric current is moving along the wire. How does he know? "I know it by the needle." How is that? I could move your needles easily. "Yes, but do you not see the needle has made two motions to the right, one to the left, and two to the right again? I am reading a message."

"But," you say, "I can see nothing in it. I could imitate that clicking and moving very easily." Yet he who is taught the art sees before him in those needles not only electric action, but a deeper mystery still. He perceives that a mind is directing the invisible force, and speaking by means of it. Not to all, but to the initiated is it given to see the mystery hidden within the simplicity. The Believer sees in the faith, which is simple as the movements of the needle, an indication that God is operating on the human mind, and the spiritual man discerns that there is an inner secret intimated which the carnal eye cannot decipher.

To believe in Jesus is a better indicator of regeneration than anything else, and in no case did it ever mislead. Faith in the living God and His Son Jesus Christ is always the result of the new birth, and can never exist except in the regenerate. Whoever has faith is a saved man. I beg you to follow me a little in this argument. A certain Divine has lately said, "A man's act of believing is not the same as his being saved—it is only in the *direction* of being saved." This is tantamount to a denial that every Believer in Christ is at once saved. And the inference is that a man may not conclude that he is saved because he believes in Jesus.

Now, observe how opposed this is to Scripture. It is certain from the Word of God that *the man who believes in Jesus is not condemned*. Read John 3:18, and many other passages. "He that believes on Him is not condemned." Now is not every *unregenerate* man condemned? Is not a man who is *not* condemned a saved man? When you are sure, on Divine authority that the Believer is not condemned, how in the name of everything that is rational can you deny that the Believer is saved? If he is not condemned, what has he to fear? Will he not rightly conclude that being justified by faith he has peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ?

Note, secondly, that faith in the fourth verse of the chapter before us is said to "*overcome the world*." "This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith." What, then? Does faith overcome the world in persons who are not saved? How can this be possible when the Apostle says that that which overcomes the world is born of God? Read the fourth verse—"Whatever is born of God overcomes the world"—and FAITH overcomes the world. Therefore the man who has faith is regenerate. And what does that mean but that he is saved, and that his faith is the instrument by which he achieves victories?

Further, faith accepts the witness of God, and more—he that has faith *has the witness in himself* to the Truth of God. Read the tenth verse of the chapter—"He that believes on the Son of God has the witness in himself." It is not said, "He that *does* this, or *feels* that," but, "He that BELIEVES has the witness in himself." His heart bears witness to the Truth of God. Has any unsaved man an experimental witness within? Will you tell me that a man's inner experience bears witness to God's Gospel and yet the



man is in a lost state, or only hopeful of being saved ultimately? No, Sir, it is impossible!

He that believes has that chance worked in him which enables him by his own consciousness to confirm the witness of God, and such a man must be in a state of salvation. It is not possible to say of him that he is an unsaved man. Again, note in this chapter, at the thirteenth verse, that wherever there is faith there is eternal life. So run the words, "these things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life." Our Lord Himself, and His Apostles, in several places have declared, "He that believes on Him has everlasting life."

Do not tell me that a sinner who believes in Jesus is to make an advance before he can say he is saved. Do not tell me that a man who trusts Christ is only on the way to salvation, and must wait until he has used the ordinances, and has grown in Grace before he may know that he is saved. No! the moment that the sinner's trust is placed on the finished work of Jesus he is saved. Heaven and earth may pass away, but that man shall never perish!

If only one second ago I trusted the Savior I am safe, just as safe as the men who has believed in Jesus fifty years and who has all that while walked uprightly. I do not say that the new-born convert is as happy, nor as useful, nor as holy, nor as ripe for Heaven. But I do say that the words, "he that believes on Him has everlasting life," is a Truth of God with general bearings, and relates as much to the babe in faith as it does to the man who has attained to fullness of stature in Jesus Christ. As if this chapter were written on purpose to meet the gross error that faith does not bring immediate salvation, it extols faith again and again! Yes, and I may add our Lord Himself crowns faith, because faith never wears the crown, but brings all the glory to the dear Redeemer.

Now, let me say a word or two in reply to certain questions. But must not a man repent as well as believe? Reply—No man ever believed but what he repented at the same time. Faith and repentance go together. They must. If I trust Christ to save me from sin, I am at the same time repenting of sin, and my mind is changed in relation to sin, and everything else that has to do with its state. All the fruits meet for repentance are contained in faith itself. You shall never find that a man who trusts Christ remains an enemy to God, or a lover of sin. The fact that he accepts the Atonement provided is proof positive that he loathes sin, and that his mind is thoroughly changed in reference to God.

Moreover, as to all the Graces which are produced in the Christian afterwards, are they not all to be found in embryo in faith? "Only believe, and you shall be saved," is the cry which many sneer at, and others misunderstand. But do you know what, "only believe," means? Do you know what a world of meaning lies in those two words? Read that famous Chapter 11 in Hebrews and see what faith has done and is still able to do, and you will see that it is no trifle! Wherever there is faith in a man let it but develop itself and there will be a purging of himself from sin, a separating himself from the world, a conflict with evil, and a warring for the glory of Christ which nothing else could produce.

Faith is, in itself, one of the noblest of Graces. It is the compendium of all virtues. And as sometimes there will lie within one single ear enough

seed to make a whole garden fertile, so, within that one word, "faith," there lies enough of virtue to make earth blessed—enough of Grace, if the Spirit makes it grow—to turn the fallen into the perfect. Faith is not the easy and light thing men think.

Far are we from ascribing salvation to the profession of a mere creed—we loathe the idea! Neither do we ascribe salvation to a fond persuasion, but we do ascribe salvation to Jesus Christ, and the obtaining of it to that simple, child-like confidence which lovingly casts itself into the arms of Him who gave both His hands to the nails and suffered to the death for the sins of His people. He who believes, then, is saved—rest assured of that. "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God."

**III.** Now what flows out of this? Love is the legitimate issue! We must love, if we are begotten of God, all those who are also born of God. It would be an insult to you if I were to prove that a brother should love his brother. Does not Nature, herself, teach us that? Those, then, who are born of God ought to love all those of the same household. And who are they? Why, all those who have believed that Jesus is the Christ, and are resting their hopes where we rest ours, namely, on Christ the Anointed One of God. We are to love all such. We are to do this because we are of the family. We believe, and therefore we have been begotten of God.

Let us act as those who are of the Divine family. Let us count it our privilege that we are received into the household, and rejoice to perform the lovely obligations of our high position. We look around us and see many others who have believed in Jesus Christ. Let us love them because they are of the same kindred. "But they are some of them unsound in doctrine, they make gross mistakes as to the Master's ordinances." We are not to love their *faults*, neither ought we to expect them to love *ours*. But we are, nevertheless, to love their persons, for, "whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God."

And therefore he is one of the family, and as we love the Father who begot, we are to love all those that are begotten of Him. First, I love God, and therefore I desire to promote God's Truth and to keep God's Gospel free from taint. But then I am to love all those whom God has begotten, despite the infirmities and errors I see in them, being also, myself, compassed about with infirmities. Life is the reason for love. The common life which is indicated by the common faith in the dear Redeemer is to bind us to each other. I must confess, though I would pay every deference to every Brother's conscientious judgment, I do not know how I could bring my soul, as a child of God, to refuse any man communion at my Master's Table who believed that Jesus is the Christ.

I have proof in His doing so. If He is sincere (and I can only judge of that by his life), then he is born of God. And has not every child a right to come to the Father's Table? I know in the olden times parents used to make children go without their meals as a punishment, but everybody tells us now that this is cruel and unwise, for it injures the child's constitution to deprive it of necessary food. There are rods in the Lord's House, and there is no need to keep disobedient children away from the Supper.

Let them come to the Lord's Table, and eat and drink with the Lord Jesus and with all His saints in the hope that when their constitution bestows stronger they will throw out the disease which now they labor under, and come to be obedient to the whole Gospel, which says, "He that

believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Let me beg the members of this Church to exhibit mutual love to one another. Are there any feeble among you? Comfort them. Are there any who want instruction? Bring your knowledge to their help. Are there any in distress? Assist them. Are they backsliding? Restore them.

“Little children, love one another,” is the rule of Christ’s family—may we, by His Grace, observe it. May the love of God which has been steeped abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us, reveal itself by our love to all the saints. And, remember, other sheep He has which are not yet of His fold—they, also, He must bring in. Let us love those who are yet to be brought in, and lovingly go forth at once to seek them. In whatever other form of service God has given us, let us with loving eyes look after our prodigal Brothers, and who knows, we may bring into the family this very day some for whom there will be joy in the presence of the angels of God because the lost one has been found! God bless and comfort you, for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

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# THE VICTORY OF FAITH

## NO. 14

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

***“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world: and this is  
the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.”***

***1 John 5:4***

THE Epistles of John are perfumed with love. The word is continually occurring while the Spirit enters into every sentence. Each letter is thoroughly soaked and impregnated with this heavenly honey. If he speaks of God, His name must be Love. Are the Brethren mentioned, he loves them. And even of the world itself, he writes, “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.” From the opening to the conclusion, love is the manner, love the matter, love the motive and love the aim! We stand, therefore, not a little astonished, to find such martial words in so peaceful a writing, for I hear a sound of war. It is not the voice of love, surely, that says, “He that is born of God overcomes the world.” Lo, here are strife and battle! The word “overcomes” seems to have in it something of the sword and warfare—of strife and contention—of agony and wrestling. So unlike the love which is smooth and gentle, which has no harsh words within its lips—whose mouth is lined with velvet, whose words are softer than butter—whose utterances are more easily flowing than oil. Here we have war—war to the knife, for I read, “Whatever is born of God overcomes the world.” Strife until death—battle throughout life—fighting with a certainty of victory. How is it that the same Gospel which always speaks of peace, here proclaims a warfare? How can it be? Simply because there is something in the world which is antagonistic to love. There are principles abroad which cannot bear light and, therefore, before light can come, it must chase the darkness. Before summer reigns, you know, it has to do battle with old winter and to send it howling away in the winds of March—then shedding its tears in April showers. So also, before any great or good thing can have the mastery of this world, it must do battle for it! Satan has seated himself on his blood-stained throne and who shall take him down, except by force? Darkness broods over the nations. Nor can the sun establish his empire of light until he has pierced night with the arrow sunbeams and made it flee away. Hence we read in the Bible that Christ did not come to send peace on earth but a sword—He came to set “the father against the son and the son against the father. The mother against the daughter and the daughter against the mother.

The mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.” Not intentionally, mind you, but as a means to an end—because there must always be a struggle before truth and righteousness can reign! Alas, for that earth is the battlefield where good must combat with evil. Angels look on and hold their breath, burning to mingle in the conflict, but the troops of the Captain of Salvation may be none but the soldiers of the Cross. And that slender band must fight alone and yet shall triumph gloriously! Enough shall they be for conquest and the slogan of their standard is ENOUGH. Enough by the arm of the helping Trinity.

As God shall help me, I shall speak to you of three things to be found in the text. First, the text speaks of a *great victory*—it says, “This is the victory.” Secondly, it mentions a *great birth*—“Whatever is *born* of God.” And, thirdly, it extols a *great Grace*, whereby we overcome the world, “even our faith.”

**I.** First, the text speaks of a GREAT VICTORY—the victory of victories—the greatest of all. We know there have been great battles where nations have met in strife and one has overcome the other. But who has read of a victory that overcame the world? Some will say that Alexander was its conqueror. But I answer, no. He was himself the vanquished man, even when all things were in his possession. He fought for the world and won it—and then mark how it mastered its master, conquered its conqueror—and lashed the monarch who had been its scourge. See the royal youth weeping and stretching out his hands with idiotic cries, for another world which he might ravage. He seemed, in outward show, to have overcome old Earth—but, in reality, within his inmost soul the earth had conquered him! It had overwhelmed him, had wrapped him in the dream of ambition, girdled him with the chains of covetousness, so that when he had all, he was still dissatisfied. And like a poor slave, he was dragged on at the chariot wheels of the world, crying, moaning, lamenting, because he could not win another. Who is the man that ever overcame the world? Let him stand forward—he is a Triton among the minnows. He shall outshine Caesar. He shall outmatch even our own lately departed Wellington, if he can say he has overcome the world! It is so rare a thing, a victory so prodigious, a conquest so tremendous, that he who can claim to have won it may walk among his fellows, like Saul, with head and shoulders far above them! He shall command our respect. His very presence shall awe us into reverence. His speech shall persuade us to obedience and, yielding honor to whom honor is due, we’ll say when we listen to his voice, “’Tis even as if an angel shook his wings!”

I shall now attempt to expand the idea I have suggested, showing you in what varied senses the Christian overcomes the world. A tough battle, Sirs, I guarantee you—not one which carpet knights might win—no easy

skirmish that he might win, who dashed to battle on some sunshiny day, looked at the host, then turned his courser's rein and daintily dismounted at the door of his silken tent. Not one which he shall gain, who, but a raw recruit today, puts on his regimentals and foolishly imagines that one week of service will ensure a crown of glory! No, Sirs, it is a life-long war—a fight needing the power of all the muscles—and a strong heart. It is a contest which shall need all our strength, if we are to be triumphant. And if we do come off more than conquerors, it shall be said of us, as Hart said of Jesus Christ—"He had strength enough and none to spare." A battle at which the stoutest heart might quail. A fight at which the brave might shake, if he did not remember that the Lord is on his side and, therefore, whom shall he fear? Jesus Christ is the strength of his life—of whom shall he be afraid? This fight with the world is not one of main force, or physical might—if it were, we might soon win it. But it is all the more dangerous from the fact that it is a strife of *mind*, a contest of heart, a struggle of the spirit, a strife of the soul. When we overcome the world in one fashion, we have not half done our work. For the world is a Proteus, changing its shape continually. Like the chameleon, it has all the colors of the rainbow and when you have worsted the world in one shape, it will attack you in another! Until you die, you will always have fresh appearances of the world to wrestle with. Let me just mention some of the forms in which the Christian overcomes the world.

**1.** He overcomes the world when it sets up itself as a legislator, wishing to teach him customs. You know the world has its old massive law book of customs and he who does not choose to go according to the fashion of the world is under the ban of society. Most of you do just as everybody else does and that is enough for you. If you see So-and-So do a dishonest thing in business, it is sufficient for you that everybody does it. If you see that the majority of mankind have certain habits—you succumb, you yield. You think, I suppose, that to march to Hell in crowds, will help to diminish the fierce heat of the burning of the bottomless pit, instead of remembering that the more fire wood the fiercer will be the flame! Men usually swim with the stream like a dead fish. It is only the living fish that goes against it. It is only the Christian who despises customs, who does not care for conventionalisms, who only asks himself the question, "Is it right or is it wrong? If it is right, I will be singular. If there is not another man in this world who will do it, I will do it. Should a universal hiss go up to Heaven, I will still do it. Should the very stones of earth fly up and stone me to death, by God's grace, I will still do it. Though they bind me to the stake, yet I must do it. I will be singularly right.

"If the multitude will not follow me, I will go without them. I will be glad if they will all go and do right as well, but if not, I will despise their

customs. I care not what others do. I shall not be weighed by other men. To my own Master I stand or fall. Thus I conquer and overcome the customs of the world.” Fair world! She dresses herself in ermine, she puts on the robes of a judge and she solemnly tells you, “Man, you are wrong. Look at your fellows, see what they do? Behold my laws. For hundreds of years have not men done so? Who are you to set yourself up against *me*?” And she pulls out her worm-eaten law book and turning over the musty pages, says, “See, here is an act passed in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar and here is another law enacted in the days of Pharaoh. These must be right, because antiquity has enrolled them among her standard authorities. Do you mean to set yourself up and stand against the opinions of the multitude?” Yes, we do! We take the law book of the world and we burn it, as the Ephesians did their magic rolls. We take her deeds and make them into waste paper. We rend her proclamation from the walls. We care not what others do—custom to us is a cobweb. We count it no folly to be singular. When to be singular is to be right, we count it the proudest wisdom. We overcome the world. We trample on her customs. We walk as a distinct people, a separate race, a chosen generation, a peculiar people. The Christian behaves in his dealings not as the laughing infidel insinuates, when he sneeringly describes Mawworm, as saying, “Boy, have you sanded the sugar?” “Yes, Sir.” “Have you put the sloe leaves in the tea?” “Yes, Sir.” “Have you put red lead in the pepper?” “Yes, Sir.” “Then come to prayers.” Christians do not do so! They say, “We know better, we cannot conform to the customs of the world. If we pray, we will also act, or else we are hypocrites, confounded hypocrites. If we go to the House of God and profess to love Him, we love Him everywhere! We take our religion with us into the shop, behind the counter, into our offices—we must have it everywhere, or else God knows it is not religion at all.” You must stand up, then, against the customs of mankind. Albeit, this may be a three-million peopled city, but you are to come out and be separate if you would overcome the world.

**2.** We rebel against the world’s customs. And if we do so, what is the conduct of our enemy? She changes her aspect. “That man is a heretic. That man is a fanatic. He is a cant, he is a hypocrite,” says the world, directly. She grasps her sword, she puts frowns upon her brow, she scowls like a demon, she girds tempests round about her and she says, “The man dares defy my government. He will not do as others do. Now I will persecute him. Slander! Come from the depths of Hell and hiss at him. Envy! Sharpen up your tooth and bite him.” She fetches up all false things and she persecutes the man if she can. She does it with the hand, if not by the tongue. She afflicts him wherever he is. She tries to ruin him in business. Or, if he stands forth as the champion of the truth, why then she laughs and mocks and scorns. She lets no stone be unturned

whereby she may injure him. What is then the behavior of the Lord's warrior when he sees the world take up arms against him and when he sees all earth, like an army, coming to chase him and utterly destroy him? Does he yield? Does he yield? Does he bend? Does he cringe? Oh, no! Like Luther, he writes "*Cedo nulli*" on his banner—"I yield to none." And he goes to war against the world, if the world goes to war against him—

***"Let earth be all in arms abroad,  
He dwells in perfect peace."***

Ah, some of you, if you had a word spoken against you, would at once give up what religion you have! But the true-born child of God cares little for man's opinion. "Ah," he says, "let my bread fail me, let me be doomed to wander penniless the wide world over. Yes, let me die—each drop of blood within these veins belongs to Christ and I am ready to shed it for His name's sake." He counts all things but loss, that he may win Christ—that he may be found in Him. And when the world's thunders roars, he smiles at the uproar, while he hums his pleasant tune—

***"Jerusalem my happy home,  
Name ever dear to me!  
When shall my labors have an end,  
In joy and peace and thee?"***

When the world's sword comes out, he looks at it. "Ah," he says, "just as the lightning leaps from its thunder lair, splits the clouds and affrights the stars but is powerless against the rock-covered mountaineer who smiles at its grandeur, so now the world cannot hurt me. In the time of trouble my Father hides me in His pavilion. In the secret of His tabernacle does He hide me and set me up upon a rock." Thus, again, we conquer the world by not caring for its frowns!

3. "Well," says the world, "I will try another style," and this, believe me, is the most dangerous of all. A smiling world is worse than a frowning one. She says, "I cannot smite the man low with my repeated blows, so I will take off my mailed glove and show him a fair white hand. I'll bid him kiss it. I will tell him I love him—I will flatter him, I will speak good words to him." John Bunyan well describes this Madam Bubble. She has a winning way with her. She drops a smile at the end of each of her sentences. She talks much of fair things and tries to win and woo. Oh, believe me, Christians are not so much in danger when they are persecuted as when they are admired! When we stand upon the pinnacle of popularity we may well tremble and fear. It is not when we are hissed at and hooted that we have any cause to be alarmed. It is when we are dandled on the lap of fortune and nursed upon the knees of the people. It is when all men speak well of us that woe is unto us. It is not in the cold wintry wind that I take off my coat of righteousness and throw it away. It is when the sun comes, when the weather is warm and the air balmy that I



unguardedly strip off my robes and become naked. Good God! How many a man has been made naked by the love of this world! The world has flattered and applauded him. He has drunk the flattery. It was an intoxicating draught. He has staggered, he has reeled, he has sinned, he has lost his reputation. And as a comet that dashed across the sky wanders far into space and is lost in darkness, so does he. Great as he was, he falls. Mighty as he was, he wanders and is lost. But the true child of God is never so. He is as safe when the world smiles, as when it frowns. He cares as little for her praise as for her dispraise. If he is praised and it is true, he says, "My deeds deserves praise, but I refer all honor to my God." Great souls know what they merit from their critic. To them it is nothing more than the giving of their daily income. Some men cannot live without a large amount of praise. If they have no more than they deserve, let them have it. If they are children of God they will be kept steady, they will not be ruined or spoiled. But they will stand with feet like hinds' feet upon high places—"This is the victory that overcomes the world."

**4.** Sometimes again, the world turns jailer to a Christian. God sends affliction and sorrow until life is a prison, the world its jailer—and a wretched jailer, too. Have you ever been in trials and troubles, my Friends? And has the world ever come to you and said, "Poor prisoner, I have a key that will let you out. You are in financial difficulties. I will tell you how you may get free. Put that Mr. Conscience away. He asks you whether it is a dishonest act. Never mind about him. Let him sleep—think about the honesty after you have got the money—and repent at your leisure." So says the world. But you say, "I cannot do the thing." "Well," says the world, "then groan and grumble—a good man like you locked up in this prison!" "No," says the Christian, "my Father sent me into want and in His own time He will fetch me out. But if I die here, I will not use wrong means to escape. My Father put me here for my good, I will not grumble. If my bones must lie here—if my coffin is to be under these stones—if my tombstone shall be in the wall of my dungeon—here will I die, rather than so much lift a finger to get out by unfair means." "Ah," says the world, "then you are fool." The scorner laughs and passes on, saying, "The man has no brain, he will not do a bold thing. He has no courage. He will not launch upon the sea. He wants to go in the old beaten track of morality." Yes, so he does. For thus he overcomes the world!

Oh, I might tell you of some battles that have been fought. There has been many a poor maiden who has worked, worked, worked, until her fingers were worn to the bone—just to earn a scanty living out of the things which we wear upon us, knowing not that oftentimes we wear the blood, bones and sinews of poor girls. That poor girl has been tempted a thousand times. The Evil One has tried to seduce her, but she has fought a valiant battle. Stern in her integrity in the midst of poverty, she still

stands upright. "Clear as the sun, fair as the moon and terrible as an army with banners," a heroine unconquered by the temptations and enticements of vice! In other cases many a man has had the chance of being rich in an hour, affluent in a moment, if he would but clutch something which he dares not look at, because God within him said, "No." The world said, "Be rich, be rich." But the Holy Spirit said, "No! Be honest. Serve your God." Oh, the stern contest and the manly combat carried on within the heart! But he said, "No. Could I have the stars transmuted into worlds of gold, I would not, for those globes of wealth belie my principles and damage my soul." Thus he walks a conqueror. "This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith."

**II.** But my text speaks of a GREAT BIRTH. A very kind friend has told me that while I was preaching in Exeter Hall I ought to pay deference to the varied opinions of my hearers. He said that albeit I may be a Calvinist and a Baptist, I should remember that there are a variety of creeds here. Now, if I were to preach nothing but what would please the whole lot of you, what on earth would I do? I preach what I believe to be true! And if the omission of a single Truth that I believe would make me King of England throughout eternity, I would not leave it out! Those who do not like what I say have the option of leaving. They come here, I suppose, to please themselves and if the Truth does not please them, they can leave. I will never be afraid that an honest British audience will turn away from the man who does not stick, stutter and stammer in speaking the Truth of God! Well, now, about this great birth. I am going to say, perhaps, a harsh thing, but I heard it said by Mr. Jay first of all. Some say a new birth takes place in an infant baptism, but I remember that venerable Patriarch saying, "Popery is a *lie*, Puseyism is a *lie*, baptismal regeneration is a *lie*." So it is. It is a lie so palpable that I can scarcely imagine the preachers of it have any brains in their heads at all! It is so absurd upon the very face of it, that a man who believes it puts himself below the range of a commonsense man! Believe that every child by a drop of water is born-again? Then that man that you see in the ring as a prize-fighter is born-again because those sanctified drops once fell upon his infant forehead! Another man swears—behold him drunk and reeling about the streets. He is born-again! A pretty born-again that is! I think he wants to be born-again another time. Such a regeneration as that only fits him for the devil. And by its deluding effect, may even make him sevenfold more the child of Hell! But the men who curse, swear, rob and steal and those poor wretches who are hanged, have all been born-again, according to the fiction of this beautiful Puseyite church. Out with it! Out with it! Ah, God sends something better than that into men's hearts when He sends them a new birth!

However, the text speaks of a great birth. “Whatever is born of God overcomes the world.” This new birth is the mysterious point in all religion. If you preach anything else except the new birth, you will always get on well with your hearers. But if you insist that in order to enter Heaven there must be a radical change—though this is the Doctrine of the Scripture—it is so unpalatable to mankind in general that you will scarcely get them to listen! Ah, now you turn away as I begin to tell you, that “except you be born of water and of the Spirit, you cannot enter the kingdom of Heaven.” If I tell you that there must be a regenerating influence exerted upon your minds by the power of the Holy Spirit, then I know you will say “it is enthusiasm.” Ah, but it is the enthusiasm of the Bible! There I stand. By this I will be judged. If the Bible does not say we must be born-again, then I give it up. But if it does, then, Sirs, do not distrust that Truth on which your salvation hangs!

What is it to be born-again? Very briefly, to be born-again is to undergo a change so mysterious that human words cannot speak of it. As we cannot describe our first birth, so it is impossible for us to describe the second. “The wind blows where it lists and you hear the sound thereof. But you cannot tell from where it comes or where it goes. So is everyone that is born of the Spirit.” But while it is so mysterious, it is a change which is *known and felt*. People are not born-again when they are in bed and asleep so that they do not know it. They feel it! They experience it! Galvanism, or the power of electricity, may be mysterious. But it produces a feeling—a sensation. So does the new birth. At the time of the new birth, the soul is in great agony—often drowned in seas of tears. Sometimes it drinks bitters, now and then mingled with sweet drops of hope. While we are passing from death unto life there is an experience which none but the child of God can really understand. It is a mysterious change, but, at the same time, it is a positive one. It is as much a change as if this heart were taken out of me and the black drops of blood wrung from it, then washed and cleansed and put into my soul again! It is “a new heart and a right spirit”—a mysterious but yet an actual and real change!

Let me tell you, moreover, that this change is a *supernatural* one. It is not one that a man performs upon himself. It is not leaving off drinking and becoming sober. It is not turning from a Roman Catholic to a Protestant. It is not veering round from a Dissenter to a Churchman, or a Churchman to a Dissenter. It is vast deal more than that. It is a new principle infused which works in the heart, enters the very soul and moves the entire man. It is not a change of my name, but a renewal of my nature so that I am not the man I used to be, but a new man in Christ Jesus. It is a *supernatural* change—something which man cannot do and which only God can effect—which the Bible, itself, cannot accom-

plish without the attendant Spirit of God. It is something which no minister's eloquence can bring about—something so mighty and wondrous that it must be confessed to be the work of God and God, alone. Here is the place to observe that this new birth is an *enduring change*. Arminians tell us that people are born-again, then fall into sin, pick themselves up again and become Christians again—fall into sin, lose the Grace of God, then come back again—fall into sin a hundred times in their lives and so keep on losing Grace and recovering it. Well, I suppose it is a new version of the Scripture where you read of that. But I read in *my* Bible that if true Christians could fall away it would be impossible to renew them again unto repentance. I read, moreover, that wherever God has begun a good work, He will carry it on even to the end. And that whom He once loves, He loves to the end.

If I have simply been reformed, I may be a drunkard yet, or you may see me acting on the stage. But if I am really born-again, with that real *supernatural* change, I shall never fall away. I may fall into a sin, but I shall not fall finally. I shall stand while life shall last, constantly secure. And when I die it shall be said—

**“Servant of God, well done!  
Rest from your blest employ.  
The battle's fought, the victory's won,  
Enter your rest of joy.”**

Do not deceive yourselves, my Beloved. If you imagine that you have been regenerated and having gone away from God, will be once more born-again, you do not know anything about the matter. For “he that is born of God sins not.” That is, he does not sin so much as to fall away from Grace—“for he keeps himself—that the Evil One touches him not.” Happy is the man who is really and actually regenerate and passed from death unto life!

**III.** To conclude. There IS A GREAT GRACE. Persons who are born-again really do overcome the world. How is this brought about? The text says, “This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our *faith*.” Christians do not triumph over the world by reason. Not at all. Reason is a very good thing and nobody should find fault with it. Reason is a candle—but faith is a sun! Well, I prefer the sun, though I do not put out the candle. I use my reason as a Christian. I exercise it constantly—but when I come to real warfare, reason is a wooden sword. It breaks, it snaps—while faith, that sword of true Jerusalem metal, cuts to the dividing of soul and body.

My text says, “This is the victory which overcomes the world, even our *faith*.” Who are the men that do anything in the world? Are they not always men of faith? Take it even as natural faith. Who wins the battle? Why, the man who knows he will win it and vows that he will be the vic-

tor! Who never gets on in the world? The man who is always afraid to do a thing for fear he cannot accomplish it. Who climbs to the top of the Alps? The man who says, "I will do it, or I will die." Let such a man make up his mind that he can do a thing and he will do it—if it is within the range of possibility. Who have been the men who have lifted the standard and grasping it with firm hand, have upheld it in the midst of stormy strife and battle? Why, men of faith. Who have done great things? Not men of fear and trembling, men who are afraid. But men of faith, who had bold fronts and foreheads made of brass—men who never shook and never trembled, but believing in God, lifted their eyes to the hills, from where comes their strength.

"Never was a marvel done upon the earth, but it had sprung of faith. Nothing noble, generous, or great, but faith was the root of the achievement. Nothing comely, nothing famous, but its praise is faith. Leonidas fought in human faith as Joshua in Divine. Xenophon trusted to his skill and the sons of Matthias to their cause. Faith is mightiest of the mighty. It is the monarch of the realms of the mind. There is no being superior to its strength, no creature which will not bow to its Divine prowess. The lack of faith makes a man despicable, it shrivels him up so small that he might live in a nutshell. Give him faith and he is a leviathan that can dive into the depths of the sea. He is a war horse that cries, aha! aha! in the battle. He is a giant who takes nations and crumbles them in his hand, who encounters hosts and at a sword they vanish. He binds up sheaves of scepters and gathers up all the crowns as his own. There is nothing like faith, Sirs. Faith makes you almost as Omnipotent as God, by the borrowed might of its Divinity! Give us faith and we can do all things!

I want to tell you how it is that faith helps Christians to overcome the world. It always does it homeopathically. You say, "That is a singular idea." So it may be. The principle is that, "like cures like." So does faith overcome the world by curing like with like. How does faith trample upon the *fear* of the world? By the fear of God. "Now," says the world, "if you do not do this, I will take away your life. If you do not bow down before my false god, you shall be put in yon burning fiery furnace." "But," says the man of faith, "I fear Him who can destroy both body and soul in Hell. True, I may dread you, but I have a greater fear than that. I fear lest I should displease God. I tremble lest I should offend my Sovereign." So the one fear counterbalances the other. How does faith overthrow the world's hopes? "There," says the world, "I will give you this, I will give you that, if you will be my disciple. There is a hope for you. You shall be rich, you shall be great." But, faith says, "I have a hope laid up in Heaven. A hope which fades not away, eternal, incorrupt, eternally beautiful hope, a golden hope, a crown of life." And the hope of glory overcomes all the

hopes of the world. “Ah,” says the world, “Why not follow the *example* of your fellows?” “Because,” says faith, “I will follow the example of Christ.” If the world puts one example before us, faith puts another. “Oh, follow the example of such an one, he is wise, great and good,” says the world. Says faith, “I will follow Christ, He is the wisest, the greatest and the best.” It overcomes example by example. “Well,” says the world, “since you will not be conquered by all this, come, I will *love* you. You shall be my friend.” Faith says, “He that is the friend of this world, cannot be the friend of God. God loves me.” So he puts love against love; fear against fear; hope against hope; dread against dread. And so faith overcomes the world by like curing like!

In closing my discourse, Brothers and Sisters, I am but a child. I have spoken to you as I could this morning. Another time, perhaps, I might be able to launch more thunders and to proclaim better the Word of God. But this I am sure of—I tell you all I know and speak right on. I am no orator—I just tell you what springs up from my heart. But before I have done, O that I may have a word with your souls. How many are there here who are born-again? Some turn a deaf ear and say, “It is all nonsense. We go to our place of worship regularly. We put our hymn books and Bibles under our arm and we are very religious sort of people.” Ah, Soul! if I meet you at the bar of judgment, remember I said—and said God’s Word—“Except you be born-again, you shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven.” Others of you say, “We cannot believe that being born-again is such a change as you speak of. I am a great deal better than I used to be. I do not swear, now, and I am very much reformed.” Sirs, I tell you it is no little change. It is not mending the pitcher but it is breaking it up and having a new one! It is not patching the heart, it is having a new heart and a right spirit. There is nothing but death unto sin and life unto righteousness, that will save your souls!

I am preaching no new Doctrine. Turn to the articles of the Church of England and read it there. Church people come to me sometimes to unite with our Church. I show them our Doctrines in their prayer book and they have said they never knew they were there! My dear Hearers, why do you not read your own articles of faith? Why, without a doubt, you do not know what is in your own prayer book! Men, nowadays do not read their Bibles and they have, for the most part, no religion! They have a religion, which is all outside show, but they do not think of searching to see what its meaning really is! Sirs, it is not the *cloak* of religion that will do for you, it is a *vital godliness* you need. It is not a religious Sunday, it is a religious Monday. It is not a pious Church, it is a pious closet. It is not a sacred place to kneel in, it is a holy place to stand in all day long. There must be a change of heart—real, radical, vital, entire. And now, what do you say? Has your faith overcome the world? Can you live above it? Or

do you love the world and the things thereof? If so, Sirs, you must go on your way and perish—each one of you—unless you turn from that and give your hearts to Christ! Oh, what do you say, is Jesus worthy of your love? Are the things of eternity and Heaven worth the things of time? Is it so sweet to be a worldling that for that you can lie down in torment? Is it so good to be a sinner that for this you can risk your soul's eternal welfare? O, my Friends, is it worth your while to run the risk of an eternity of woe for an hour of pleasure? Is a dance worth dancing in Hell with howling fiends forever? Is one dream, with a horrid waking, worth enjoying, when there are the glories of Heaven for those who follow God? Oh, if my lips would let me speak to you, my heart would run over at my eyes and I would weep myself away until you had pity on your own poor souls! I know I am, in a measure, accountable for your souls. If the watchmen warn them not, they shall perish—but their blood shall be required at the watchman's hands. "Turn you, turn you, why will you die, O house of Israel?" thus says the Lord. Besotted, filled with your evil wills, inclined to evil—still the Holy Spirit speaks by me this morning, "If you turn unto the Lord, with full purpose of heart, He will have mercy upon you. And to our God, He will abundantly pardon."

I cannot bring you. I cannot fetch you. My words are powerless, my thoughts are weak! Old Adam is too strong for this young child to draw or drag, but may God speak to you, dear Hearts. May God send the Truth home and then we shall rejoice together, both he that sows and he that reaps, because God has given us the increase. God bless you. May you all be born-again and have that faith that overcomes the world!"

***Have I that faith which looks to Christ,  
Overcomes the world and sin—  
Receives Him Prophet, Priest and King,  
And makes the conscience clean?  
If I this precious Grace possess,  
All praise is due to Thee!  
If not, I seek it from Your hands;  
Now grant it, Lord, to me."***

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.**

# VICTORIOUS FAITH

## NO. 2757

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 15, 1901.

*DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,*  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 24, 1879.

*“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that overcomes the world—our faith. Who is he that overcomes the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”*  
*1 John 5:4, 5.*

WHAT is this “world” that we have to overcome? Did not God make the world and did He not see “everything that He had made and, behold, it was very good”? Yes, He did. But after sin entered this world, men came under its power and, now, by “the world” is meant all mankind who remain under the power of sin and are enemies of God. “The world” means the whole corrupt mass of human society out of which God has taken a people whom He has chosen for Himself, whom He quickens by His Divine Spirit and whose business it is to overcome the world. They will find that the world—the power of evil—will war against them and they also must war against it! And the issue of the battle must not long be doubtful. There remains for us only one of two courses—either the world must overcome us and we must yield to it—or else we must overcome the world and cause it to submit to us.

The Apostle helps us to understand what he means by “the world” by what he says in the third verse. “This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not grievous.” Now, anything which makes us think that God’s will is grievous is of the spirit of the world, against which we have to fight. If, for instance, we are tempted to think that the restrictions of God’s Law—His commandments and precepts are too stringent, it is the spirit of the world which tempts us to think so, for, “His commandments are not grievous” to those who truly love Him. It is only to the rebellious world that the restrictions of God appear to be too stringent, or that the commands of Christ become burdensome. If we are suffering pain or poverty, or whatever form of trial we may be called to endure, if we are tempted to say, “God is dealing harshly with us, He is unkind to us,” that, also, is manifesting the spirit of the world against which we are to contend until we conquer it.



For God's will is always right and if we really love Him, we shall acknowledge that it is right and though, for a while, we may have to fight against the spirit of rebellion, yet if we are, indeed, God's children, we must get the mastery over that spirit of evil and, so, the will of God, even when it involves pain, weakness, shame, or death, itself, shall still be perfectly agreeable to us because it is the will of God! We have not completely conquered the spirit of the world until we can truthfully say that the commandments of God, so far from being grievous to us, are acceptable simply because they come from Him.

Now I propose, as God shall help me, first, to speak of *the conquest itself*. Then, of *the conquering nature*. "Whatever is born of God overcomes the world." And, thirdly, of *the conquering weapon*. "This is the victory that overcomes the world—our faith."

**I.** First, then, concerning THE CONQUEST ITSELF. What is it to overcome the world?

Certainly it is not to go about the world blustering and bullying everybody until they all lie prostrate at our feet! If we could accomplish such a feat as that, the world would, in such a case, have overcome us and we would not have conquered it. We would have displayed a spirit and temper betokening the pride of power, the desire to rule over others—and this love would have mastered us. Alexander the Great, when he was master of the whole world, was the greatest slave within it, for he was discontented even with his victories. The pride of conquest held him in captivity by its iron chain. No, he who aims at the highest greatness in this world may only be more greatly selfish than the rest of mankind—and what is that but to be really little? He is truly great who is the most unselfish! And he is the least of all who lives for himself alone.

Neither is it overcoming the world if you try to get out of it and to live by yourself so as never to be tempted to sin. I have seen a man on his knees by the hour, together, reading some pious Latin book, living in a monastery where he never spoke—he had evidently conquered his tongue because he gave no answer to anybody who ever spoke to him. He was reckoned, by his brother monks, to have overcome the world—but had he really done so? Ask any soldier whether a man who slinks away in the day of battle and hides among the baggage—and does not fight at all—is a conqueror! That would be a very easy way of winning a victory—just to escape from the fight—to be of no service in the battle between good and evil, but just to hide away in your own little snugery over there, in the monastery, or the convent, or the hermitage! It might be an easy way of believing that you had conquered because you had ceased to fight—but that delusion would not make the victory yours. No, Brothers and Sisters, you and I have to roll up our shirtsleeves and go into the world and work like other people—we have to mingle with our fellow men and, as the Lord God said to Adam—in the sweat of our face have we to eat our bread.

It may be our occupation to have to add up those long columns of figures, or to measure up those bales of goods, or to talk to our fellow men on various matters, but, whatever our employment may be, we have to be in the world and we have to conquer it! To be in the world, yet not of it—as much separated from the rest of mankind as if we belonged to an alien race—conquerors of it wherever we go, not by getting out of it, but by mingling with the men and women in it—doing all that is lawful and right and all that is expected that a man should do to his fellow men, yet, all the while being conquerors over the evil spirit of the world!

Now, having shown you what this conquest of the world is not, let us turn to the positive side of the question and see what it is. The first thing that is necessary with many who are seeking to overcome the world is to cut *themselves loose from the world's customs*. They were born into the world—one man has his own little world and another man has another little world—but every man, sooner or later, finds himself in a world of sin. There are ungodly companions with whom he is linked—evil associations to which he is bound. There are some men who, in their unconverted state, give themselves up entirely to the pleasures of the world, the amusements and frivolities of what is called, “Society.” Now, if such men ever expect to overcome the world, the very first thing they must do is to cut their old connections altogether, to sever all the bonds which unite them to those who lead them into sin.

Such a thing has often happened as for a man who has been the best of company and the choicest of good fellows among worldlings, to sit down in quietness for half an hour, and God the Holy Spirit has worked so mightily upon his heart that he has said to himself, “What have I been doing but playing the fool to make other fools laugh? How am I spending my time? I must honestly say that I am doing no real good with it. What am I making of my manhood? Here it is—well-near six feet of it and it will soon lie in six feet of earth—what am I doing that is really worth doing? Am I not really wasting my time? This style of living will not do.”

Ah, the blessed Spirit has begun working in the man and he has wept before his God as he has thought over his wasted life. Further, he has, by faith, looked to Jesus on the Cross and he has said, “You, blessed Savior, have redeemed me, so, henceforth, I will be Yours. As I live by You, I will live for You and for my fellow men.” After arriving, by God’s Grace, at that decision, he has become a different man from what he used to be! His old companions could not get him back to his former haunts, however much they might try to do so. Even if he should go there, they would not long want him with them, for he would not, any longer, be of their way of thinking or their way of acting, for he would be a changed man altogether.

There are many of you who would like to come to that decision, but you never appear willing to actually decide to serve the Lord. You are always going to do it, yet you never do it. You hesitating people are the

most unhappy folk in the whole world, for you neither get comfort out of your present condition, nor out of that better condition after which you sometimes aspire, but which you have not the courage to resolutely seek after until you find it! Some men have just enough conscience to make them miserable, but they have not enough force in it to make them determine that things shall be altered. Their religion is very much like the experience of certain boys who, professedly, go out to bathe in the early morning. They put their toes into the water and shiver all over with the cold. But the brave swimmer takes a header, plunges right in, is soon in a fine glow and comes out praising the delightful bath he has had! I would urge every man who is just now upon the point of deciding—and I pray God the Holy Spirit, with His almighty energy, to back up my urging—that he may now say—

**“Tis done—the great transaction’s done,  
I am my Lord’s and He is mine!”**

I pray that he may henceforth be a changed man, that he may forsake his former evil ways and live wholly unto God. That is the first part of overcoming the world—breaking loose from its bonds so that one can say, “I am not tied down by it any longer. By God’s Grace, I am a free man in Christ Jesus.”

But that emancipation is merely a beginning. Overcoming the world consists further in *maintaining that freedom*. Oh, what a work is this! It is no child’s play for a man to say, “No, I will never again be the slave that I used to be. By God’s eternal Grace, I have broken off this fetter and that, and never again shall those chains be fastened upon me. Great God, by Your almighty love, You have loosed my bonds. I am Your free man! I am free, indeed, and I will fight for my freedom—and under no possible circumstances will I go back to my old slavery.” Yes, but that fight is the difficulty—and I shall have to show you that nobody can be victorious in that fight unless he is one of a peculiar race—those who are born of God, born from above! This is a stern battle—when the world surrounds us everywhere—when pleasure tempts us—when gain tries to corrupt us—when poverty assails us—when evil company seeks to sway us—it is hard for us to come right straight out of all our former associations and then to stay out—remaining conquerors over the world throughout the whole of the rest of our life and being conquerors even in death, having vanquished the world even on our dying bed.

Part of the overcoming of the world consists in our being *raised above circumstances*. Remember how the Apostle Paul had conquered the world? He sat in prison shivering with cold but he said, “I know how to be abased.” He went, by-and-by, into the houses of some of his friends where they gave him all that he could desire and he said, “I know how to abound.” It is not an easy thing to be such a master of the world that the utmost poverty cannot make you miserable, yet God can give you Grace to say, “I can be poor, but I will be upright. I can lose every stick that I

have, but I will stand fast by Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior. And while I have Him, I cannot be cast down.”

I say that the fight against poverty is a very stern one, but the battle against the seductions of wealth is a far sterner one. Perhaps some of you think that you would like to fight that battle. I daresay you would, but you do not know what you are wishing. I see many men who are very gracious under all sorts of need—and I see many other men who, in proportion as they grow rich in worldly things, grow poor as to spiritual things. Very often, just in proportion as men get high in earthly position, in that proportion they cease to do anything that is of any particular service to anybody. I do not know what would become of any of us if we were made peers of the realm. It is, I have no doubt, a great trial to anybody to be so exalted, but there is scarcely a person here who could wear a coronet and yet faithfully serve the Lord! And probably there is not a man or a woman among us who could endure the trial of being made a king or a queen. It needs more than a world of Grace to overcome the world when the world makes much of you! When God does give us piety in high places, as, blessed be His holy name, He sometimes does, we ought to be most grateful for it, for it is a plant that does not grow well in such a situation as that. The old couplet is still true—

**“Gold and the Gospel seldom agree,  
Religion always sides with poverty.”**

It has been so from the first and I suppose it will be so to the last. But the true conquest of the world is to be indifferent about all such things—to be grateful for abounding mercies and to be grateful even for straitened circumstances. They used to say, “Philosophers can be merry without music” and, certainly, Christians can be happy without having their cup perpetually full. “I have learned,” said the Apostle Paul, “in whatever state I am, therewith to be content.” Happy are all they who have learned the same lesson, for it this is overcoming the world!

Once more, dear Friends, to overcome the world is *to be above its threats and above its bribes*. You working men who are Christians often have a hard time of it, but when your work-mates mock and jeer at you, and call you evil names, never mind them. Overcome the world by patiently enduring all the persecution that falls to your lot. Do not get angry and do not become downhearted. Jests break no bones and if you had any bone broken for Christ’s sake, it would be the most honored one in your whole body! Still, you need not wish to have the friendship of this world and you must not expect to have it, for the world does not love God’s people. Look how it served them in ages gone by—hanging was thought to be too good for them, so it roasted them alive!

The world would have exterminated the saints if it could have done so and, today, what does the world say of Christians? “Oh, they are either fools or fanatics, or else they are a set of canting hypocrites.” If a man preaches the Gospel, and many are drawn to hear him, quibblers cry,

“Oh, he is an imposter!” If any Christian man is very precise and particular, they say, “Ugh, he is one of the sniveling Puritans!” They never know anything bad enough to say of genuine Christians. They do not like us! It were a pity if they should, for they did not like our Master, and they do not like our Father. If we will consent to hide our doctrines, or to daub them over with the philosophical luminous paint of the preterit period, they will put up with us. But if we bring out pure Gospel Truth, straightway they will be down upon us!

Yet there are some of God’s people that the world does love when they do the world a good turn. If their love to man leads them to a high philanthropy and if the world can get anything out of them, it does not mind loving them. It has a cupboard love even to saints—and if there is any profit to be made out of them, the world will love *them*, though not their saintship! They like Mr. So-and-So as a politician, but when it comes to his religion, they say, “That is his weak point.” They do not care to interfere with that. They admire another man because of his care for the poor—the widow and the fatherless—but they hate the Doctrine of the Cross which he delights to preach and which is to him the very joy of his heart.

On the other hand, when the world cannot frighten us by frowns, it often tries to woo us by smiles. “Oh,” it cries to us, “you really are too righteous, you are too good. You need not be so precise—come just a little way with us—yield only an inch, that is all we ask.” No, Brothers and Sisters, yield no inches for all the smiles on this Jezebel’s painted face! But stand out just as boldly against her blandishments as against her thunderbolts. Care nothing for her opinion or her action either way, for, if you do, you will not have overcome the world. God help us, by His gracious Spirit, to be conquerors in that sense!

To overcome the world, further, means *to be above the influence of the world’s example*. As I said before, we have, each one of us, our own little world and we all are, to a certain degree, subject to the influences of those who surround us. The young man in business who begins as a Christian is too often influenced by the pernicious maxims and customs of the trade with which he is connected. Men mingle in society and each one, to some extent, affects the others. How often is a pious child grievously affected by an ungodly parent! How frequently a gracious servant is ill-affected by an ungodly master or mistress! But if you really overcome the world, you will live above its influence. You will be like one who is obliged to go where the air is foul and disease is rife, but who has such a healthy constitution that he does not catch the disease and is not polluted by the impurity. There is no seed-plot within him for the disease to grow upon. Blessed is that man who is himself an example to his fellow men—who does not so much come under the influence of others as cast his own influence over others. God make all of you, Beloved, such true

leaders of mankind in the right direction because you have, yourselves, overcome the world!

If you want to see the portrait of a man who overcame the world, look at Abraham. He was at home with his father in Haran and God said to him, “Come forth”—and away he went, with Sarah, and Lot, and their flocks and herds! The well-watered plain of Jordan lay before him and he might have settled in it, as Lot did, but it did not tempt him—he dwelt alone with his flocks and his herds, where God had bid him go. The king of Sodom and Abraham’s nephew, Lot, were carried away captive and, for the sake of Lot, Abraham went with a band of men, smote the allied kings and delivered the prisoners. The king of Sodom said to him, “Give me the persons and take the goods to yourself.” Now, according to the rules of war, the spoil were all Abraham’s, but, oh, how grandly did he behave! He was not going to be conquered by the world, so he said to the king of Sodom, “I will not take from a thread even to a shoelace. I will not take anything that is yours, lest you should say, I have made Abram rich”—which was as much as saying, “I have a right to it if I wish to take it, but I waive my rights. I act from higher motives than the ordinary rules of men can supply—the Lord Jehovah is my Helper and Provider and I live upon what He gives me. He can make me rich without the help of the king of Sodom, so take your goods and go.”

See also how nobly he overcame the world on that memorable day when God said, “I will now see whether Abraham does really love Me best of all. He has one boy—the child of his old age—and I will tell him to offer him up in sacrifice.” And grandly did the Patriarch, in that fiery trial, overcome the world, for Isaac was, practically, all the world to him on that day when he unsheathed the knife and proved that his love to God was superior to everything else! And this is the kind of conquest to which you, Beloved, are also called. May God grant that you may be well equipped for it and be truly victorious in it!

**II.** Now, secondly, I think you will be prepared, after my giving this explanation of what it is to overcome the world, to hear about THE CONQUERING NATURE. “Whatever is born of God overcomes the world”

Do you all know what it is to be born of God? I do not think I can tell you, in so many words, exactly what it is, though I know for myself. It is not simply to be improved and reformed. It is a grand thing when a man who has been degraded, lives in a better fashion. But a cobbler might take an old shoe and mend it, yet that would not make it a new one. Being born of God is also more than being made anew. It includes that, but that is not all that it includes. For God, who makes all things, can new-make them when He pleases, yet that does not make them to be born of Him. We all know what it is for one person to be born of another—you were all born of your father and of your mother—and so you became part-takers of your parents’ nature. In like manner, only in a far higher sense, regeneration is more than creation, for there is in it a kinship with God.

So, being born-again makes us something more than God's creatures—we are God's children.

You know that blessed truth of adoption, by which God takes men and adopts them into His family, but regeneration is a great deal more than adoption. A man may have an adopted child, but yet it is really no child of his. There is nothing of himself in it and he cannot put his nature into it. But we are not only God's adopted children if we are, indeed, born from above, we are God's newborn children! The Divine Nature is actually put into us when we are born of God—is not that a wonderful thing? And that miracle of mercy must be worked in all of us who are ever to overcome the world.

For notice this, *no nature but the Divine Nature will ever try to overcome the world*. By nature, we are of the world, and that which is of the world will not fight against the world, it will not even *think* of doing so. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." And flesh will not fight against flesh. Our Lord Jesus said to the Jews, "You are of your father, the devil"—and the devil will not fight against the world, or try to overcome it, for his course is the course of this world, he is the prince of it! But where the Divine Nature come, it comes to fight against the world! The holy Nature of God never enters into a man but what that man cries, "Now will I be wholly free from sin! Now will I shake off every fetter of it." "Now," he says, under the power of this Divine inner life, "I do scorn the thought that I, who am born of God, should be a slave to sin—that I, who bear within me something of the Deity—I, who am a twice-born man, begotten again by God the everlasting Father, of whom I have become a child—I loathe the very idea of yielding to sin." That is the kind of man to overcome the world because of the Divine Nature within him!

For, see, the regenerated man is sure to overcome the world when he goes to fight against it because, first, *he has the Spirit of the Father in him*. Now God the Father is the world's Creator, so the world can never be a match for its Creator! He made it and He can destroy it whenever He pleases to do so. It is not possible that sin should overcome God, for, as the Apostle James tells us, "God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempts He any man." He is by Nature perfectly holy and when this Divine Nature is put into a man, it is still holy and it cannot sin because it is born of God!

This new Nature is also *akin to the Nature of Christ*. And you know how the Second Person of the blessed Trinity—the Christ of God, dwelt here among men and the world could never overcome Him. Men could kill Him and they did, but they could not make Him sin. They could drive Him from place to place, but they could not make Him angry. They could not provoke Him to speak any word that He might afterwards regret. They could never get anything from Him which was worthy of reproach or of rebuke. They called all the witnesses they could to testify against Him, but even the false witnesses could not agree, for He was "holy, harmless,

undefiled and separate from sinners.” And even on the Cross of Calvary, when they hung Him up to die, His dying pangs could extort from Him nothing but a prayer, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” And thus He conquered the world, for the Human Nature in Him, blended with the Divine, could not be conquered by the world—it was not possible!

Further, we *become akin to the Divine Spirit* by being born of God and the Holy Spirit cannot be conquered by the world. It is He that convinces the world of sin! It is He that shall yet win this world for Christ! He is Omnipotent, so when the Spirit of God dwells within us, as He does when we receive the Divine Nature, it is not possible that He should be conquered, or that we should be conquered by the world.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, listen to these words. Do you not see that you must overcome the world or else you will perish? But you cannot overcome the world as you are. You must, therefore, be born-again! Your only hope lies in your being born of God! And this, if it is to take place, must be God’s work. It is God alone who can do it, so you are like ships on their beam-ends—you cannot “right” yourselves. Cry, therefore, with your whole heart to God and ask Him to work this miracle in you! “Salvation is of the Lord.” He can save you. He can take away the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. He can breathe upon the dry bones and make them live. Yes, He, the mysterious Father of our spirits, can create in us a new spirit that shall be begotten of Himself and be like unto Himself—and this we must have—or we can never overcome the world.

**III.** Now, thirdly, and lastly, I have to speak of THE CONQUERING WEAPON WHICH IS USED BY THIS NEW NATURE. “This is the victory that overcomes the world—our faith.”

It never entered into my head that the most of professing Christians would ever overcome the world. I do not think they ever will, for the world has, to a large extent, overcome them. You may hear some of them asking, “How far may we go in worldly amusements?” You really want to go, do you not? Then go, for it does not matter much where such people as you are go. “Oh, but we should like to go as far into the world as we might!” Would you? Then my Lord’s message to you is, “You must be born-again!” It is quite evident that you have not the Nature of God in you, for the Divine Nature in the soul makes it start back, and say, “How far can I get away from anything that looks like wrong? I hate the very appearance of evil.”

The Christian does not deny himself this or that, merely because he feels under an obligation to do so, or because he dreads the lash of God’s whip. No, if he could indulge his new Nature to the fullest, he would continually swim in the sea of perfection! If he could be what he wishes to be, he would never think a wrong thought, much less speak an evil word. Now, the Divine Nature that is in him fights against sin—it cannot help



doing so—and it clings to that which is good and craves after that which is right. Just as the ox longs to drink water and stands in a pool of it on a hot day and drinks and drinks again, so does the Christian seek to drink in the life and purity of God—not because he is told to do so, or because some outside force operates upon him, but because the new Nature is *within* him and he longs, therefore, to indulge it to the fullest! And that new Nature, being the Nature of God, longs after that which is pure, lovely and of good report.

The instrument with which this new Nature fights against the world is faith. And faith conquers, first, by *regarding the unseen reward which awaits us*. The world comes and offers pleasure as the reward of sin. But faith says, “There are greater pleasures to be had by abstaining from sin.” The world says, “Take this gain today.” But faith says, “No, I will put what I have out at interest—there is something infinitely better to be had hereafter.” In its beginning, faith generally works in that way—it despises all the treasures of Egypt and values far more the eternal rewards that Christ has laid up for it in Heaven. But do you not see that there is a measure of selfishness there in both cases? The sinner sins in order to be happy, as he thinks—and the newborn man abstains from sin in order to be happy! Well, that is a good thing to do, though the motive is not the most commendable. But there is a measure of faith about it, for faith is looking for the future rewards, and believes in the Heaven which God has prepared for them that love Him.

But as faith grows, it attains to something better than that, for *it recognizes the unseen Presence which is with us*. The world says, “Come with us and go our way. We will pat you on the back and say that you are a good fellow—and you will have a fine time if you come with us.” But faith says, “I do not trouble about how I appear in your eyes, for there is another eye which I can see, but which you cannot see, for God is looking at me and I am most of all concerned to be right in His sight.” Faith realizes that the newborn nature is in the Divine Presence and thus makes God’s Presence to be just as real and just as vivid as the presence of men. And that Presence of God altogether outweighs the presence of men—and the believing soul says to the world, “To please you, I dare not do that which is wrong in the sight of God, for who are you, compared with the Most High God? I will not do wrong in order to escape your frown, for, by so doing, I should receive the frown of God. And I must maintain my integrity before Him.”

That, you see, is a higher position than the one I first mentioned, for faith not only regards the unseen reward which awaits the Believer but faith recognizes the unseen Presence of God and is moved by an all-constraining desire to please Him.

That was a very striking incident in the life of our dear Brother Oncken, of Germany, when the burgomaster of Hamburg said to him, “I hear, Sir, that you have been baptizing at night.” “I have, Sir,” he replied,

“because the law will not permit me to do it by day.” “How dare you immerse these persons?” asked the burgomaster. “I dare to do it,” answered Mr. Oncken, “because it is the Law of God” “And you have done it in defiance of the law of the land! Now, Sir, do you see this little finger of mine?” “Yes,” replied Mr. Oncken, “I see it.” “Well, Sir, as long as that little finger lives, I will keep you down, for I am determined to put an end to this movement.” “But, Mr. Burgomaster,” said Mr. Oncken, “not only can I see your little finger, but I can also see a great arm which you do not see. That is the arm of the eternal God and, as long as that arm can move, you will not be able to put me down, for I am only doing the will of Jehovah.” Years after that stormy scene, I went to Drench in Hamburg in connection with the opening of my Brother Oncken’s Chapel, and among the notable gentlemen who helped to honor that occasion by their presence was that very burgomaster. He still had his little finger, but he was not there to put Mr. Oncken down! He came to contribute to Mr. Oncken’s work and to show that the great arm of God had beaten the little finger of the burgomaster! That kind of experience has been many times repeated in the world. The men of the world resolve to put us down, but it cannot be done! If we were simply of men, we might be put down—but we are of God and the Divine Nature in us must conquer in the long run!

When faith rises still further, it feels that the soul so loves God and so wishes to delight in Him, and becomes so closely united to God that *it takes pleasure in all that in which God takes pleasure*. It is true faith that believes that God takes pleasure in the humble actions of poor creatures such as we are, but our faith has that confidence. It believes God to be a kind and tender Father, delighting in what His children do and, therefore, faith says, “I cannot grieve Him, so, be gone from me, sinful world! Away with your gold, and your silver, and your smiles, and your frowns! I dare not be influenced by any of these things and so grieve my God.” And, daily, as faith grows stronger and stronger, it tramples the world more and more under its feet and altogether abhors it.

To the genuine Christian, Christ is life’s one aim. He sets that mark before him and shoots at it. I once saw a colonel shooting at a target. There were two targets near each other and he made a center at one of them. The attendant called out, “Which target was that gentleman shooting at?” “The one on the left,” was the answer. “I thought so,” said the man, “for he hit the one on the right.” There are some people who are always shooting at the world and it seems to be their great aim to hit it, but the Christian is always aiming at Christ—and if he has not made the center yet, he will shoot again and again until he does, for his great desire is that he may live for Christ, alone, and be found in Him, not having his own righteousness “which is of the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith,”

So, I hope you see that if faith is the conquering weapon and we intend to be conquerors, we must become Believers in the invisible God! And in order to exercise faith in the invisible God in Christ Jesus, we must be born-again, for, until that new Nature comes into us, we never believe in Christ! We may believe a great deal in ourselves. We may believe in worldly society, in its threats, or in its bribes, but we do not believe in Christ. But how blessed is that man who, at the last, will be able to say, "I have faithfully served my God. I have turned neither to the right hand nor to the left. I have not considered myself. I have courted no man's praise, I have not sought self or gain. What I had to spare, I gave to God's cause and to the poor. What I could gather, I distributed according to the necessities of my fellow men. I have lived for God, for Christ and for the Truth—I have not lived for myself." The man who can truthfully say that is a saved man!

Whether you know it or not, my Friend, that is salvation—to be saved from sin and from self—and there is no getting salvation from the groveling meanness of selfishness except by being born-again! For self clings to every man until he is born-again—and it is not always gone even then. Satan spoke the truth when he said to the Lord, "Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has will he give for his life." But he will not be ready to part with life itself until he gets a higher life and a better one imparted to him by the Spirit of God!

Again I say that this Truth of God throws us on our beam-ends. If we are to be saved, we must look to God! We must seek salvation at His hands. We must ask Him for faith and what a mercy it is that He waits to give it! You are nothing and God will be everything to you. Get to the end of yourself and that will be a proof that God has already begun with you! Cease to believe in your own merits, or your own virtues. Put away all trust in yourself and come and trust in God as He is revealed in His Son Jesus Christ and you have received that salvation which will keep on progressing until all sin shall be driven out of you and you shall dwell forever where Jesus is—as unselfish as Jesus is—as pure, as blessed, as glorious as He is! God grant this to us all, for 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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# **“BY WATER AND BLOOD”**

## **NO. 3252**

**A SERMON  
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***“This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ—  
not by water only, but by water and blood.”  
1 John 5:6.***

BY the terms “water” and “blood” we understand the purifying and the pardoning effects of Christ’s work for His people. He came to purify them from the power of sin, that they might no longer live in it. This is indicated by the declaration that He “came by water.” He also came to put away the guilt of their sin, that they might not be condemned for it. This is set forth by the intimation that He also came “by blood.” We might say that all the Lord’s Prophets who came before Christ, in a certain sense, “came by water.” That is to say, they all sought the purification of the Lord’s people. Whether it was Isaiah, whose lips had been touched with the live coal from the altar, or Jeremiah, whose eyes were fountains of tears as he wept over sinners, or Amos, who spoke as a herdsman, or Ezekiel, whose message was one of grandeur and sublimity, the objective of every one of them was to purge the people from their sins. It was against sin that they all lifted up their voices, yet none of them could pardon sin and no one of them ever professed to be able to do so! Of the whole of them it must be said that they came by water only, and not by blood.

But Jesus Christ does what the Prophets could not do. It is true that He does seek to make His people holy, but it is by His blood that all their sins are forever put away. John the Baptist was the last and the greatest of all the Prophets who came before Christ yet he had to say, “He that comes after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear.” John never spoke of his own blood having any power to take away sin, but he pointed to Christ and said, “Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.” So far as our Lord’s first disciples were concerned, He certainly “came by water,” for contact with His unique Personality must have tended to purify their lives. Yet He also came “by blood” as well as by water, for it was by virtue of His atoning Sacrifice that their sins were blotted out and that they became “accepted in the Beloved.”

The two ordinances of our holy religion were intended, I take it, to sum up the teaching of Christ. The one is Baptism, which represents the cleansing of the conscience as the body is washed with water, the death

of the soul to the old carnal life, its burial with Christ and its resurrection to a life of holiness. Then comes the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper which sets forth, in the broken bread and the poured-out wine, the great Truth of Christ’s Atonement—the fact that He has, by His death, perfected forever all those who have been set apart unto Him.

It is very important that we should always carry in our minds the remembrance of these two Truths of God—first, *that Jesus Christ “came by water,”* that is, it was His Divine purpose to purify His people and make them holy. And, secondly, *that Jesus Christ “came by blood,”* that is, it was His grand aim and objective to deliver His people from the guilt of sin. These are the two topics upon which I am going to speak to you as the Holy Spirit shall graciously guide me.

**I.** So, first, JESUS CHRIST “CAME BY WATER”—it was His Divine purpose to purify His people.

It is manifest that *there was an urgent necessity for this purification,* for all of us had become as an unclean thing in the sight of God. Even our righteousnesses were as filthy rags. We could not cleanse ourselves, neither could we obtain cleansing through the works of the Law. Yet it was imperatively necessary that we should be made holy—otherwise, where God is and where His holy angels dwell, we could never be—and, therefore, what we ourselves could not do, and what the Law could not do, “God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh” has perfectly accomplished!

If any of you ask me how Christ makes His people holy, I would remind you that when the Spirit of God reveals Jesus Christ to our heart, we then begin to perceive the exceeding sinfulness of sin. What? Did sin stab my Savior to the heart? Did sin nail my Best-Beloved to the Cross? Then I hate sin with a perfect hatred and will be revenged upon it! The Atonement of Christ gives such an exhibition of the guilt of sin as is not to be seen anywhere else—no, not even in the flames of Hell! And when a soul sees Christ despised, rejected, wounded, bleeding and dying because of sin, it realizes how foul and vile a thing sin is and so is moved to hate it, not only because of its foulness and blackness, but also out of gratitude to Christ who has put it away. Did my Savior love me so much as to bear the dread penalty of my sin? Then I will give sin no quarter, but seek to utterly destroy it—

**“The dearest idol I have known,  
Whate’er that idol is”—**

shall be cast down from the throne which it has usurped that I may worship my gracious God, and Him alone!

This gratitude to Christ begets a more and more intense love to Christ and the more we love Him, the more we become like He—and becoming like He is, sin is cast out and virtue is nourished. Ask any Christian whether he has not found that the best weapon with which to smite his sins has been a nail from Christ’s Cross or the spear that pierced His side! Men have tried to overcome sin by the reasoning of philosophy, or

by arguments fetched from common sense—but those blunt wooden swords have been powerless to destroy it! It is only the sharp two-edged sword of the Spirit—the grand Doctrine of the love and Grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ that can pierce our sin to the heart and lay it in the dust! You have, Beloved, but to meditate upon His passion to receive the virtue of the water which flowed from His side, and that shall enable you to trample upon your lusts and to consecrate all your powers and passions to His service.

I appeal to the experience of every Christian here to confirm what I have said—my Brother or Sister in Christ, was there not great need for Christ to come “by water” to you? For, first, what was your nature? No, what *is* it? If you were left to yourself, what might you not become? If circumstances put temptation in your way and God’s Grace did not restrain you, what sin might you not commit? Have you not, sometimes, when your feet have almost gone and your steps have well-near slipped, looked down into the depths of the horrible pit of human corruption and shuddered with alarm at the discovery of possibilities of evil which you had scarcely suspected? Well, then, if you have such a nature as this, you do indeed need the purifying streams from the heart of Christ to make it clean, and you may well pray to Him, with Toplady—

***“Let the water and the blood,  
From Your split side which flowed,  
Be of sin the double cure,  
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.”***

Then, next, what about our thoughts? As I walked to this House of Prayer tonight and tried to concentrate my meditations upon the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, I could not help feeling how mysterious it is that the more we try to guide our thoughts into right channels, the more determined they seem to be to run towards evil. Have you not sometimes found that even in your most hallowed moments, some unchaste and vile thought which you abhor as you hate the very fiend, himself, will suddenly come into your mind? Does not blasphemy at times intrude into your prayers? Does it not occasionally happen that the hymn you are singing suggests something the very reverse of praise to God and that the text of the sermon, or some part of the discourse, itself, becomes a peg upon which the devil hangs a temptation to sin? Alas, alas, our thoughts, if left to themselves, are as a cage of unclean birds or a den of wild beasts! And as Hercules needed to turn a stream of water to clean the Augean stable, our Lord Jesus Christ needed to pour rivers of water out of His own heart to cleanse the foul stable of our corrupt thoughts!

Then think of our words. I am not now speaking of carnal man—I am talking of professing Christians!. Would any of us like to have all our words printed for a single week? If any of you would, I can honestly say that I would not. One does earnestly try to keep the tongue from evil and the lips from speaking guile, but oh, how many idle words, how many fri-

volous words, how many sharp, angry, hot, unkind words fly from our lips almost before we are aware of it! God forgive us for the sins of the tongue! If we had nothing else for which to praise Christ, we ought to bless Him to all eternity that He came “by water” to cleanse that tongue which is naturally so foul!

Then look at our actions. John writes truly, “Whoever is born of God does not commit sin, for His seed remains in him and he cannot sin, because he is born of God”—that is to say, he does not sin willfully, he does not continue sinning, yet he does sin. Need I try to prove that he does? O Beloved, look at your lives since you have known the Lord, and see what sin there has been in them! Can you set even one week’s action in the light of God’s Countenance and say, “O Lord, my life this week has been perfectly pure”? You know that you cannot! Well then, if with the utmost possible guard upon your own conduct, with the most diligent check upon your conversation, with the greatest watchfulness concerning your thoughts, you are still made to feel that there is a corrupt nature within you and that the flesh still lusts against the Spirit, how thankful you ought to be that Jesus Christ “came by water” that He might purge your nature and make it clean!

Thus have I shown you the necessity for this purification. Now let me try to set before you *the power of this “water” which makes the Christian clean*. It is not a matter of speculation as to whether Christ makes sinners into saints—He is constantly performing this blessed work, which no power but that which is Divine could ever accomplish! Think for a minute or two of the forces which it has to overcome. There is the old nature of which I have been speaking, and that is not an enemy that can be easily overthrown. Have you ever tried to bind it fast with fetters and to keep it in chains? That “old Adam” is very strong—and even in aged Christians who sometimes seem to fancy that their corruptions have grown as aged and as feeble as they are, it has been, alas, only too sadly proved that the “old Adam” does not become weak as easily as the old man does! The opposition of our carnal nature to the Grace and work of Christ is so strong that nothing but Omnipotence, itself, can overcome it, yet Jesus Christ so gloriously “came by water” that He completely conquers the flesh!

Then there is the enmity of the world, which is always in antagonism to Christ and to His people, too. Worldlings are always ready to turn us aside to sin, and they will never help us to walk the narrow way that leads unto life. The way of the world is always towards evil—the habits and customs of the world are evil, only evil, and that continually! As the Apostle John says, “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.” All these evils continually beset us and powerful, indeed, must be that stream which can counteract and overcome them! Yet Jesus Christ does this through coming “by water” as well as by blood!

There is also the devil to be overthrown and we must never think lightly of his powers. He has overcome many mighty men and he would easily overpower us if we were left to contend with him in our own unaided strength. Bunyan’s pilgrim found it to be no child’s play to fight with Apollyon, nor shall we! “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” But, blessed be God, we go not to this warfare at our own charges! And greater is He who is with us than all that can be against us!

Yes, that awful trinity of evil—the world, the flesh and the devil—shall not be able to overcome even one Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ! Think of this, Beloved, and let your eyes sparkle with the delight of anticipation—you shall one day have no tendencies to sin—you shall then be as pure in nature as the holy angels! You shall then be fit to consort with cherubim and seraphim and the glorified spirits that day without night circle the Throne of God! And even the Lord God, Himself, the Infinitely Pure and Holy One, shall not disdain to dwell among you, for then you shall be perfectly free from sin, “without fault before the Throne of God.” Not even the all-piercing eyes of God shall be able to discover in you any thought of wrong, any word of evil, any act of sin, any corruption of nature, any sloth, or pride, or lust, or temper, or anything contrary to His holy will! Free from all sin forever are all those who shall stand “before the Throne and before the Lord, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.” And I shall be there and you shall be there, if here we are trusting in Him who “came by water” to “purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Have no doubt concerning it, my Brother or Sister in Jesus! Strong are your foes, but far stronger is your glorious Helper! Many and mighty are your enemies, but Almighty is your Friend! Stern is the conflict that has to be faced, but sure is the victory that shall, in due time, be won! So press on bravely day by day, and moment by moment, resisting even unto blood, striving against sin!

How many of us have already proved the purifying power of this “water” by which Christ came? Of course, I need hardly point out to you that there is no support here for the unscriptural doctrine of baptismal regeneration! The water that flowed from Christ’s side is typical of the cleansing work of the Truth that He has revealed, even as He said to His disciples, “You are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you.” Have you, Beloved, felt the cleansing power of the Truth as it is in Jesus? If not, God grant that you may realize it now—and to Him shall be the praise forever!

**II.** Now, secondly, I have to remind you that JESUS CHRIST CAME BY BLOOD AS WELL AS BY WATER. Not by water only, but by water and blood—that is to say, it was His grand aim and objective, by His atoning Sacrifice, to deliver His people from the *guilt of sin!*



There are some who are continually trying to get the Doctrine of the Atonement out of the Bible. Certain philosophical divines, who have just a smattering of theological knowledge, and who seem to forget the couplet—

**“A little learning is a dangerous thing  
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring”—**

try to hold up Christ for our admiration as a great Teacher, as a mighty Prophet, and as our perfect Exemplar—but as to the idea of Christ shedding His blood to wash away sin, they cry, “Away with it! Away with it!” And yet, my dear Friends, Christ cannot be of the slightest service to any of us if He did not come “by blood” to put away the guilt of our sin as well as “by water” to purify us from its defilement! For, supposing you and I could, by some mysterious influence, become from this time forth perfectly holy—what would be the good of that to us? I do not know that it would be any benefit to us at all if there were no Atonement! I think that it would be a curse rather than a blessing, for we would still be under condemnation on account of the sins which we have already committed! We are even now in the position of condemned criminals—and if there is no atoning Sacrifice of Christ to put away the guilt of our many transgressions—and we have to pay the penalty which is the inevitable consequence of our past sins, how intense and, indeed, *intensified* must be our anguish as after being made holy, we have to suffer for the iniquities which we committed before that great change was worked upon us! I have only to state the matter thus for you to see that such a condition of things is utterly impossible. Oh, no! If I must be lost, I will remain as I am! If there is no pardon for my past transgressions, it is of no use for me to have purity for the future! If I could become perfectly holy for a time, but would, after all, be cast away from God’s Presence, I do not want a temporary holiness of that sort, for I do not see how it could be of the slightest possible use to me! And my very nature recoils against even a good thing which would only increase my misery to an intolerable degree.

But, Beloved, I have only been supposing for the sake of argument, what is not true, *for Jesus Christ did come “by blood” as well as “by water.”* Paul truly wrote to the Hebrews, “Once in the end of the world has He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” And He has forever put away all the sin of everyone who believes in Him. That great Sacrifice was once and for all completed on Calvary—and it is made efficacious to each one of the innumerable host for whom Christ died as soon as, by faith, he appropriates the blessing to himself! As Joseph Hart sings—

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

It was by virtue of Christ’s atoning Sacrifice that Paul was able to say at Antioch what we can truthfully repeat in your hearing today, “Be it

known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him, all that believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the Law of Moses." The precious blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses from all sin all those who put their trust in Him! It is no sooner applied by the Holy Spirit to the heart and conscience than every sin that a man has ever committed ceases to be! And the virtue in Christ's blood is so great that it covers all the sin that the man will ever commit, as John Kent sings—

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

A Believer in Jesus has no record against him in God's Book of Remembrance. The Lord says to him as He said to Israel of old, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins." They are as completely obliterated, annihilated and destroyed as if they had never been committed! It is this glorious Truth of God which sets Christ apart from all the Prophets that came before Him—and all His servants who have or will come after Him—they all "came by water," seeking to make their message the means of purification to the Lord's people. But Christ came "not by water, only, but by water and blood," for He came both to purify His people and to put away the guilt of their transgression!

Those who deny the Atonement of Christ must have very low views of what God is and of what is due to His offended Majesty. According to them, God is to be insulted, His Throne is to be attacked, His crown is to be assailed and His honor is to be impugned—and yet no adequate recompense is to be made to Him! Such persons must also have very low views of sin. They make it out to be a mere trifle which God is to forgive without exacting any penalty for it. They seem to think that in His mercy, He can put away sin without any reparation to His broken Law and without any satisfaction being rendered to His offended Justice! But he who reads his Bible aright knows that all such notions are altogether erroneous! He has learned from the Scriptures that God is inflexibly stern in His Justice although He is supremely gracious in His Love. God hates sin so much that He had to turn away His face even from His well-beloved Son when He was, by imputation, bearing the sins of His people upon Calvary! And it was that desertion by His Father that wrung from Christ that saddest of all the cries from the Cross, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" But now that Christ has endured the full penalty for His people's sin, God can "be just and the Justifier of him who believes in Jesus." God's love can be displayed to the utmost without in any way infringing the rightful claims of His Justice. And all His attributes remain absolutely unsullied after the vindication they have received through the atoning Sacrifice of Christ.

*All this has been accomplished because Jesus Christ came "not by water only, but by water and blood."* Oh, the power of the precious blood of Jesus! Did you ever feel it, dear Friends? If so, you will never doubt the truth of the Atonement, for it will be very real to you. Never can I forget the day when I first felt in my soul the power of the blood of Jesus! Christ's blood has the power to put away sin from the sight of the all-seeing Jehovah, but it also has the power, so far as man is concerned, to give peace to the troubled conscience, rest to the weary heart, joy to the miserable life! No one could ever have been more wretched and sad than I was, when under a sense of sin, life had become almost unbearable though I was but a lad. But oh, what a leap my soul gave from the very depths of despair up to the heights of overflowing joy when I realized that Christ had come to me—"not by water only, but by water and blood"—and that He had put away my sins as far as the East is from the West, so that they should be remembered against me no more forever!—

***"Ever since by faith I saw the stream  
His flowing wounds supply,  
Redeeming love has been my theme,  
And shall be till I die."***

Remember, my dear Hearer, that *Jesus Christ must come to you "by blood" or else He will never come to you "by water."* Christ never gives a man holiness of life unless that man accepts Him as the great Propitiation for sin. Do you ask, "How can Christ come to me by water and by blood?" The only way that I know is the one that I have pointed out to you over and over again. It is this—you are a sinner, lost and undone. Jesus Christ came to seek and to save the lost. To do this, He had to take the sinner's place—to bear the sinner's guilt and to suffer the penalty that the sinner deserved to suffer. "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him and with His stripes we are healed." Have you faith enough to appropriate His work? Perhaps you question whether you may do so. Well, rest assured of this—there never was a sinner who trusted Christ and then was told that he had no right to trust Him. Oh, no! He, Himself, said, "Him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out," and He will not cast you out if you come to Him! Can you believe that His blood was shed for you? Dare you rest your soul's salvation upon the great work of which He said, "It is finished," before He bowed His head and gave up the ghost? Will you now trust Christ as your Substitute and Savior? You know the verses that we often sing—

***"Just as I am—without one plea  
But that Your blood was shed for me,  
And that You bid me come to You,  
O Lamb of God, I come.  
Just as I am—and waiting not  
To rid my soul of one dark blot,  
To You, whose blood can cleanse each spot,  
O Lamb of God, I come."***

Is this the language of your heart? Then I venture to say that Christ has come to you, “not by water only but by water and blood,” that Christ died for your sins according to the Scriptures and that God will never punish you for your transgressions as Christ has borne the full penalty for them all! Then if you have received Christ, thus, as coming to you by blood, I feel sure that you will also believe that He has come to you by water, to purify you from all defilement and, therefore, you will not any longer knowingly and willfully continue in sin! The gratitude which you must feel in your heart for all that Christ has done for you will constrain you to walk before Him in holiness and humility, and to seek to obey His will at all times!

Now, many of us are coming to the Table of our Lord to commune with Him and with one another—and there we must especially think of how He came to us, “not by water only, but by water and blood.” The broken bread will remind us of His body broken for us, and the wine in the cup will bring to our remembrance His precious blood of the New Covenant shed for us for the remission of our sins. Oh, what a wonder it is that we, who once were as the prodigal son in the far country, wasting our substance in riotous living, or perhaps even herding among the swine—are now welcomed at our Father’s board among His happy forgiven children! A few years ago, no, even a few months ago, some of us would not have been spending the Sabbath evening among the Lord’s people in a House of Prayer—and it would never have entered into our thoughts that we should be found sitting as honored guests at His Table! Our ideas of enjoyment, then, were very different from what they are now. The laughter of fools was then in our mouth and perhaps the song of the drunkard issued from our lips. But now, by God’s Grace, a blessed change has been worked in us, for we are washed, we are sanctified, we are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God! So, as we come to this Table of Communion, let us come humbly remembering what we once were, thankfully recollecting what Christ has done for us and earnestly entreating Him to continue and complete His good work in us by purifying us with water even as He has already put away our guilt by His blood! And to Him shall be the Glory forever and ever! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
I JOHN 5.**

**Verse 1.** *Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.* [See Sermon #979, Volume 17—FAITH AND REGENERATION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Take comfort, Believer, from that declaration! You have accepted Jesus as the Christ, the anointed of God, so the Apostle affirms that you are “born of God.” It may be only lately that you have been born-again. You may be only a babe in Grace, but if you have a true faith in Christ as God’s Anointed, you are “born of God.”

**1.** *And everyone that loves Him who begot, loves him also that is begotten of Him.* If you truly love God, you also love His well-beloved and only-begotten Son—and you also love all His children! There cannot be a true love to the Father and a hatred to His family, that is impossible. Judge, therefore, by this test whether you love God or not.

**2, 3.** *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments and His commandments are not grievous.* Love is a practical thing. Love without obedience is a mere pretense. True love shows itself by seeking to please the one who is loved. May God the Holy Spirit work in us perfect obedience to the commands of God, that we may prove that we really do love Him!

**4.** *For whatever is born of God overcomes the world: and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.* [See Sermons #14, Volume 1—THE VICTORY OF FAITH and #2757, Volume 47—VICTORIOUS FAITH—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] This is the conquering weapon! He who truly believes in Jesus cannot be overthrown by the combined forces of the world, the flesh and the devil! Remember the lesson that Haman learned when he contended in vain against Mordecai because Mordecai was of the seed of the Jews—and learn that they who belong to Christ shall, like Christ, be more than conquerors!

**5.** *Who is he that overcomes the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God?* Let that Truth of God be firmly fixed in your mind and nerve you in your conflict with the world. The old cry, *Athanasius contra mundum*, “Athanasius against the world,” may be uttered by every Believer in Jesus into *Christianus contra mundum*. “Who is he that overcomes the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”

**6, 7.** *This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ, not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that bears witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit: and these Three are One.* Thus all the Persons in the blessed Trinity confirm the faith of the Christian—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit bear united witness to the faith which God, Himself, gives us.

**8.** *And there are three that bear witness on earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.* [See Sermon #1187, Volume 20—THE THREE WITNESSES—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Three candles in the room, but the light is one. Three witnesses to our heart, but the witness is the same. If we have the witness of the Spirit, the water, and the blood, we know that we have received the Truth of God!

**9, 10.** *If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son. He that believes on the Son of God has the witness in himself.* [See Sermons #1250, Volume 21—THE PRIEST DISPENSED WITH and #1428, Volume 24—THE TRUE POSITION OF THE WITNESS WITHIN—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] What better witness than this, could he have?

**10.** *He that believes not God has made Him a liar*—[See Sermon #1207, Volume 20—A SOLEMN IMPEACHMENT OF UNBELIEVERS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] He need not actually say that God is a liar—the fact that he does not believe Him has practically made out that God is a liar. How many of us are there to whom this passage applies? “He that believes not God has made Him a liar”—

**10.** *Because he believes not the record that God gave of His Son.* Is this true concerning anyone here? If so, perhaps you have not been aware of the extent of your guilt. You have remained unbelievers out of sheer carelessness, out of neglect of the Word. I pray you, rest not in such a state of mind and heart now that you are informed by the Spirit of God that by your unbelief, you are making God a liar! Who would willfully commit that great sin? Let us shudder at the thought of the bare possibility of such guilt as this!

**11.** *And this is the record, that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.* Our only hope lies in Christ! But there is life for us in Christ and life eternal, if we do but believe in Him!

**12.** *He that has the Son, has life, and he that has not the Son of God has not life.* You exist, and you always will exist, but true life is not yours if you have not Christ as your Savior. Life is something infinitely superior to mere existence! “He that has the Son, has life, and he that has not the Son of God has not life.”

**13-15.** *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may believe on the name of the Son of God. And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us: and if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him.* A very wonderful thing is prayer, yet it is not every man’s prayer that is heard. But he that has the life of God within him shall have his petitions granted because the Holy Spirit will move him to ask in accordance with the will of God!

**16-18.** *If any man sees his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and He shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death. We know that whatever is born of God sins not; but he that is begotten of God keeps himself, and the Wicked One touches him not.* He who has committed the sin which is unto death has no desire for forgiveness. He will never repent, he will never seek faith in Christ, but he will continue hardened and unbelieving. He will henceforth never be the subject of holy influences, for he has crossed over into that dark region of despair where hope and mercy never come!

Perhaps some of you think that you have committed that unpardonable sin and are at this moment grieving over it. If so, it is clear that you cannot have committed that sin, or else you could not grieve over it! If you have any fear concerning it, you have not committed that sin which is unto death, for even *fear* is a sign of life! Whoever repents of sin and

trusts in Jesus Christ is freely and fully forgiven, therefore it is clear that he has not committed a sin which will not be forgiven. There is much in this passage to make us prayerful and watchful, but there is nothing here to make a single troubled heart feel anything like despair. He that is born-again, born from above, can never commit this unpardonable sin. He is kept from it—“the Wicked One” cannot even touch him, for he is preserved by Sovereign Grace against this dreadful damage to his soul!

You need not be curious to enquire what this unpardonable sin is. I will give you an old illustration of mine concerning it. You may sometimes have seen a notice put up on certain estates in the country, “Man-traps and spring guns set here,” but if so, did you ever go round to the front door of the mansion and say, “If you please, will you tell me where the man-traps are, and whereabouts the spring guns are set?” If you had asked that question, the answer would have been, “It is the very purpose of this warning not to tell you where they are, for you have no business to trespass there at all.” So, “all unrighteousness is sin,” and you are warned to keep clear of it. “There is a sin unto death,” but you are not told what that sin is on purpose that you may, by the Grace of God, keep clear of sin altogether!

**19-21.** *And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in wickedness. And we know that the Son of God is come, and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. Little children keep yourselves from idols. Amen.* After the Reformation in England, there was a certain part of the Church called the rood-loft, where the crucifix used to be, and it was ordered by the Reformers, when “the holy rood” was taken away, that these words should be printed in capital letters in its place—

“LITTLE CHILDREN KEEP YOURSELVES FROM IDOLS.” This was an admirable arrangement and this text might very profitably be put up in a good many Ritualistic churches now, instead of the *Agnus Dei* and the crucifix—“Little children, keep yourselves from idols.” Might we not also say to many a mother and many a father concerning their children, and to many a lover of money and hunger after gold, “Keep yourselves from idols”? Idolatry will intrude itself in one form or another. Some idolize *themselves*— they look in the mirror and there see the face of their god! O beware of all idolatry! “Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.” We may very well say, “Amen,” to that!

—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 THREE WITNESSES

## NO. 1187

A SERMON DELIVERED OF LORD'S DAY MORNING, AUGUST 9, 1874,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“There are three that bear witness on earth, the Spirit, and the water,  
and the blood: and these three agree in one.”*  
1 John 5:8.

CHRISTIANITY puts forth very lofty claims. She claims to be the true faith and the only true one. She avows her teachings to be Divine and therefore Infallible, while for her great Teacher, the Son of God, she demands Divine worship and the unreserved confidence and obedience of men. Her commands are issued to every creature and though, at present, her authority is rejected by millions of mankind, she confidently looks forward to a time when the Truth of God shall obtain universal dominion and Jesus the Lord shall take unto Himself His great power and reign. Now, to justify such high claims, the Gospel ought to produce strong evidence, and it does. It does not lack for external evidences, these are abundant, and since many learned men have spent their lives in elaborating them, there is less need for me to attempt a summary of them.

In these days scarcely a stone is turned over among yonder eastern reins which does not proclaim the truth of the Word of God, and the further men look into either history or Nature, the more manifest is the truth of Scriptural statements. The armory of external evidences is well stored with weapons of proof. The Gospel also bears within itself its own evidence—it has a self-proving power. It is so pure, so holy, so altogether above the inventive capacity of fallen man, that it must be of God. But neither with these external or internal evidences have we to do this morning. Rather I call your attention to the three witnesses which are spoken of in the text, three great witnesses still among us, whose evidence proves the truth of our religion, the Deity of our Lord and the future supremacy of the faith.

Our text speaks of three witnesses, the Spirit, the water and the blood—may the Holy Spirit who is our Interpreter, lead us into the full meaning of this very remarkable passage.

I. I shall note, first, that OUR LORD HIMSELF WAS ATTESTED BY THESE THREE WITNESSES. If you will carefully read in the 29<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Book of Exodus, or in the eighth chapter of the Book of Leviticus, you will see that when a priest was ordained, (and a priest was a type of Christ), three things were always used—he was washed with water in every case, a sacrifice was brought and his ear, his thumb and his toe were touched with blood. And then he was anointed with oil, in token of that unction of the Spirit with which the coming High Priest of our profession would be anointed. So that every priest came by the anointing Spirit, by water and by blood, as a matter of type. And if Jesus Christ is, indeed, the Priest that was to come, He will be known by these three signs.



Godly men in the olden times also well understood that there was no putting away of sin except with these three things, in proof of which we will quote David's prayer, "Purge me with hyssop"—that is, the hyssop dipped in blood—"and I shall be clean; wash me"—there is the water—"and I shall be whiter than snow." And then, "Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation and uphold me with Your free Spirit." Thus the blood, the water and the Spirit were recognized of old as necessary to cleanse us from guilt. And if Jesus of Nazareth is, indeed, able to save His people from their sins, He must come with the triple gift—the Spirit, the water and the blood.

Now it was evidently so. Our Lord was attested by *the Spirit*. The Spirit of God bore witness to Christ in the types and prophecies, "Holy men of old spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." And Jesus Christ answers to those prophecies as exactly as a well-made key answers to the wards of a lock. By the power of the Holy Spirit our Lord's humanity was fashioned and prepared for Him, for the angel said to Mary, "The Holy Spirit shall come upon you and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you; therefore, also, that holy Thing which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God." When our Lord, in due time, commenced His public ministry, the Spirit of God descended upon Him like a dove, and rested upon Him. And a Voice was heard from Heaven saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

This was, indeed, one of the surest seals of our Lord's Messiahship, for it had been given by the Spirit of Prophecy unto John as a token—"upon whom you shall see the Spirit descending and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizes with the Holy Spirit." The Spirit abode in our Lord without measure throughout His whole public career, so that He is described as full of the Spirit and led of the Spirit. Therefore His life and ministry were full of power. How truthfully He said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind." Well said Peter, "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him."

Mighty signs and miracles were the witness of the Divine Spirit to the mission of the Lord Jesus. The Spirit abode with our Lord all His life, and to crown all, after He had died and risen again, the Holy Spirit gave the fullest witness by descending in full power upon the disciples at Pentecost. The Lord had promised to baptize His disciples with the Holy Spirit and they tarried at Jerusalem in expectation of the gift—nor were they disappointed—for all of a sudden "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Those cloven tongues of fire and the "rushing mighty wind," were sacred tokens that He who had ascended was Lord and God! The Apostles said, "We are witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to them that obey Him."

The word of the Apostles, through the Holy Spirit, convinced men "of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment," as the Master had foretold. And

then the Spirit comforted the penitents and they believed in the exalted Savior and were baptized the same day. The words of Jesus were abundantly fulfilled—"When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceeds from the Father, He shall testify of Me." Thus from our Lord's birth, throughout His life, and after His Ascension, the Holy Spirit bore conspicuous witness to Him. It is also manifest that our Lord came with *water*, too. I have shown you that every priest was washed with water. Our Lord was not unclean, and therefore one would have thought He might dispense with this. But to "fulfill all righteousness" His first step was to be washed in Jordan by the hands of John the Baptist, coming thus to the door of His ministry by that Baptism in water which indicates that by death, burial and resurrection, He was about to save His people.

As soon as that Baptism had been accomplished, yes, and before that, you could see that He had come with water, for by water is signified that clean, pure, hallowed life which the outward washing was meant to typify. His first years of obscurity were years of holiness. And His later years of service were spotless. "In Him was no sin." Who exercised a ministry so pure as His? Where else can we find such immaculate holiness? He came not by the water, merely as a symbol, but by that which the water meant—by unsullied purity of life. His doctrine was as pure as His example. Point me to a single *syllable*, of all His teaching, which would create, foster, or excuse sin! He was the Friend of sinners, but not the apologist for their sins. His tenderness to sinners was that of a physician whose aim is to remove the disease. His whole doctrine is fitly comparable to purifying and life-giving water—and it operated upon men's hearts in that manner.

In this last sense, especially, He came by water. It is very remarkable how John's Gospel is both the exposition and the text of John's First Epistle, for if you turn to it you find our Lord Jesus coming by water at the outset of His teaching. To Nicodemus He says a man must be "born of water and of the Spirit." To the woman of Samaria He speaks at large of "living water." And on the great day of the feast He says, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink." In His ministry He not only issued the invitation, but to all who believed on Him He gave freely of the water of the Fountain of Life. Thus our Lord came by water in the sense of communicating a new, pure and purifying life to men—for the water is the *emblem* of the new life which springs up within the soul of Believers—a life fresh and sparkling, leaping up from the eternal fountains of the Divine Existence.

It is a life which will flow on forever and widen and deepen like Ezekiel's river. It will increase in fullness of power and joy until it unites with the ocean of immortal bliss. Jesus came to pour forth this living flood among the sons of men. Blessed be His name! Our Lord closed His life with washing His disciples' feet—a fit conclusion to a life which had, by its example, been cleansing throughout—and still remains as the most grand corrective of the corrupt examples of the world. Even after death our Lord retained the instructive symbol by giving forth from His pierced heart, water as well as blood, which John evidently thought very significant. For when

he wrote concerning it he said, "He that saw it bore record, and his record is true: and he knows what he says is true, that you might believe." So that from the Jordan to the Cross, both the symbol and the substance were with our great Master, while His own personal purity and His gift of life to others proved His mission to be from above.

With Jesus also was *the blood*. This distinguished Him from John the Baptist, who came by water. Jesus came, "not by water only, but by water and blood." We must not prefer any one of the three witnesses to another, but what a wonderful testimony to Christ was the blood! From the very first, He came with blood, for John the Baptist cried, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world!" Now, the lamb which takes away sin is a *slaughtered* lamb, a *bleeding* lamb—so that at the time when the baptismal waters were upon Him—John saw that He must bleed for human sin. In His ministry there was often a clear testimony to His future sufferings and shedding of blood, for to the assembled crowd He said, "Except a man eat My flesh and drink My *blood*, there is no life in him."

To His disciples He spoke of the decease which He should shortly accomplish at Jerusalem. Then at the last, taking all our sins upon His shoulders, in the agony of Gethsemane, the blood bore witness that He was, indeed, the Lamb of God, and on yonder tree where He—

***"Bore all Incarnate God could bear,  
With strength enough, but none to spare."***

And He disinterestedly died for His enemies, unselfishly suffering an ignominious doom that He might redeem those who had rejected and scoffed at Him! His invincible love triumphed over death, itself, and endured Divine wrath without repining, as none but the Son of God could have done. Now Messiah was to be cut off, but not for Himself—He was to make His soul an offering for sin. He was to make His grave with the wicked and lie in the heart of the earth. The blood of the Covenant was to be shed, the Paschal Victim was to be slain, the Shepherd was to be smitten, the Lamb was to be led to the slaughter—and therefore only by the shedding of His blood could Jesus prove Himself to be the Messiah so long foretold.

However pure the life He led, had He never died He could not have been the Savior appointed to bear the iniquity of us all. The blood was needed to complete the witness. The blood must flow, with the water—the suffering with the serving. The most pious example would not have proven Him to be the Divine Shepherd—if He had not laid down His life for the sheep. Take away the Atonement and Jesus is no more than any other Prophet—the essential point of His mission is gone. It is evident that He who was to come was to finish transgression and to make reconciliation for iniquity. Now, this could not be done except by an expiation—and as Jesus has made such an expiation by His own blood—we know Him to be the Christ of God. His blood is the seal of His mission, the very life of His work!

I have thus shown that our Lord, Himself, was attested by these three sacred witnesses.

**II.** Now, secondly, may God the Holy Spirit help me to show that THESE THREE REMAIN AS STANDING WITNESSES TO HIM TO ALL TIME. And first, *the Holy Spirit* is witness at this hour that the religion of Jesus is the Truth of God and that Jesus is the Son of God. I say not that

He bears such witness everywhere, for there are many that preach in the wisdom of *men* and in carnal excellency of speech. God the Holy Spirit does not work with them because He has chosen other instruments. I do not say that He bears witness to the Truth of God when it is defiled by a lukewarm ministry and a prayerless Church—but I do say that the Spirit of God, wherever Jesus is fully preached, is the great Witness to the truth of His Word—for what does He do?

By His Divine energy He convinces men of the Truth of the Gospel—and these so convinced are not only persons who, through their education are likely to believe it, but men like Saul of Tarsus who abhor the whole thing! He pours His influences upon men and infidelity melts away like the iceberg in the Gulf Stream! He touches the indifferent and careless, and they repent, believe and obey the Savior! He makes proud men tremble and wicked men quake for fear. The conversions which are worked where Christ is truly preached are the miracles which attest the Truth of the Gospel! He who can make the harlot to be chaste, the drunk to be sober, the thief to be honest, the malicious to be forgiving, the covetous to be generous and, above all, the self-righteous to be humble, is, indeed, the Christ of God! And when the Spirit does all this and more by the Gospel, He bears conclusive witness to the power of the Cross!

Then, too, the Spirit goes forth among Believers and by them He bears witness to our Lord and His Gospel. Great is the variety of His operations, for which cause He is called the Seven Spirits of God. But in each one He witnesses to Jesus. Whether He quickens, consoles, enlightens, refreshes, sanctifies, anoints, or inflames the soul, He does it always by taking the things of Christ and revealing them to us. How mightily does He comfort the saints! Have you not been consoled by Him in deep distress? Have you not endured the loss of dear ones without repining because your heart has been sustained by the Comforter? Now, that wondrous influence which worked peace in you through the Gospel, must have confirmed you in the belief of the Truth of God! And others who have seen your serenity under heavy trial, if they are not convinced, at least are led to inquire what strange thing this is which makes the Christian suffer without repining! The Spirit bears witness to Christ, then, when He comforts the saints.

And He does the same when He gives them guidance, enlightenment and elevation of soul. I will, however, for a moment, dwell upon “utterance.” Some reject the idea, but for all that it is true that in the same hour, it is given to God’s servants to speak in His name. Look at the martyr times! How wondrously feeble women like Anne Askew baffled all their foes! How ignorant weavers stood up before bishops and doctors and confounded them! Even now, in answer to prayer, the Spirit comes upon chosen men who yield themselves to His influence and bears them along with a whirlwind, making them eloquent in the Divine sense, speaking out of their hearts that which God gives them to deliver. Some of us know this, for we have cast ourselves upon that eternal Spirit and thoughts have been given us, and mouth and utterance, also.

By this, also, the Spirit bears witness to the Truth of our faith. I have not time to go into all the operations of the Spirit, only let me say that His sustaining, His consoling influences have been very especially seen in

persecuting times. Men of God have been subjected to tortures which our mind finds it painful to dwell upon—yet they have not been vanquished by their foes. Neither nakedness, nor peril, nor sword have separated them from the love of God. Blandina tossed in a net by a wild bull and burned with hot plates of brass, wearies out her tormentors! And Lawrence, on his gridiron, finds joy enough for mirth! One cries aloud amid the flames, “None but Jesus!” And another claps his blazing hands and shouts victory as his soul quits the body!

The Spirit of God in the Church has preserved her amid furious and long-continued persecutions—filling the saints with a dauntless courage and a serene invincibility which has both amazed and alarmed their enemies. So mightily has this patience convinced the world that it has passed into a proverb, “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.” With equal power does the Spirit of God bear witness to the Gospel in great revivals of religion. How wondrously did the Spirit of God testify to Christ during the Reformation! Scarcely had Luther opened his mouth to proclaim the Good News than straightway men received it eagerly! They sang Psalms as they plowed the field or threw the shuttle. The precious Word of God was in all men’s mouths. They said that angels carried Luther’s writings all over the world—it was not so, but the ever-blessed Spirit makes the Truth of God to fly like flames of fire.

So it was in Whitfield’s day and in many revivals which we have read of, and some which we have seen. Sometimes men have been struck down and convulsed—at other times, without outward violence, they have been, with equal power, renewed in their souls. Who that has been at Edinburgh and seen many hundreds of people rushing through the streets to one appointed Meeting Place, to fall on their knees and cry for mercy all at once, could doubt but what the Gospel must be true? The Spirit of God, Omnipotent in the realm of spirits, and able to guide the human will without violating it, has enlightened men’s darkened minds and made them see that Jesus Christ *is* God and Savior! Overwhelmed by the love of Jesus, they have yielded at once to His commands! A formal Church, with a minister to stand up and talk officially, and a people who come and go mechanically, bears no witness to religion, but rather creates infidels. But where we see what some have called, “real Methodist fire,” and others, “the old Protestant enthusiasm,” or, rather, where we see *the Holy Spirit* attended by marvelous conversion, deep repentance, singular illumination, the angelic and general love—we have indisputable evidence of the Divinity of our faith!

The next abiding witness in the Church is *the water*—not the water of Baptism, but the new life implanted in Christians, for *that* is the sense in which John’s Master had used the word, “water.” “The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.” Where the Spirit of God comes, He creates in the man a new nature—pure, bright, fresh, vigorous, like a fountain—and the fact that this new nature does exist in multitudes of men is a standing evidence that the Gospel is true—for no other religion makes men new creatures! No other religion even *pretends* to do it! They may propose to *improve* the old nature, but none of them can say, “Behold, I make all things new.”

This is the sole prerogative of Jesus our Lord. The existence of the new life is matter of fact. We, ourselves, know many whose lives are pure and blameless. They have faults before God, but before the eyes of men they are perfect and upright, blameless and harmless. The godly lives of Christians are good evidence of the Truth of the Gospel. Did I hear someone object, "But many professors of Christianity are not holy"? I grant you it, but, then, everybody knows that they are inconsistent with the religion which they profess. If I heard of a lustful Muslim, I should not consider him inconsistent with Mohammedanism—is he not allowed his harem? If I heard of a licentious Hindu, I should not consider him to be dishonoring his religion, for some of its sacred rites are disgusting and unmentionable. The same may be said of all the idolatries.

But everybody knows that if a man professes to be a Christian and he is guilty of a gross fault, the world rings with the scandal, because it recognizes the inconsistency of his conduct with his profession. Though some may, at first, breath of a slander and blazon it abroad and say, "This is your religion," the world knows it is *not* our religion, but the lack of it! Why do they, themselves, make such a wonder of a fallen professor? Are adulterers so very scarce that such a noise should be made when a minister is, truly or falsely, charged with the crime? The world's conscience knows that the religion of Jesus is the religion of *purity*—and if professed Christians fall into uncleanness the world knows that such a course of action does not arise out of the religion of Christ—they know it is diametrically the opposite to it. The Gospel is perfect, and did we wholly yield to its sway, sin would be abhorred *by* us and slain *in* us, and we should live on earth the life of the perfect ones above. Oh, may God produce in His Church, more and more, the witness of the new life, the testimony of holiness, love, meekness, temperance, godliness and Grace—these are the Gospel's logic—its syllogisms and demonstrations, which none can refute.

The third abiding witness is *the blood*. The blood of Christ is still on the earth, for when Jesus bled it fell upon the ground and was never gathered up. O Earth, you still are bespattered with the blood of the murdered Son of God! And if you reject Him, this will curse you. But, O Humanity, you are blessed with the drops of that precious blood, and believing in Him it saves you! Now, does the blood really save from guilt, terror, and despair? Does it operate among men? Let us ask our memory. Its answer is clear and full. I speak what I know and testify what I have seen. I have preached the blood of Jesus Christ and the love of the Incarnate God, and I have seen proud, stout-hearted men shed tears in floods! The rock has wept when smitten with this wondrous rod of the Cross. Men who could resist yon thunders of Sinai have melted before the tender notes of Calvary.

Yes, and, on the other hand, I have seen the desponding, whose soul chose strangling rather than life, look up to that dear Cross and their faces have been brightened—and an unspeakable joy has chased away despair! The blood has worked miracles of consolation! We have seen men at war with God and opposed to holiness, to whom the blood has spoken—they have seen a God reconciled to them—and they have been rec-

onciled to Him. We have seen them beneath the spell of the blood throw down their weapons and cry—

***“I yield, by Jesus’ love subdued—  
Who can resist its charms?  
And throw myself to be reserved  
Into my Savior’s arms.”***

The blood of Jesus, after speaking peace to the conscience, inflames the heart with fervent love and full often leads men to high deeds of consecration, self-denial and self-sacrifice, such as can scarcely be understood till they are traced back to that amazing love which bled upon the tree!

Well might the martyrs bleed for Him who was crucified for them! The blood is working mightily in men to will and to do for the glory of God. Yes, Brothers and Sisters, the blood has such a melting, such a converting, such a subduing, such a sanctifying, such a joy-creating power to every conscience which hears its matchless voice that it remains, with the Spirit and the water, a convincing witness to the Christ of God!

**III.** In the third place, let us observe that THIS TRIPLE, YET UNITED WITNESS, IS PECULIARLY FORCIBLE WITHIN BELIEVING HEARTS. John tells us, “He that believes on the Son of God has the Witness in himself.” Now, Brothers and Sisters, these three witnesses bear testimony in our souls abidingly. I speak not of years ago, but of last night, when you bowed your knee in prayer and prayed and were heard. Did not the Spirit, when He helped you to pray, bear witness that the Gospel was no lie? Was not the answer to your prayer good evidence? And that Sabbath morning when you prayed that you might gather up your thoughts and forget the week’s cares—and you did so by the Spirit’s aid—did not this sacred rest of your soul prove that Christ is, indeed, a Savior?

Sitting here this morning as your soul has burned within you, and your Master has been near you, has not that communion, given you of the Spirit, been to you a fresh witness to Christ? The other day, when you were so sad and the Holy Spirit comforted you—when you were so rebellious and He made you quiet, even as a weaned child—did not this confirm your faith? The other day when you were so in the dark and He enlightened you. When you were in such dilemmas and He guided you—had you not, then, fresh evidence that there is a life, a power, a Divinity about the Gospel? These sweet feelings of yours came to you by the Spirit of God revealing Jesus to you! He did not comfort you nor elevate you by the Law, nor by the flesh—but by the love of God shed abroad in your heart—that precious love which comes streaming down from the Cross of Jesus Christ our Lord!

Ah, dear Friends, I feel sick to death of the common talk about the healthiness of doubting and the beauty of “modern thought.” This talk is only the self-praise of a set of concealed Infidels treacherously lurking in God’s Church! There is a short way with skeptics which I commend to your use. Ask them—Do they know the Holy Spirit? Did they ever feel Him in their own souls? If they say, “No,” we believe them. So let them believe us when we declare that we *do* feel the operations of the Holy Spirit. There is the end of the controversy. If they are honest, so are we, and we are witnesses to the Divine working of the Holy Spirit in our own souls. If they

never felt His power, their negative statements cannot in the least degree affect the truth of ours.

The next witness in us is *the water*, or the new and pure life. Do you feel the inner life, my Brethren? I know you do—you feel it fighting, struggling, contending—sometimes winning—and at other times captive and groaning. You feel it often aspiring, desiring, hungering, thirsting, yearning, sighing—and sometimes singing, shouting, dancing and leaping up to Heaven. You are conscious that you are not what you used to be. You are conscious of a new life within your soul which you never knew till the date of your conversion—and that new life within you is the living and incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever. The fact that you know you are born of God forbids a doubt as to the Truth by which you were begotten—the sense that you are forgiven forbids all skepticism as to the fact that Christ is come in the flesh and that He is the Son of God—and that His Gospel is the Truth of God. To you all these things are clear.

Witnessing within us is, also, *the blood*. Beloved, this is a witness which never fails, speaking in us better things than the blood of Abel. It gives us such peace that we can sweetly live and calmly die. It gives us such access to God that sometimes, when we have felt its power, we have drawn as near to our Father as if we had seen Him face to face. And oh, what safety the blood causes us to enjoy! We feel that we cannot perish while the crimson canopy of Atonement by blood hangs over our head! What victory it gives us, making us cry, “Thanks be unto God, who gives us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” These are mysterious sensations, not to be accounted for by fleshly enthusiasm, for they are strongest when we are calmest. They are not to be accounted for by any natural predilections to such emotions, for we are, by nature, as easily perturbed as others, and as apt to forget Divine things. In times of trial we have looked to Jesus’ flowing wounds and we have been comforted. We have found communion with Jesus to be so blessed that we would not envy Gabriel his angelhood!

Now, then, you young men, you need not read, “Paley’s Evidences.” The evidence of the Spirit, the water and the blood is better. You do not have to study, “Butler’s Analogy,” though you may if you please, but such books, excellent as they are, only prove the skin and shell of our religion—the vital matter is the *kernel*. If you come by simple prayer and ask to have the blood of Jesus applied to your soul—and if the Spirit of God works mightily in your spirit so that you obtain a new inner principle and lead a new life as the result—you will have the best evidence in the world! You will laugh at doubters and make a fire of Colenso’s objections! *And*, “Essays and Reviews,” Tyndal’s challenge, Huxley’s dreams and all that heap of worthless muck which has polluted the Church and defiled the souls of men.

O heavens, may we never live to see the day in which ministers tell us that it is good to doubt! When poets almost deify that very skepticism of which John says makes God a liar—and which, therefore, is to be denounced as an insult to God and the curse of the age! Go, fling your doubts away, you doting men and dreaming women, and bow like penitents at Jesus’ feet, for there you will find far more than all your fancied



learning can bestow! But if you will *not* do this, yet know that in vain you arraign your Maker! In vain do you re-judge His judgment and act as if you were the gods of God!

Thus I have tried to show that these three witnesses testify in our souls. I beg you now to notice *their order*.

**IV.** These three bear witness in us thus, the Spirit, the water, and the blood. Why in this order? Because in this manner they operate. The Spirit of God first enters the heart, perhaps long before the man knows that such is the case. The Spirit creates the *new life* which repents and seeks the Savior, that is the water. And that new life flies to the blood of Jesus and obtains peace. The Spirit mightily working, the new life is secretly created and then faith in the blood is begotten—and the triple witness is complete. We have also found this to be the order of our consolation. I have said to myself, “Do I know that the Spirit of God is in me?” And I have been afraid that it is not. I have then turned to my inner life, the water, and have not always been certain concerning it. But when I have looked away to the blood, all has been clear enough! Jesus died. I throw myself once again into His arms. When I do not know whether I have the Spirit and when I am in doubt as to whether I have the living water, I still know that I believe in the blood and this brings perfect peace.

Having observed their order, now note *their combination*. “These three agree in one,” therefore every true Believer should have the witness of each one. And if each one does not witness in due time, there is cause for grave suspicion. For instance, persons have arisen who have said the Spirit of God has led them to do this and that. Of them we inquire what are your lives? Does the water bear witness? Are you pardoned? Does the blood testify for you? If these questions cannot be answered, they may rave as they like about the Spirit of God, but the witness to their salvation is open to the most grave suspicion! We have known some who will say, “Look at my life. I am very different from what I was. I am a sober, honest, excellent man.” Yes, but do you rest in the blood of Jesus? Practical evidence is good, but it must arise out of *faith*. If you do not believe in Jesus you have not the essential witness and your case is not proven.

Many also say to us, “I believe that Jesus died for me,” but we must ask them concerning their lives. Are you cleansed in act? Are you an altered man? For remember, unless the water speaks with the blood, you have not the three-fold testimony. There may be some who say, “Well, we believe in Jesus and our lives are changed.” But remember, you may say that, but is it so? If so, the *Spirit of God* has changed you—if you have merely excited yourself into the *belief* that it is so, or if you were born by your own free will—you have not the Witness, because the truly saved are born not of blood, nor of the will of man, but of the Spirit of God.

The three Witnesses agree in one. He that believes in pardon by the blood, believes, also, in sanctification by the water. He who rests in Jesus Christ’s blood always honors the Spirit of God, and, on the other hand, he that believes in the Holy Spirit values both the inner life and the cleansing blood. God has joined these three together—let no man put them asunder. The old theologians spoke of *baptismus flaminis*, *baptismus fluminis* and

*baptismus sanguinis*. May we know all these, and rejoice in the Spirit, the flood, and the blood.

**V.** Lastly, THESE WITNESSES CERTIFY TO US THE ULTIMATE TRIUMPH OF OUR RELIGION. Is *the Spirit* working through the Gospel? Then the Gospel will win the day because the Spirit of God is Almighty and complete master over the realm of the mind. He has the power to illuminate the intellect, to win the affections, to curb the will and change the entire nature of man, for He works all things after His own pleasure and, like the wind, He “blows where He wishes.” When He puts forth His Omnipotent energy, none can stand against Him. He has converted 3,000 in a day—and He could as readily convert three million! Or three hundred million! He can do this and He will!

The wind, at times, blows so gently as scarcely to stir the wings of a butterfly, but at another time it rushes in a tornado, sweeping all before it. Do not judge from its soft breath what its full tempest would be, for nothing can stand against the wind when once it speeds forth with power. Let the Spirit of God blow across this land and it will at once drive away the fog of superstition and the clouds of ignorance! The Holy Spirit is compared to fire. What can resist the energy of fire? There may be so little of it that a person may carry it in his lantern, but lo, it sets a city on a blaze! One match contains all the fire on yonder prairie—it is flung into the dry grass, and lo, the heavens, themselves, are scorched with the exceeding heat! Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Is anything too hard for the Lord? Behold, the universe was once chaos, and the Spirit brooded over it and this fair world came forth! Let Him, in like manner, incubate over this chaos of sin, and a new Heaven, and a new earth, in which dwells righteousness, shall rise! The Gospel must conquer because the Holy Spirit, who works with it, is Almighty.

Next, the Gospel must conquer, because of *the water*, which I have explained to be the *new life* of purity. What does John say? “Whatever is born of God overcomes the world.” It is impossible for the Gospel to be vanquished so long as there remains in the world *one* soul that is born of God. Living and incorruptible seed abides forever! Those who would destroy the Church only scatter her living seeds—and when Satan raises a hurricane it only bears those seeds further afield! Satan once sat down for weeks together to scheme, and he called in all the devils one by one till Pandemonium all met in one conclave, and what do you think came of it all? The Papal Inquisition! They set that horrible machine to work to crush out what they called heresy. They said they would ride up to their saddle girths in the blood of Lutherans and they almost kept their promise.

But their cruelty availed not, the living faith survived and their murders and infernal cruelties did but stir the world to a groan of sympathy which helped the progress of the Gospel. They cannot destroy the Gospel! Do not talk about the Pope of Rome, or the Ritualistic or the infidel party destroying the Gospel Church—they can as soon annihilate the Lord, Himself, because the inner life of Christians is a spark struck from the eternal Sun of Life and can never be extinct while God lives.

Lastly, the Gospel must spread and conquer because of *the blood*. Has that power? Oh, yes, I will tell you how. God, the Everlasting Father, has promised to Jesus, by Covenant, of which the blood is the seal, that He “shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.” As surely as Christ died on the Cross, He must sit on a universal throne! God cannot lie to His Son! He cannot mock His wounds, or be deaf to His death-cries! Therefore, Christ must have what His Father has promised Him, and He has said, “Ask of Me and I will give You the heathen for Your inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for Your possession.” They that bow in the wilderness shall bow before Him—and His enemies shall lick the dust—for He must reign until He has put all enemies under His feet.

Beloved, the inference from all this is, if you are not on Christ’s side it is ill with you, for you will be surely conquered in the battle. But, if you are on Christ’s side, never speak hesitatingly or despondingly. When they bring out a new book to disprove Genesis and another to evaporate the Atonement, do not be afraid. As long as the Gospel is in the world the devil will find somebody to write books against it. Take no notice of them—they cannot stand against facts. A philosopher once wrote a book to prove that there is no such thing as matter! And a certain reader believed it till he chanced to knock his head against the bedpost—and then he abandoned the theory.

When a man feels the power of the Holy Spirit, or the power of the inner life, he does not care to argue—he has a homespun philosophy of facts which answers his purpose better. Though others may ground upon him and say, “You are not learned,” he feels that it does not need learning to prove that which is a matter of personal consciousness any more than we need proof that sugar is sweet when we have a piece in our mouths. Do you doubt the Gospel? Try it! The men who speak against the Bible, as a rule, have never read it. Those who rail against Christ do not know Him. And those who deny the efficacy of prayer have never prayed. Nothing is more convincing than fact. Get out of the realm of word-spinning and wind-bag-filling into practical Christian life, proving *personally* that these things are so, and you will soon be convinced by the blessed witness of the Spirit, the water, and the blood!

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 John 5.  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—335, 451, 331.**

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# **FAITH, AND THE WITNESS UPON WHICH IT IS FOUNDED NO. 1213**

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

***“If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God  
is greater: for this is the witness of God which He  
has witnessed of His Son. He that believes in  
the Son of God has the witness in himself:  
he that believes not God, has made Him a liar;  
because he believes not the witness that God  
witnessed of His Son.”  
1 John 5:9, 10.***

YOU observe that I have somewhat corrected the translation. The same word is employed in every case in the original, but for the sake of variety of expression the translators have used four different words in our version and so, instead of improving the sense, which, indeed, never can be in the case of the Holy Spirit's writing, they have rather darkened the meaning. Put the word, “witness,” or, “testimony,” in each case, and you get the true meaning.

Last Thursday night I tried to show the great importance of faith and that while it was a most simple thing it was also most sublime. While it appeared to be weak, it was really the strongest of all motive principles, and produced the most amazing results. If, on this occasion I shall run in the same strain, for me, indeed, it will not be grievous, and for you it will be safe, for we cannot too often review the Truths of God which are the vitals of our holy religion. Faith stands, under the Covenant of Grace, in a leading position among the works of the regenerate man and the gifts of the Spirit of God.

Righteousness is no longer to him that works, but to the man that believes on Him that justifies the ungodly. The promise no longer stands to the man who does these things, that he shall live in them, else we were shut out of it, but, “The just shall live by faith.” God now bids us live by believing in Him. He saw that we were not willing to yield obedience to Him and remained rebellious. Perceiving, with a glance, that the root of that rebellion lay in lack of love to Him and in need of confidence in Him, He now begins, at the very foundation of the whole matter, and by a wondrous act of Grace, to claim our confidence. He gives us proof that He deserves it and then comes to us, and says, “Trust Me. Trust My Son, who has died for you, and you are reconciled to Me by His blood.

“Begin, then, the new life, with confidence in Me as the mainspring of all your actions, and thus shall you be saved. If I threaten you, you will

only revolt more and more. If I strike you, you will sooner die under the rod than repent. Nothing remains with which to influence you but love. And now, in the Person of My Son, I commend My love to you and show you what good intents I have towards you. Come and trust Me. Let us be Friends again. Rely upon what I have worked in the Person of My Son, that you might be forgiven. Trust Him and you are saved.”

Men are willing enough to accept a Gospel which requires them to *do* something. They admire the impossible way of salvation by works. Man is afraid, when Sinai is *altogether* on a smoke, and begs that the terrible words of the Law may not be spoken to him again. And yet he still loves to wander around the foot of Sinai and is unwilling to come unto Mount Zion. The old spirit of Hagar is upon us—and until the Lord causes us to be *born again* we remain children of the bondwoman and will not rejoice in the promise. To accept the gift of Free Grace is contrary to our proud nature! The power of God is needed to induce us to throw down the tools with which we work for salvation and take, with joyful hands, the full, free and finished salvation which Jesus bestows on all who trust Him. One would have thought this plan of trusting in Jesus for salvation would be joyfully accepted by all, but, instead of that, no man receives the witness of God, though it is Infallible.

I wish to speak, this evening, a little upon the grounds of testimony—the *reasons of faith*—and may God grant, while we speak about them, Believers may be refreshed and unbelievers may be led to Jesus! First, in our text, we have *the external evidence*, or the witness of God *to us*—“If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which He has witnessed of His Son.” Then, secondly, we shall consider *the internal evidence*, or the witness of God *in us*. “He that believes on the Son has the witness in himself.” And then, thirdly, we shall *inquire how we are treating the witness of God*, especially dealing with those of whom we find it said, “He that believes not God, has made Him a liar, because he believes not the witness that God witnessed of His Son.”

**I.** First, then, dear Friends, since our great business is that we believe God, let us see what reason we have for believing Him. THE EXTERNAL EVIDENCE given is stated in the first verse of the text, as the evidence of God to us, and it is prefaced by the remark that, “*we receive the witness of men.*” We are accustomed to receive the witness of men. David said, “All men are liars,” but he spoke in haste. There would be no history if we did not receive the witness of men. If we neglected human evidence there could be no courts of law, no trading between man and man except for cash money. Confidence would cease and the bands which unite the social fabric would be snapped. We do and must believe the testimony of men as a general rule—and it is only right that we should account witnesses honest till they have proven themselves false.

The principle may very readily be pushed too far, and we may take the witness of men and find ourselves deceived. Still, for all that, the evidence

of honest men is weighty and, “in the mouth of two or three witnesses the whole shall be established.” Now God has been pleased to give us a measure of the witness of men with regard to His Son, Jesus Christ. We have the witness of such men as the four Evangelists and the 12 Apostles. These men *saw* Jesus Christ. Some of them were familiar with Him for years. They saw evidence of His Deity, for they saw Him walk on water and heard Him say to the winds and the waves, “Peace, be still,” and there was a great calm! These witnesses say that they saw Him heal lepers with a touch, open blind men’s eyes and even raise the dead.

Three of them tell us that they were on the Mountain of Transfiguration with Him and saw His Glory, and heard a Voice out of Heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son: hear you Him.” These persons were very unsophisticated individuals. They mostly belonged to a class of men who are rather celebrated for their bluff honesty, namely, fishermen. They certainly had nothing to gain by saying that they saw all these things—in fact, they had everything to lose. Their names are famous, now, but they could little have reckoned upon such fame. And they do not appear to have been men who cared about fame at all.

They lost their all. They were despised and maltreated, and most of them met with a cruel death on account of having borne witness to what they saw. Their witness is by no means of a doubtful character. They were very positive that they saw the things of which they are witnesses. One of them has said, “he that saw it bore record, and he knows that his witness is true, and he knows what he says true.” No part of history has come down to us so well attested as the life of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Now, a man takes Tacitus, and he believes what Tacitus tells him, although, very likely, Tacitus did not see the things and only got them second hand. But as a reputable historian, his witness is received. Surely the witness of Matthew and Mark, and Luke and John, and Peter and James and Paul is as good as the witness of Julius Caesar or Tacitus! And it is rendered the more trustworthy from the fact that they *died* for adhering to it—which neither Caesar nor Tacitus were made to do. Besides, for the Gospel narrative we have many witnesses—the number of names was about 120—and they all agreed and stood fast. And even the one who did, for a time, seem to forsake his testimony, bad as he was, returned to it and threw down the money for which he had sold his Master and said, “I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood.”

We have the witness of men as to the facts that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, lived and died and rose again and ascended into Heaven. Further, we have the testimony of men as to the present power of that same Jesus to forgive men their trespasses and to save them from the power of sin. From the first day when our Lord was taken up till now, men and women have come forward and have said, “We were once lovers of sin. Whatever our neighbors are, such were we, but we are washed! We are sanctified! And all this by faith in Jesus.” Those who knew these people have con-

fessed the change, although they have often been, at the same time, angry with them for it. They have acknowledged their virtues and have persecuted them on that account.

Now these converted people have stood to it that they obtained a new heart and a right spirit through believing in Jesus. They have been put in prison for saying this and for declaring that faith in the crucified Savior had delivered them from the dominion of sin, from despondency and despair. That it had made them love God, given them hope and joy and peace, taught them to love their neighbors, to do justice and to expect a home in Heaven. These people have been among the best in the world, all along, even as we read in history of the Albigenses and the Waldenses, or the Vaudois or the Lollards. They are described as detestable fanatics and enthusiasts, but they are admitted to have been sober, honest, chaste, quiet citizens and industrious parents—so that the very kings who put them to death regretted that it was necessary to sacrifice such subjects.

Now, it is a very singular thing that these people should so constantly and continuously come forward and say, “The witness of God is true. He has sent His Son into the world and those that believe on Him are saved. We are saved and we will burn at Smithfield, rot in the Lollards’ tower, or lie in a dungeon till the moss grows on our eyelids—but we will never deny or cease to assert this Gospel.” All ages have supplied the witness of men. Some of you, beloved Friends, have had this witness in a very pointed and practical manner. I may be addressing one who is irreligious, but he never can forget his mother, or his sister, or some other beloved relative now gone to Heaven. You are never able to laugh at religion, though you do not believe in it, because these sainted ones rise up before your mind.

You are persuaded that they were under a delusion, but, for all that, they were so happy that you half wish you were deluded, too. You would sooner put your children in a school with godly people than with skeptics like yourself—you know you would! There is a something about a Christian which is a witness to you. To me, I must confess, the witness of the lives of some Christians has been wonderfully confirmatory when I have seen how they suffer without repining and even bless the Lord in the midst of agony. If this is the essence of the Christian religion it must be true! And so, on dying beds, when we have seen the remarkable peace and, sometimes, the extraordinary joy of persons departing, we have felt quite sure that faith in Jesus is no fiction.

I have heard dying children speak like doctors of divinity about the things of God! I have heard dying women who were quite uneducated, speak of the world unseen in a style of inspiration which has struck me with awe. I do not believe that a faith which enables a man to die triumphantly, rejoicing in his God, or to die calmly in the midst of pain, looking for a world to come, can be, after all, a myth! O, if it were so, and the wise man could prove it was all a mistake, I would almost ask him to forego his work—for this has charmed away our fears and turned our desert life into

a garden of the Lord! The Gospel has smoothed the pillow of the dying and wiped the tears of the desponding! Alas, for you, O Earth, if this could be proven a dream! Then were your sun quenched forever and it had been better for us all that we had never been born!

But it is not so! The witness of men about the things of God is very clear. Some years ago there went into a Methodist class meeting, a lawyer who was a doubter, but at the same time a man of candid spirit. Sitting down on one of the benches, he listened to a certain number of poor people, his neighbors, whom he knew to be honest people. He heard some 13 or 14 of these persons speak about the power of Divine Grace in their souls, and about their conversion and so on. He jotted down the particulars and went home, sat down, and said to himself, "Now, these people all bear witness. I will weigh their evidence." It struck him that if he could get those 12 or 13 people into the witness box, to testify on his side in any question before a court, he could carry anything.

They were persons of different degrees of intellect and education, but they were all of the sort of persons whom he would like to have for witnesses—persons who could bear cross-examination and by their very tone and manner would win the confidence of the jury. "Very well," he said to himself, "I am as much bound to believe these people about their religious experience as about anything else." He did so and that led to his believing on the Lord Jesus Christ with all his heart! Thus, you see, the testimony of God to us does, in a measure, come through men and we are bound to receive it.

But now comes the text—"If we receive the witness of men, *the witness of God is greater.*" God is to be believed if all men contradict Him! "Let God be true and every man a liar." One Word of God ought to sweep away 10,000 words of men, whether they are philosophers of today or sages of antiquity. God's Word against them all, for He knows Infallibly! Of His own Son He knows as none else can. Of our condition before Him, He knows! Of the way to pardon us He knows! There is nothing in God that could lead Him to err or make a mistake—and it were blasphemy to suppose that He would mislead us!

It were an insult to Him, such as we may not venture to perpetrate for a moment, to suppose that He would willfully mislead His poor creatures by a proclamation of mercy which meant nothing, or by presenting to them a Christ who could not redeem them! The Gospel, with God for its witness, cannot be false! Whatever may be the witness against it, the witness of God is greater! We *must* believe the witness of God! Now, what is the witness of God with regard to Christ? How does He *prove* to us that Jesus Christ did really come into the world to save us? He proves it in three ways according to the context of this passage. God's witnesses are three—the *Spirit*, the water, and the blood.

God says, "My Son did come into the world. He is My gift to sinful men. He has redeemed you and He is able to save to the uttermost them that



come unto Me by Him. And in proof that it is so, the Holy Spirit has been given. He descended at Pentecost. He abides with you forever. He has not gone back again. He is in the Word—He is with the Word. He is in the Church—He is with the Church.” Whenever God the Holy Spirit is pleased to work, whether in revivals, or by individual conversions, the wonderful phenomena which are worked by Him, which are miracles in the world of the *mind*, are as astonishing as the miracles of Christ in the world of *matter*. God is saying, “I declare Christ to be My Son and your Savior, for I have sent the Holy Spirit to prove it. I have converted yonder sinner, I have comforted yonder saint, by the Holy Spirit. I have instructed the ignorant, I have sanctified the impure, I have guided My people safely by the Holy Spirit. *He* is My witness. If you need any evidence that Jesus is really My Son, behold My Spirit going forth among the sons of men, converting whom He wills by the Truth concerning Jesus.”

Then *the water*, that is to say, the purifying *power* of the Gospel is also God’s witness to the Truth of the Gospel. If it does not change men’s characters when they receive it, it is not true. If it does not purify and produce virtue and holiness, do not believe it! But as God everywhere—among the most savage tribes, or among the most refined of mankind—makes the Gospel to be sacred, it has the power of cleansing the hearts and lives of men. He gives another witness that His Son is really Divine and that His Gospel is true—*the blood* also witnesses. Does believing in Jesus Christ do what the blood was said to do, namely, give peace with God through the pardon of sin? Does it, or not?

Hundreds of thousands all over the world affirm that they had no peace of conscience till they looked to the streaming veins of Jesus—and then they saw how God can be Just and yet forgive sin. Wherever God gives peace through the blood, that blood witnesses with the Spirit and the water on God’s behalf. He says to us sinners, “I have spoken to you a Word of love, and that word is My Son. What I have said to you is Jesus. He is My communication to men. I have delivered Him as My message to your souls. And in proof that He is my message to you—a message of love and mercy and pardon—behold, I send the Holy Spirit forth among the sons of men! Behold, I work a purifying work among the sons of men and I give peace in the heart through the blood of the Atonement. These three agreeing in one, are My witness concerning My Son.”

Now, dear Brothers and Sisters, remember that the evidence of faith to every soul hangs here. I shall soon speak to you of the witness *in* you, but the faith demanded of men rests not upon the ground of any witness *in* them, but of the witness *to* them. I am to believe God because He cannot lie. I am to believe Christ because God gives me the witness concerning Christ. And if I will not do so I shall have no other witness. The inward evidence only comes to those who, first of all, accept the evidence of God. Witness *in* us is not given *first*, but witness *to* us—and if the evidence to us is rejected, we shall be cast away and lost forever.

**II.** I come now TO THE INTERNAL EVIDENCE, or the witness *in us*. “He that believes on the Son of God has the witness in Himself.” When a man is led by the Spirit of God to believe that God cannot lie, he enquires what it is that God says. And he hears that atonement has been made and that whoever believes in Jesus shall have eternal life. He sees the witness to be good and he believes it. That man is saved. What happens next? Why, this man becomes a new creature! Old things have passed away. He loves what he hated and hates what he loved! He believes what he denied and disbelieves what he formerly accepted. He is radically changed.

“Now,” says he to himself, “I am sure of the Truth of the Gospel, for this change, this wonderful change in me, in my heart, my speech and my life, must be of Divine origin! I was told that if I believed I should be saved from my former self, and I am! I know not only by the external witness, nor even because of the witness of God, but I have an inner consciousness of a most marvelous birth and this is a witness in myself.” The man then goes on to enjoy great peace. Looking alone to Jesus Christ for pardon, he finds his sins taken from him and his heart is unburdened of a load of fear. And this rest of heart becomes to him another inward witness.

To be forgiven makes his very soul dance for joy and he cries, “Now I know that Christ’s blood can wash away sin, because mine has gone.” Oh, believe me, if you were ever reduced to despair under a sense of sin. If you were ever dragged through a thorn hedge, laid by the feet in the stocks of conviction and beaten with the great ten-thonged whip of the Law till there was not a sound place on you and you were utterly ready to die—if Jesus then came to you and said, “Be of good comfort, your sins are forgiven you”—you knew that it was so and doubted His existence no more! From that moment you learned to say, “I once hated the testimony of Matthew and Mark, and Luke, and John, and Paul, but I do not now. I believe and am sure, for I have felt it myself, and know it in my soul.”

Perhaps a skeptical neighbor will sneeringly say, “It is fanaticism.” Yes, but you will feel just like a man who went to the Ophthalmic Hospital as blind as a bat and came out able to see clearly—and somebody said it was fanaticism and he said—“Well, I do not know what that hard word means, but one thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see.” It is a wonderfully hard thing to drive a man out of his consciousness. “Prove that you are alive,” said somebody, and the man who was asked for the proof walked across the room. Instead of a syllogism he gave a fact! So does the joy and peace which the Lord gives to His people from Himself become to them the very best evidence of the power of the precious blood and of the Divine mission of Jesus!

As the Christian thus goes on from strength to strength, he meets with answers to prayer. He goes to God in trouble, tells the Lord about it, and he gets out of his trouble, or he is enabled to bear it and to see it all works for his good. In great perplexity he hastens to the Lord—light comes and he sees his way through it. He needs many favors. He asks for them and

they are bestowed. He does not need Elijah to come and say, "God hears prayer, for He answered my cries on Carmel and sent rain." He wants no Old Testament saint to declare to him that God answers His people's requests. He is glad of their testimony, but he has the witness in himself!

I sometimes hear of even professed ministers of Christ who have doubts about these things. I should like to ask them a question or two. I should not enquire as to what they believe or do not believe, but I should begin thus—"Do you know Jesus Christ in your own soul? Were you ever converted? Do you feel the power of the Holy Spirit resting upon you?" If I came to close questioning with some of these skeptical gentlemen, I guarantee you they would soon take themselves off to some other company! I do not believe in this modern *doubting*—I have no faith in its honesty and no belief in its depth. The most foolish men I know of take up with it just as small boys like to wear men's clothes.

But when a man knows *anything* about God by fellowship and has *really* experienced these things, doubts and fears may flit across his soul—just as the migratory birds in the end of autumn may be heard flying overhead in the air—but they will not alight on his soul to rest! Infidel theories find no dwelling place in a soul that is really born unto God and has daily and continual dealings with Him. A man does not doubt things that are an integral part of his daily existence. Very few skepticisms arise in a man's mind about the facts of pain and pleasure, or the phenomena of hunger and thirst. So, when it comes to living and feeding upon Christ, practical experience soon puts an end to questions. "He that believes has the witness in himself."

O, Brothers and Sisters, the Lord gives to His people answers to prayer! And he gives them such a sense of nearness to Himself and sometimes such overpowering joys in His Presence, or such an overwhelming sense of awe when He comes near to them, that they believe and are sure that it is even so. "He that believes has the witness in himself" and there is no witness like it! Expect the witness of God, which stands first and which we are to receive, or perish—there is nothing equal to the witness within yourself. Somebody wants to prove to me that sugar is sweet. My dear Sir, you may spare yourself the trouble. I had some in my tea, just now, and I am quite sure about it.

He wants to prove to me that seawater is salty. Sir, I do not question it, I have tasted it quite often enough to have no doubt about it. Things of religion must be tasted to be proved—"O, *taste* and see that the Lord is good." First believe the Gospel to be true, because of the witness of God. And if, having so believed, you would be deepened and strengthened in faith, go on to enjoy the blessings of Divine Grace and you will grow in faith. Christian people, I ask you this question and I know your answer—If you ever doubt about the truthfulness of God, is it not when your piety is in a low condition? If you have neglected prayer. If you have lost fellow-

ship with Jesus. If you have dropped out of accord with God. Is it not *then* that you are plagued with questions?

But if we walk in the Light, as God is in the Light, and abide in Him whom we have received, is it not true that though we may be quite unable to meet, in the ways of logic, the objections that are raised, there is a something within, an inward indisputable assurance which is not shaken and cannot be? It is said of a Roman Catholic priest that he took away the New Testament from a child on one occasion, but the child's teacher had taught the boy 12 chapters of the Gospel according to John, and so he said to the priest, "But you cannot take it all away, Sir." "Why not?" "Because I have learned 12 chapters by heart."

Now, if the critics begin tearing away at our precious Book—though I would not let them have a verse of it—yet, if they could obliterate some of its promises, they could not tear it all away because we have it in our hearts. We *know* it is true. Many a poor man and woman could illuminate their Bibles after the fashion of the tried saint who placed a, "T and P," in the margin. She was asked what it meant and replied, "That means, 'Tried and Proved,' Sir." Yes, we have tried and proved the Word of God and are sure of its Truth!

**III.** I have shown you that the Gospel is proclaimed to men and they are expected to believe it—not upon the ground of any witness that is in them, but because of the witness of God *to* them. And I have also shown that the witness in them follows in due course as a *reward* of faith rather than a ground of faith. But here is the practical point—HOW ARE WE TREATING THE WITNESS OF GOD? For it is written in our text, "He that believes not God, has made Him a liar; because he believes not the witness that God witnessed of His Son."

Now, are we believing the witness of God? I believe that the most of you here present entertain no doubt, whatever, that the Bible is the Word of God. Do not, therefore, I pray you, think it superfluous for me to ask you! Do you believe it? Do you believe it? You reply, "of course I do." Well, I am not sure that it is, "of course," because there are persons who believe in a way—and that way is a false one. I have heard of a poor curate who was upbraided for not believing the articles of his Church and replied that he believed at the rate of 40 pounds a year.

There are persons who believe at a very cheap rate. They believe in the Westminster Assembly's Catechism—it is true they never read it—but they believe it. The Church has a creed—they do not know what it is—but they still say they believe it. They believe what the Church believes. "But what does the Church believe?" "It believes what I believe." "And what do you and the Church believe?" "We both believe the same thing." That is what it comes to. Such a faith will not save your soul! There must be an intelligent reception of the testimony which God has given. There are many in whom this faith does not exist, because if it did they could not act as they do.

Do you unconverted people believe that the wrath of God abides on you? Then you must be insane if you do not seek to escape from that wrath! If you believed that at this moment there was a snake in your pew, I guarantee you, you would soon rush out into the aisle! I should not need to argue with you about it, either! I might try to persuade you to sit still, but you would not be persuaded. If you really believed that your sins had destroyed you, you could not be careless any longer. Do you believe that Jesus Christ has come into the world to save sinners and that He is able to save *you*? Yes, you are sure you do.

I am not so sure, because if it were certain that there was outside yonder door a purse of gold worth 50,000 pounds and that whoever chose to take it should have it, *you would be glad to hear me pronounce the benediction*, the most devout of you, so that you might get the treasure! You would not need any exhorting to go, for natural instincts would lead you to make haste and seize the golden opportunity. If you believe that Jest Christ saves from sin and gives to the soul a treasure far beyond all price, you should make all speed to obtain the precious gift! Is it not so? He who believes in the value of a gift will hasten to accept it unless he is out of his mind!

Many of you who *think* you believe, and *say* you believe, do not believe at all! And, I put it to you, do you know what you are doing? You are calling God a liar! So the text says. "No, I would not do that," says one. Friend, I hope that your case is well described in that prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." But after to-night you will know what you do. If you do not believe what God says, you call Him a liar. "I do not see that," says one. You cannot help seeing it if you will but look at it, for if any person bears witness to you concerning some important matter and you say, "I do not believe you," you call that person a liar!

When God bears witness in any way, He ought to be believed. To deny the Truth of God is a fearful insult to Him. To every man and to every good man, especially, his truthfulness is a jewel. He cannot endure to have his truth impugned, and do you think that God can? The more pure a man is, the more indignant he is when his truthfulness is assailed. And to doubt God is to assail a truthfulness which is unimpeachable and ought never to be questioned! Besides, look at the whole case. You have quarreled with God. You have broken His Law. You have sinned. You deserve to be cast into Hell! And yet, in His mercy, He says, "Sinner, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but would rather that he should turn unto Me and live. And in order that I may be able to forgive you and yet be Judge of all the earth, I have given My own Son to bleed and die on Calvary, that whoever believes in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life. Come," He says, "Sinner, trust in My Son, and I will forgive you."

And your answer is, "I do not believe You." Now that is, in addition to the insult of unbelief, exceedingly provoking to the loving heart of God! I have met with persons who have been generous to the poor until the

murmuring words of some whom they have tried to benefit have quite wearied them from their benevolent course. Most persons who are doing generous actions are very sorely hurt if their conduct is misrepresented and their kindness treated with ingratitude. Now, when so splendid an act of generosity, so unparalleled a deed of Grace as the gift of His own Son is made a subject of undeserved unbelief, it touches God in a very tender place. I am not using too strong language when I remind you that He whom He gave to us was His own Son, very dear to Him, and yet He put Him to grief on our account.

The bloody sweat of Gethsemane and the wounds of Calvary show how greatly God pressed and bruised that matchless cluster—His own Son. And, after all that, for you to say “No, I do not believe in Jesus. I will not have His Atonement and I will not trust in Him,” is cruel of you, Sinner! It is cruel of you to the last degree! To stand at Calvary’s Cross and see Him bleed, whose unspeakable beauties might put the very sun to blush for the dimness of His light—to see Him die for His enemies and to hear Him say, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,” and then to turn your back on Him? This is the direst proof of the depravity of human nature that ever was presented under Heaven!

All the iniquities and transgressions that are committed by men. All the crimes that have ever stained humanity do not equal, in extent of enmity to God, the hatred that lurks in the resolve sooner to be damned than owe salvation to the Free Grace of God! He hates God, indeed, who hates Him so much that he will even dwell forever in Hell sooner than be forgiven by Him and saved through the blood of His Son! Man shows his deadly enmity against God to the fullest extent when he will destroy himself to indulge it! I think I hear one say, “I would believe if I felt something in my heart.” You will never feel that something! You are required to *believe* on the witness of God—and will you dare to say that His evidence is not sufficient?

If you will believe on the Divine testimony you shall have the witness within, by-and-by, but you cannot have that *first*. The demand of the Gospel is, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and believe upon God’s testimony.” What more testimony do you need? God has given it to you in many forms. By holy men who have gone before, as I have told you. By His Inspired Bible. By the various works of His Spirit. And by the water and the blood in the Church all around you. Above all, Jesus Himself is the best of witnesses. Believe *Him*. “But I wish I could have a very striking dream—perhaps that would convert me.” Would you put more confidence in a *dream* than in God’s Word? “O, but I hear of persons who have received revelations from the Spirit of God.”

Do not tell me about the Spirit of God speaking to anybody more than is in the Bible! What is in the Scriptures the Spirit of God will apply to the heart. But if you need the Spirit of God to speak to you over and above that, you will never have it! You have Moses and the Prophets—hear

them—and if you do not, neither will you be converted though one rose from the dead! But nobody will rise from the dead. You have, upon the strength of the Divine testimony, to trust your soul in the hands of Jesus—and if you do so you shall be saved. May the Holy Spirit lead you to do so at this very moment.

“That is an easy matter,” says one. I know it is, and that is why it is so hard. If it were a hard thing, you would do it, or try to do it. But because it is so easy, your pride will not come down to it unless my Master moves you to consent. It is simply, “wash and be clean.” “Believe and live, trust and find it true.” Ah, may the Lord grant that this simple matter may be clear to you—that you may accept it eagerly, lay hold upon it earnestly—and then, having believed, you shall have the witness in yourself which will prove it to be true.

“Doctor,” you say, “will your medicine heal me?” “Yes,” he says. “But doctor,” you say, “I cannot believe till I have the witness in myself that it will make me well.” “But,” he says, “you won’t be able to take my medicine on *those* terms because you cannot have that witness till you have taken it! Will you have it on my witness that I have prescribed this in many similar cases and I know, from what I understand of the anatomy of the body, that the drugs suit your disease and will remove it.” “No, doctor,” says the man, “I must feel better before I can have confidence in you.” “What? Feel the power of the medicine *before* you take it?” “Yes.” “Then your demand is preposterous. You must surely be weak in your intellect.”

Moved by this reproof, you take the medicine. He comes the next day and you feel relieved from the pain. A new tone is given to your system and you cheerfully exclaim, “Now, doctor, I have the witness in myself.” But, if you had been foolish enough to insist and not take the medicine till you had proved it—and yet you could not prove it till you took it—you would have behaved like an idiot! And the man who will not take God at His Word, but needs something else besides the Lord’s witness, not only insults God, but plays the part of an insane suicide and deserves to perish! God give you Grace to accept the Gospel! Then you shall have the witness in yourself and He shall have the praise, and you shall have the comfort.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 John 5.  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—531, 486.**

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# A SOLEMN IMPEACHMENT OF UNBELIEVERS NO. 1207

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 13, 1874,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“He that believes not God has made Him a liar; because he believes not  
the record that God gave of His Son.”  
1 John 5:10.***

NO doubt if our Lord Jesus were on earth He would find many persons for whom He would pray, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” It is no doubt true of many who are living in great sin that they do it ignorantly, not knowing the full measure of their guilt or its real character in the sight of God. It is the duty of the Christian minister and, indeed, of all Christians, to render sins of ignorance impossible by imparting Scriptural knowledge. We must let men know what they are doing and never suffer them to go on in the dark. If they will commit sin, let them at least know what is involved in it, for “that the soul be without knowledge is not good.”

It is not meet that any man should continue in darkness now that the true light has dawned upon mankind. It is true, our testimony will not always be received, for men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. But our duty remains the same—we are to bear witness of the Truth of God and to be, in the hands of God, the instruments of convincing the world of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. The great sin of not believing in the Lord Jesus Christ is often spoken of very lightly and in a very trifling spirit, as though it were scarcely any sin at all. Yet, according to my text, and, indeed, according to the whole tenor of the Scriptures, unbelief is the calling God a liar—and what can be worse?

I earnestly desire that every unbeliever may see his unbelief at this time in its true colors and, perhaps, as the Spirit of God enables him to see the evil of his past unbelief, he will be so shocked at himself and horrified at his crime, that he will continue in it no longer, but yield himself to the faith. My soul longs, yes, even faints, that Divine Grace may be given to the unbelieving—that they may now believe in the Lord Jesus Christ!

When our race had been lost by sin, it was infinite mercy on God's part to provide a way of salvation—and infinite condescension to make that way of salvation suitable to our lost condition. If it had been salvation which depended upon works, it would have been impossible for us. It would have mocked our sorrow, but could not have relieved it. In abounding mercy God has set forth Jesus Christ to be a Propitiation for sin and He bids guilty men believe in Him as the atoning Sacrifice and see in Him the love of God made manifest. He bids sinners lay hold upon eternal life by accepting Jesus Christ by faith as their Savior.

Now, had not man been very vile and grossly wicked at heart, he would have leaped for joy at the proclamation of the Gospel—and have believed,



at once, the Truth to which God bears witness! But, being desperately set on mischief, man does not believe in Jesus Christ, and if you preach Christ to him and set the Crucified One before him, still, except where the Holy Spirit works effectually, he remains in his unbelief, refuses to receive the witness of God and rejects the Redeemer.

What I desire to do, this morning, is to bring every man who is in that condition to look at himself as in a glass—and see clearly what he is doing. I wish to make him feel, as he hears this discourse, “Yes, I see what I am doing—by not believing Jesus I am despising the blood of Atonement and I am telling God to His face that He is a liar.” It is always well for every man to know exactly where he is. On the sea of life the more often we take observations as to our longitude and latitude, the better. Many bankruptcies arise from careless trading. And in such cases the traders have no mind to consult their account books, but go on, with their eyes half open, hoping that things will take a turn, which turn is never taken.

It is always good for a man to know *who* he is, *what* he is, *where* he is and where he is going. I would plead with the unbeliever to look well to his position, to see how God regards it, and to judge himself that he be not judged. If I should not seem to speak very tenderly at this time, you must not be astonished. I believe there is such a thing as pitying sinners and comforting them till they consider themselves to be no longer blameworthy—and even regard themselves as unhappy people who *deserve* sympathy!

I talked not long ago with a troubled one and after much battling I brought her to this point—“There is the way of salvation. Jesus Christ has come into the world to save sinners and whoever believes in Him is saved.” She replied, “I cannot believe in Him.” And then I came to the push of the bayonet and said, “Will you, then, stand up in the sight of Almighty God and declare to Him that you cannot believe Him, which, of course, is the same thing as saying, in other words, that God is a liar? Rise, then, and let me hear you say what is in your heart.” She replied most earnestly, “I could not say anything of the kind.” My answer was, “But you *did* say so just now. And by your unbelief you have been saying so for years! You are practically saying it every moment that you remain in unbelief.” That troubled one said to me as she left, “I thank you for not trying to comfort me. I wanted to be faithfully dealt with and I bless God that you have done so.”

Now I will, out of love to the souls of those who do not believe in Jesus, deal fairly with them. I will give them no comfort, for there is no comfort for those who believe not. I will try to make them see what their sin is, that they may be ashamed and confounded, and repent of their wicked unbelief. May the Spirit of God make them see that “he that believes not God has made Him a liar, because he believes not the record that God gave of His Son.”

First we shall see *the sinner’s inability to believe dissected*. Then, *the nature of his sin detected*. Then, *the unbeliever’s sin abhorred*. And fourthly, *his fate predicted*.

**I. First, THE SINNER’S INABILITY TO BELIEVE DISSECTED.** He pleads that he cannot believe. He often says this and quiets his conscience with

it. When he is aroused and awakened he declares that he cannot believe in Jesus Christ and cannot believe God—and goes off to his deadly sleep, again. He quotes the Scriptures to back up his excuse and perhaps reminds us of the Words of the Lord Jesus, Himself—“No man comes to Me except the Father who has sent Me draws him.” To which we reply that the Words of our Lord are always very weighty with us and we would not wrest one of them for a moment—but our Lord explains His own Words in another place, where He says, “You will not come unto Me that you might have life.”

So then the sinner’s inability lies in his *will*—it is because he *will* not that he cannot. Let every sinner be assured of this and let his conscience confirm the truth of the statement. Listen, O Unbeliever, you have said, “I cannot believe,” but it would be more honest if you had said, “I *will not* believe.” The mischief lies there. Your unbelief is *your* fault, not your misfortune! It is a disease, but it is also a *crime*—it is a terrible source of misery to you, but it is justly so—for it is an atrocious offense against the God of Truth! Let me take your unbelief to pieces and show why it is that you cannot believe.

The inability of many of you lies in the fact that *you do not care to think about the matter at all*. A great many of you do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ because you do not care about your souls, or see the importance of being saved. You give your minds to your business, your pleasure, or your sin—you dream that there is time enough to think of heavenly things—and you think them to be of secondary importance. This is the source of a large proportion of ordinary unbelief. Let any man who disbelieves the Bible, for instance, answer this question—Did you ever candidly read that Book with the view of seeing for yourself whether or not it is the Book of God? Did you ever seriously sit down to study the evidences of its being the Revelation of God?

It is very seldom that any infidel can be found who will say “yes” to those questions. They rail at what they do not understand and condemn off-hand what they have never studied! Is this right? Many, however, say, “Oh, yes, I believe the Bible, I believe it is God’s Book. I believe the Gospel to be God’s Gospel.” Why, then, do you not believe in Jesus? It must be because you do not think the Gospel message important enough to be obeyed. And in so doing you are practically calling God a liar, for you tell Him that your soul is not so precious as He says it is, neither is your state so perilous as He declares it to be.

You are dying—the doctor says, “Here is a medicine which will cure your disease. It is the only medicine that will save your life and you will die if you do not take it.” Suppose you do not take the medicine? I shall be right in saying that however you may view the matter, you call that physician a liar in the most blunt manner! You do not say in so many words, “I am not as bad as you say I am.” You do not say, “I do not believe in your medicine,” but, by refusing to take it, you say so most unmistakably! The physician will quite understand your action, even if you do not speak a sentence and, as he sees you die before his eyes, he will feel that your death lies at your own door.

In refusing to come to the Gospel feast you do as good as tell the Lord that He makes too much of it. That He makes Heaven and earth ring with the Glory of it, but in *your* esteem your farm and your merchandise are far more worthy of attention. You, by your neglect of the great Salvation, declare that you are not in any pressing danger and do not stand in urgent need of a Savior. You also say that the pardon of sin, the favor of God and a good hope of Heaven are not worthy to be sought first and above all other things. You state that Jesus neither is the Chief among ten thousand, nor is His love necessary to make you truly happy. In all these points, and many others, your carelessness calls the Lord a liar!

A second reason of the sinner's inability to believe lies in the fact that *the Gospel is true*. "No," you reply, "that is precisely why we would believe it." Yes, but what does Jesus say in John 8:45? He says, "Because I tell you the truth, you believe Me not." Strange reason for not believing a statement—because it is true! Yet there are thousands of individuals whose capacity for believing a lie is enormous—while their ability for accepting the Truth of God appears to have gone from them. When religious impostors have arisen, the very men who have heard the Gospel from their youth up and have not received it because it is true, have become dupes of imposition at once!

The Truth of God did not suit their nature, which was under the dominion of the Father of Lies, but no sooner was a transparent lie brought under their notice than they leaped at it at once like a fish at a fly! The monstrous credulity of unbelief amazes me! I meet with persons who consider themselves to be bold thinkers and philosophers. They express their astonishment that I can really believe the things which I preach—but no sooner do I learn from them what *their* positive creed is than the astonishment comes to be on my side—and is a thousand times greater than theirs could be! The faith which accepts Christ has but a small throat, indeed, compared with that credulity which believes, for instance, in the development of man from a monkey—that creed requires the swallow of the great fish which swallowed Jonah!

A lie you will believe, but because the Gospel is true you do not believe it. "You give us a bad character," says one. It is your *true* character! Some of you are in the habit of accepting no teaching but that which chimes in with your depraved tastes and skeptical notions! But because the Gospel is true and, therefore, crosses your corrupt tastes, you cannot endure it! If we were to trim it a little, cut it down and make it suit you, you would accept it! But in the name of the Everlasting God we assure you we will *not* do it—we *dare not* do it for God's sake, nor even for *your* sakes—for to preach to you another Gospel would only be to deceive you.

There are persons who do not receive the Gospel because *it is despised among men*. The Gospel is sneered at by the great ones of the earth and the mass of mankind ridicule it. And therefore cowards turn their backs upon it. If princes and great men followed after the Truth of God, then there might be something in it, but are not Believers in Jesus generally a poor company? Do you not virtually say, "I cannot believe God's witness alone, but I would believe it if a learned professor or a great lord would add his testimony." What did they say in Christ's day? "Have any of the

rulers believed?” The opinions of the rulers were evidently more considered than the witness of the Blessed God!

We know a certain class of people who always ask, “Is it fashionable?” And there are others of another class who cautiously inquire, “What do the men in our shop think about it?” They set more store by the judgment of *men* than by the declarations of God! They will believe their fellow creatures who are as fallible as themselves, but *God* they will not believe! Let me tell you that even if you were, after a fashion, to believe God because His testimony is supported by the great ones of the earth, or by the many around you, it would not be believing God at all! It would at bottom resolve itself into believing the testimony of *men*. Sinner, this is no small offense—to be ready to accept the verdict of your fellow men—but not ready to accept the declaration of your God!

Many, however, do not receive the Gospel because *they are much too proud to believe it*. The Gospel is a very humbling thing. It says to the sinner, “Now, Sir, you have no merits of your own and what is more, you have no power to obtain merit in the future.” The man claims to have been temperate, chaste, honest and generous. But the Gospel says to him, “You have broken God’s Law, and you are condemned for it.” All that you have done was but your duty and cannot blot out your shortcomings in other respects. “For whoever shall keep the whole Law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all”—so says the Book which cannot err (James 2:10). If you are to be saved, you must be saved as a sinner, or not at all, for Christ has not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance!

You must be saved through the merits of Another and washed from sin in the precious blood of Jesus! Your own works must not have a finger in it. It must be by Grace and Grace, alone. Of course the proud man cannot believe that. He turns his back upon it in scorn! Why can’t he believe it? Because he *will not* believe it! He is so proud that it offends him. It goes against the grain, and he will not endure it. Many of you must confess that you do not like the Gospel because it does not leave you room to stow away your pride. If it said to you, “Attend to the sacraments,” why, you would be baptized tomorrow and come to the Lord’s Table, if that would save you!

And if I were allowed to preach that if any man walked barefooted from his house to the Land’s End he would be saved, you would start off this afternoon, wet as it is! If there were any great thing for you to do, you would do it. But because there is nothing for you to do but to accept what Another has done, you will not have it! Your detestable pride is at the bottom of your rejection of Free Grace! If this is the secret of your inability, does it excuse you? Or does it make your offense the greater?

Another reason why men cannot believe God’s testimony concerning Jesus lies *in the holiness of the Gospel*. If the Gospel came to them and said, “You can confess your sins, obtain absolution and then go and sin again,” would not that suit many of you? That is the religion for sinful men! Do you think there ever will be a time when such teaching will cease to be popular? It is a most attractive religion Satan, himself, invented—and it shows his genius in lying! Confess your sin to a priest! Pay a shilling! Get absolved and go away and live as you like till next time! Rub sin

off as you go along with a little penance! Human nature rejoices in *that* religion!

But the Gospel says to the man, "You must forsake your evil ways. What is more, the very nature that suggests these sins must be changed. You must be born again." The Gospel cries, "Repent!" Let the wicked forsake his ways and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him turn unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him. The Gospel proclaims Jesus, who saves men *from* their sins, but you do not want that! The impurity of your hearts is that which makes it hard to believe a pure Gospel. O Souls, I pray you, look at this Truth of God! When you say, "I cannot believe"—it is either because you are too careless, or else because your nature, itself, is too deceitful and too impure to accept the Truth of God!

It would be easy enough to believe if these things were gone. Do the angels find it difficult to believe? Would pure spirits find it difficult to believe? No, your *sin* lies at the foundation of your unbelief! It is the root which bears this wormwood. We cannot expect a spendthrift to believe in the excellence of economy, or a vicious man to believe in the pleasures of chastity. Loose men even deny that *anyone* is pure! What an opinion bad men have of all mankind! Why do they think so ill of others? Because they judge them by themselves! When a dove flies over a landscape, it sees the clear streams and the fields of corn. But when a vulture passes over the same landscape what does *it* see? A dead horse here, a carcass there, or a piece of carrion!

Everybody sees according to his eyes. A graceless, impure man cannot see purity. Christ said to the proud Pharisees, "How can you believe that receive honor from one another?" Their pride stood in the way! And in every case in which a man declares concerning the Lord Jesus, "I cannot believe," the difficulty is in *himself* and not in the facts to be believed, nor in the evidence of those facts. There is one excuse for unbelief, and only one. "How can they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?" That excuse will do for the heathen, but not for you, for you have heard and read about Jesus and know the Gospel. The only excuse that can be accepted is not for you! Of you it must be said, "He that believes not has made Him a liar."

**II.** Secondly, I must now come to closer quarters and DESCRIBE THE NATURE OF THE SIN OF UNBELIEF, in that it makes God a liar. I will take many forms of it and show this to be the case. Those are guilty of this sin who deny that Jesus is the Messiah, the promised Savior, the Son of God. Out of Heaven, God Himself declared, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." Peter truly said at Pentecost (Acts 2:22) that Jesus of Nazareth was "a Man approved of God by miracles, and signs, and wonders, which God did by Him." God says in many ways "He is my beloved Son," and if you say He is *not*, you make God a liar! That is clear enough.

There are some who deny His Deity. Now, over and over in Scripture we are told that Jesus Christ is "God manifest in the flesh." "The Word was God." "By Him were all things created that are in Heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible" (Col. 1:16). He is "called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God." The miracles which Christ worked and especially

His Resurrection from the dead—all prove His Deity—the Father bearing witness that He is His equal and His fellow. When a man says that Jesus is not God, and the Father says He is, there is no question God is being called a liar. But, as I believe there are very few of that kind of unbelievers here, I will leave such persons and pass on.

A poor trembling, weeping sinner comes to me and among other things he says, “My sins are so great that I do not believe they can be pardoned.” I meet him thus. God says, “Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” “But, Sir, my sin is very great, indeed!” “The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from *all* sin.” “But my transgressions have been exceedingly aggravated.” “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.”

“Sir, I cannot believe it.” Stand up, then, and tell the Lord so in the plainest manner—“O God, You have said You will abundantly pardon, but it is a lie!” I challenge you to make that statement outright, for you are making it in your hearts! It is idle to deny it, for it is so. God says, “I will and I can pardon,” and you say He cannot—what is that but accusing the Lord of falsehood? Another will say, “Oh, but my heart is so hard I cannot believe in the power of God to make a new man of *me* and deliver *me* from the love of sin.” Yet God declares in His Word, “A new heart, also, will I give them, and a new spirit will I put within them. I will take away the heart of stone out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh.” That is what God says. “It cannot be,” you say. Very well, then, admit it—you are calling God a liar! God says, “I can.” You say He cannot. There is your position!

In many there exists a doubt about the willingness of God to save. They say, “I believe that the blood of Jesus Christ does blot out sin, but is He willing to pardon *me*?” Now, listen to what Jehovah says, for He says it with an *oath*, and to me it is a very startling thing that God should swear! He swears by Himself because He can swear by no greater. Mark that! “As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but had rather that he turn unto Me and live.” Over and over again, in all sorts of circumstances, He gives us assurance that He delights in mercy! Now, then, Sinner, if you say God is unwilling and Christ is unwilling, and yet the Lord swears that He *is* willing, and Christ dies to prove it—what, then, is your unbelief?

I hardly like to utter what I feel I must say—you do deliberately charge God with perjury and what could the greatest blasphemer out of Hell, or the blackest devil *in* Hell do, more than *that*? That is exactly what *you* have done and are doing now! “Alas,” cries one, “*my* ground for doubt is deeper. I hear that God can pardon, regenerate and all that. And I believe it, but then I cannot see that any of this is for *me*. I do not see that these things are sent for *me*.” Listen, then, to what God says, “Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters, and he that has no money, let him come buy wine and milk.” You skillfully reply, “But I do not thirst.” More shame for you, then!

Listen again—"Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "But I do not labor." Do not labor? How do you get your living? I feel sorry for you if you are a rich and lazy man that you have no labor. That text includes every laboring man and every heavy-laden man under Heaven. Listen, yet again, "Whoever will, let him come." Does not that invite *every* living man who is willing to come? If you say, "I am not willing," then I leave you, for you confess that you are unwilling to be saved—unwilling to be reconciled to God, and that is exactly what I am trying to prove—you *cannot* believe, because you are *unwilling* to do so. On your own head be your blood!

I do not know what more I can say to you. You must be mad to be willing to incur, forever, the flames of Hell and the wrath of God! It is not for me to *comfort* you when you are in such a condition as that! If you choose your own destruction, why, so it must be. Yet hear me once again. Jesus has said to His disciples, "Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature; he that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Are you a creature? "Yes, I am a creature." Well, Man, God has put it as plain as it can be put—the Gospel is to be preached to *you* and, therefore, it has a relation to you! Would God send it to you to tantalize you? When you say, "It is *not* for me," you make God a liar! He says it is for "every creature" and you know you are a creature—how, then, dare you say it is not for you? In speaking thus, you accuse the Lord of trifling with you and mocking you.

"Well," says one, "but I cannot see how simply trusting in Christ and believing God's witness of Him would save my soul." My dear Man, are you never to believe anything but what you can *see*? And how are you to see this thing till you have tried it? A physician says, "that medicine will heal you." The patient replies, "I need to see that it heals me *before* I take it." The man is a fool and so are you if that is how you trifle with God! You must believe the Gospel on the evidence of God and not otherwise, or your faith is not faith in God at all! The faith which He commanded in the Gospel is faith in the record which God has given concerning His Son, a faith which takes God at His Word.

Believes then, on the Lord Jesus Christ and you have believed God to be true. Refuse to trust in Jesus Christ, unless you get some other evidence beyond the witness of God, and you have practically said that God's testimony is not enough—that is to say, you have made God a liar! Many a time I have heard men say, "Oh, but I cannot believe it, it seems so wonderful." Is not that why you *should* believe it? What should come from the glorious Lord but that which is wonderful? He is glorious in holiness, fearful in praise, doing wonders! Another cries out, "That it is too good to be true!" Ah, poor Soul, but have you never read, "As high as the heavens are above the earth, so are My ways above your ways, and My thoughts above your thoughts"? A less salvation would not do you any good nor glorify God.

Some feel that the Gospel is too simple. They want a more complicated system than—"believe and live." How can it be too simple for finite minds like ours? Then I have heard them turn round and say, "It is too mysterious," and yet after all, where is this a mystery—"Believe in the Lord Jesus

Christ and you shall be saved”? What can be more *plain* than that? Anyway, dear Friends, let me say to you, whether it is a mystery or not, God bears witness to it! And if you do not believe it, you call God a liar! Whether you think it too simple, or too good, or too wonderful, or too *anything*, you must either believe God or call Him a liar! There is no third course for, be it simple or mysterious, wonderful or commonplace, the Lord asserts it to be true—and if you refuse His witness you make Him a liar and must take the consequences.

**III.** And now I pray the Holy Spirit to rest upon my words while I treat, for a few minutes, upon the third and most awful point, namely, THE ABHORRANCE OF THIS SIN. To disbelieve God is, indeed, a sin! It was the mother sin of all—the door by which all other evil came into the world. The devil whispered in the ear of mother Eve, “Yes, has God said?” That insinuated doubt commenced our fall. And when that had tarnished the brightness of her intellect, the fiend added, “You shall not surely die”—calling God a liar. When she believed him and her husband joined her in it, our ruin was complete.

Unbelief of God drove our race out of Eden and, in consequence, we are born in sore travail and plow the ground with toil. Oh, accursed Unbelief! It is time you were hung up on a gallows high as that of Haman! Alas, that any man should hug you to his heart! You destroyer of our race, you are loathsome, indeed! When the children of Israel were in the wilderness journeying towards Canaan, how was it that so many graves were dug in the desert? And that out of 600,000 footmen who came out of Egypt only *two* survived to enter the promised land? Who slew all these? The inspired Apostle tells us, “They could not enter in because of unbelief.”

Go, today, to Jerusalem. Look beneath the buildings of the modern town and mark the excavations which reveal the utter ruin of the holy city. See how fully the prophecy was fulfilled that not one stone should remain upon another! Stand upon the steeps of Zion and ask, “Who destroyed this fair city? Who burned her holy and beautiful house with fire? She was once so beautiful, the joy of the whole earth! Who cast her down to the dust, and why? The palaces of David and Solomon are overthrown and the plow has been driven over their foundations—why all this? Why was the siege of Jerusalem the most bloody and horrible in all history?”

It was because the Jews rejected the Messiah and would not believe the testimony of the living God! O, accursed unbelief! It spits its venom against the holy God and He cannot but abhor it. How can the absolutely true submit to be charged with falsehood? This sin of making God a liar—I pray you look at it very solemnly, for it is a stab at God, Himself! What is it that would most easily provoke you? If a person stole your goods? If he struck you? If he injured you in business, you might bear it patiently. But when a man tells you to your face that he cannot believe you, the insult is acutely felt! You are not truthful if you can be content to be called a liar! Nothing stings like it—it is the unkindest cut of all! Oh, do not tell me that you find it difficult to believe my words, for that will cut me to the quick! Yet would I, a thousand times rather have you treat me thus than offer the same insult to the Lord my God!



Then, remember, this unbelief insults God on a very tender point. He comes to the guilty sinner and says, "I am ready to forgive." The sinner says, "I do not believe You." "Hear Me," says the Lord, "What proof do you ask? See, I have given My only-begotten Son. He has died upon the tree to save sinners." "Still I do not believe You," says the unbeliever. Now, what further evidence can be given? Infinite Mercy has gone its utmost length in giving the Savior to bleed and die! God has laid bare His inmost heart in the wounds of His dying Son and *still* He is not believed! Surely, man has reached the climax of enmity to God in this!

Nothing proves the utter baseness of man so much as this refusal to believe his God! And nothing proves so much the greatness of Almighty Grace as that God should, after all this, condescend to work faith in a heart so depraved! O miracle of sin! O greater miracle of love! I would have you remember that you are not only calling God a liar once or twice, but you deny what He has, over and over again, declared! To tell a man that he is a liar once is a great insult. But if he continues to assert the truth and you still contradict him, the provocation gathers force. If the man is perfectly truthful, it is a piece of wickedness on your part to refuse him credence when he repeats his evidence again and again.

But the Lord has gone further than *repeating* His Word—He has sworn it—and yet you will not believe Him! I pray you remember that you are in the Presence of God at this very moment and that the Lord is now looking right into your heart. He sees clearly that in your inmost soul your unbelief is saying to Him, "O God, the maker of Heaven and earth, You are a liar! O God, who gave Your Son to die, I believe that fact, but I will not even now trust You. I do not believe in Your power or willingness to pardon me, though Your Word very clearly declares You to be both able and willing. You have promised to forgive all who believe in your Son, but I will not believe! You are ready now, at once, to put away sin from every man that believes Your witness with regard to Christ, but I do not believe Your witness—You lie!"

I know you shudder at such sentiments and there is good need that you should. So why do you continue to act upon them? Did I not hear someone say, "Ah, Sir, I have been trying to believe for years." Terrible words! They make the case still worse! Imagine that after I had made a statement, a man should declare that he did not believe me, in fact, he could not believe me though he would like to do so. I should certainly feel grieved. But it would make matters worse if he added, "In fact, I have been trying to believe you for years and I cannot do it." What does he mean by that? What can he mean but that I am so incorrigibly false and such a confirmed liar, that though he would like to give me some credit, he really cannot do it? With all the effort he can make in my favor, he finds it quite beyond his power to believe me?

Now, a man who says, "I have been trying to believe in God," in reality says just that with regard to the Most High! How idle is it to talk of *trying* to believe! If a statement is true, a right judgment believes it, not of choice, but because the evidence commands faith. The *trying* lies in the other direction—men do not *want* to believe the Truth of God—therefore they are careless and negligent. They raise quibbles and questions. They

demand signs and wonders, and feelings, and impressions. They struggle against the evidence. They shut out the light.

In you who believe the Bible to be God's Word and yet are unbelievers, it is evidently so, for if Jesus is the Savior, why do you not believe Him? The talk about trying to believe is a mere pretence! But pretence or not, let me remind you that there is no text in the Bible which says, "*Try* and believe." It says, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." He is the Son of God. He has proved it by His miracles. He died to save sinners, therefore trust Him. He deserves implicit trust and childlike confidence. Will you refuse Him these? Then you have maligned His Character and called Him a liar!

**IV.** I shall leave this matter when I have, with a heavy burden on my soul, said a few words upon THE FATE OF THE UNBELIEVER. If this man continues to say he cannot believe God and that Christ is not to be trusted, what will happen to him? I wonder what the angels think must befall a being who calls God a liar? They see His Glory and as they see it they veil their faces and cry, "Holy, holy, holy!" What horror would they feel at the idea of calling God a liar! The saints in Heaven, when they see the Glory of God, fall down on their faces and adore Him! Ask them what they think must happen to those who persist in calling God a liar, and a liar in the matter of His mercy to rebels through Jesus Christ!

As for me, I cannot conceive any punishment too severe for final unbelief. Only this I know, it is written, "He that believes not shall be damned." May you never know what that means—but you *will* know it as sure as you live if you continue in unbelief. God is not a liar, but if He does not damn the man who dies an unbeliever, He will be! Therefore depend upon it, He will do it! He has said, "He that believes not shall be damned." If He is a liar, He may let you escape, but if He is not, He will cast you into Hell! There is nothing else before you. The other day an enquirer said to me, "I cannot believe," and I gave him no answer but this—"then you must be damned." Had I nothing else to say? No, nothing else. I have no comforts to offer, no hopes to present to an unbeliever. "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believes not shall be damned."

There is an honest intolerance about these words of our Lord. He does not stammer and hesitate and say, "I fear some ill may occur to you." No, He says outright that you will be *damned*. Nothing on earth or in Heaven can save you except you believe in Jesus Christ.. You may knock at a thousand doors and you may cry, and pray, and groan, and agonize and sweat—yes, even to drops of blood—but there is only one door to Heaven and that door is faith in Jesus Christ. If you will not enter by that door, God Himself will not open another. God has been pleased to empty out the infinite mercy of His heart into the Person of His dear Son, and He cries, "Whoever will, let him come and take of the Water of Life freely." But, if Jesus is rejected by you, and God's witness about Him is refused, do not look for any other help.

Do you think that God has another son who will die for you? You would not believe in Him if He had! Do you think He will alter the whole plan of Salvation and the Covenant of Grace, and reverse the purposes of His Wisdom to gratify your wicked whims? That were to make Him an accomplice in your wickedness and a patron of your insolence! Believe me, He

will keep His Word—if you believe not in Christ, you shall be utterly damned at the Last Great Day! The last word I have to say is this, not only will the unbeliever be lost, but he will be lost *by his unbelief*. Thus says the Lord, “He that believes not is condemned already.” Why? “Because he has not believed on the Son of God.”

Has he not committed a great deal more that will condemn him? Oh, yes, a thousand other sins are upon him, but Justice looks for the most flagrant offense that it may be written as a superscription over his condemned head—and it selects this monster sin and writes—“*Condemned, because he has not believed on the Son of God.*” When the Spirit of God came into the world to convince men of sin, He began by convincing them of the greatest of all. Which did He choose as the most glaring? “Of sin because they believed not on Me.” I am only telling you what I find in the Scriptures. Certain Brethren will say, “This sermon is not orthodox.” I care nothing for their criticism—what I have advanced is God’s Word and God’s Word against any man’s word all the world over.

His word is sharper than a two-edged sword, and I pray Him to use it to cut to your very marrow this morning—to wound and kill—that afterwards Christ may make alive! If any one of you should be finally cast into the prison of despair, to suffer, in Hell, the wrath of God, the accusation which will appear over your condemned cell will run thus, “This man knew the Gospel to be true and yet he would not believe it.” That thought will torture you with a vengeance, “I am condemned because I believed not the Truth of God. Because I called my God a liar. Because I trusted not in Christ. He told me it would be so, and it is so. This is the sting of it all, that for my *unbelief* I am *justly* left to perish.”

Oh, dear Hearers, do not call the Lord a liar! By your reason which is yet left to you. By your love to yourselves. By Heaven and by Hell. By the bleeding wounds of Jesus and by the Truth of God, I entreat you, accept Jesus! May the Holy Spirit go with my entreaties that your souls may relent, that your stony hearts may melt before the Cross and you may receive Jesus Christ to be your All in All this day. Amen and Amen!

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 John 5.  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—485, 600, 483.**

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# THE PRIEST DISPENSED WITH NO. 1250

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 15, 1875,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“He that believes on the Son of God has the witness in himself.”  
1 John 5:10.***

IT is a part of the theory of Ritualism, that is to say, Anglicized Popery, that no man can know his sins forgiven unless he is assured so by a priest. They tell us that to know ourselves saved we must either have a revelation from Heaven, which we may not expect, or we must wait till the Day of Judgement, or else some duly authorized “spiritual father” must pronounce us absolved. They cannot suppose any other method of being assured of forgiveness. That is the theory and in practice it comes to this, that when anything troubles your conscience you must make a clean breast of it to this, so-called, learned “minister,” *alias* parish priest, and tell him whatever things you have done, answering all questions he may choose to put to you, whether they are clean or whether they are unclean.

And only then will he give you absolution in the name of God, claiming to be—mark you, I am not saying what they do not say, for I quote from one of the most popular of their manuals, entitled, “Steps to the Altar”—claiming, I say, to be “a trustee from God, and commissioned by Him as His ministerial deputy, to hear, and judge, and absolve.” That is the theory, a very attractive one, too, to human nature, for man, by nature, is an idolater, that is to say, he desires something tangible, and visible, to revere and trust in. The old spirit which cried out in the wilderness, “Make us gods to go before us, for as for this Moses which brought us up out of the land Egypt, we know not what has become of him,” is still alive and craves for idols—and delights to find them either in the form of priests or sacraments

As for faith in the unseen purely *spiritual* worship, and simple reliance upon the promise of God, these are not according to human nature, and wherever you discover them, they are the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Man’s idolatry loves priestcraft and, therefore, we should not be astonished if Ritualism were to become more and more popular and subjugate the whole land. Confidence in priestly powers seems to afford the soul an easy way of coming to an anchorage. To come directly to Jesus Christ with the whole heart needs thought, consideration and heart work—but to confess to a *priest* and get his assurance of pardon is a method much less difficult, less spiritual and, consequently, more agreeable to human nature.

What need is there of being born again from above when a little water will do it? What need is there of feeding upon Christ when bread and wine are the same thing? What need is there of the witness from above when every curate can assure you that you are pardoned? What need is there, I ask, of the witness of the Holy Spirit, when any clerical person can pronounce you absolved? I would in all kindness speak with those who are in

bondage to this delusion and suggest a few questions. You think it more easy to believe in a man appointed by God than to believe in Christ Himself, but may there not be a doubt or two about the *man*? Is it not possible that he has not been rightly ordained, or that he, himself, when he speaks does not mean what he says? Remember, everything depends upon his ordination and intention!

Do you say, "Oh, but he is certified by the Church"? But are there not grave questions as to the Church? Can Apostolic succession be proven? It is the idlest of romances! The church of Rome has struggled to prove her own descent from Peter, but fails at the very beginning—and we may be doubly sure that the Anglican Church is still more at sea. She calls the Nonconformists, Schismatic in reference to herself, but what is *she* in regard to the church of Rome? She has no Apostolic succession, in the sense in which the expression is ecclesiastically used, and should be ashamed of setting up the fraudulent presence!

Her godly ministers have the same Apostolic successor as all true servants of Christ have, and no more. No man has such a pedigree as to entitle him to represent the Eternal God and stand between the Father and men's souls! The claim is as gross an imposition as that of the fortune-teller who pretends to prophecy. Hark you, my Friends, have you no manliness? Does it not seem to you, as it does to me, to be a monstrously degrading thing that you should prostrate yourselves before a man, like yourselves, and believe that *he* can pronounce the pardon of your sins? This precious, "Steps to the Altar," says, "Let the manner of your confession be in an humble posture, on your knees, as being made to God rather than man." Mark you this, you are to go down on your knees to the *man* whom the *State* appoints to superintend the religion of your parish!

What is it but Brahmanism, mislabeled Christianity? The whole drift of the scheme is to elevate a clerical caste and lay all the rest of mankind at their feet! This is the reverse of the religion of the New Testament which says that all Believers are a royal priesthood, made by the Lord Jesus kings and priests unto God! Is not Ritualism quite sure to grow into Popery, no, is it not full-blown Popery, already? Will it not, once again, reduce the world to slavery under an arch-priest at Rome or Canterbury if it is allowed to have its way? And what say the Scriptures? "There is one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus." Why should we set up other mediators and go to them for absolution when our Lord Jesus receives all who come to Him?

Do you see in the New Testament any trace of such assumptions on the part of God's ministers? Does the Gospel say, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, *if absolved by a priest*"? That interpolation is foreign to the Gospel! "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved" is the Gospel according to the Scriptures! "Confess to the priest and you shall be forgiven" is the Gospel of the Vatican! Everywhere the Scripture calls man to come into personal contact with his reconciled God in Christ Jesus. The first resolution of the awakened sinner is, "I will arise and go unto my Father." It is not, "I will arise and go unto the authorized minister who stands between me and my Father." It is not, "I will resort to sacraments and ceremonies," but, "I will go to my Father." In fact the

whole objective of the Gospel is to bring us near to God in Christ Jesus and to put down every interposing medium. He who rent the veil of the temple has ended this priestly business!

This morning my business is to show that there is no need of a certificate from any man as to our being forgiven, for "*he that believes has the witness within himself.*" He does not need a new revelation. He does not need to wait till the Day of Judgment—he is forgiven, and he knows it, and knows it infallibly, too—by a witness which is within himself. Of that I shall speak, and may the Spirit of God help us to get at the real truth! Yes, I would to God that all who hear me this day would believe in our Lord Jesus Christ and have the witness of His salvation in themselves!

Let me, first of all, say a word or two about the way in which we are saved, the *modus operandi* of salvation, as we find it described in the Scriptures. Here it is in a nutshell. We have all broken God's Law and we are justly condemned on account of it. God, in infinite mercy, desiring to save the sons of men, has given His Son, Jesus, to stand in the place of as many as believe in Him. Jesus became the Substitute of His people and suffered in their stead, and for them the debt of punishment due to God was paid by Jesus Christ upon the Cross of Calvary. All who believe in Him are, thereby, cleared before the bar of Divine Justice.

Now, the Lord, having given His Son, has revealed this great fact in His Word. Here it is in this Inspired Book—the full statement of it—to this effect, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and that whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ has everlasting life. This is God's testimony! We, who are here present, or at least the bulk of us, know that it is God's testimony and all we have to do in order to realize the result of Christ's passion is simply to *believe* the testimony of God concerning it and rest upon it!

The argument runs thus—Christ saves those who trust Him. I trust Him and, therefore, I am saved. Jesus Christ suffered for the sins of His people. His people are known by their believing in Him. I believe in Him and, therefore, He died for my sins, and my sins are blotted out. This is the summary of the transaction. God's testimony concerning His Son is at first believed, simply because God says so and for no other reason. And then there grows up in the soul other evidence not necessary to faith, but very strengthening to it—evidence which springs up in the soul as the *result* of faith, and is the witness referred to in our text—"He that believes has the witness in himself."

There is no need for the intervention of any second or third party here. The man has trusted Christ and the Gospel for himself, and proved it to be true—what service can that gentleman in a long coat render to him? What more evidence can he bring with his Prayer Book or without it? The matter is as clear as the sun! What is the need of his tallow candles? We shall try to answer three questions today by the aid of our text—*How do we come to be Believers?* Secondly, *How do we know that Believers are saved?* And thirdly, *How do we know that we are Believers?*

**I. HOW DO WE COME TO BE BELIEVERS?** Beloved Friends, you know how faith arises in the heart from the human point of view. We hear the Gospel, we accept it as the message of God and we trust ourselves to it.

So far it is our own work—and let it be remembered that in every case *faith* is and must be the act of *man*. The *Holy Spirit* never *believes* for anybody—each man must personally believe. We cannot be saved by the faith of another, even though that other were Divine. Each one of us must, himself, believe.

But, having said that, let us remember that the Godward history of our believing is quite another thing, for true faith is always the *gift of God and the work of the Holy Spirit*. The Holy Spirit brings us to perform the act of faith by which we are saved and the process is after this manner, though varying in different individuals—First, we are brought *attentively to listen* to the old, old story of the Cross. We have heard it a great many times, perhaps, but now we hear with opened ears, anxiously desiring to know the inner sense. While we are so listening, the Word commends itself to us—it awes us by its majesty of holiness! It attracts us by its beauty of love and we perceive that it is truly the *Word of God*.

Thus faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. Attentive hearers, earnestly listening, very seldom remain unbelievers long. The superficial hearer who is satisfied to sit through a sermon but does not care to understand it, misses the blessing. The diligent reader of the Bible, reading it with prayer, is very unlikely to remain unsaved—before long the Spirit of God, who works through the Word, applies some portion or other of Holy Scripture to the soul with power—and the reader is brought to faith.

We believe, then, not because a clerical person, or a crowd of clerics assure us that the Bible is Inspired, but because the Spirit of God, working with the Word, commends it to our consciences and to our understandings and, therefore, we believe. You will generally find that unbelievers do not read the Bible, and do not hear the Gospel—how can they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? If they will not consider the Gospel candidly, how can they expect to believe it?

Further, *the Holy Spirit is also pleased to make us conscious of our sinfulness*, our danger and our inability. And this is a great way towards faith in Christ, for the great difficulty in believing in Jesus is that men believe in *themselves*. But when they discover that their lives, which they thought commendable, are censurable—and when they find out that their native strength is feebleness itself—they are, then, prepared to believe in God's salvation! When a man can no longer rely upon himself, he cries to the Strong for strength. Thus the Spirit of God leads us to faith by driving us out of self-confidence.

Moreover, while attentively hearing, *we perceive the suitability of the Gospel to our case*. We feel ourselves sinful and rejoice that our great Substitute bore our sin, and suffered on its account, and we say, "That substitution is full of hope to me; salvation by an atonement is precisely what I desire. My conscience can rest here." We learn that Jesus came by water, to cleanse our nature as well as to take away our guilt, and we say, "That also meets my need." Studying the great doctrine of the Cross, it strikes us as being full of the wisdom and love of God, and as suitable for our case as bread is suitable for hunger, or water for thirst. And our

moral instincts, by an inner witness which we cannot further describe, leap to the conclusion that this must be true and, therefore, we believe it.

You see, first we give an attentive *hearing* to the Gospel, then we *receive*, by the Spirit of God, a consciousness of our *need* of it, and then we discover the suitability of it to meet our need! And by that process we are led onward to genuine faith in Christ. There is but one more step, and that is, *we accept Jesus as set forth in the Gospel* and place all our trust in Him. He is set forth as the Savior of mankind, bringing life and peace to all who trust Him. We hear a voice that says, "Whoever will, let him come and take the Water of Life freely." We see the Savior, Himself, standing with outstretched arms and crying, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink."

And being assured of the freeness as before we were of the suitability of the Atonement, we accept it, and thus we exercise the faith of God's elect. We have gone through a process which has divorced us from every other confidence and brought us to rest on that which God has set forth to be a Propitiation, even the finished work, the blood and righteousness of Christ. When the soul accepts the Lord Jesus as Savior, *she believes in Him as God*, for she says, "How can He have offered so glorious an Atonement had He not been Divine? How could God set Him forth to make propitiation for the sons of men had He not been equal to the task, a task requiring an Infinite Nature?" We worship the Son of God! In Him we rest and on Him we lean! We find in Him all that we need! This is why we believe, then, and the process is a simple and logical one. The mysterious Spirit works us to faith, but the states of mind through which He brings us follow each other in a beautifully simple manner.

Now, in all this I see no room for a priest at all. For the preacher there is a niche, for, "how can they hear without a preacher?" But the priest with his authority as an interpolator, like the fifth wheel of a steam engine, he is of no possible service and a good deal in the way. He deserves to be called "a superfluity of naughtiness." God's Word convinces my reason, and God's Spirit wins my heart to faith in Jesus—what more under Heaven do I need as a reason for faith?

That gentleman with the gown on has no more to do with the business than if he did not exist! His intervention to tell me, by authority, that the Gospel is true and that I am absolved, is as ridiculous as the conduct of that little African potentate who, as soon as he has eaten the few morsels of carrion which adorn his majestic table, bids a herald proclaim east, west, north, and south, that all other kings in the world are now permitted, by his gracious majesty, to have their dinners! Probably they have never heard of the permission and have suffered no evil from being ignorant of it. Who is this fellow, that he should take so much upon himself?

Having been brought to rest in Jesus as my Savior by a perfectly reasonable process, by a chain of argument in which not one link is deficient, I care nothing whatever for any official confirmation from the gentleman in the gown, who has no argument, but bids me believe because *he* has been ordained! I need no confirmation of what God speaks! Twice two will be four whether the parish priest says so or not, and God's testimony is true quite independently of all the gowns and surplices in and out of the robe-



maker's shop. If Her Majesty should give me the title deeds of an estate, signing the transfer with her own hand and seal, I should smile at the lackey who should kindly offer to add his authority to her Majesty's act and deed!

Where the word of a king is, there is power, and this is preeminently true where the Word of the King of kings is concerned! I have believed in Jesus Christ as He is set forth on the authority of God, Himself, and who are you, Sir Priest, to come between me and God? You tell the penitent, "You are to look upon the priest, as he is trustee from God, and commissioned by Him as His ministerial deputy, to hear and judge and absolve you." Away with such blasphemous lies! We need no deputies, for we have Christ Himself! You and your authority may go packing.

**II.** Secondly, HOW DO WE KNOW THAT BELIEVERS ARE SAVED? That seems to be a grave question with some. "I trust Jesus, I believe in Him with all my heart, but am I saved?" My dear Friend, you ought not to raise that question, for it is finally settled by Divine authority. But as you *do* raise it, let us answer it for you very briefly. We know and are sure that every Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is saved because God says so, and is not that enough? *God declares in His Word*, even in that sure Word of Testimony—where you will do well to take heed as unto a light that shines in a dark place—that every Believer in Jesus Christ is saved.

The passages in which this is stated are far too many for us to quote them all. Only let us note that memorable one at the close of Mark's Gospel, "Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He that believes not shall be damned." The Believer is saved! You have in those verses God's Word for it! True, the Believer is bound to profess his faith by baptism, which follows upon his faith—but the second sentence shows that the *faith* is the all-important matter, for it is added—"He that *believes not* shall be damned."

*Faith* is the vital thing which, if omitted, will involve damnation. How the whole of John's Gospel teems with this Truth of God! Turn to the blessed third of John, and see how wondrously clear it is. In the 16<sup>th</sup> verse, for instance—"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Read the 18<sup>th</sup> verse—"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."

Follow on to the 36<sup>th</sup> verse: "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." Can anything be more plain and positive? Assuredly, he that believes in Jesus is a saved man! Turn to the 10<sup>th</sup> chapter of Romans. I shall only give you passages in which the Truth of God is as the sun in the heavens. Paul says, beginning in the fourth verse—"Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes. For Moses describes the righteousness which is of the Law, that the man which does those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaks on this wise, Say not in your heart, Who shall ascend into Heaven? (that is to bring Christ down from above) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is to bring up Christ again from the dead). But what does it say? The word is

near you, even in your mouth, and in your heart (that is, the word of faith, which we preach) that if you will confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead you shall be saved.”

Paul rejects all idea of salvation by works and lays all the stress upon *believing* in a risen Savior. To the same purpose speaks the Apostle in Romans 1:16—“For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” This, indeed, is the great reason why the Bible is written, that we may believe on the Lord Jesus and have life through His name! And so John tells us in the 20<sup>th</sup> chapter of his Gospel at the 31<sup>st</sup> verse.

Don't you see, then, Brothers and Sisters, if you believe in Jesus you are saved? And you can be sure that it is so because God declares it! If we, from now on, had no other witness, is not the witness of the Lord sufficient? It seems to me to be the essence of *unbelief* for a man to need a *minister* to tell him that if he believes he is saved, when God solemnly affirms that it is so! I could not conceive myself so forsaken of God as to assume that I could assure my fellow man of his pardon and affect to pronounce absolution by authority committed to me! Surely this were presumption to be answered for at the Last Great Day! God forgive those who are guilty of it!

Again, we know on the authority of Scripture that Believers are saved because *the privileges which are ascribed to them prove that they are in a saved condition*. Let us read in John again. John goes to the very root of every matter and in chapter 1:12 he tells us, “As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.” See, Brethren, everyone that believes on the name of Jesus is a son of God—and how can a son of God be a lost soul? Will He cast away His own children? God forbid! In the same Gospel, chapter 5:24, Christ, Himself, tells us, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that hears My word, and believes on Him that sent Me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”

He is gone out, then, of the region of death and condemnation into that of life and acceptance, and surely no one will say that such a man is not saved! Our Lord tells us, too, that everyone that believes in Him has the Holy Spirit dwelling in him, which could not be if he were not saved. Look at John, chapter 7:38-39—“He that believes on me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water. This He spoke of the Spirit which they that believe on Him should receive.” So that the Holy Spirit dwells in every Believer, and where the Holy Spirit abides, salvation is certainly enjoyed.

Our Lord also promises the resurrection to every Believer. Read John 11:25, that glorious passage in which Jesus said to Martha, “I am the resurrection, and the life. He who believes in Me, though he were dead yet shall he live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?” Resurrection to eternal life is not the portion of the unsaved, for they “shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on them.” You see

that John's Gospel is rich with this precious doctrine. Nor does he, alone, thus reveal the blessed results of faith. Paul also speaks of these privileges in all his Epistles. If you turn back to the Romans, how full that Epistle is of the same Truth of God—"Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord by whom, also, we have access by faith into this Grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

You remember the passage we read just now in the Epistle of John—"This is the victory which overcomes the world, even our faith," so that faith brings us victory from day to day, even as faith at the very outset brings us remission of sin as the Apostle tells us in the Acts 10:43. But I need not multiply proof texts—it would require several sermons to sum up the privileges of Believers—privileges quite inconsistent with the idea that a Believer can be an unsaved man. You can find these for yourselves, for they are as plentiful in Scripture as ears of corn in harvest! There are such privileges ascribed to Believers everywhere as could not be ascribed to them if they were not saved souls.

Once again, the *whole tone of Scripture regards the Believer as a saved man*. "Believers" is a common synonym for saints, for sanctified persons. And it is a truth to say the Epistles are written to Believers, for they are written to the Churches, and Churches are but assemblies of Believers. The Lord looks upon men as divided into Believers and unbelievers—and between these two there is a gulf of difference as great as that between the Israelites and the Egyptians in the day when the pillar gave light to Israel but darkness to the hosts of Egypt.

Do you believe in Jesus? You are in the favor of God. Do you not believe in Him? Then no priest can help you, nor can you help yourself! You are lost and ruined and undone! The only way of escape is that you believe in Jesus Christ! Brethren, when the Word of God tells us so positively that having believed we are saved, can you see any earthly use in going to a person who says he is authorized of God, and asking *him* whether you are saved or not? I cannot, for one! I think it far easier, by God's Grace, to believe in Jesus than to believe in these gowned and bedizened clerics! And to believe in Jesus and in them, too, is like seeing by the light of the sun aided by the lamp of the glowworm!

What can the little men do? In the bad old times in the South a free Negro was forced to carry his papers about with him, but in that blessed day when the Jubilee trumpet sounded, and every African throughout the States was free, I can hardly imagine some little squire or country judge saying to the emancipated Negro, "Sam, I will make out papers for you, and for your consolation I will put my name, 'Jeremiah Stiggins,' at the bottom." Why, the emancipated man would have said, "I have seen the proclamation which has the name of Abraham Lincoln, the President of the United States, at its foot, and I do not care a button for *your* name or anybody else's!"

Having believed in the Lord Jesus, I have salvation upon the authority of the Word of God, and on the Holy Spirit's authority I know that there is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, and therefore I would not thank an angel for his oath if he tendered it in con-

firmation! When the little man in the surplice comes to me and says, "I will give you a certificate that you are absolved," I reply, "I am very much obliged to you, but there are softer heads than mine, and you had better exercise your arts upon *them*. You cannot excite in me *any* feeling but that of *pity*, bordering on contempt." Before God the whole business is blasphemy, and before Christian men it is foolery and worse!

**III.** The last point is this, HOW DO WE KNOW THAT WE ARE BELIEVERS? It is clear that if we are Believers we are saved, but how do we *know* that we are Believers? First of all, as a general rule, *it is a matter of consciousness*. How do I know that I breathe? How do I know that I think? How do I know that I believe that there was once a Saxon Heptarchy? I know I do, and that is enough. Faith is, to a large extent, a matter of consciousness. A man is not always conscious of what is true, for a man might be in such a weak condition that he might say, "I hardly know whether my heart beats," and yet it will be beating all the time. Doubts may arise, and will—but as a general rule—faith is a matter of consciousness. I live, and if you ask me for proof I reply, "I know I do." I believe, and if you ask me how I know it, I reply, "I am sure I do."

Still, there is other evidence. How do I know that I am a Believer? Why, by *the very remarkable change* which I underwent when I believed! For when a man believes in Jesus Christ there is such a change worked in him that he must be aware of it. As in the case of the blind man when his eyes were opened he said, "One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see." That poor woman who had the issue of blood so many years—when she touched Christ's garment and was healed, how did she know it? We read that she felt in herself that she was made whole. She had touched the hem of the Lord's garment and was recovered—and in the same way the Believer knows that he has believed.

Suppose a child was born in a coal pit and has seen no light except that of the candles down below, and, that he is suddenly taken up the shaft to see the sun, the green fields and the sweet spring flowers? What a surprise! I cannot wonder if the child should think itself dreaming! But if you were to say to it, "Are you out of the coal pit? Can you *prove* that you are?" Why, notwithstanding that the child would hardly know where it was because of its vast surprise, yet would it be sure that it was out of the darkness—convinced by an argument within itself which nobody could refute! So do we know, Brothers and Sisters, that we are born again, for we feel a new life and live in a new world. Things we never dreamed of before we have realized. I remember one, who, when he was converted said, "Well, either the world is new or else I am." This change is to us strong evidence that faith is in us and has exercised its power.

Brethren, we have further evidence that we believe, for *our affections are altered*. The Believer can say that the things he once loved, he now hates, and the things he hated he now loves. That which gave him pleasure, now causes him pain. And things which were irksome and unpleasant have now become delightful to him. Especially is there a great change in us with respect to God. We said in our hearts, "No God." Not that we dared say, "There is no God," but we wanted to get away from Him. We would have been glad to hear that there was no God! But, now, how al-

tered are our affections! Now our greatest joy is God! The nearer we can approach Him the better! The very sound of His name is delicious music to us! We know that this change was produced by our believing in Him, of that we are confident, for the matter is clear.

A certain master had a servant whose mind was very much poisoned against him by slanderous tales. Everything the master did the servant misconstrued because he considered him to be a tyrant and an oppressor. Now it came to pass that this servant, one day, learned more concerning his master, and found out that everything he had done was dictated by the most generous motives and that his master, indeed, was one of the excellent of the earth. The moment that servant's thoughts of his master changed and he had faith in his goodness, he acted very differently, as you may well conceive! None could be more faithful and diligent than he.

Now we *prove* that we believe, because we feel towards God so very differently! He is loved in our inmost souls and we *delight* to serve Him! This would have been utterly impossible if we had not been changed in our feelings toward Him by being led to trust Him. We know, also, that we believe because, though very far from perfect, *we love holiness and strive after purity*. You that have believed in Jesus, do you not now pant after holiness? Do you not endeavor to do that which is right? And when you are conscious that you have failed, does not conscience prick you? Have you not gone on your knees in bitterness of soul and said, "My God, help me and deliver me, for I delight in Your commandments. Help me to keep Your statutes"?

Right, truth and peace are the things we now seek after, whereas time was when these were of small account, and our own selfish pleasure and our own perverted judgement were the rule of our being. By this change of conduct we know that we have believed in Jesus Christ! And, my dear Brothers and Sisters, we know that we have believed in Jesus Christ because now *we have communion with God*. We are in the habit of speaking with God in prayer and hearing the Lord speak with us when we read His Word. Some of us have spoken with our Lord Jesus so often that we have grown to be near and dear Friends—and whatever we ask in prayer He grants us.

Answered prayers are sweet testimonies to faith! When the Lord is pleased to deliver us out of trouble. When His Holy Spirit cheers us in depression. When He helps us under difficulties. When He makes us patient under pain—all these things become proofs that we have real faith in Him! Our faith has realized Him and brought Him near! It has taught us how to live upon Him and so strengthened us in His ways. Once more, only, upon this point, and then we will come to the practical application.

We know that we have believed in the Lord Jesus because we have, over and above all this, a secret something, indescribable to others, but well-known by ourselves, which is called in Scripture, the *witness of the Holy Spirit*—for it is written, "The Spirit, Himself, also bears witness with our spirit that we are born of God." First *our* spirit bears witness to our new birth, and then the Spirit of God comes in and bears witness with our spirit to the same effect! Do you know what it means? If you do not, I cannot tell you. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." There

comes stealing over the soul, sometimes, a peace, a joy, a perfect rest, a heavenly deliciousness, a supreme content in which, though no voice is heard, yet we are conscious that it is there rushing through our souls, like a strain of Heaven's own music, the witness of the Spirit of God! We are sure of it, as sure as we are of our own being! And by that witness we know that we are, indeed, Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now mark, we may not *ask* for any witness beyond the testimony of God, nor will any other witness be given. I charge all of you here present not to say, "I will believe in God when I obtain the inward witness." No, you are bound to believe in God *first*, on the sure testimony of His Word. If you believe His Word you shall know the sweets of Divine Grace. To ask for more evidence, first, is as though a man should say, "Here is a medicine prepared by a physician of great repute, and it is said to be very powerful for driving out the disease from which I suffer. I will take it as soon as I see that I am improving by its means."

The man has lost his reason, has he not? He cannot expect even a partial cure till he has *taken* the medicine! He cannot expect the result to come before the cause. You must take the good physician's medicine as a matter of faith and, afterwards, your faith will be increased by the beneficial result. You must believe on the Lord Jesus, because of the witness of God concerning Him, for that is all the witness you ought to wish for and all that God will give you. After you have believed, other witnesses will spring up in your soul, as the results of faith. And so your confidence will be strengthened. But just now, Beloved, believe in Jesus Christ, and having believed in Him you shall know that you are forgiven for His name's sake.

In closing, let me ask every person here, do you believe in Jesus Christ or not? If you believe, you are saved! If you believe not you are condemned already, because you have not believed. Remember that. Let me next ask, are any of you seeking after any witness beyond the witness of God? If you are, do you not know that you are virtually making God a liar? For if God says such-and-such a thing is true, and you seek further evidence beyond His Word, you do, in effect, say that God's witness is not sufficient and that God is a liar. I pray you behave not so insolently. Accept His naked Word, for it is surer than the sight of the eyes or the hearing of the ears.

Behold how the arch of Heaven stands without a single pillar, vast as it is—what sustains it but the Word of God? See how this round world hangs on nothing and yet strays not from her sphere—what maintains her in her course but the bare Word of God? That Word which rolls the stars along and has never failed to fulfill its purpose, is that on which you are asked to lean! Sinner, will you believe your God? If you will, you shall be established, blessed and enriched! But if you still say He is a liar, then you shall be as the heat in the desert which shall not see when good comes, but suffers perpetual drought.

If you rest in Jesus, trusting Him, you have done well, but yet you have only done Him justice. There is no merit in believing what is true! Who but a man of base heart would refuse to do so? To believe One who cannot lie is by no means a meritorious action and, therefore, salvation is by faith that it may be by Grace! Yet faith will bring to you life, love, joy, peace,

immortality and all that Heaven can mean! May God grant you Grace to believe! But I pray you do not let the little man in robes stand between you and Christ. Let no one do so! I charge you, never regard anything I say as having any authority in it apart from the Word of God.

I reckon it of all crimes, the greatest, for a man to assume to mediate between men and God! Little as I respect the devil I prefer *him* to a priest who pretends to forgive sins! For even the devil has too much honesty about him to pretend to give absolution in God's name. There is but one pardoning Priest and He is the Son of the Highest. His one Sacrifice has ended all other sacrifices! His one Atonement has rendered all future oblations counterfeit. Today, as Elijah stood on Carmel and cried out against the priests of Baal, so would I! I count no words too severe! If my very speech should be a thunderbolt and every word a lightning flash, it would not be too strong to protest against the accursed system which once degraded the whole earth to kiss the Pope's foot and is degrading our nation still, and that through a so-called Protestant Church!

Oh, God Almighty, God of Latimer and Ridley, God of the martyrs whose ashes are still among us, will You allow this people to go back, again, to false gods, and saints, and virgins, and crucifixes, relics, and cast iron and rotten rags? For to this, also, will they come if Your Grace does not prevent it! Oh, my hearers, Jesus is the only Savior of the sons of men. Believe in Him and live! This is the only Gospel! At your peril reject it! I pray you receive it for Christ's sake.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*I. John 5.*  
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—554, 239, 232.**

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# THE TRUE POSITION OF THE WITNESS WITHIN NO. 1428

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 11, 1878,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“He that believes on the Son of God has the witness in himself.”  
1 John 5:10.***

SOME time ago I tried to set forth the manner of the witness and sealing of the Spirit and I have no doubt that the subject will still remain upon the memory of many of you. But I am led to refer to it again and to go over the same ground because I meet with so many instances in which mistakes are made in reference to it—mistakes which cause great sorrow and much sin. The letter which I will now read I received yesterday and it is one of many of the same subject. “Dear Mr. Spurgeon—May I ask your prayers and the prayers of your congregation, to God, that He will, by the Holy Spirit, reveal Himself to me. I have for a long time past, I may say, years, been trying to serve Him and have a strong desire openly to join with His people, but I have not the witness in myself that I am saved and until then I dare not take the step.”

Now, this letter breathes an anxious desire to be right and sincere in all things and this is to be highly commended. We ought to be jealous over our spirit, fearful of hypocrisy and resolved to do all things in truth and sincerity. We ought to abhor the idea of making a profession of that which is not true and, so far, this letter shows a spirit worthy of imitation. Everyone should be anxious that he should in nothing be a hypocrite and should not allow the profession of his lips to go one single inch beyond the feeling of his heart. It is, again, a most proper thing that every man should desire to have the very best possible evidence as to his soul's salvation and if there is an evidence to be had of a very special, decisive and certain kind, it is but right that every man should cry to God for it and should feel unsatisfied until he obtains it.

But, when all this has been said, we are bound in honesty to add that it is very possible for this anxiety to become an obstacle to faith and for the desire after special *evidence* to become a hindrance to our receiving the evidence which the Lord has given us in His Word. In our ignorance we may be overlooking the true source of peace and assurance! While straining our eyes by looking for that which God will never reveal to us, we may be missing rare consolations which lie near at hand! While craving for something *unusual* we may be neglecting that which Infinite Wisdom has put within our reach, like the foolish child which utters hungry cries for the moon, but forgets to eat the bread upon its own plate!

There are many who, in their sincerely earnest desires to gain some token for good, are forgetting that earnest of the Spirit which is already



within their own bosoms and thus, through darkness of spirit, they miss present comforts and are too feeble for present duties. They sit in fetters forged by their own fancy, when they might as well arise and walk at large. May the Holy Spirit, therefore, instruct us so to handle this matter that many who are seeking for this inner witness may know that they already have it, or may at least obtain it this day through Jesus Christ our Lord. Here, then, is our text—"He that believes on the Son of God has the witness in Himself."

**I.** Our first observation is that BELIEVING ON THE SON OF GOD COMES *BEFORE* THE INNER WITNESS. "He that believes on the Son of God has the witness in Himself"—he believes *before* he has that witness—and it is only as a Believer that he obtains it. This is self-evident in the text. No one can read these words without seeing that a man must be a Believer *before* he has the witness in himself. It does not say, "He who has the witness in himself *becomes* a Believer," but the order is reversed—"He that *believes* has the witness in himself." He believes *first* and *then* he obtains the inner witness.

The basis of faith is the testimony of God concerning His Son—the testimony of God as we find it in holy Scripture. I do not believe Christ Jesus to be the Son of God because of anything I feel within myself, but because God Himself declares Him to be such! Neither do I trust my soul with Jesus because of certain emotions felt within, but because God, in the Book which I accept as His testimony, declares that He has set forth Jesus to be the Propitiation for sin. In the Bible I see that God Himself witnesses that whoever trusts Jesus is thereby forgiven, accepted and saved! And, therefore, I trust Him. We have no other foundation for our faith to rest upon than the witness of God. "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater." The testimony of God is surely enough for us! Dare we ask for more?

We must not go about to buttress the solid pillar of Divine Testimony. "Thus says the Lord" is proof enough and it is blasphemous impertinence for us to demand further evidence! Dare we look around for something which we have *observed* or something which we have *felt* to be a support to the solemn declaration of the Most High? If so, we are not believing in God at all, but are waiting for a surer witness than God, who cannot lie! In such a case we are still lost, for we cannot be saved while we are calling God a liar by refusing to believe Him till He can bring corroborative evidence! If we were to obtain that additional evidence, it is clear that our faith would not then stand in *God*, but in the additional testimony and so we should remain as to God still unbelievers!

The only basis for saving faith is the testimony of God Himself concerning His Son Jesus Christ! "And this is the testimony that God has given to us eternal life and this life is in His Son." Note that the words which follow our text assure us very solemnly that the rejection of this basis, namely, God's own testimony, involves the utmost possible guilt. "He that believes *not* God, has made Him a liar, because He believes not the record which God gave of His Son." Now, it is quite clear that this does not refer to any *inward* witness, because the man who *does not believe Christ* has no in-

ward witness and cannot have any! He cannot be guilty of rejecting what he never had—but God has given an *outward* witness to all mankind—a witness contained in Holy Scripture, clear and express and therein He declares that Jesus Christ is His Son and the appointed Savior of men! And He bids men trust in Him, promising that they shall thus be saved.

It is the rejection of the Revelation of God which involves the unbeliever in transcendent guilt, because his unbelief is tantamount to saying that God speaks lies—that He has deliberately given us a Bible which is a fiction; that He has set before us hopes which will end in disappointment; that He has threatened us with a doom which is a mere bugbear—that He has sent us a Savior who cannot save, who has presented a Sacrifice in which there is no real efficacy! The rejection of Christ as our Savior is the most pointed way of calling the Lord a liar! Surely we ought to start hack from such guilt as this, for it stabs at God's honor and, inasmuch as it impugns His truthfulness, it robs Him of one of the brightest jewels of His crown!

O beloved Hearers, be not guilty of this, I pray you, but believe your God! What if all men contradict Him—be it yours to believe Him—“Let God be true and every man a liar.” Believe God, though every feeling of your nature should seem to controvert His testimony, for feelings deceive and consciousness may be a dream—but God cannot lie—His Word is Truth itself! This, then, is the basis of faith, and the basis of faith which cannot be rejected without the utmost sin. Let me put it another way. I hear and I read that God has sent His Son Jesus Christ to save sinners—and thus I learn that I must trust Christ and I shall then obtain the benefit of His salvation. I believe this. I trust Christ and I am saved. This salvation gives me peace and rest and I become confirmed in my belief.

Now there are many who want this peace and rest *before* they will believe. They expect harvest *before* sowing and will not sow unless their preposterous desire can be granted! My dear Friend, you cannot expect to have the natural order reversed in this fashion! Why should you need it? Has not God spoken the Truth and if it is the Truth of God, why do you not believe it? The essence of faith lies in *believing* that God speaks the Truth and in acting upon His Word because it *is* the Truth! Is this more than God has a right to expect of you? Why should there be any refusal to render what is so manifestly His due? Why should we ask for further evidence whether it is in ourselves or in others? Should we not at once say, “God has said it. It is true. I will act upon it. And since He says Christ died for sinners and saves all that trust in Him, I will trust Him and I shall be saved”?

Now, this basis of faith is abundantly sufficient. I feel half ashamed to have to insist upon this most evident Truth of God, for, if we were not desperately set on mischief and alienated from God, we should feel this at once! Has God said it? Then to ask any *confirmation* of it is a direct *insult* to Him—a gratuitous impertinence against the Majesty of Heaven! Has God said it? Then we are more bound to believe than if all the scientific men in the world for centuries had witnessed to it! Has God said it? We are more sure of it than if all the traditions of all nations had handed it

down to us! Has God said it? Then we are surer of it than if our reason proved it by mathematical demonstration! Has God said it? Then we are more certain of it than if we saw it with our eyes—for they might be deceived—or than if we heard it with our ears, for they might be imposed upon. Our senses are deceivable, but God is not deceivable! He must be true and we may wisely cast the weight of our souls upon His faithfulness. And when we do, we may take all the consequences, fully assured that what the Lord has promised He is able to perform.

Now, though this basis is sufficient, the Lord, knowing our unbelief, has been pleased not to add to it, but to set it before us in a graciously amplified manner. He says, "There are three which bear witness on earth, the Spirit, the water, and the blood, and these three agree in one." That Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that He can and does save sinners and that He will save all who believe in Him is proven, first, by the giving of the Holy Spirit. He descended first at Pentecost, visibly and perceptibly, in rushing wind and cloven tongues of fire and He manifested His power by the marvelous gift of speaking in languages which the disciples had never learned. The Holy Spirit was mightily with the Apostles, bearing witness that Jesus was the Son of God and that the Gospel which they preached was Divine.

The Holy Spirit has not returned to Heaven and though His miraculous power is no longer seen among us in the physical world, He is still working spiritual miracles in the Church. He still regenerates; He still enlightens; He still consoles; He is still the help of our infirmity in prayer. He is still our Comforter and Guide. In many blessed and useful ways, for which He is to be adored, the Holy Spirit is still in the midst of the Church to witness to the truth of the Gospel. Instead of miracles we have the Presence of the Holy Spirit—men quickened from death in sin, hearts renewed, eyes enlightened, souls regenerated—these are the standing witnesses of God in the Church to the Truth of the Gospel.

Then, there is the witness of the water. By the water, I understand to be meant that Living Water of which, if a man drinks, he shall live forever. And it indicates the spiritual life which abides in the Church—the life and the cleansing which God gives to Believers. Now, there are thousands of us who can bear witness that we possess a life to which we once were strangers—but by believing in Jesus Christ that life has been given to us—as it shall also be given to all who hear me this day, upon their believing in Jesus! That Water of Life abiding in the Church and always flowing out of the very midst of her living members is another form of the witness of God, a part of the one solid basis upon which true faith must rest.

Then there is the blood—a third witness—that blood of Atonement which speaks better things than that of Abel, which brings peace to the guilty conscience and ends the strife within. There is no voice like it to believing ears! This is another and most powerful form of the witness of God. He does pardon sin and give peace to the conscience—the fact is known to thousands and is the abiding witness of God to His dear Son. The abiding power of the Spirit, the water and the blood are God's continuance of His one testimony that Jesus Christ is the appointed Savior and that whoever

trusts in Him shall be saved. Beyond this evidence, the hearer of the Gospel may expect nothing. What more can he need? What more can he desire? If you refuse Christ upon the witness of God, you must refuse Him outright, for no other witness shall ever be given unto those who believe not upon the solemn testimony of God!

And, Beloved, let me say that this basis which has been so graciously amplified in the triple witness of the Spirit, the water and the blood, has this to commend it—it is everlasting and immutable! Did you believe in Jesus Christ 50 years ago? Did you then trust Him because God declared Him to be worthy of your confidence? That witness of God remains in all its potency today! A thousand years ago a poor sinner came to Jesus because God had assured him in the Scriptures that there he should find mercy. And today another sinner may come with just the same confidence, for the guarantee of faith is unaltered! What a blessing this is!

Our feelings change—sometimes the inward witness burns brightly and sometimes it becomes very dim—sometimes we feel tender in heart and at another time we are hard as a millstone! At one moment we are zealous and at another moment indifferent. It would never do to have such a shifting basis of our faith. Such a moving, shivering quicksand as this would never satisfy us very long! But what a rock we have in God's Word! He has said it and it must be true, "He that has the Son has life." When I look within I cannot always tell by my *feelings* whether I have obtained spiritual life or not. But since I know that I believe in Jesus, I know that I have eternal life because God has said so! I, trusting His Son Jesus Christ, know myself to be saved over the head of all my feelings, let them be what they may, for God has said, "He that believes has everlasting life."

And you, poor Soul, are *not* invited to come to Christ this morning because there is something *in you* that is a guarantee for your coming—some inward witness bearing testimony to your fitness! No, you are to come because there is witness enough in this Book! Because there is witness enough in the fact that the Spirit of God is in the Church! Because there is witness enough that the Living Water is still imparted unto men and that the blood of Jesus has not lost its power, but cleanses from all sin! If you will not believe upon this all-sufficient witness, you *cannot* expect to receive any other, for this is the witness of God upon which men savingly believe in Christ Jesus!

Now, dear Friends, the faith which will not and cannot rest on this basis is evidently no faith in God at all, but a proud resolve to demand other evidence than His Word. "Well," says one, "but suppose I were to see a *vision*? I should then believe." That is to say, you would believe your vision, but that vision would, in all probability, be the result of a fevered brain and you would be deceived! "Uh, but if I could hear a voice, then I could believe." That is to say, you refuse the sure Word of testimony in the Bible and will only believe God if He will condescend to indulge *your* whims! Voices which you might think you heard are not to be depended upon—for imagination easily creates them! When day-dreaming I have heard many voices, or thought I did, but they may have been echoes, or birds far up in

the air, or mere fancies. There is nothing to be depended upon in hearing a voice in the air!

Will you put *that* in competition with the revealed will of God? “Oh, but if I had a *special* Revelation.” Such a special Revelation you have no right to look for! I speak most plainly here—no additional Revelation is to be expected because the Book of God is *ended*—the Revelation of God is finished and he that adds to the sacred Book is cursed! If you, therefore, say that God has made a new Revelation to you, you run a dreadful risk of the curses which are written in this book! God, by His Spirit, brings old Truths of God home to the heart, gives new light to our eyes and causes the Word to exercise new power over us—but He reveals no new facts and He utters no words in any man’s ears concerning his condition and state. We must be content with the old Revelation and with the life and power and force with which the Holy Spirit brings it to the heart.

Neither must any of us seek to have any additional Revelation, for that would imply that the Scriptures are incomplete. What? Has God spoken all this volume that you may believe on His Son and is not that enough for you? Must He go out of His way to make some private communication to *you*? Is all that which He has already spoken to be treated as a lie unless He, at *your* dictation, condescends to say something for *you*, personally? Are you too good or too great to be saved like other sinners? That is what it practically comes to! “Oh,” you say, “but if I felt such-and-such, I would believe.” Suppose you did? Then your confidence would be in your *feelings* and not in God—and what would that be but *presumption* seeing that there cannot be anything in your feelings which can make God true! God is true, feel whatever you may! Believe Him, then, for it is to that faith in His Son that He gives salvation and not to faith in your feelings!

Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness. But if Abraham had stood higgling and haggling till he had seen this and that, he would not have believed nor found righteousness by faith! Let me tell those of you who will not believe in God till you get a certain experience, or sign, or wonder to be added to God’s Word, that those of His people who have been the longest walking by faith have to come back very often to the first foundation of faith in the outer witness of God in His Word! It has been the privilege of some of us to possess the inner witness for years and yet, at certain times, it departs and we have to fall back on the foundation—the Truth of God.

When the winds are out and the storms are loosed and temptation howls through the soul, we always fly to the Word of God and not to our own experience! We get away from what we *feel* to what the Lord has said. One ounce, of, “It is written,” gives more confidence than a ton of what we have *felt*. We are apt, in troublous times, to judge that our happy feeling was a delusion and our confidence a mistake. “True, I did think that I stood and looked within the pearly gates and was full of heavenly joy. But, alas, it may have been all a dream!” This is, however, no dream—that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners—there is no mistake about that fact! That God has sent forth His Son to be a Propitiation for sin—there is no imagination about that!

There it stands in black and white in the Scriptures of Truth and to that witness we again fly! Whether I am saint or sinner. Whether I am an heir of Heaven or an heir of wrath, there stands the Word of God—"He that believes in Him is not condemned." I do believe in Him and I am not condemned, nor shall all the devils in Hell make me think I am, since God has said I am not! On that my faith shall stand unshaken, come what may! Let this suffice upon our first head, that *believing* on the Son comes *before* the inner witness.

**II.** Secondly, THE INNER WITNESS NATURALLY FOLLOWS UPON FAITH. "He that believes on the Son of God has the witness in himself." It is quite impossible that the inner witness should precede faith and this you will clearly see if you think a minute. Here is a medicine well-known to be exceedingly efficacious in a certain disease. A sick man says that he will not believe in its power until he has some inner witness of it! It is clear to you that he cannot possibly have any evidence of its power until he has at least enough faith to take the medicine and give it a chance of operating upon him. So is it with this blessed catholicon of the precious blood of Jesus—you cannot have any inner witness to its power till, first of all, you receive it by faith!

"To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believed on His name"—but the reception must come first! And you cannot have this witness apart from faith, because the Holy Spirit never sets His seal to a blank sheet of paper. There must, first of all, be the writing of faith upon the heart and *then* the Spirit of God puts His attesting seal to it! Would you have God the Holy Spirit witness to a falsehood? And yet He would be witnessing to a lie if He gave an inner witness of salvation to a man who is still an unbeliever and who, consequently, is already condemned! If you refuse to believe God's Word, how can you think that the Spirit will bear witness of anything in you except it is to your condemnation? There must be faith *before*—and then the witness will follow after.

But let it be especially remembered that a man may have the witness within him and sometimes he may not perceive it. You say, "That is strange"? Yet reflect—you might be the possessor of a large estate and an adversary might contest your right to it. What if you cannot find your title deeds? The estate might be clearly enough yours, but those deeds of yours might be mislaid and locked up in a forgotten drawer—and you might be sorely put to it, perhaps, until the day of trial settles the dispute as to whether it is yours or not.

I believe that many a child of God has plenty of witness in his own soul, but he has not the wisdom to perceive it. Plenty of witness, but through ignorance or carelessness he does not collect it and refresh himself with it. If he believes, he has the witness within himself and he will be comforted if he has but light enough to know what the witness is. But often, through negligence in searching the Word of God, he has the witness but cannot discover it. He wishes to read it, but his ignorance has mislaid it!

Now, what is this witness within? It may be seen as follows—take the verses that precede my text and you get one form of it. Jesus Christ is the

Son of God and the Savior of sinners—that is the main point to be witnessed. First the Spirit, after we have believed, bears witness in our soul that it is so, because we perceive that the Spirit has led us to believe in Jesus and has given us repentance. The Spirit has renewed us. The Spirit has made us different from what we were. The Spirit helps us in prayer. The Spirit lifts us up upon the wings of praise. The Spirit works upon us wondrously and so we gather that this comes to us through believing in Jesus. He is, indeed, the Savior of sinners, for we are saved!

Then the water bears witness within us—that is to say, we feel a new life, we feel the Living Water in our hearts and we are conscious of being alive to things to which we were once dead! We find that now there is within us a new nature which we never possessed before. All this becomes comfortable evidence that what we have believed is true. We have proved it to be true, for we have the life which was promised to us upon our believing in Jesus. Thirdly, the precious blood within our souls bears further witness, for when it gives us peace, we sing as sinners bought with blood and rejoice before God as cleansed by the blood from all sin. And, as having access into that which is within the veil by the sprinkled blood, we feel deep peace within our souls through the voice of the blood. This is a witness, sweet and clear, within us, proving that what we received from God's Word without any other evidence is certainly true.

Now we have confirmatory witness within our spirits, given not because we demanded it, but as a sweet *reward* and gracious *privilege*. We should never have received it if we had not first *believed* on the naked Word of God—only after that does the witness flow naturally into the heart. Another part of the witness lies in this, that when we have believed we receive life—and according to the 11<sup>th</sup> verse, this is the record that God has given us eternal life—and this life is in His Son. We have believed and we feel that we have obtained the life—we are doubly assured that the witness of God is true. We believed it, before, because God had said it. And now we are permitted to feel it since the life is welling up within our souls like a fountain! We now *know* that Jesus Christ must be the Son of God, for to whom else is it given to bestow life? Who else could have bestowed upon us this high, this spiritual, this heavenly life?

In detail, the inward evidence lies very much this way. First, a wondrous sense of change comes over the Believer. Having believed in Jesus Christ upon the simple evidence of God, there is a work of regeneration performed upon him and he feels himself altogether transformed. A young girl once said, "Either the whole world is changed, or else I am." Everything seems so altered, for it is seen with new eyes! The man undergoes a radical change of feelings! All things are reversed to him—his sweets are now sour and his sour is now sweet! And finding himself so thoroughly new-created, he says, "This is the finger of God," and he infers that the power which has worked all this comes from the Son of God.

Then, again, there is a wondrous power which goes with the Word of God, not always, but often. Are you not conscious, my Brethren, of often feeling, when you are reading the Word, or hearing it, as you never felt when listening to any other form of speech? Get to the foot of the Cross,

for instance, and look up and view the flowing of your Savior's precious blood—do you not feel, then, as nothing else can make you feel? You are reading a religious book and it has a holy effect upon you. But if you reflect, you will see that it is only powerful because it is borrowed from the Word of God. The voice of God thrills your soul in a more than magical manner as no other voice ever can! Why, I guarantee you, a Christian *blindfolded* would know which was a text of Scripture and which was not by its effect upon his heart!

The very words are so majestic that none can imitate their dignity—and when they are applied with power they lay us low or lift us up as only Divine Words could do! “Where the word of a king is, there is power,” and this becomes an inner witness to the sovereign Truth of the Gospel! The same witness is borne by a sense of being put into our right place. You were all out of place before, but having believed in Jesus Christ you are put in your right position. You stand in harmony with the Divine system and this you feel could only be effected by the Truth of God—for a lie works to disorder and not to right. If anybody had said to the prodigal son—“I doubt whether you have a father. I doubt your father's love. I doubt whether he has any house where there is bread enough and to spare,”

He might have been puzzled to answer those wretched doubts while he was standing at the swine trough, but you could not trouble him with it when he has reached his father's house and was sitting down at the table of love listening to the sound of the music and dancing, and feasting upon the fatted calf! If any skeptic had then said to him, “There is no father's love,” why, his cheeks still sweetly tingling with the kisses would have supplied him with his best reply! I do not suppose he would have deigned to answer the doubter except by a quiet smile! And he would have gone on feasting upon the fatted calf or, if he did answer, he would have said, “Go, take your doubts to one who will receive them. I am right again with my dear father, for he has forgiven me and I feel his love and know for myself that he abounds in tenderness.”

That deep feeling of peace which comes to us through believing in Jesus makes us feel quite sure that He can save and that we are secure in Him! We took God at His Word when we had no feeling, but having believed in Jesus Christ we are now conscious of a wonderful rest—“The peace of God which passes all understanding.” We see that we are forgiven, justly forgiven, saved by mercy, but still not to the violation of the Justice of God and, therefore, we are perfectly at ease. Yes, and sometimes we rise beyond peace! I am not going to tell many of the high secrets of the inner life, this morning, but yet I will confess that at times—

**“Our joys divinely grow,  
Unspeakable, like those above,  
And Heaven begins below.”**

This, again, is a part of the inner witness that the Gospel is true.

And what if I were to speak of growing holiness of character, of increased conformity to Christ's image? Do not these form a good inner witness? What if I were to speak of growing strength so that the things we



dare not once attempt we now accomplish with ease, or of growing patience under tribulation? Either of these would be noble proofs! What if I spoke of fellowship with God, or of peace in the prospect of death, or of a thousand other blessings which make up Christian experience? Might I not claim that all these go to make up a very powerful inner witness which abundantly seals the Truth of God which we at first accepted as matter of pure faith in the testimony of God?

**III.** As time hastens I will only pause for a moment to say that THIS INNER WITNESS IS EXCEEDINGLY EXCELLENT. First, because it is very plain and easy to be understood. Numbers of you have never read "*Butler's Analogy*." And if you were set to study it you would go to sleep over it. Never mind, you may have an unanswerable "analogy" in your own souls! You might not understand Butler or Paley, but you will understand the witness of your own spirit! You may talk to a pauper about mastication and digestion and assimilation and he will open his eyes and wonder what you mean—but he will understand your practical meaning well enough if you give him a good dinner!

So it is with the things of God—theological terms are difficult, but if you believe in Jesus Christ and He saves your soul, you will understand that He is the Divine Savior and *nobody* will be able to convince you otherwise! That is another point of its excellence—that it is unanswerable! A man is told that a certain medicine is mere quackery. "See here," says he, "it healed me." What do you say to such an argument? You had better leave the man alone. So when a Christian is told that the Gospel is all nonsense and he replies, "It saved me. I was a drunk and it made me sober and more. I was a man of strong passions and it tamed me and more." What can you say to such facts? Why, nothing! It must be with you as with the rulers of old—"When they saw the man that was healed standing with Peter and John, they could say nothing against them."

Such argument as this is very abiding in its results. A man who has been transformed and feels himself daily renewed by the Gospel, cannot be baffled because every day his argument is renewed and he finds fresh reasons within himself for knowing that what he believed is true! Such argument is always impossible to defeat. Sometimes if you are challenged to a controversy you have to reply, "Wait till I run upstairs and consult a few books." But when the evidence is *personal*—"I have felt it, I know it, I have tasted it, handled it"—why you have your argument at your fingertips at all times! Such witness as this gives a man great boldness. He does not begin to conceal his opinions, or converse with his neighbor with an apologetical air, but he is positive and certain!

I confess that when I have to argue about the truth of Divine things it is a dreary task. I am so sure of these things, myself, by living and actual test, that I am amazed that other people are not sure, too! And while they are wanting me to argue about this point or that, it seems to me like asking a man to prove that there is a sun in yonder sky. I bask in his beams, I swoon under his heat, I see by his light—and yet they ask me to prove his existence?! Are they mad? What do they want me to prove? That God hears prayer? I pray and receive answers every day! That God pardons

sin? I was in my own esteem the blackest of sinners and sunk in the depths of despair, yet I believed, by God's Grace, and by that faith I leaped into a fullness of light and liberty at once!

Why do they not try it themselves? You want me to prove that bread is fit for food? Why, Man, I have been living upon it for years! I do not know how to begin my proof. Take a bit of bread, Man, and eat and know for yourself. "Taste and see that the Lord is good." We believe and are sure and, therefore we speak, but we do not wonder if men reject *our* witness, for they refuse the witness of *God*!

**IV.** I close by saying that excellent as this inner witness is, IT MUST NEVER BE PUT IN THE PLACE OF THE DIVINE WITNESS IN THE WORD. Why not? Because it would insult the Lord and be contrary to His rule of salvation by faith. Because, moreover, it is not always with us in equal clearness, or rather, we cannot equally discern it. If the brightest Christian begins to base his faith upon his *experiences* and his *attainments*, he will be in bondage before long. Beloved, build on what God has said and not upon your inward joys. Accept these precious things, not as foundation stones, but as pinnacles of your spiritual temple! Let the main thing be—"I believe because God has spoken." If any other evidence comes to your net, accept it, but go on fishing by FAITH! Faith in God, in God's naked Word!

Then, if the Lord's hand should turn and you, in Providence, should be stripped bare like Job, so that you sit on a dunghill covered with boils, you will be able to say, "I believed that God loved me when He gave me children. I believed God loved me when I had sheep and oxen. I believed that God loved me when I had camels and asses, but still, these were not the grand reasons of my faith, but *God Himself* and, therefore, I still believe that He loves me now that every child is dead, all my property is swept away and I am sick. Yes, though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." That is faith! God grant you to have that faith which can sing, "Though the fig tree shall not blossom and there shall be no herd in the stall, yet will I rejoice in the Lord."

Though there is no evidences of Grace in me; though there are no joys; though there is a broken peace; though there is sin to mourn over and though there is hardness of heart to stagger me—yet I still took the Lord Jesus as a sinners' Savior at the first and I take Him as a sinners' Savior now! I did not trust Him at the first because I was a saint and now I will not doubt Him because I find out more and more that I am a sinner—but I will still go to Him just as I am and rest on the great salvation which God has provided for me! Sinner, I charge you, do not wish to put your notion of an inner witness into the place of God's own witness which He bears to you and to every creature under Heaven in His sacred Word!

You may not say, "I will trust Jesus when I have the inner witness," because you never *can* have the inner witness till you have *first* trusted in the redeeming Lord! Until you are willing to believe God's bare Word and come to Christ in all your guilt and accept His cleansing blood and perfect righteousness, you never can have any evidence within, unless it is evidence of your own folly and sinfulness! Therefore, what is the use of your

looking for it? Why seek the living among the dead? You cannot have this inner witness *before* believing and you ought not to desire it—for the desire is unreasonable!

I have shown you that it would be irrational to expect the Spirit of God to set His seal to a blank—how can He do so? If you will not believe God, why should you expect to be saved? And if not saved, how can you have the inner witness? If a king were about to pardon men simply upon the condition that they would trust his mercy—and they were to answer, “We will not believe in your clemency unless you indulge our whims”—would you wonder if he did not pardon them? Moreover, let me ask you, how can you ever be right with God if you will not believe Him? Certainly I could not count you to be my friend if you refused to believe my solemn statements. If you counted me a liar, how could I call you my friend? What peace can there be till confidence is restored? Are not those God’s enemies who refuse to believe His witness about His own Son?

Now, my Hearers, will you believe God or not? Dear Souls, will you believe God or not? “Oh,” you say, “but!”—Now, that is not the question! What “but” can there be about this matter? Either the Lord is true or false! I know you can make a hundred “buts,” but will you believe God, or will you call Him a liar? O Spirit of the living God, show men the sin of unbelief and bring them to see how just and right a thing it is simply to trust God and believe His witness concerning Jesus Christ!

Now, I put you to this—If God is not worthy to be trusted, say so and go your way! But if He is. If He has spoken the truth, why do you not believe Him? If, after this, you refuse to believe in Jesus, your doom will be upon your own heads! But if you will trust Christ, you may rejoice, for you are saved! This is the Gospel that we are commanded to preach to every creature—“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believes not shall be damned.” God give His own blessing for Christ’s sake. Amen.

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

# DEAD OR ALIVE —WHICH?

## NO. 755

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 16, 1867,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“He that has the Son has life; and he that has  
not the Son of God has not life.”  
1 John 5:12.*

LAST Sunday morning we addressed you upon the gracious operations of the Holy Spirit in the Believer, and upon the glorious fact of His dwelling in the hearts of the regenerate. Now it frequently happens that when we discourse upon the work of the Holy Spirit, there are certain weak and uninstructed Brethren who straightway fall into questions and despondencies because they, in some point or other, are unable to discern the work of Grace within themselves. That work may be prospering within them, but through the turmoil of their spirits and the dimness of their mental vision, they do not at once perceive it, and therefore they are distracted and alarmed.

There is a consoling doctrine which is intended to yield comfort to souls thus afflicted. It is the great truth that, “Whoever believes on the Lord Jesus Christ has everlasting life.” If they would remember this Gospel declaration, they might also, with advantage, consider the other spiritual fact, and by weighing the two Truths of God in their minds, they might receive much permanent blessing. While at the present, by having an eye to one only, they throw themselves off balance and make to themselves many sorrows.

It is not, however, the easiest thing in the world to preach clearly, with judicious blending, the operations of the Spirit and the doctrine of complete salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. However clear our utterance, we shall seem sometimes to make one Truth entrench upon the other. It is the mark of the Christian minister who is taught of God that he rightly divides the Word of Truth. But this rightly dividing is so far from being an easy thing that it must be taught us by no less a teacher than God the Holy Spirit.

When our Lord addressed Nicodemus, He experienced the same difficulty which, at this day, every watchful minister observes in his hearers. He found that a description of the inner work must be accompanied by the publication of the Gospel of faith, or it would only cause bewilderment and depression. Our Lord began, in the third chapter of John's Gospel, by telling Nicodemus that he must be born again, and explaining to him the mysterious character of the new birth. Whereupon Nicodemus was filled with wonder, and unbelievably exclaimed, “How can these things be?”

He does not seem to have made the smallest advance towards faith by hearing of the new birth, and therefore, on the selfsame occasion our Lord turned aside from the doctrine of regeneration, the inner work, to speak to him of the doctrine of *faith*, or the work of Christ which is the object of saving faith. Thus it comes to pass that the very same chapter which has in it that searching passage, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,” contains also these en-

couraging words, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.”

From which I gather, my Brethren, that those unwise revivalists who perpetually cry up, “Believe and live!” and by their silence and sometimes by their unguarded remarks, disparage *repentance* and other works of the Holy Spirit, have not our Savior’s example for so doing. And on the other hand, those conservative Divines who continually cry up *inward experience*, and preach the work of the Spirit, but forget to publish the Gospel message, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved,” these also have neither example nor precedent from our Lord Jesus Christ or His Apostles, but mar the Truth of God by leaving out a portion of it.

If we can, with all boldness and distinctness, declare the inward work which the Holy Spirit accomplishes in the soul by working in us to will and to do of God’s good pleasure, and at the same time can tell the sinner most plainly that the object of his faith is not the work *within*, but the work which *Jesus Christ accomplished upon the Cross* for him, we shall have dealt faithfully with Divine Truth, and wisely with our hearer’s soul. The faith which brings salvation looks away from everything that is inward to that which was accomplished and completed by our once slain but now ascended Lord! And yet no man has this faith except as it is worked in him by the quickening Spirit.

If we can preach both these Truths of God in harmonious proportion, it seems to me that we shall have hit upon that form of Christian teaching which, while it is consistent with Truth, is also healthful to the soul. Having on the previous Sunday done our best with the one subject, we now seek to give the other its fair prominence. We have in the text mention made of certain men who are living, and of others who are dead. And, as the two are put together in the text, we shall close by some observations upon the conduct of those who have life towards those who are destitute of it.

**I.** First, then, CONCERNING THE LIVING. Our text testifies that, “He that has the Son has life.” Of course, by “life” here is meant not mere *existence*, or *natural* life, for we all have that whether we have the Son of God or not. In the image of the first Adam we are all created living souls and continue in life until the Lord recalls the breath from our nostrils.

The life here intended is *spiritual* life—the life received at the new birth by which we perceive and enter into the heavenly kingdom—come under new and spiritual laws, are moved by new motives, and exist in a new world. The life here meant is the life of God in the *soul*, which is given us when we are newly created in the image of the Second Adam who was made a quickening spirit. A celestial form of life inwardly perceptible to the person who possesses it, and outwardly discernible to spiritual observers by its holy effects and heavenly fruits.

This spiritual life is the sure mark of deliverance from the penal death which the sentence of the Law pronounced. Man under the Law is condemned—the sentence of death is recorded against him. But man under Divine Grace is free from the Law and is not adjudged to death, but lives by virtue of a legal justification which absolves him from guilt and consequently liberates him from death. These two kinds of life—the life which is given by the judge to the offender when he is pardoned, and the life which is imparted from the Divine Father—the heir of Heaven is begotten again

unto a lively hope. These two lives blend together and ensure for us the life eternal such as they possess who stand upon the “sea of glass,” and tune their tongues to the music of celestial hosts.

Eternal life is spiritual life made perfect! If we live by virtue of our pardon and *justification*, and if, moreover, we live because we are quickened by the Holy Spirit, we shall also live in the glory of the eternal Father, being made in the likeness of our Lord Jesus Christ who is the true God and Eternal Life. This is the life here intended—life spiritual, life eternal. By the term “having the Son,” we understand *possessing* the Lord Jesus Christ. There is the finished work of Jesus, and faith appropriates it. We trust in Christ, and Christ becomes ours. As the result of Grace in our souls we chose the Lord Jesus as the ground of our dependence, and then we accept Him as the Lord of our hearts, the Guide of our actions, and supreme delight of our souls.

He that has the Son, then, is a man who is trusting alone in Jesus, in whom Jesus Christ rules and reigns. And such a man is most assuredly the possessor of spiritual and eternal life at the present moment. It is not said, “he *shall* have life.” He has it. He enjoys it *now*. He is at this hour a quickened spirit. God has breathed into him a new life by which he is made a partaker of the Divine Nature and is one of the seed according to promise. And this life he has by virtue of his having received the Son of God to be his All.

I have thus briefly opened up the words of the text, and having broken the bone, let us now discuss the marrow and fatness of it. Whoever in this world possesses Christ by faith is most certainly alive unto God by a life eternal. I shall remark, in the first place, that having the Son is good evidence of eternal life from the fact that faith by which a man receives Christ is, in itself, a living *act*. Faith is the hand of the soul, but a dead man cannot stretch out his icy limbs to take of that which is presented to him. If I, as a guilty, needy sinner, with my empty hands receive the fullness of Christ, I have performed a *living act*.

The hand may quiver with weakness, but life is there. Faith is the eye of the soul by which the sin-bitten sinner looks to Christ, lifted up as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness. But from the stony eyes of death no glance of faith can dart. There may be all the organization by which it should look, but if life is absent the eyes cannot see. If, therefore, my eye of faith has looked alone to Jesus, and I depend upon Him, I must be a living soul—that act has proven me to be alive unto God. Looking to Jesus is a very simple act, indeed. It is a childlike act, but still it is a *living* one. No sight gleams from the eyeballs of death.

Faith, again, is the *mouth* of the soul. By faith we feed upon Christ. Jesus Christ is digested and inwardly assimilated so that our soul lives upon Him. But a dead man cannot eat. Whoever heard of carcasses gathering at a banquet? There may be the mouth, the teeth, and the palate, and so forth—the organization may be perfect—but the dead man neither tastes the sweet nor relishes the delicious. If, then, I have received Christ Jesus as the Bread which came down from Heaven—as the spiritual drink from the Rock—I have performed an action which is in itself a clear evidence that I belong to the *living* in Zion.

Now, my dear Friends, perhaps some of you have hardly any other evidence of Grace but this. You know that you have received Christ. You know that you look to Jesus and lay hold upon Him. Well, then, you could

not have done this if you had not obtained eternal life, and the text is evidently true, "He that has the Son has life." Furthermore, faith in Jesus is good evidence of life because of the things which accompany it. Now, no man ever did come to Jesus Christ and receive Him until he had felt his need of a Savior. No sickness, no physician. No wound, no surgeon.

No soul asks for pardon or obtains it till he has felt that sin is an evil for which pardon is necessary. That is to say, repentance *always* comes with faith. There must be a loathing of sin and a dread of its consequences, or there is no faith. Now, as repentance is an evident sign of life, faith in Jesus must involve spiritual life. What if I say that repentance is like the cry of the new-born babe which indicates that the child is alive? That cry of, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" is as sure a sign of life as the song of cherubim before the Throne of God. There could have been no laying hold of Christ without true repentance of sin, which repentance becomes, in its turn, a clear proof of the possession of the inner life which springs from incorruptible seed, and therefore lives and abides forever.

Where there is faith, again, there is always *prayer*. Depend upon it, that if Saul of Tarsus cries, "Lord, what will You have me to do?" it will, before long, be said of him, "Behold, he prays." No soul believes in Jesus Christ without exercising its faith and its desires in prayer. But prayer is the breath of the soul, and where there is breath there must be life. Can the dead pray unto God? Shall a dead soul cry out for mercy? No, Beloved, the falling of a tear, the upward glance of an eye when none but God is near—these may be very weak prayers as men judge them—but they are as much signs of life as Jacob's wrestling at the brook Jabbok, or Elijah's prevailing with God on Carmel's brow.

So, then, he that has an interest in the Lord Jesus, since his faith is attended by repentance and prayer, and many other holy Graces, has a multitude of sure and certain evidences of eternal life within the soul! And I might say that the consequences of receiving Christ are also good evidences of heavenly life. For when a man receives the Son of God, he obtains a measure of peace and joy—and peace with God and joy in the Holy Spirit are not to be found in the sepulchers of dead souls. When Ezekiel saw the dry bones in the valley, I do not find that any of them were singing for joy of heart or silently musing in unutterable thankfulness.

There was a sort of peace in the valley—the horrible repose of *death*, the grim silence of the grave—but *living*, sparkling peace, flowing like a river, those dry bones could not know. Job says of the hypocrite, "Will he delight himself in the Almighty?" Joy in God is too wonderful a work of God for mere professors to forge a passable counterfeit of it. Artificial flowers may be very like the real beauties of the garden, but they lack the joyous perfume and honeyed stores of life—and the bees soon find out the difference! The honey juice and the delicate aroma are not to be matched.

The like might be said of all the results of faith which are far too numerous for me to speak of in detail this morning, such as purging the conscience from dead works, enlightenment by the Spirit, godly fear, the spirit of adoption, brotherly love, separation from the world, the consecration of life, holy gratitude which mounts like flame to Heaven, and sacred affection which ascends like altar smoke. None of these can be found in the morgue of fallen humanity! They can only be discovered in the house of life where God works according to His good pleasure.

He that has the Son, it is clear, has life because the act by which he lays hold upon the Son of God, the occurring of that act and the consequences of that act, all infallibly betoken the possession of *life eternal*. The possession of the Lord Jesus Christ is the evidence of faith in many ways. It is God's mark upon a living soul. See yonder battlefield strewn with men who have fallen in the terrible conflict! Many have been slain, many more are wounded, and there they lie in ghastly confusion, the dead all stark and stiff, covered with their own crimson, and the wounded faint and bleeding, unable to leave the spot where they have fallen.

Surgeons have gone over the field rapidly, ascertaining which are corpses beyond the reach of mercy's healing hand, and which are men faint with loss of blood. Each living man has a paper fastened conspicuously on his breast, and when the soldiers are sent out with the ambulances to gather up the wounded, they do not, themselves, need to stay and judge which may be living and which may be dead. They see a mark upon the living and lifting them up right tenderly, they bear them to the hospital where their wounds may be dressed.

Now, faith in the Son is God's infallible mark which He has set upon every poor wounded sinner whose bleeding heart has received the Lord Jesus! Though he faints and feels as lifeless as though he were mortally wounded, yet he most surely lives if he believes, for the possession of Jesus is the token which cannot deceive! Faith is God's mark witnessing in unmistakable language—"this soul lives." Jesus says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believes on Me has everlasting life." Tenderly, tenderly, you ministers of Christ, and you blood-bought ones who care for the broken-hearted—lift up this wounded one, bear him away, bind up his wounds with comfortable promises—and restore his ebbing life with precious consolations from the Book of God!

Whatever else we cannot see, if a simple trust in Jesus is discernible in a convert we need feel no suspicions but receive him at once as a beloved Brother, for this is the Father's will—that everyone that sees the Son, and believes on Him, may have everlasting life! Moreover, the possession of the Lord Jesus Christ becomes a clear evidence of life, because, indeed, it is in some sense the source, fountain, and nourishment of life! Here is a hand, "Is it alive?" Many questions may be asked about it which will be unsatisfactory as evidence of life.

"Has it a delicate complexion? Are the fingers well fashioned?" The answers may be, as you please, yes or no, and yet life may be present or absent. "Is it adorned with gold rings set with emeralds or diamonds?" Or, "Does it wear an elegant, well-fitting glove?" The answer may be whichever you please—none of those things will at all effect the life of the hand. It may be white as ivory, or brown as autumn leaves. It may be clad in mailed gauntlet, or soiled with stains of blood, and yet it may be either clay cold in death or warm with life.

But here is the question which cuts at the main point, "Is the hand vitally connected with a living head?" If it is so, then the conclusion is inevitable, that the hand is most surely alive! Now faith, by which we receive the Son of God, is the Grace which vitally unites the members with Christ, their living Head. And where there is a vital *union* with the Son of God, there must be life. While the branch is vitally in the stem it will have life. If it is not always bearing fruit, yet it always has life in itself, because it is in



union with the living stem, and thus, Beloved, the fact of having the Son becomes an evidence of life, because it is the Source of life!

In another aspect of it, having the Son is not only the *source* of life, but the *result* of life. When the great doors were opened at the Black Hole in Calcutta, and the pure air went streaming in, there were many lungs which did not receive that air for the simple reason that the most of those who had been so barbarously confined were dead. To them the fresh oxygen had come too late. But there were a few which gladly and at once received the breath of Heaven, and such as were still alive walked forth from amidst the corpses into the open air.

Now, when a man receives Jesus into his soul as life from the dead, his faith is the sure indicator of a spiritual and mysterious life within him—in the power of which he is able to receive the Lord. Jesus is freely preached to you. His Grace is free as the air, but the dead do not breathe that air—those who breathe it are, beyond all doubt, alive. Christ is presented to you in the preaching of the Gospel as freely as the water from the drinking fountain at the corner of the street. But the dead man drinks not, his lips care not for the flowing crystal. He who drinks is evidently alive. The reception of Jesus Christ is the sure result of a heavenly life palpitating within the soul!

Thus you see the evidence is good, from several points of the compass. Looking at the soul's business from several ways, faith still becomes with equal clearness a witness that the man who has it possesses the Divine life within him. Let me further remark that the possession of the Lord Jesus Christ by faith is sufficient evidence of eternal life. "I do not know," says one, "when I was converted." My dear Friend, have you the Son of God? Do you trust in Jesus Christ? That is quite enough! If you can, from the heart, say, "I trust Jesus Christ," though you have no spiritual biography worth recording, you have life!

Many aged persons have either forgotten their birthdays, or have lost the register and cannot tell exactly how old they are. But that does not at all prove that they are not alive! So your not knowing precisely when you were converted is no evidence that you are not saved! No doubt it is very comfortable to be able to refer to a distinct date and place when the great change took place, but in many instances there could be no such reference made because the change was extremely gradual. In some parts of the world the sun rises on a sudden and sets just as quickly. But here, in England, we enjoy those delightful twilights which herald the morning and foreshadow the night.

With many converts there is a long twilight of soul in which they are not all darkness, but certainly not all light. They can scarcely tell where the darkness ended and where the light began. Dear Friends, do not worry yourselves about the almanac of Grace. Care more about its present *reality* and less about its past *history*. "He that has the Son of God has life." Though he may not know when he laid hold upon the Son of God, yet if he has Him now he has no need to harbor the raven of mistrust. Faith is sufficient evidence, even in the absence of any great knowledge.

I would to God that we were all taught in the Word and could enter into the doctrines which are food for strong men in Christ—but even then we should know very little of Election. Though the difference between Sanctification and Justification might seem too high for us to comprehend, yet if we have the Son of God we have life. No doubt there have been some who

have entered Heaven who were little better than half-witted, and yet, through simple faith in Jesus they were as surely saved as a Newton or a Locke, who, with all their understanding and all their philosophy, could not rest upon a better foundation than the merit of that condescending Redeemer upon whom the poorest fool in the kingdom may depend with safety.

If you have Christ, learn as much as you can. Seek to grow in Divine Grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. But if your understanding is dull, do not tremble as though your soul depended upon your knowledge, for, "He that has the Son has life," however ignorant he may be! So, again, it may be that you have never passed through any special horrors and alarms. When some pilgrims come to the wicket gate, the Slough of Despond pours forth its filth and the black dog howls at them as they knock at Mercy's door. But many others are brought to Jesus gently, being carried like lambs in His bosom.

Many of Christ's flowers bloom in sheltered spots and feel not the frosts of sharp temptation. Jesus has bands of love to draw with as well as a scourge of small cords to draw with. Many gentle spirits are led to find their All in the Christ of God, and yet they know very little of the depths of their inward depravity, and less still of the evil suggestions of Satan. My dear Friends, do not let this distress you! I was about to say even be *thankful* for it. Have you looked to Jesus Christ? Have you depended alone on Him? That is, for the present, sufficient evidence without anything else. "He that has the Son of God has life."

I think I hear someone say, "Ah, but I have been reading the biography of such-and-such a good man, and I find him frequently in the seventh Heaven of communion, so full of joy and rapture. Oh, that I knew something about that!" Well, I wish you did. I would have you covet earnestly the best gifts. But, my dear Friend, you must not think that because you have *not* enjoyed these raptures, therefore you are not saved. Many go to Heaven with very little comfort on the road. I do not commend them for their lack of comfort, but I do advise you, instead of looking to singular experiences as a ground of confidence, look to the *bleeding Savior* and rest alone on Him, for if you have Him you have eternal life.

To compare ourselves among ourselves is not wise. Experiences greatly differ. All Israelites are of the loins of Jacob, but all are not of the tribe of Judah. I do not doubt that the facial features of all the Jewish tribes differed, yet the great type of father Jacob could be seen in the face of every Jew. So the spiritual features of all the children of God will differ, for there are diversities of operations—but notwithstanding that, there is a unity of spirit which cannot be broken. Beloved, have you the Son of God? If so, you have life! And even if that life should be somewhat sickly, which is not desirable, yet it will help to make it stronger if you distinctly know that it is the life eternal.

When a man's life becomes feeble it would be of no service to him to doubt whether it is life at all! But it helps him much to know that it is the life of God and is therefore sure to be victorious over death and Hell! And though it is but a spark, it is such a spark that all the devils in Hell cannot tread it out, and all the waters of affliction cannot quench it. If you have the Son, poor feeble trembling one, you have a life which will co-exist with the life of God! You have a life which "neither things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature," shall be

able to destroy—because they cannot separate you from the Lord Jesus! Because He lives, you shall live also. It is a great mercy that having the Son is abiding evidence. “He that has the Son has life.”

I know what it is to see every other evidence I ever gloried in go drifting down the stream far out of sight. It is frequently my inward experience to see sin and unworthiness marked upon everything I have ever done for God. As far as He has done any good thing by me or in me, it lives. But oftentimes, as I look back upon my years of ministry and see multitudes of sermons, and prayers, and other efforts, I have thought of them all as being less than nothing and vanity, tainted, and marred, and spoiled by my personal imperfections.

I could not depend on the whole of them to make so much as a feather weight towards my salvation. When you begin to doubt your inward Graces, and to judge all your past life, and find it lacking, it is sweet, even then, to say—

**“One thing I know, I rest in Jesus.  
Whatever else may be false, this is clearly true—  
‘Other refuge have I none,  
Hangs my helpless soul on You.’”**

Job says that the poor man clings to the rock for shelter, and that poor man is blessed who remains in that position, evermore clinging to that Rock of his salvation—

**“Forever here my rest shall be,  
Close to Your wounded side.  
This all my trust and all my plea,  
For me the Savior died.”**

I suppose, dear Friends, that your experience, like mine, leads you to lean less on self and more upon the Lord. You sometimes come out in full feather, all glorious to behold, and you shine like a full developed and advanced saint. But how soon your mountain moves, for the Lord hides His face! A molting season sets in, and soon all your plumes and honors are trailed in the mire and you have even to hide yourself from your own sight, for you feel utterly ashamed. It is very probable that at such a time you have a much truer opinion of yourself than in your prosperity—you are much nearer the mark when you despise yourself than when you find somewhat where to glory.

It is unspeakably precious in hours of discouragement, then, to fly straight away to Jesus with the contrite cry of—

**“Just as I am—without one plea  
But that Your blood was shed for me,  
And that You bidd’st me come to you.  
O Lamb of God, I come.”**

I have heard of persons boasting that they had outgrown that hymn, but I know I never shall. I must be content, still, to come to Jesus with no qualification for mercy except that which my sin and misery may give me in the eyes of His free Grace. It is a thousand mercies that, although clouds may obscure other evidences, they cannot prevent our coming to the great Propitiation and casting ourselves upon His cleansing power.

Dear friends, I may close this first head by saying that having the Son is infallible evidence of life. “He that has the Son has life.” It is not said that he *may, perhaps*, have it, or that *some* who have the Son have life—there is no exception to the rule. As sure as God’s Word is true, “He that has the Son has life,” be he *who* he may, or *what* he may! And this gracious assurance includes those of you who labor in the depths of poverty!

You who are in the furnace of affliction! You returning backsliders who still hang on Christ! You Believers under a cloud! You who mourn your many shortcomings!

By faith you dare to rest in Jesus, and you have therefore passed from death unto life. Be of good cheer, Beloved! Drink of the well of hope, and in joyful confidence in the Lord press forward in your heavenward pilgrimage.

**II.** Now a word CONCERNING THE DEAD. “He that has not the Son of God has not life”—that is, he has not *spiritual* life. The sentence of death is recorded against him in the Book of God. His natural life is spared him in *this* world, but he is condemned already, and is in the eye of the Law dead while he lives.

Think of that, some of you, for these words refer to you! The unbeliever has no spiritual life! He neither laments his soul’s need, nor rejoices that it may be supplied. He lives without prayer and he knows nothing of secret fellowship with God because he has no inward life to produce these priceless things. Consequently, he will have no eternal life. He will exist forever, but his existence will be a protracted death of life he would not taste. He will have none of the joys of Paradise, no sight of God’s face. He will not swell the song of eternal happiness, nor drink of the river of ever-flowing bliss.

He is a walking corpse, a moving carcass, a body in which death holds the place of life. He has not the Son of God—that is, he has never trusted in Jesus to save him, and never submitted himself to the guidance and governing of the King in Zion. Now observe that the not having the Son of God is clear evidence of the *absence* of spiritual life, for the man who has not trusted in Jesus has made *God* a *liar*. Shall pure spiritual life make God a liar? Shall he receive life from God who persists in denying God’s testimony?

How shall God blot out his sentence of condemnation while the criminal remains such an enemy to his own Creator as to count Him a liar? The history of his unbelief proves that he is not a spiritually living man, for up till now he has chosen darkness, which is the dwelling place of death, and has loved corruption, which is the fruit of the grave. Would the spiritually quickened have done this? He has quenched his conscience. He has done despite to the Spirit of Grace. He has preferred sin to righteousness, and the pleasures of this world to the joys of Heaven. He has seen no beauty in Christ, no suitability in His salvation—the man must be blind, he must be devoid of all spiritual sense—in fact, he must be *dead* or he would not have acted so!

Let me tell you that for a hearer of the Gospel not to believe on the Son of God must be, in the judgment of angels, a very astounding crime. How they must marvel when they see that God was made flesh to redeem the sons of men, and yet men do not believe in the Incarnate Savior! The “faithful saying, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners,” is not depended upon by tens of thousands, though it is “worthy of all acceptance,” yet the mass of mankind give it no acceptance. What must angels think of such men?

They, no doubt, understand the reason of it, that the mind is so perverted and corrupt that manhood is nothing better than a reeking sepulcher. Unbelief of the Gospel is the great damning sin of man. The not laying hold of Jesus is the sin of sins—it is like Jeroboam, of whom we read

that he sinned and made Israel to sin. It is the egg in which all manner of mischief lies. Not believing in Jesus Christ is the condemnation emphatically. “This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light.”

Remember, my dear Hearers, if you have never received Christ, this is overwhelming evidence that you are dead in sin. You have been sprinkled in your infancy. You have been confirmed. Perhaps you have been immersed. Possibly you have joined the Church. But if you have not the Son of God all those outward things have not the weight of a grain of sand in the scale. “Oh, but,” you may say, “I have been assured on good authority that ‘I was made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven’ in my baptism!”

You were so assured upon the authority of a book which has deceived many, and will, I fear, deceive tens of thousands more. It is not true that you are an inheritor of Heaven if you have not Christ! If you have believed in Christ, you have life. But if you have not the Son of God you have no heavenly life, and let all the priests that ever lived assure you of your being a child of God by your baptism, I tell them flat to their faces that they lie in their throats, and that some of them know they do! The Word of God is to be taken and not theirs, and that Word says, “He that has not the Son has not life.”

Away with these false priests and their infant sprinkling, too—what have they to do to pretend to be the servants of God when they are deceivers of souls? No outward ceremonies, though they are multiplied ten thousand-fold, and rendered gorgeous by all the pomp and glory of the world—no, even though God Himself should command them—could give you spiritual life! You must have Christ, for He is the life of the soul, and without Him you are dead in sin!

“Oh, but,” perhaps you may say, “I have always lived a chaste, upright, moral life! I have been attentive to religious duties. I could allege many *particulars* which might go to prove that I live unto God.” Yes, but all your particulars, however well they might be alleged, would prove nothing in the teeth of such a text as this, “He that has not the Son of God has not life.” I tell you, Moralist, what you are—you are a corpse well-washed and decently laid out. You are daintily robed in fair white linen, sprinkled plenteously with sweet perfumes and wrapped in myrrh, and cassia, and aloes, with flowers wreathed about your brow, and your bosom bedecked by the hand of affection with sweetly blushing roses.

But you have no life, and therefore your destiny is the grave, corruption is your heritage, and your place of abode is fixed, “where their worm dies not, and the fire not quenched,” for, “He that believes not shall be damned.” With all his excellencies and moralities, with all his baptisms and his sacraments, “He that believes not shall be damned.” There is no middle place, no specially reserved and superior abodes for these noble and virtuous unbelievers. If they have not believed, they shall be bound up in bundles with the rest, for God has appointed to unbelievers their portion with liars, and thieves, and whoremongers, and drunkards, and idolaters.

Beware, you unbelievers, for your unbelief will be to the Judge Himself at the great assize, and to the attendant angels, most condemning evidence against you! “Take him away! Christ has not known him, and he has not known Christ. He had not the Son, and he shall not see life, but

the wrath of God abides on him.” Now, if such things were spoken concerning some people in Africa or New Zealand, you would be concerned about those miserable souls, though they are so far away. But they are spoken about *some of you*—some of *you* are dead! Is not *this* terrible?

Oh, if by some touch of an angel’s wand our bodies should all become as our souls are, how many corpses would fill these aisles and crowd these pews! John once wished for gains, that his body might prosper and be in health even as his soul prospered. Now, suppose our bodies were to prosper just as our souls do! Why, there would sit in one place a living woman, and side by side with her a dead husband! Further on, a living child, and then a dead gray-headed grandsire. Oh, what a sight this place would be! We should hasten to gather up our garments, those of us who are alive, and say, “Let us be gone! How can we sit side by side with corpses?”

The effect would be startling to the last degree, and yet, most probably, the *spiritual* fact does not disturb us at all! We know it to be true, but we take it as a matter of course, and we go our way with scarcely a prayer for our poor dead neighbors.

**III.** I close the sermon by a few observations CONCERNING THE LIVING AS THEY DWELL AMONG THE DEAD. As the living are constrained to live among the dead, as the children of God are mixed up by Providence with the heirs of wrath, what manner of persons ought they to be? In the first place let us take care that we do not become contaminated by the corruption of the dead. You who have the Son of God, mind that you are not injured by those who have not the Son.

We have heard of such accidents when the anatomist has been making an examination of a dead body. He has been prying with his scalpel among the bones, and nerves, and sinews, and perhaps he has pricked his finger and the dead matter has infected his blood—and death has been swift and sure. Now, I have heard of some professed Christians wanting to see, they said, the ways of the ungodly, going into low places of amusement to spy out the land, to judge for themselves. Such conduct is dangerous and worse. My dear Friends, I never found it necessary, in my ministry, to do anything of the kind, and yet I think I have had no small success in winning souls. I must confess I should feel very much afraid to go into Hell to put my head between the lion’s jaws for the sake of looking down his throat.

I should think I was guilty of a gross presumption if I went into the company of the lewd and the profane to see what they were doing. I should fear that perhaps it might turn out that I was only a mere professor, and so should taint myself with the dead matter of the sin of those with whom I mingled and perish in my iniquity. “Come out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing!” The resort of the ungodly is not the place for you. “Let the dead bury their dead, but as for you,” said Christ, “follow Me.”

If we must in this life, in a measure, mingle with the dead, let us take care that we never suffer the supremacy of the dead to be acknowledged over the living. It would be a strange thing if the dead were to rule the living! The dead must be laid in their coffins and put away in their narrow cells according as the living may decree. Yet sometimes I have seen the dead have the dominion of this world—that is to say they have set the fashion—and living Christians have followed. The carnal world has said,

“This is the way of trade!” And the Christian man has replied, “I will follow the custom.”

Christian, this must not be! “Yes, but,” says one, “I must do as others do, for you know we must live.” This, also, is *not* true, for there is no necessity for our living! There is a very great necessity for our dying sooner than living if we cannot live without doing wrong. O Christian, you must never endure that corruption should conquer Grace! By God’s Grace, if you get at all under the power of custom, you must cry out, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me?” You must wrestle till you conquer, and cry, “Thanks be unto God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

What I think we should do towards dead souls is this—we should pity them. When the early Christians dwelt in the catacombs where they could not go about without seeing graves, they must have had strange thoughts arising in their minds. Now, my Brothers and Sisters, you are in a similar plight. You cannot walk through London without thinking, “The most of these I meet with are dead in sin.” Some of these dead souls live in your own house! They are your own children! Your own servants! When you go out to work you have to stand at the same bench with spiritually dead men! You cannot turn aside from your daily labor to enter the House of God but you even meet the dead there!

Ought not this to make us pray for them: “Eternal Spirit, quicken them! They cannot have life unless they have the Son of God. O bring them to receive the Son of God”? Beloved, in connection with such prayer, be diligent to deliver the quickening message. The quickening message is, “Believe, and live.” “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.”

Ought you not, you living ones, to be perpetually repeating the great life-word, depending upon the Holy Spirit to put energy into it? Do, I pray you, seek to win souls, and from this day, separating yourselves from the world as to its maxims and its customs, plunge into the very thick of it where you can serve your Master, plucking brands from the fire and winning souls from going down to the pit. May the Lord bless this simple word this morning, for His name’s sake. Amen.

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# HELPS TO FULL ASSURANCE

## NO. 1791

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 20, 1884,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may believe on the name of the Son of God.”  
1 John 5:13.***

How very simple this all is! John had an eagle's wings with which to soar aloft and an eagle's eyes with which to penetrate into great mysteries—and yet of all the writers of the Old or New Testament he is one of the simplest. He never endeavors to show you the greatness of his mind or the grandeur of his rhetoric. On the contrary, he speaks as a child to those who are children in the school of love. I would that all of us who try to teach others would remember this and sink ourselves in our lesson.

It is equally notable how practical John is. When he writes, he always has a worthy intention in every line. “These are written,” he says, and he explains the design with which he penned the record. These Epistles are not written to dazzle you, nor to lead you into speculation, nor to gratify your curiosity—but these are written “that you may know that you have eternal life.” The practical objective may seem, to the high-soaring votaries of modern thought, to be commonplace, but John had a deep veneration for matters which moderns despise. The commonplaces of theology are the greenest of the pastures wherein the sheep of God feed and lie down. It is infinitely more to our benefit to know that we have eternal life than to be able to predict the future of empires or to forecast the destiny of kings! It is of more practical importance for us to know that we have eternal life than to be able to explain all mysteries, or to speak with tongues.

John acts according to his loving heart when he writes to lead his Brethren into the assured knowledge of their personal possession of eternal life. When he tells us his design, it is that he may help to accomplish his purpose—for by informing men of understanding why he is writing, he stirs them up to see his purpose and to fall in with it. “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may believe on the name of the Son of God.”

Dear Friends, if this is the design of the inspired Apostle, let us not be slow to cooperate with him, but let us pray, this morning, for the full assurance of faith, that we may know for sure that eternal life is pulsing in our hearts! May you who have not believed in Jesus feel a fervent desire



within your spirits to take that preliminary step and become believers in the Son of God! Come, then, to the text, and consider with us, first, *to whom it was written*—“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God.” Secondly, *to what end it is written*—“That you may know that you have eternal life.” This will lead us, thirdly, to consider *how that which was written in this Epistle conduces to this blessed confidence*. And then, lastly, I shall have to call your attention to *an added matter which is never forgotten* by John, even when he writes with the design of promoting the highest form of Christian attainment—“That you may believe on the name of the Son of God.”

They already believed on the sacred name, yet it remained a part of John’s design to confirm them in that faith and conduct them to higher degrees of it. May the Holy Spirit make our meditation profitable!

**I.** First, then, briefly, TO WHOM WAS THIS WRITTEN? It is important to observe the direction of a letter, for I may be reading a communication meant for somebody else. And if it should contain good tidings, I may be deceiving myself by appropriating the news. This Epistle, and this particular text in it, were written *for all those who believe on the name of the Son of God*. In part of the Epistle, John says, “I write unto you, little children.” Then he says, “I write unto you, young men.” Further on he says, “I have written unto you, fathers.” But now he writes to babes, to young men and to fathers under the one comprehensive description of those who have believed on the name of the Son of God! Our discourse is, therefore, for all of you who are believers in Christ.

Little child, you who have just begun the spiritual life, we would have you attain to the confidence that you have eternal life! Young man, sternly battling with sin, we would have you strengthened for your conflict by knowing that you have eternal life! And you fathers, let us hope you have not come so far without this knowledge, but whether you have or not, these things are written that you, in your mature years, may rise to the full conviction that the life of God is strong within you! No person, young or old, is excluded from this text, unless he is an unbeliever. *To unbelievers this text is not written*—it is for all who trust in Jesus—and it is for no one else.

If you enquire why it is not addressed to unbelievers, I answer, simply because it would be preposterous to wish men to be assured of that which is not true! John never wished that a man who had not believed in Jesus Christ should even *think* that he had eternal life, for it would be a fatal error. “He that believes not shall not see life.” How, then, could he have an assurance of possessing it? Faith is a necessary preliminary to assurance—you must have the blade of faith before you can have the ripe corn of assurance. Dear Friends, do not *dream* of being sure that you are saved apart from making sure that you have trusted yourselves with the crucified Savior! The Atonement presented by Jesus Christ, the Son of God, gives assurance of salvation to all who trust in it, but to no one else. It would be taking things out of their due order. It would be doing you real and, perhaps, fatal mischief if we should lead you to presume that you have eternal life before you have unreservedly believed in the Lord Jesus

Christ! “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life; and he that believes not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him.”

I speak, therefore, to all of you who have come to Christ, however imperfect and undeveloped your spiritual life may as yet be. I invite no one else to the banquet of joyous confidence! As with a drawn sword of fire, John’s words guard the way like the cherub at the gate of Paradise. His words, “these things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God,” keep back every man who has *not* believed in Jesus from even *dreaming* that he has eternal life. What have you to do with the rest, the peace and the blessedness of full assurance unless you have received the appointed Savior into your heart’s trust?

We may gather from this address being made to all the people of God and to none beside, that *there are some Believers in the world, and true Believers, too, who do not know that they have eternal life.* A very large number of true Believers do not know this cheering fact. For instance, certain Christians believe that even if they are now saved they may yet be lost—that even if they have the life of God in them, that life may die out! Beloved, I pray for you that you may know that you have *eternal* life—not a temporary life! The life which the Holy Spirit imparts to the Believer is not a thing of days, weeks, months, or years—its dwelling place is in the region of eternity. It is, practically, a Divine life which God puts into us, whereby we are made “partakers of the Divine Nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” We were begotten again unto a lively or living hope in the day of our regeneration!

The new birth from above by the Spirit of God is a birth to an endless life. “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which lives and abides *forever.*” Our Lord at the well of Samaria gives us another figure—“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.” Many imagine that this spring *can* fail. How much comfort God’s dear children lose by not apprehending the *absolute immortality* of the new life I will not venture to say. But this much I *will* declare—that to me it is the very crown and glory of the Gospel that if I receive Jesus into my soul and the Holy Spirit imparts to me the new life, I have received an *everlasting* blessing! Has not Jesus said “I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand”?

Again, a large number of Christ’s people who may be perfectly sound in the doctrinal view of the nature of this life do not know that they possess it at this present moment if they are Believers. I find even the commentators, when they try to write upon this text, and most of the preachers who have left us printed sermons upon it, read the text as if it said, “that you may know that you *shall have* eternal life.” They speak about the full assurance that we shall *one day* enter into Glory. I beg their pardon—the text does *not* say anything of the kind! It is, “that you may know that you have eternal life,” even here, at this present hour! The spiritual life which is in the Believer at this moment is the same life which shall be in him in

Heaven! The Grace-life is the Glory-life in the bud—the same life, only less developed.

We shall not, in the article of death, receive another life than that which we have while we are sojourning here below. Death sets a seal on that which is, but it *produces* nothing. There is to be a very palpable change worked upon the body, but as to the *spirit*, the life of God which is in it now is the life which will dwell in it throughout eternity. Our believing life is eternal life. We want children of God who believe in Jesus to feel that the holy flame which kindles their lamp, today, is the same fire which will shine forth before the Throne of God forever—they have already begun to exercise those holy emotions of delight and joy which will be their Heaven! They already possess, in measure, those perceptions and faculties which will be theirs in Glory. Let us remember this and know that, as Believers, we have *eternal life*.

Yet again, there are some Christians who believe all this and are perfectly right in theory, but yet they each one cry, “I need to *know* that I have eternal life. I need a fuller assurance of salvation than I have already obtained.” That is also our desire for you, for if you know you have believed in Jesus, you certainly are quickened with eternal life and ought to know it! But it is only to you that have believed that the text speaks. If you have not believed in the glorious name of the Well-Beloved, then come at once and put your trust in Him! This is the Gospel to every unbeliever—“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” For, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned.” An unbeliever may have an assurance that he will be lost, but he *cannot* have an assurance that he is saved, or ever will be!

First, believe on the name of the Son of God, who is manifested to take away sin. Trust in His glorious Person, in His finished work, in His accepted Sacrifice, in His prevailing intercession and in His glorious advent which is yet to be. Look unto Him and be you saved! Rest alone upon the one foundation which God has laid in Zion and then to you will the word of this consolation be sent, but not till then!

**II.** So, secondly, I have now to mention TO WHAT END JOHN HAS WRITTEN.

When he says, “that *you may know that you have eternal life*,” I think His first meaning is that *you may know that everybody who believes in Jesus Christ has eternal life*. This is not a fact about you and a few others, only, but it is a *general* Truth of God—every man that believes on the name of the Son of God has eternal life! We may not doubt this. It is not a matter of inference and deduction, but a matter of Revelation from God. You are not to form an opinion upon it, but to *believe* it, for the Lord has said it. Listen to these words in 1 John 5:1—“Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.” Thus says the Spirit of God and so it must be!

We do not need any further evidence. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater. The Spirit of God bears witness to this and as the Spirit is Truth, His witness is certainly true! Accept His witness and ask for no other. It is written (1 John 5:12), “He that has the Son has

life; and He that has not the Son of God has not life.” This is the unvarying testimony of the whole of Scripture—and especially of the writings of the Apostle John. How many times over he insists upon it that the Believer has eternal life! I beseech you, never question the statement! Settle it in your mind, for if you have any doubt about it, you have undermined the Gospel and rejected the witness of the Lord—and denied the Holy Spirit! You will not behave thus wickedly; therefore glorify God by believing His testimony.

I think that John, in this passage meant, and we will consider him as meaning it, something more—namely, *He would have us know that we personally have eternal life by having us know that we do personally believe in Jesus*. It is one thing to know that every Believer has eternal life, but it is quite another thing to know that I am a Believer so as to have eternal life *myself*. I have read of one who fell into the water and, as he was sinking, he saw a rainbow in the sky above him. “Ah,” he thought, “God has made a covenant not to destroy the earth with a flood, and yet it is no comfort to me, for I fear I shall be drowned.” The largest provisions of Grace avail us nothing unless we have a *personal* interest in them! It is true that every Believer has eternal life, but what if I am not a Believer?

It is a very amazing thing that people should not know whether they believe in Jesus or not—for it is an ascertainable piece of knowledge. I know whether I *think*. I know whether I *resolve*. I know whether I *doubt*. I ought, therefore, to know whether I believe! But you see, human nature received a terrible twist at the Fall, and it has fallen into a very foggy region so that the eyes of the understanding are all squinted and the air around is very dank. Perhaps you ask me to speak for myself and I assure you that I do—but at the same time I do not hesitate to say the same of you! You, my clever friend, who are so wonderfully clear-headed, I should not wonder but what you are the foggiest and blindest of the whole company! The worst darkness is that which so blinds a man that he thinks he can see better than other people. We are all, by nature, in such a mixed-up state that we need not wonder at any strange statement or feeling!

When you hear Brethren assert that a person who is not assured that he believes must necessarily be an unbeliever, you may say to yourself, “That friend does not know everything.” There is no estimating the possible inconsistency and contradiction of the human mind. I have been in a state of mind in which I have questioned the possibility of there being a grain of Grace in me and yet, I have clung to Jesus with a death grip! At such times my mind has worked morbidly and its way has been turned upside down. Bunyan speaks of being, “much tumbled up and down in his thoughts,” and that nearly hits my mental condition. It is very possible for a man to be a very strong Believer and yet to question whether he has a spark of faith! I have heard ministers ridicule this state of inward questioning and, indeed, it is ridiculous to all but those who are in it!

If you once become a sufferer under this wretched complaint, the absurdity of your disease will not lessen its painfulness. Our mental distresses need not be logical—they can be full of anguish and yet be most unreasonable. You probably know some people who are excessively nerv-

ous—they are afraid the skies will fall or the earth will crack. This is very stupid, but the agony caused, thereby, is very real! There is little of the Christian spirit in the man who can increase mental torment by turning it into jest. This is not to pour oil into the wound, but to rub salt into it. No doubt, the doubts which many have of their personal safety are very unreasonable, but a servant of God is not, therefore, to scorn the subject of them, for the Lord Jesus Christ had compassion on the ignorant. He did not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax—nor must we!

I am personally taught to be tender of poor doubters, for I have often been one myself. I would sometimes give all that I have to be able to feel myself to be even the least in the Lord's family. Just now I enjoy a full assurance, but I am not always on the mountain and, therefore, I have a heart for others because I am, myself, compassed with infirmity. We may not judge harshly, as if things were as we would theoretically arrange them, but we must deal with things as they are—and it cannot be questioned that some of the best Believers are, at times, sorely put to it to know whether they are Believers at all! The prayer of John is that such people, yes, and all Believers, may know for sure—beyond all doubt—that they have eternal life.

So far is human nature out of joint that it is necessary for me to say what it seems superfluous to say—that full assurance of our possessing eternal life is possible. The Church of Rome teaches that no man can be assured that he has eternal life, except some few to whom supernatural revelations may be given. That sort of doctrine lingers in the air of Protestantism—many people think the same though they do not say so. Impossible to know that you are quickened? It ought to be impossible to have any doubt about it! Rationally, a living man should know that he is alive. No man should give sleep to his eyes or slumber to his eyelids while he has a doubt about his eternal state. It is possible and, if it is possible, it is very *desirable*—for when a man knows that he has eternal life, what a comfort it is to him!

What gratitude it produces in his spirit! How it helps him to live above the world! With what holy ardor does he pursue the service of God, knowing that he has an eternal reward! He has not to waste time in calculating evidences and perpetually examining himself, for he *has* examined himself and he has cast himself upon Christ—and he knows that he has eternal life. With what rapidity does he make progress, for he leaves the first principles and goes on towards perfection! No longer questioning, he shows holy daring and goes from strength to strength in rapturous fellowship and ecstatic enjoyment! He advances from glory to glory, his *faith* proving to him, even while he is here below, the joys which are laid up for the redeemed! I say again, if full assurance is possible, it is eminently desirable.

And I go a little further—it is our *duty* to obtain full assurance. We would not have been commanded to give diligence to make our calling and election sure if it were not right for us to *be* sure! I am sure it is right for a child of God to know that God is his Father and never to have a question in his heart as to his sonship. I know it is right for a soul that is married to Christ to know the sweet love of the Bridegroom and never to tolerate a

cloud of suspicion to come between the soul and the full enjoyment of Christ's love. Therefore, I would urge you onward to know that you have eternal life.

My Brothers and Sisters, John, being dead, yet speaks out of this Book—he calls upon you to know that the Son of God is come and has given us an understanding that we may know Him, who is true—and that we are *in* Him who is true, even in His Son, Jesus Christ. He bids us, as Believers, firmly repose our souls upon the promise of our faithful God. I sorrowfully remind certain of you that, as you have *not* believed, you have neither part nor lot in this matter—and the Beloved disciple does not speak to you.

**III.** Thirdly, I come to where I would lay the stress of the discourse this morning—WHAT HAS JOHN SAID IN THIS EPISTLE WHICH LEADS US TO BE SURE OF OUR FULL ASSURANCE? How does he help us to know that we *are* Believers and, consequently, to know that we have eternal life? I cannot attempt a full *summary* of this most blessed Epistle, but I shall select a few items from very many. An exposition of this Epistle, written to show how it enables men to know that they have eternal life, would be a very valuable thing, and I feel confident that without the slightest forcing of a single sentence it could be shown that the whole letter bears upon assurance. The wish of the Apostle that all Believers might know that they have eternal life is the silken thread upon which his pearls are strung.

Now Believers ought to know that they have eternal life and they ought never to doubt it, for God's own Word assures them that it is so. Remember that Word of the Lord Jesus in John 6:47—"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believes on Me has everlasting life"? Will you doubt the Lord's, "Verily, verily"? Christ's Word unsupported by any external evidence is quite enough to satisfy every gracious mind. "Let God be true, but every man a liar"—yes, let every *circumstance* be a liar! Everything that we have looked upon as evidence should be regarded as a lie if it denies the declaration of the Lord! Out of this simple faith in God, assurance comes naturally by the operation of the Spirit of God upon the heart. Take pure and unadulterated milk and let it stand, and you will soon get cream. Faith is the milk and full assurance is the cream upon it—and when faith has stood long enough, you may see the rich cream of holy confidence upon the top of it! The witness of God is true and, therefore, to be believed, yes, to be believed with full assurance!

According to all right principles, assurance should increase by the lapse of time during which faith occupies itself upon the same promise. I have trusted my soul to Christ, therefore I have eternal life. How do I know? I know because the Spirit of God has so declared it in the Word of God! Thus has He spoken—"He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." I believe in the Son and, therefore, I have eternal life! Do friends assure me that they see the life in me? I am very much obliged to them, but I do not need their evidence. "He that believes has the witness in himself." When the Holy Spirit has made a statement, it is something like impertinence either to ask or to offer any further evidence upon the point. There-

fore, that matter is not my subject. I take it we must not offer you any other argument to prove the eternal life of Believers beyond this—*God has said it.*

The matter which may be argued about is this—“Do I believe in Jesus? Am I a Believer in such a sense that I have eternal life?” Let us look at the Epistle for help in this enquiry. You will find, first, that John mentions as an evidence, *truthful dealing with God in faith and confession of sin.* Naturally men walk in darkness or falsehood towards God, but when we have believed in Jesus, we come to walk in the light of the Truth of God. Read in the first chapter of the Epistle from verse 6 to nine. “If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

The Believer does not attempt to deal with God as if he had no sin, for that were to make Christ useless, seeing there would be no need of His blood to cleanse. He does not say that he now lives without sin, for that were to make his cleansing a thing of the past, whereas the Spirit teaches that it is a *present* matter, concerning our present walk with God. To claim to live without sin is to walk in the dark, for the claim is a false one. The man who walks in the light comes before God as a sinner, whom the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses from all sin. So, then, you may take this as an evidence that you are a saved man, if you deal truthfully with God—if you confess your guilt before God, if your only hope of being cleansed from it lies in the blood of Jesus Christ—then you have come to act towards God on the line of truth and He accepts you.

You that are not a believer in Christ may try to forget that you have any sin, or, by forms and ceremonies, offer some kind of palliation of your sin, but when you are brought into the honest light you will make a clean breast of it and cease to act a borrowed part. Your cry will be, “Search me, O God, and try me,” and your appeal will be to the boundless mercy of God in Christ Jesus! You can be sure that you are a child of God when sin is confessed and faith is looking to Jesus for the removal of it. “Father, I have sinned,” is the cry of a true-born child. “God be merciful to me, a sinner,” is the prayer of the man who goes down to his house justified. We can repeat with rapture the words of Paul to the Romans, “Being justified freely by His Grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.”

Next, John gives us *obedience* as a test of the child of God. Look to the second chapter and begin to read at the third verse—“And hereby we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He that says, I know Him, and keeps not His commandments, is a liar and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him. He that says he abides in

Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked.” Come, then, Beloved Brothers and Sisters, do you obey the will of the Lord from your heart? Is holiness the aim and objective of your life? Do you strive to do as Jesus bids you? Do you set your clock by the heavenly sun? Do you try to order your ways and your steps according to the Law of the Lord? Do you delight yourself, also, in the Law of God after the inner man? Do you press forward after perfect holiness? Then His servant you are whom you obey! Rest assured beyond all question that you are one of Christ’s sheep, for He says, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.” “He that does righteousness is righteous.” If Grace has made you obedient, it has given you eternal life!

Follow me as I call attention, next, to the evidence of *love* in the heart. In the second chapter read at the 9<sup>th</sup> verse—“He that says he is in the light and hates his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in him.” Then go on to the 14<sup>th</sup> verse of the third chapter. “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loves not his brother abides in death.” This will greatly help you to decide your case. Do you hate *anybody*? Are you seeking revenge? Are you unforgiving? Then you are not dwelling in the Light of God—you are of Cain and not of Christ! Do you feel that you love your enemies and that, in fact, you are no man’s enemy because love is the principle of your life? “Love is of God; and everyone that loves is born of God, and knows God.”

We must feel a general benevolence towards all men and a still more intense love and complacency towards all who are in Christ. This love must be practical and lead us to help and succor our Brethren. Have you this love? Do you feel a delight in the company of the Brethren because they belong to Christ, however poor or illiterate they may be? You would not feel love reigning in your spirit if true faith had not come to dwell there! A loving spirit evidenced by a loving life is a true sign that you belong to God, whose name is Love. Be of good courage and enter into full assurance, O you whose bosoms glow with the sacred flame of fervent love to God and men!

Next to that comes *separation from the world*. Read in the second chapter at the 15<sup>th</sup> verse—“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” This is backed up by the first verse of the third chapter—“Therefore the world knows us not, because it knew Him not.” Have you met with opposition from the ungodly? Have you discovered that Ishmael still mocks Isaac? Do you find, when you go out to work, that your shop mates who used to drink with you are inclined to avoid you? Are you pointed at as a hypocrite because you are a Christian? Then there is a difference between you and others and the world can see it! The serpent’s seed will hiss at the seed of the woman—God has put an enmity between the two. Do not, therefore, be surprised at it. Did not our Lord say, “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. 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”? Thus



slander, abuse, and other forms of persecution may turn to your comfort by showing that you are of that sect which is everywhere spoken against!

Next to that, in the second chapter, we have the evidence of *continuance in the faith*. “And the world passes away, and the lust thereof: but he that does the will of God abides forever. Little children, it is the last time and as you have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it the last time. 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 longer a Christian man is enabled to persevere in holiness, the more confident may he become that his religion is the work of the Spirit of God in his soul. “He that endures to the end shall be saved.” Perseverance in holiness is a sure mark of election. It is the righteous who hold on their way. Mere pretenders are as wandering stars and fading flowers. That which comes and goes is not of God—the Holy Spirit abides *permanently* in true Believers.

The next evidence you will find in the third chapter, the third verse, namely, *purification*. “Every man that has this hope in Him purifies himself, even as He is pure.” Do you every day endeavor to keep clear of sin and, when you have sinned, do you at night go with bitter repentance to God and beg to be delivered from it? Are you fighting against your besetting sins? Do you contend against the customs of the world? Have you come to be a warrior against evil? Let that be an evidence that there is in you a new spirit which was not there by nature! And let that prove to you that you are quickened into newness of life—conflict and victory are evidences of Grace. “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous. For whatever is born of God overcomes the world: and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.”

Again, in the 21<sup>st</sup> verse of the third chapter, we meet with another blessed evidence, and that is a *clear conscience*—“If our heart condemns us not, then have we confidence toward God.” They say of us that we seek ourselves, or that we are hypocrites. But if we can lay our hand upon our heart and say, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You,” we have the best grounds for full assurance. A conscience purged from dead works to serve the living God is one of the seals of the Holy Spirit upon that epistle which He has written in our hearts! This Divine witness is a privilege which none possess but the regenerate! Prove yourself clear in the court of conscience that you may know that you have eternal life. Furthermore, we find an evidence in *answers to prayer*—“And whatever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.” Does God hear your prayers? Then you are pleasing in His sight! Are you in the habit of speaking with Him and does He reply to you? Then you are agreed with God! Does He grant you the desire of your heart? Is it not because you delight in Him? He hears not those who willfully live in sin, but if any man does His will,

him He hears. You may look upon every answered prayer as another token of the love of God toward you in Christ Jesus your Lord.

*Adherence to the Truth of God* is another help to full assurance. Read the whole fourth chapter—"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." In the sixth verse he says, "We are of God: he that knows God hears us; he that is not of God hears us not." I read in a certain learned divine, the other day, a declaration that the evangelical doctrine which we preach is not Christianity, but Paulinism. By that utterance this divine condemned himself! John says, "We are of God: he that knows God hears us; he that is not of God hears us not. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." He who hears not the Apostles, hears not their Master! He who dares say that Paul has not given us the Gospel is not of Christ, for Jesus says, "He that receives you, receives Me, and he that receives Me receives Him that sent Me."

The testimony of the Holy Spirit by Apostolic lips is as sure as the testimony by the Son of God Himself! And it is flat rebellion against the Holy Spirit to graduate His utterances, whether they be through Prophets, Apostles, or the Christ, Himself. He who makes this to be true and that to be false, or this true and that truer, still, has disparaged the Spirit of God who speaks as He pleases, but is always Infallible! He that questions what the Spirit says has not the Spirit of Christ dwelling in him. If you have taken Scripture to be your guide and hold fast by the Truth of God, you are one of Christ's sheep, of whom He says, "A stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers." Against the detestable spirit of this age and against everything else that would corrupt the Gospel of Christ, it is the mark of the true seed to stand opposed! If you bear witness to the Truth of God, the Truth bears witness to you! Blessed are those who are not removed from the hope of their calling.

One of the best evidences of true faith, and one of the best helps to full assurance, is a *holy familiarity with God*. Read in the fourth chapter, the 16<sup>th</sup> verse—"And we have known and believed the love that God has to us. God is Love and he that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear: because fear has torment. He that fears is not made perfect in love. We love Him, because He first loved us." Oh, Beloved Brothers and Sisters, if you have come to speak with God as a man speaks with a man. If you dwell in Him. If every day you say more to God than you do to men and if you find more joy in fellowship with God than you do in all the world beside, then you are one of His!

God never made a man to know Him and love Him, and then cast him away! Eternal life is surely in you if you have entered into the secret place of the tabernacles of the Most High and abide under the shadow of the Almighty. When you have no longer that slavish fear which makes you stand back, but that child-like confidence which draws you nearer and yet nearer unto God, then are you His child! The spirit of adoption is one

point of sure witness from the Spirit of God. He who can call God his exceeding joy is among the living in Zion.

**IV.** I would now finish, only I dare not leave out the last point—THE APPENDIX TO JOHN’S DESIGN. The Apostle puts it, “That you may believe on the name of the Son of God.” I think he means this—you are never to get into such a state that you say, “I have eternal life and, therefore, I need not trust simply in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. Years ago I was born again, and so I can now live without the daily exercise of faith.” “No,” says the Apostle, “I am writing this to Believers, and I tell them that while they may have full assurance, it cannot be a *substitute* for habitual faith in the Lord Jesus.”

Personally, I wish to say—it is some 34 years since I first believed in the Christ Jesus and I came to Him, then, as having nothing in myself, and I took Him to be my All-in-All. At this moment I possess a comfortable and clear assurance that I have eternal life, but my ground of confidence, today, is exactly what it was when first I came to Christ. I have no confidence in my *confidence*, I place no reliance upon my own assurance. My assurance lies in the fact that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” and, that, “Whoever believes in Him has everlasting life.” I believe in Him and, therefore, I know I have eternal life.

Brothers and Sisters, do not stir beyond that—keep to your first faith. However far you go in other directions, stand fast in your undivided faith in Jesus. If you think it wise to examine these signs and evidences which I have given you, do so. But if you think to get food out of them, you will find a bare cupboard. If you think you can live without Christ, on what you have known in the past, you are greatly mistaken! It is like trying to live on stale manna. None of you would have done that in the wilderness—you would have soon turned up your noses at it. When it was more than a day old it, “bred worms and stank.” Everything you look to, apart from Christ, will rot in due time, so that you will loathe it.

Beloved, every vessel, whether it is a great flagon or a little cup, must hang upon the one nail which is fastened in a sure place. If you get away from Jesus, you wander into a land of darkness and of the shadow of death. Whether I am a child of God or not is a question I will not discuss today. I am a sinner and Jesus Christ came to save sinners—and they that trust in Him are saved. Therefore I trust Him! Therefore I am saved! The Word of God declares it. Blessed be His name forever and ever! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 John 5.  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—191, 549, 193.**

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# THE BLESSING OF FULL ASSURANCE NO. 2023

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, MAY 13, 1888,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that you may know that you have eternal life and that you may believe on the name of the Son of God.”*  
1 John 5:13.

JOHN wrote to Believers—“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God.” It is worthy of note that all the Epistles are so written. They are not letters to everybody—they are letters to those who are called to be saints. It ought to strike some of you with awe when you open the Bible and think how large a part of it is not directed at you. You may read it and God's Holy Spirit may graciously bless it to you, but it is not directed to you. You are reading another man's letter—thank God that you are permitted to read it—but long to be numbered with those to whom it is directed.

Thank God much more if any part of it should be used of the Holy Spirit for your salvation. The fact that the Holy Spirit speaks to the Churches and to Believers in Christ should make you bow the knee and cry to God to put you among the children that this Book may become your Book from beginning to end, that you may read its precious promises as made to *you*. This solemn thought may not have struck some of you—let it impress you now.

We do not wonder that certain men do not receive the Epistles, for they were not written to them. Why should they quibble at words which are addressed to men of another sort from themselves? Yet we do not marvel, for we knew it would be so. Here is a will and you begin to read it. But you do not find it interesting—it is full of words and terms which you do not take the trouble to understand because they have no relation to yourself. But should you, in reading that will, come upon a clause in which an estate is left to *you*, I guarantee you that the nature of the whole document will seem changed to you.

You will be anxious now to understand the terms and to make sure of the clauses and you will even wish to remember every word of the clause which refers to yourself. O dear Friends, may you read the Testament of our Lord Jesus Christ as a testament of love to yourselves and then you will prize it beyond all the writings of the sages.

This leads me to make the second remark, that as these things are written to Believers, Believers ought especially to make themselves acquainted with them and to search into their meaning and intent. John says, “These things have I written to you that believe on the name of the Son of God.” Do not, I beseech you, neglect to read what the Holy Spirit has taken care to write to you. It is not merely John that writes. John is

inspired of the Lord and these things are written to you by the Spirit of God. Give earnest heed to every single word of what God has sent as His own Epistle to your hearts.

Value the Scriptures. Luther said that, “he would not be in Paradise, if he might, without the Word of the Lord. But with the Word he could live in Hell itself.” He said at another time that, “he would not take all the world for one leaf of the Bible.” The Scriptures are everything to the Christian—his meat and his drink. The saint can say, “O how I love Your Law!” If we cannot say so, something is wrong with us. If we have lost our relish for Holy Scripture, we are out of condition and need to pray for spiritual health.

This much is the porch of my sermon, let us now enter more fully into our subject, noticing, first, that John wrote with a special purpose. And then going on to assert, secondly, that this purpose we ought to follow up.

**I. First, JOHN WROTE WITH A SPECIAL PURPOSE.** Men do not write well unless they have some end in writing. To sit down with paper and ink before you and so much space to fill up will ensure very poor writing. John knew what he was doing. His intent and aim were clear to his own mind and he tells us what they were.

According to the text the beloved Apostle had one clear purpose which branched out into three. To begin with, John wrote that we might enjoy the full assurance of our salvation. “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.” Many who believe on the name of Jesus are not sure that they have eternal life. They only hope so. Occasionally they have assurance but the joy is not abiding. They are like a minister I have heard of, who said he felt assured of his salvation, “except when the wind was in the east.” It is a wretched thing to be so subject to circumstances as many are.

What is true when the wind is in the soft south or the reviving west is equally true when the wind is neither good for man nor beast. John would not have our assurance vary with the weatherglass, nor turn with the vane. He says, “These things have I written unto you, that you may know that you have eternal life.” He would have us certain that we are partakers of the new life and so know it as to reap the golden fruit of such knowledge and be filled with joy and peace through believing.

I speak affectionately to the weaker ones who cannot yet say that they know they have believed. I speak not to your condemnation but to your consolation. Full assurance is not essential to salvation, but it is essential to *satisfaction*. May you get—may you get it at once. At any rate may you never be satisfied to live without it. You may have full assurance. You may have it without personal revelations—it is worked in us by the Word of God. These things are written that you may have it. And we may be sure that the means used by the Spirit are equal to the effect which He desires.

Under the guidance of the Spirit of God, John so wrote as to attain his end in writing. What, then, has he written with the design of making us know that we have eternal life? Go through the whole Epistle and you will

see that it all presses in that direction. But we shall not at this present time have more than a glance through this chapter.

He begins thus—"Whosoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." Do you believe that Jesus is the anointed of God? Is He so to you? Is He anointed as your Prophet, Priest and King? Have you realized His anointing so as to put your trust in Him? Do you receive Jesus as appointed of God to be the Mediator, the Propitiation for sin, the Savior of men? If so, you are born of God. "How may I know this?" Brethren, our evidence is the witness of God Himself as here recorded. We need no other witness.

Suppose an angel were to tell you that you are born of God, would that be a more sure testimony than the infallible Scripture? If you believe that Jesus is the Christ, you are born of God. John has thus positively declared the Truth of God, that you may know that you have eternal life. Can anything be more clear than this?

The loving spirit of John leads him to say, "Everyone that loves Him that begat, loves Him also that is begotten of Him." Do you love God? Do you love His Only-Begotten Son? You can answer those two questions surely. I knew a dear Christian woman who would sometimes say, "I know that I love Jesus. But my fear is that He does not love me." Her doubt used to make me smile, for it never could have occurred to me. If I love Him, I know it is because He first loved me. Love to God in us is always the work of God's love towards us. Jesus loved us and gave Himself for us, and therefore we love Him in return. Love to Jesus is an effect which proves the existence of its cause.

Do you love Jesus? Do you feel a delight in Him? Is His name as music to your ear and honey to your mouth? Do you love to hear Him extolled? Ah, dear Friends! I know that to many of you a sermon full of His dear name is as a royal banquet. And if there is no Christ in a discourse, it is empty and vain and void to you. Is it not so? If you do, indeed, love Him that begat, and Him that is begotten of Him, then this is one of the things that is written—"that you may know that you have eternal life."

John goes on to give another evidence—"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His Commandments." Do you love God? And do you love His children? Listen to another word from the same Apostle—"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the Brethren." That may appear to be a very small evidence. But I can assure you it has often been a great comfort to my soul. I know I love the Brethren—I can say unto my Lord—

***"Is there a lamb among Your flock  
I would disdain to feed?"***

I would gladly cheer and comfort the least of His people.

Well, then, if I love the Brethren, I love the Elder Brother. If I love the babes, I love the Father. And I know that I have passed from death unto life. Brethren, take this evidence home in all its force. It is conclusive—John has said, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the Brethren." And he would not have spoken so positively if it had not been even so. Brethren, never be content with sentimental

comforts—set your feet firmly upon the rock of fact and Truth. True Christian assurance is not a matter of guesswork but of mathematical precision. It is capable of logical proof and is no rhapsody or poetical fiction.

We are told by the Holy Spirit that if we love the Brethren we have passed from death to life. You can tell whether you love the Brethren, as such, for their Master's sake and for the Truth's sake that is in them. And if you can truly say that you thus love them, then you may know that you have eternal life.

Our Apostle gives us this further evidence—"This is the love of God, that we keep His Commandments: and His Commandments are not grievous." Obedience is the grand test of love. If you are living after your own will and pay no homage to God, you are none of His. If you never think of the Lord Jesus as your Master and never recognize the claims of God and never wish to be obedient to His will, you are not in possession of eternal life. If you desire to be obedient and prove that desire by your actions, then you have the Divine life within you. Judge yourselves. Is the tenor of your life obedience or disobedience? By the fruit you can test the root and the sap.

But note, that this obedience must be cheerful and willing. No doubt some, for a while, obey the Commands of God unwillingly. They do not like them, though they bow to them. They fret and grizzle because of the restraints of piety. And this proves that they are hypocrites. What you wish to do you are doing in the sight of God. If there could be such a thing as holiness forced upon a man, it would be unholiness. O my Hearer, it may be that you cannot fall into a certain line of sin. But if you could, you would—your desires show what you really are. I have heard of Christian people, so called, going to sinful amusements, just, as they say, to enjoy a little pleasure.

Ah well, we see where you are! Where your pleasure is, your heart is. If you enjoy the pleasures of the world, you are of the world and with the world you will be condemned. If God's Commands are grievous to you, then you are a rebel at heart. Loyal subjects delight in the royal Law. "His Commandments are not grievous." I said to one who came to join the Church the other day, "I suppose you are not perfect?" and the reply was, "No, Sir, I wish I might be." I said, "And suppose you were?" "Oh, then," she said, "that would be Heaven to me." So it would be to me. We delight in the Law of God after the inward man.

Oh, that we could perfectly obey in thought and word and deed! This is our view of Heaven. Thus we sing of it—

***"There shall we see His face,  
And never, never sin;  
There from the rivers of His Grace  
Drink endless pleasures in."***

We would scarce ask to be rid of sorrow, if we might be rid of sin. We would bear any burden cheerfully if we could live without spot. We shall also be without grief. His Commandments are not grievous but they are ways of pleasantness and peace to us. Do you feel that you love the ways of God, that you desire holiness and follow after it joyfully? Then, dear

Friends, you have eternal life and these are the sure evidences of it. Obedience, holiness, delight in God, never came into a human heart except from a heavenly hand. Wherever they are found they prove that the Lord has implanted eternal life—for they are much too precious to be buried away in a dead soul.

John then proceeds to mention three witnesses. Now, dear Hearers, do you know anything about these three witnesses? “There are three that bear witness in earth—the Spirit, and the water, and the blood—and these three agree in one.” Do you know “the Spirit”? Has the Spirit of God quickened you, changed you, illuminated you, sanctified you? Does the Spirit of God dwell in you? Do you feel His sacred impulses? Is He the essence of the new life within you? Do you know Him as clothing you with His light and power? If so, you are alive unto God.

Next, do you know “the water,” the purifying power of the death of Christ? Does the crucified Lord crucify your sins? Is the water applied to you to remove the power of sin? Do you now long to perfect holiness in the fear of God? This proves that you have eternal life. Do you also know “the blood?” This is a wretched age, in which men think little of the precious blood. My heart has well-near been broken and my very flesh has been enfeebled as I have thought upon the horrible things which have been spoken of late about the precious blood by men called Christian ministers.

“O my Soul, come you not into their secret! Unto their assembly, my Honor, be you not united.” Beloved Friends, do you know the power of the blood to take away sin, the power of the blood to speak peace to the conscience, the power of the blood to give access to the Throne of Grace? Do you know the quickening, restoring, cheering power of the precious blood of Christ which is set forth in the Lord’s Supper by the fruit of the vine? Then in the mouth of these three witnesses shall the fact of your having eternal life be fully established. If the Spirit of God is in you, He is the earnest of your eternal inheritance. If the water has washed you, then you are the Lord’s. Jesus said to Peter, “If I wash you not, you have no part in Me.”

But you are washed, and therefore the Lord’s. If the precious blood has cleansed you from the guilt of sin, you know that it has also purchased you from death and it is to you the guarantee of eternal life. I pray that you may, from this moment, enjoy the combined light of these three lamps of God—“the Spirit, and the water, and the blood,” and so have full assurance of faith.

One thing more I would notice. Read the ninth verse—the Apostle puts our faith and assurance on the ground that we receive “the witness of God.” If I believe that I am saved because of this, that, and the other, I may be mistaken—the only sure ground is “the witness of God.” The inmost heart of Christian faith is that we take God at His Word. And we must accept that Word, not because of the probabilities of its statements, nor because of the confirmatory evidence of science and philosophy, but simply and alone because the Lord has spoken it. Many professing Christians fall sadly short of this point. They dare to judge the Word instead of bowing before it. They do not sit at the Master’s feet but become doctors



themselves. I thank God that I believe everything that God has spoken, whether I am able to see its reason or not.

To me the fact that the mouth of God has spoken it stands in the place of all argument, either for or against. If Jehovah says so, so it is. Do you accept the witness of God? If not, you have made Him a liar and the Truth is not in you. But if you have received “the witnesses of God,” then this is His witness, that “He has given to us eternal life and this life is in His Son.” I say again, if your faith stands in the wisdom of men and is based upon the cleverness of a preacher, it will fail you. But if it stands on the sure Word of the Lord, it will stand forever and this may be to you a special token that you have eternal life. I have said enough upon this subject—oh that God may bless it to you! May we be enabled, from what John has written, to gather beyond doubt that we have the life of God within our souls.

Furthermore, John wrote that we might know our spiritual life to be eternal. Please notice this, for there are some of God’s children who have not yet learned this cheering lesson. The life of God in the soul is not transient but abiding. Not temporary but eternal. Some think that the life of God in the Believer’s soul may die out. But how, then, could it be eternal? If it dies, it is not eternal life. If it is eternal life, it cannot die. I know that modern deceivers deny that eternal means eternal but you and I have not learned their way of pumping the meanings out of the words which the Holy Spirit uses. We believe that “eternal” means endless, and that if I have eternal life, I shall live eternally. Brethren, the Lord would have us know that we have eternal life.

Learn, then, the doctrine of the eternality of life given in the new birth. It must be eternal life, because it is “the life of God.” We are born again of the Spirit of God by a living and incorruptible seed, which lives and abides forever. We are said to be “made partakers of the Divine nature.” Surely, this means, among other things, that we receive an undying life. For immortality is of the essence of the Life of God. His name is “I AM that I AM.” He has life in Himself and the Son has life in Himself and of this life we are the receivers. This was His purpose concerning His Son, that He might give eternal life to as many as the Father had given Him. If it is the life of God which is in a Believer—and certainly it is, for He has begotten us again—then that life must be eternal. As children of God, we partake of His life and as heirs of God, we inherit His eternity. “This is life eternal, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.”

Beloved, our Lord Jesus Christ calls the life of His people *eternal life*. How often do I quote this text! It seems to lie on the tip of my tongue—“I give unto My sheep *eternal life*. And they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.” And again, “He that believes in Him has *everlasting life*.” It is not temporary life, not life which at a certain period must grow old and die but *everlasting life*. “It shall be in him a well of water springing up into *everlasting life*.” This is the life of Christ within the soul. “For you are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God.” “I live. Yet not I, but Christ lives in me.” “When Christ, who is our life, shall ap-

pear, then shall you also appear with Him in glory.” If our life is Christ’s life, we shall not die until Christ dies. If our life is hidden in Him, it will never be discovered and destroyed until Christ Himself is destroyed. Let us rest in this.

Mark again how our Lord has put it—“Because I live, you shall live also.” As long, then, as Jesus lives, His people must live, for the argument will always be the same, “Because I live, you shall live also.” We are so one with Christ that while the Head lives the members cannot die. We are so one with Christ that the challenge is given, “Who shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?” A list is added of things which may be supposed to separate but we are told that they cannot do so, for “in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.” Is it not clear, then, that we are quickened with a life so heavenly and Divine that we can never die?

John tells us in this very chapter, “We know that whosoever is born of God sins not.” He does not go back to his old sin, he does not again come under the dominion of sin. But, “he that is begotten of God keeps himself and that Wicked One touches him not.”

Beloved, I entreat you to keep a hard and firm grip on this blessed doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints. How earnestly do I long, “that you may know that you have eternal life”! Away with your doctrine of being alive in Christ today and dead tomorrow! Poor, miserable doctrine, that is! Hold fast to eternal salvation through the Eternal Covenant carried out by eternal love unto eternal life. For the Spirit of God has written these things unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.

Once more, according to the Authorized text, though not according to the Revised Version, John desired the increase and confirmation of their faith. He says, “That you might believe on the name of the Son of God.” John wrote to those who believed that they might believe in a more emphatic sense. As our Savior has come not only that we may have life but that we may have it more abundantly, so does John write that having faith we may have more of it. Come Beloved, listen for a moment to this! You have the milk of faith but God wills that you should have this cream of assurance! He would increase your faith. May you believe more extensively.

Perhaps you do not believe all the Truth of God because you have not yet perceived it. There were members of the Corinthian Church who had not believed in the resurrection of the dead and there were Galatians who were very cloudy upon justification by faith. Many a Christian man is narrow in the range of his faith from ignorance of the Lord’s mind. Like certain tribes of Israel they have conquered a scanty territory as yet, though all the land is theirs from Dan to Beersheba. John would have us push out our fences and increase the enclosure of our faith. Let us believe all that God has revealed, for every Truth of God is precious and practically useful.

Perhaps your doctrinal belief has been poor and thin. Oh that the Lord would turn the water into wine! Many of you live upon milk and yet your

years qualify you to feed on meat. Why keep the babes' diet? You that believe are exhorted to "go in and out and find pasture." Range throughout the whole Revelation of God. It will be well for you if your faith also increases intensively. Oh that you may more fully believe what you do believe! We need deeper insight and firmer conviction. We do not *half* believe, as yet, any of us. Many of you only skim the pools of the Truth of God. Blessed is the wing which brushes the surface of the River of Life. But infinitely more blessed is it to plunge into the depths of it. This is John's desire for you—that you would believe with all you heart and soul and strength.

He would have you believe more constantly, so that you may say, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed—I will sing and give praise." It is not always so with us. We are at times chicken-hearted. We play the man today and the mouse tomorrow. Lord have mercy upon us—we are an inconsistent people, fickle as the wind. The Lord would have us abide always in Him with strong and mighty confidence, being rooted and built up in Him.

He would have us trust courageously. Some can believe in a small way about small things. Oh for a boundless trust in the infinite God! We need more of a venturesome faith—the faith to do and dare. Often we see the way of power but have not the faith which would be equal to it. See Peter walking on the sea! I do not advise any of you to try it, neither did our Lord advise Peter to do so—we do well enough if we walk uprightly on land. But when Peter had once taken a few steps on the sea, he ought to have known that His Lord could help Him all the rest of the way.

But alas, His faith failed and he began to sink. He could have walked all the way to Jesus if he had believed right on. So is it with us—our faith is good enough for a spurt but it lacks staying power. Oh, may God give us to believe so that we may not only trip over a wave or two but walk on the water to the end! If the Lord bids you, you may go through fire and not be burned, through the floods and not be drowned. Such a fearless, careless, conquering faith may the Lord work in us!

We need also to have our faith increased in the sense of its becoming more practical. Some people have a fine new faith, as pretty as the bright poker in the parlor and as useless. We want an everyday faith, not to look at, but to use. Brothers and Sisters, we need faith for the kitchen and the pantry, as well as for the drawing-room and the conservatory. We need workshop faith, as well as Prayer Meeting faith. We need faith as to the common things of life and the trying things of death. We could do with less paint if we had more power. We need less varnish and more verity. God give to you that you may believe on the name of the Son of God with a sound, commonsense faith which will be found wearable, and washable, and workable throughout life.

We need to believe more joyfully. Oh what a blessed thing it is when you reach the rest and joy of faith! If we would truly believe the promise of God and rest in the Lord's certain fulfillment of it, we might be as happy as the angels. I notice how very early in the morning the birds begin to sing—before the sun is up or even the first gray tints of morning light are

visible—the little songsters are awake and singing. Too often we refuse to sing until the sun is more than up and noon is near. Shame on us! Will we never trust our God? Will we never praise Him for favors to come? Oh for a faith that can sing through the night and through the winter! Faith that can live on a promise is the faith of God's elect. You will never enjoy Heaven below until you believe without wavering. The Lord give you such faith.

**II.** Thus I have gone through my first head and taken nearly all the time. I must now come to push of pike, as the old soldiers used to say. We must drive our teaching home. THE PURPOSE WHICH JOHN HAD IN HIS MIND WE OUGHT TO FOLLOW UP. If he wished us to know that we have eternal life, Brothers and Sisters, let us try to know it. The Word of God was written for this purpose. Let us use it for its proper end. The whole of these Scriptures were written that, “we might believe that Jesus is the Christ and that believing we might have life through His name.”

This Book is written to you who believe, that you may know that you believe. Will you suffer your Bibles to be a failure to you? Will you live in perpetual questioning and doubt? If so, the Book has missed its mark for you. The Bible is sent that you may have full assurance of your possession of eternal life—do not, therefore, dream that it will be presumptuous on your part to aspire to it. Our conscience tells us that we ought to seek full assurance of salvation. It cannot be right for us to be children of God and not to know our own Father.

How can we kneel down and say, “Our Father which are in Heaven,” when we do not know whether He is our Father or not? Will not a life of doubt tend to be a life of falsehood? May we not be using language which is not true to our consciousness? Can you sing joyful hymns which you fear are not true of you? Will you join in worship when your heart does not know that God is your God? Until the spirit of adoption enables you to cry, “Abba, Father,” where is your love to God? Can you rest? Dare you rest, while it is a question whether you are saved or not?

Can you go home to your dinner today and enjoy your meal, while there is a question about your soul's eternal life? Oh, be not so foolhardy as to run risks on that matter! I pray you, make sure work for eternity. If you leave anything in uncertainty, let it concern your body or your estate but not your soul. Conscience bids you seek to know that you have eternal life, for without this knowledge many duties will be impossible of performance. Many Scriptures, which I cannot quote this morning, stir you up to this duty.

Are you not bid to make your calling and election sure? Are you not a thousand times over exhorted to rejoice in the Lord and to give thanks continually? But how can you rejoice if the dark suspicion haunts you, that perhaps, after all, you have not the life of God? You must get this question settled or you cannot rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him. Come, Brothers and Sisters, I beseech you, as you would follow Scripture and obey the Lord's precepts—get the assurance without which you cannot obey them.

Listen, as I close, to the reasons why each Believer should seek to know that he has eternal life. Here they are. Assurance of your salvation will bring you “the peace of God, which passes all understanding.” If you know that you are saved, you can sit down in poverty, or in sickness, or under slander and feel perfectly content. Full assurance is the Kohinoor among the jewels the heavenly Bridegroom adorns His spouse. Assurance is a mountain of spices, a land that flows with milk and honey. To be the assured possessor of eternal life is to find a Paradise beneath the stars, where the mountains and the hills break forth before you into singing.

Full assurance will sometimes overflow in waterfalls of delight. Peace flows like a river and here and there it leaps in cascades of ecstatic joy. There are seasons when the plant of peace is in flower and then it sheds a perfume as of myrrh and cassia. Oh, the blessedness of the man who knows that he has eternal life! Sometimes in our room alone, when we have been enjoying this assurance, we have laughed outright, for we could not help it. If anybody had wondered why a man was laughing by himself alone, we could have explained that it was nothing ridiculous which had touched us, but our mouth was filled with laughter because the Lord had done great things for us, whereof we were glad!

That religion which sets no sweetmeats on the table is a stingy house-keeper. I do not wonder that some people give up their starveling religion—it is hardly worth the keeping. The child of God who knows that he has eternal life goes to school, but he has many a holiday. And he anticipates that day of going Home when he shall see the face of his Beloved forever.

Brethren, full assurance will give us the full result of the Gospel. The Gospel ought to make us holy. And so it will, when we are in full possession of it. The Gospel ought to make us separate from the world. The Gospel ought to make us lead a heavenly life here below. And so it will, if we drink deep draughts of it. But if we take only a sip of it now and again, we give it no chance of working out its design in us. Do not paddle about the margin of the Water of Life but first wade in up to your knees and then hasten to plunge into the waters to swim in. Beware of contentment with shallow Grace. Prove what the Grace of God can do for you by giving yourself up to its power.

Full assurance gives a man a grateful zeal for the God he loves. These are the people that will go to the Congo for Jesus, for they know they are His. These are the people that will lay down their all for Christ, for Christ is theirs. These are the people that will bear scorn and shame and misrepresentation for the Truth’s sake—for they know that they have eternal life. These are they that will keep on preaching and teaching, spending and working—for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven and they know it. Men will do little for what they doubt and much for what they believe. If you have lost your title deeds and you do not know whether your house is your own or not, you are not going to spend much in repairs and enlargements. When you know that Heaven is yours, you are anxious to get ready for it. Full assurance finds fuel for zeal to feed upon.

This also creates and sustains patience. When we know that we have eternal life, we do not fret about the trials of this passing life. I could point to the Brethren here this morning and I could mention Sisters at home, who amaze me by their endurance of pain and weakness. This I know concerning them, that they never have a doubt about their interest in Christ. And for this cause they are able to surrender themselves into those dear hands which were pierced for them. They know that they are the Lord's and so they say, "Let Him do what seems Him good."

A blind child was in his father's arms and a stranger came into the room and took him right away from his father. Yet he did not cry or complain. His father said to him, "Johnny, are you afraid? You do not know the person who has got hold of you." "No, father," he said, "I do not know who he is but you do." When pain gives us an awkward nip and we do not know whether we shall live or die—when we are called to undergo a dangerous operation and pass into unconsciousness—then we can say, "I do not know where I am but my Father knows and I leave all with Him." Assurance makes us strong to suffer.

This, dear Friends, will give you constant firmness in your confession of Divine Truth. You who do not know whether you are saved or not, I hope the Lord will keep you from denying the faith. But those who have a firm grip of it, these are the men who will never forsake it. A cavalier in an omnibus said to a Christian man one day, "Why, you have nothing, after all, to rest upon. I can prove to you that your Scriptures are not authentic." The humble Christian man replied, "Sir, I am not a learned man and I cannot answer your questions. But I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and I have experienced such a change in character, and I feel such a joy and peace through believing, that I wish you knew my Savior, too."

The answer he received was a very unexpected one—the unbeliever said, "You have got me there. I cannot answer that." Just so—we have got them there. If we know what has been worked in us by Divine Grace, they cannot overcome us. The full-assurance man baffles the very devil. Satan is cunning enough but those who know and are persuaded, are birds which he cannot take in the snares of Hell. When you know that your Lord is able to keep that which you have committed to Him until that day, then you are firm as a rock. God make you so.

Dear Brethren, this is the kind of thing that will enable you to bear a telling testimony for your Lord. It is of no use to stand up and preach things that may or may not be true. I am charged with being a dreadful dogmatist and I am not anxious to excuse myself. When a man is not quite sure of a thing, he grows very liberal—anybody can be a liberal with money which he cannot claim to be his own. The broad-school man says, "I am not sure, and I do not suppose that you are sure, for indeed nothing is sure." Does this sandy foundation suit you? I prefer rock.

The things which I have spoken to you from my youth up have been such as I have tried and proved and to me they wear an absolute certainty, confirmed by my personal experience. I have tried these things—they have saved me and I cannot doubt them. I am a lost man if the Gospel I have preached to you is not true. And I am content to bide the issue

of the day of Judgment. I do not preach doubtingly, for I do not live doubtingly. I know what I have told you to be true—why should I speak as if I were not sure? If you want to make your own testimony credible in such a day as this, you must have something to say that you are sure about. And until you are sure about it I would advise you to hold your tongue. We do not require any more questionings. The market is overstocked. We need no more doubt, honest or dishonest.

Brethren, if you know that you have eternal life, you are prepared to live and equally prepared to die. How frequently do I stand at the bedside of our dying members! I am every now and then saying to myself, “I shall certainly meet with some faint-hearted one. Surely I shall come across some child of God who is dying in the dark.” But I have not met with any such. Brethren, a child of God may die in the dark. One said to old Mr. Dodd, the quaint old Puritan—“How sad that our brother should have passed away in the darkness! Do you doubt his safety?” “No,” said old Mr. Dodd, “no more than I doubt the safety of Him who said, when He was dying, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

Full assurance, as we have said before, is not of the essence of salvation. Still, I beg of you to note that all along through these many years, in each case, when I have gone to visit any of our Brothers and Sisters at death, I have always found them departing in sure and certain hope of seeing the face of their Lord in Glory. I have often marveled that this should be without exception and I glory in it. Often have they said to me, “We have fed on such good food that we may well be strong in the Lord.”

God grant that you may have this assurance, all of you! May sinners begin to believe in Jesus and saints believe more firmly, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

***Portion Of Scripture Read Before Sermon—1 John 5.***  
**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN-BOOK”—175, 738, 711.**

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# PRAYING AND WAITING

## NO. 596

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 23, 1864  
 BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

***“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that you may know that you have eternal life and that you may believe on the name of the Son of God. And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us: and if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him.”***  
***1 John 5:13-15.***

THE beloved Apostle John here addresses himself to those who have believed on the Son of God. And having himself ascended the high hill of fellowship with Jesus, he labors to conduct his fellow Believers up three glorious ascents of the mount of God. I think I see before me now three shining ladders and with the Glory of God reflected from his brow, I see John, like an angel of God, conducting the Lord's Jacobs up the glittering rounds. The first ascent he would have them take is from faith to the full assurance of faith.

He writes to them as Believers and he says, “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that you may know that you have eternal life.” As Believers, they had eternal life, for, “He that believes on the Son of God has everlasting life,” and shall never come into condemnation. Yes, “He that lives and believes in Christ, though he were dead, yet should he live.” But it is one thing to *have* eternal life and another thing to *know* that we have eternal life.

In the third verse of the second chapter of this very Epistle, this Apostle draws a distinction between knowing Christ and knowing that we know Him, for he writes, “Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His Commandments.” A man may know Christ in his heart and yet at certain seasons, through weakness of judgment or stress of temptations, he may be cast into doubts as to whether he has any saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus at all. But he alone is happy, who, building upon the sure foundation of God's promise, gives all diligence to make his calling and election sure and enjoys an assured confidence of his interest in Christ.

I know there are some who do not like us to draw any distinction between faith and assurance. But the more I think upon the subject the more I am compelled to do it—not for the encouragement of unbelief—but for the consolation of those weaklings of the flock who, upon another ground must be rejected altogether since their trembling faith has never, as yet, ripened into assurance. Believers who have observed their own experience must have noticed that even when they can cast themselves in all simplicity upon Christ Jesus and consequently have a right to be confident of their own safety—yet even then they cannot at all times enjoy the



comfortable persuasion of security because their minds are distracted and Satan has gained an advantage over them.

They trust their God, but it is with something of the spirit of Job when he said, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." The shadow of the dark thought that perhaps you may prove an apostate darkens your path and you cling to the Lord, not with a *joyful* assurance which can say, "He is mine," but with that desperate faith which cries, "I must believe, for otherwise there is nothing before me but destruction!" "To whom shall I go but unto You, for You have the words of eternal life!"

Even the strongest of saints must be led, I think, in their experience to observe that while always believing they are not always assured. This must certainly be the case with the weaker ones and the beginners. I know faith is a sureness concerning the Truth of God. I cheerfully accept the definition. But I must bid you observe that there is a difference between being sure of the Truth of God and being sure that I am a partaker of Divine Life. I come to Christ not knowing whether He died especially for me, or not. But I trust in Him as the Savior of *sinners*—this is faith. And having trusted in Him I discover that I have a particular and special interest in the merit of His blood and in the love of His heart—this is rather *assurance* than faith.

Although assurance will grow out of faith and that is scarcely faith which does not lead to assurance, yet the two are *not* identical. You may believe in Christ and have eternal life and still be in doubt about it. You ought not to be, but still you may fall into such a state. The Apostle desires that if you believe, you may come to a still higher state and may infallibly and joyfully *know* that you have eternal life. O Brethren, do not fear to mount this ladder! The steps are very easy—just continue to believe as you have believed! Receive the Word of God as it stands—you need no other ground of assurance but that which is written there—and the Spirit shall enable you to see your own title, sealed and sure. Continue to rest in Jesus and you shall find that in Him, as you have attained faith, so in Him you shall also obtain an assurance of faith. Here is the first heavenly staircase.

The Apostle desires to lead the disciples up a second ascent. Observe it. "And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us." From the assurance of our interest in Christ the next step is to a firm *belief* in the power of prayer, in the fact that God does regard *your* prayer. And this you can hardly get unless you have attained to an assurance of your own interest in Him. Belief in the prevalence of my prayer, to a great extent, must depend upon my conviction of my interest in Christ. For instance, here is Paul's argument—"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?"

I must therefore be sure that God has given me Christ. And if He has given Christ to me, then I know that He will give me all things. But if I have any doubt about Christ's being mine and about my being the receiver of God's unspeakable gift in Christ, I cannot reason as the Apostle did and I cannot, therefore, have that confidence that my prayer is heard. Again, God's fatherhood is another ground of our confidence in prayer. "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?"

But if I am not clear that God is *my* Father. If I have not the spirit of Adoption, then I cannot come to God with this confidence that He will give me my desire. My sonship being assured, I am confident that my Father knows what I have need of and will hear me. But my sonship being in dispute, my power in prayer vanishes—I cannot hope to prevail. Besides, the man who has faith in Christ and knows himself to be saved has already received answers to prayer! And answers to prayer are some of the best supports to our faith as to the *future* success of our petitions. "Because He has inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live." But if I have no reason to conclude that God has heard my prayer for forgiveness—if I am in doubt as to whether my first cries have ever reached His ear and obtained an answer—how can I come with confidence?

No, Brothers and Sisters, seek in the first place, since you have believed in Jesus, to get the witness within you that you are born of God. *Then* go from this gracious ascent to the next—knowing and being assured that He hears us always because we do the things which are pleasing in His sight and plead the name of our Lord Jesus Christ who is All in All to us. If you have climbed this second ascent, and I hope there are many here who have, the third is not difficult. It is to go from your belief that God hears prayer to a conviction that when you have prayed you *have* the petitions that you have desired of Him.

In other words, to ascend from a solemn conviction of the *usefulness* of prayer to a particular and special belief that in your own case, when you have desired anything of God in prayer through Jesus Christ, you have obtained the answer! Not that you have had the particular mercy at once given into your hands—for there is much that is really ours which, nevertheless, is not at *present* in our sensible possession—and yet is truly ours. We have Heaven, but we have it not in enjoyment as of yet. And so we may have answers to our prayers and yet, as far as our *sense* is concerned, we may not have received *anything*. We have it, but we see it not. It is ours, but our God sees fit to reserve it for a season for a further trial of our faith.

If a man had nothing more than he could *see*—there are many of you here who have possessions across the sea, or ships far off upon the water—and if you had only what you can see just *now*, your estates would be sorely diminished! So we may have the answers to many of our prayers—really have the answers—and yet for the present those answers, like a ship upon a long voyage, may not yet have returned. Yet we have the answer as the merchant has the ship which is as much his upon the Atlantic as when it shall lie alongside his wharf. May we, dear Friends, obtain the gracious position of knowing that having sought the Lord in prayer through Jesus Christ, we have the petitions which we desired of Him!

I want, this morning, as God may help me, to strengthen our dear Brethren to look for answers to prayer. Seeing that you have the promise of an answer to prayer and that the answer must come to you, look for it!

Unless you believe that you have the answer in reality, you are not likely to watch for its appearance. But if you have come so far as to believe that you *have* the answer, I do now earnestly urge you to look for it and rejoice.

First, let me explain *explanation*. Secondly, let us say something in the praise of this believing in our answer to prayer, *commendation*. Thirdly, let us rebuke some who do not like to have their prayers answered—here we have *rebuke*. And then, fourthly, let us stir you up to exercise this gracious privilege which is your undoubted right as the children of God—this is *exhortation*.

**I. EXPLANATION**—and let the explanation be taken from instances in Holy Writ. Elijah bowed his knee on the top of Carmel and prayed to God for rain. For three years there had not been a single drop descending upon Israel. He pleads, and having finished his intercession, he says to his servant, “Go and look from the top of Carmel towards the sea.” He did not think it sufficient to have prayed—he believed that he had the petition which he desired of God and therefore he sent his servant to see. The answer which was brought back was not encouraging. But he said to his servant, “Go again seven times,” and seven times that servant went.

Elijah does not appear to have staggered in his faith—he believed he had the petition and therefore expected soon to see it—since seeing is often a blessed reward of believing. He sent his servant till at last he brought back the news, “There is a little cloud the size of a man’s hand.” Quite enough for Elijah’s faith. He acts upon the belief that he has the petition, though not a drop of rain has fallen. He goes down to tell Ahab to make ready his chariot that the rain not stop him—in the full and firm conviction that as certainly as he had asked—so surely would the rain descend!

David is another case in point. Let me quote but this one expression, “In the morning will I direct my prayer unto You and will look up.” As men take an arrow from the quiver, so David takes his prayer. He fits it to the string and bends the bow by vehemence of desire and then he takes aim—he directs his prayer to God. He is not shooting to the right hand or to the left, but upwards to his God he points his polished shaft. Not to those who will afterwards read the Psalm. Not to those who are listening to his voice—he directs it to Heaven. And having done so, draws the bow with all his strength and away flies the arrow.

Anxious to know how it speeds, he looks *up* to see whether the Lord accepts his desires and continues to look up to see whether a gracious answer is returned. This is what I mean by the Christian’s knowing he has an answer to his petition and waiting and watching till it comes. Take the case of Samson, poor, strong, yet weak Samson—as strong in faith as he was in body. After his hair had grown again he is brought forth to make sport for the Philistines and he prays to God to strengthen him but this once.

Mark how he believed he had the petition—for he said to the man who conducted him blindfolded into the Philistine’s temple, “Put me near the two pillars whereon the house does lean.” And why does he seek to stand there? Because he believes he has his petition. Having taken up his posi-

tion, he grasps the two pillars and bows himself with all his might. Why? Why does he strain himself so? Is it possible that he hopes to move those mighty columns from their bases? Yes, it is not only *possible*, but *certain* that he will work wonders, for he believes that he has his petition from his God!

See how in the strength of his belief he pulls down the temple of Dagon about the heads of the worshippers and proves the power of believing supplication! Something of that kind of spirit I want Believers to experience—to *know* that their prayer is heard and then to *act* upon the conviction that it is so. Take again, the case of Hannah, a woman of a sorrowful spirit. She prayed without an audible voice, only her lips moved. As soon as Eli told her that God had heard the prayer, observe the change which was worked in her, “Then was her countenance no more sad.”

Why, Hannah, why do you smile? You have not yet seen your husband. You have no signs that God has visited you and granted the desire of your heart! No, but the Man of God has said it and that is enough for her! The wrinkles disappear from her brow and the tears from her eyes—you ask her why and she says, “I have the petition that I desired of God: I asked in faith and the Lord has been pleased to hear my prayer.”

A yet more wonderful instance is that of Jacob, who not only believes in the utility of prayer but he will not let the Angel depart till he wins His blessing. This was going farther—not only *believing* that there was a blessing and that prayer could get it, but a *determination* not to cease prayer till he had some visible token that he had obtained it! Here was strong faith! The case may be exceptional and especially when we pray for temporal mercies I do not think we have any right to give the Lord such a time and to say we will not rise from our knees till the favor is bestowed. That might be presumption rather than faith.

But there are times when mercies are so necessary and when we are so clear that our prayer is according to God’s will—when the prayer is so evidently indicted upon our heart by the Holy Spirit that we may even say unto the Covenant Angel, “I will not leave this closet till You give me Your answer. I will never cease to pray till You deign to smile—I will not let You go unless You bless me.” I have to complain of myself and I suppose you have to complain in the same manner that so much of our prayer is lacking here. We do not send the servant to look to the sea. We do not let our countenance grow glad when we have poured out our hearts before God—

**“At His feet we groan, yet bring our wants away.”**

This is base and wicked of us! O that we had *true* faith—the *real* faith which would honor God and comfort ourselves by believing that we have the petition which we have desired of Him. So much by way of explanation.

**II.** We come now to COMMENDATION. Let me commend the habit of expecting an answer to prayer and looking for it for many reasons. I will but give you an outline of them. By this means you put an honor upon God’s ordinance of prayer. He who prays without expecting to receive a return mocks at the Mercy Seat of God. That Mercy Seat was made of gold, of pure gold, as if to show its preciousness to all true Believers. And, by

not expecting to receive anything of God, you in effect despise the Throne of Grace.

Let me ask you, of what use can the Mercy Seat be if God has said, "Seek you My face" in vain? If no answers come to supplication, then supplication is a vain waste of time! You play with prayer when you do not expect an answer! You are not treating it in an earnest, solemn and devout manner. You are trifling with it. Little children get their bows and shoot their arrows—they care not where, up into the air, to the east, or to the west—it is nothing to them. But men in sober fight take their aim and watch their arrows. You are but playing with God's ordinances of prayer, if, when you pray you are careless about results.

The truly prayerful man is resolved in his own soul that he *must* have the answer. He feels his need of it! He sees God's promise. His heart is stirred to earnestness and he cannot be satisfied to go away without some token for good. You would not treat the Mercy Seat as though it were a place for boys to play at! You would honor it, would you not? You would not be among those of whom the Prophet said, "You have snuffed at it," and said, "What a weariness it is." No, but you would make the place where God meets with His people glorious. You would take your shoes off because it is holy ground. But you cannot do this except you *believe* that prayer has power in it and *know* that you have the petitions which you ask of Him.

Such a spirit, in the next place, having honored prayer, also honors God's attributes. To believe that the Lord will hear my prayer is honor to His *truthfulness*. He has said that He will and I believe that He will keep His Word. It is honorable to His *power*. I believe that He can make the Word of His mouth stand fast and steadfast. It is honorable to His *love*. The larger things I ask, the more do I honor the *liberality*, *Grace* and love of God in asking such great things. It is honorable to His *wisdom*, for if I ask what He has told me to ask and expect Him to answer me, I believe that His Word is wise and may safely be kept. If you would dishonor every attribute of God, pray with unbelief. But if, on the contrary, you would put a crown on the head of Him who has saved you and who is the God of your salvation, believe that if you ask He will give and if you knock He will open unto you!

Again, to believe that God hears prayer and to look for an answer is truly to reverence God Himself. If I stand side by side with a friend and I ask him a favor and when he is about to reply to me I turn away and open the door and go to my business, why what an insult is this! It is not always considered courteous if you do not answer a person. But it is always *discourteous* if, after having asked a question, you do not wait for the answer. If I send a petition to a man's door and then having earnestly asked, or pretended to ask earnestly, I am utterly careless about the answer, I have not treated the man respectfully. If that person should send me a letter in return to my request and I should not even take the trouble to open it, how could I provoke him worse?

So you first ask God to grant you a favor and then you do not stop to get it. And when He sends it, you receive it as a matter of course and do not praise it as a gracious answer to your supplication. Christian Brother,

let me commend to you the gracious art of believing in the success of your prayers—because in this way you will help to insure your own success. A beggar knocks at your door. He wants charity. He has a firm belief that you will give it to him. The door does not open to him the first time—he knows you have seen him and that you understand his wants—he therefore knocks again. He is so confident of your generosity that he continues waiting at your doorstep.

You, at first, take little notice of him—you are busy with other matters. You come again to the window and you say, “What, is he still there?” Perhaps even then you are called away by urgent business and you attend to it rather than to him. But coming once more to the door, there he stands! “Why, then,” you say to him, “you shall have your desire.” And your hand is in your pocket to give him the relief he wants. It is even so with our God. When He sees us wait upon Him He will not permit us to wait without receiving the reward.

“He will strengthen your heart. Wait, I say, on the Lord.” Merely to knock at Mercy’s door without waiting for a reply is but like the runaway knocks of idle boys in the street—you cannot expect an answer to such prayers! Stand upon your watchtower and—

**“Hear what God the Lord will speak—  
For He will speak peace unto His people,  
And to His saints—  
But let them not turn again to folly.”**

Furthermore, thus to believe in the result of prayer tries and manifests faith. Perhaps nine prayers out of ten which we offer might have been as well not offered for any good which they have done to us. Am I too severe? I mean our hurried morning prayers when business is calling us away. I mean our sleepy evening prayers when we are scarcely half awake. I mean those formal petitions, (I am not speaking of those who use a book, for you can be quite as formal without a book as with)—those formal petitions in which you have only expressed godly *opinions* without feeling godly *emotions*, passed over holy words without their really coming from your hearts.

But, Brethren, when we pray and *expect the answer*, this is a sure token that our prayer has not been a mere formality. Then Faith lays hold upon God and she waits. Patience stands by her side, knowing that the windows of Heaven, however fast they may be closed, will open soon and God’s right hand will scatter His liberality upon waiting souls. So Faith waits and watches and waits and watches again. This is the reason why the glorious doctrine of the Second Advent has such a blessed effect on some of God’s people. It exercises their faith and brings hope into the field.

And so answers to faith exercises our watching faith and trains our hope to look up. The devil says, “Surely God will never hear your prayer.” You answer, “I have the petition and am waiting till He puts it into my hand—it is up there, labeled for me and set aside in the treasury for me and I shall have it. I am waiting till the time comes when I may safely receive that which is mine even now.” So the flesh whispers, “It is in vain,”

but Faith says, “No, prayer is blessed, prayer is God’s Spirit returning where it came and it will never fail.”

“But how can such a sinner as you are hope to succeed with God,” whispers Unbelief? But Faith, like Abraham, considers not its own body, though dead, neither the deadness of Sarah’s womb, but staggers not at the promise through unbelief—it keeps on waiting till it gets its reward! Such a habit, moreover, helps to bring out our gratitude to God. None sing so sweetly as those who get answers to prayer! Oh, some of you would give my Master sweet songs if you did but notice when He hears you!

But perhaps the Lord may drop an answer to your prayer and you merely cry, “It is a fortunate *circumstance*,” and God gets no praise for it. But if, instead, you had been watching for it and seen it come, you would fall on your knees in holy gratitude and say—

**“I love the Lord—He heard my cries,  
And pitied every groan—  
Long as I live, when troubles rise,  
I’ll hasten to His Throne.”**

Let me add this would make your faith *grow*, would make your love *burn*, and every Grace would be put in active *exercise* if, believing in the *power* of prayer, you watched for the answer and when the answer came went with a song of praise to the Savior’s feet!

I will not say more, lest by multiplying commendations I rather weaken the force of what I say. I could not praise this habit too much. The man whom God has taught to pray believingly has all God’s treasures at his command. You have the privy key of Jehovah’s secret cabinet. You are rich to all the extents of bliss. You have about you the Omnipotence of God for you have power to move the arm that moves the world! He who lacks this mercy is but weak and poverty-stricken, but he who has gained it is one of the mightiest in God’s Israel and will do great exploits.

**III.** Having thus spoken by way of commendation, we pause awhile and turn to speak by way of REBUKE. But it shall be such a gentle rebuke as shall not break the head. I am not just now speaking to those who never pray at all—let me, however, solemnly remind them that prayerless souls are Christ-less souls and will be lost souls before long. Nor am I speaking to those of you who merely prattle through a form of prayer—I give *you* but this one word: remember that God will not forever be mocked by you and that your prayers are numbered with your sins—you do but insult the Majesty of Heaven while you pretend to worship Him.

I am communing this morning with those persons to whom John wrote—you who believe on the name of the Son of God. You who believe in the efficacy of prayer. How is it that you do not expect an answer? I think I hear you say, “One reason is my own unworthiness. How can I think that God will hear such prayers as mine? I am fickle as the wind that blows and full of infirmities. I am one of the meanest of His sheep. If I were one of His ministers I would believe that my prayer was heard. But I am the least in Israel and my father’s house is all unknown. I do serve God sometimes a little, but oh, how little! And even that little is marred

with selfishness! I am the very worst in the whole family. How can I think that my prayer will be heard?”

Brothers and Sisters, let me remind you that it is not the *person* who prays that commends the prayer to God, but the fervency of the prayer *in the virtue* of the Great Intercessor. Why do you think the Apostle wrote these words—“Elijah was a man of like passions with us”? Why was that statement made? Why, precisely to meet the case of those who say, “My prayer is not heard because I have such-and-such faults.” Here is a case in point with yours—“Elijah was a man of like passions with us,” and yet he prays earnestly that it might not rain and it rained not—so that the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man is not prevented in its acceptance before high Heaven by the infirmity of the person who offers it.

“Yes,” you say, “but, Sir, you do not know the particular state of mind I have been in when I have prayed. I am so fluttered and worried and vexed and troubled that I cannot expect *my* prayer, offered in such a state of mind, to prevail with God.” Did you ever read the thirty-fourth Psalm and carefully consider where David was when his prayer had such good speed with God? He says, “O magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt His name together. I sought the Lord and He heard me and delivered me from all my fears.” This poor man cried and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles.

Now where do you think David prayed that prayer which God thus heard? Read the heading of the Psalm—“A Psalm of David, when he changed his behavior before Abimelech, who drove him away and he departed.” You remember what he did? He played the madman and let his spit run down his beard. He acted the fool and was never more a fool, except once, than he was then! And yet even then, in his fool’s play, God heard his prayer! There is something very teaching here. Child of God, though you may have gone ever so far astray and played the fool, let not this keep you back from the Mercy Seat! It was built on purpose for unworthy sinners to come to. You are such. If God only heard you in your good times, why then, you would perish!

The gates of His Grace are open at night as well as at day and black-handed saints may come and find mercy as well as those who have kept their garments white. Do not, I pray you, get into the ill habit of judging that your prayers are not heard because of your failings in spirit. “But,” says a third, “it is not merely that I do not so much doubt the efficacy of prayer on account of *myself*, but my *prayers* themselves are such poor things! I cannot! I cannot get the groan out of my heart before God. I would not ask to pray a *happy* prayer. If I could but pray an utterly *wretched* prayer. If my heart would but ache I would be content, but I cannot get to God. I do not know how to lay hold upon Him and wrestle with Him, and therefore I cannot expect to prevail.”

Dear Brothers and Sisters, this is your *sin* as well as your infirmity! Be humbled and pray God to make you like the importunate widow, for only so will you prevail. But at the same time let me remind you that if your prayers are sincere it shall often happen that even their weakness shall not destroy them. When Christ was asleep in the ship His disciples came to Him and said, “Master, care you not that we perish?” And He rebuked



them—"O you of little faith, why do you doubt?" But He did not *refuse* to hear their cry for all that! For He rebuked the winds and the waves and there was a great calm. He may rebuke the unbelief of your prayer and yet in infinite mercy He may *exceed* His promise!

There is no promise that He will hear unbelieving prayers. And he who wavers must not expect to receive anything—but the Lord may go beyond His Word and give us mercies notwithstanding that fault. And all other failings He graciously overlooks and receives our prayers through Jesus Christ. Let your sense of the poverty of your prayers lead you to abhor your *faults*—but not to abhor *praying*. Let it make you long to pray better—but never cause you to doubt that if you can, with true fervency, come to God through Jesus Christ your Lord, your prevailing is not a matter of hope but a matter of *certainty*—your success is as absolutely sure as the laws of Nature.

Further, I have no doubt many of God's people cannot think their prayers will be heard because they have had, as yet, such very few manifest replies. I saw the other day a greyhound chasing a hare. The moment the hare ran through the hedge out of the greyhound's sight, the race was over, for he could not follow where he could not see. The true hound hunts by *scent*—but the greyhound only by *sight*. Now there are some Christians too much like the greyhound. They only follow the Lord as far as they can see His manifest mercy. But the true child of God hunts by *faith* and when he cannot see the mercy, he scents it and still pursues it till at last he lays hold upon it!

Why, Man, you say you have had no answers! How do you know that? God may have answered you though you have not seen the answer. "I am heard," says good Ralph Erskine—

***"I'm heard when answered soon or late,  
Yes, heard when I no answer get!  
Yes, kindly answered when refused,  
And treated well when harshly used."***

This is a riddle, but it is a fact. God has not promised to give you the particular mercy in kind, but He will give it to you somehow or other. If I pay my debts in gold no man can blame me because I do not pay them in silver. And if God gives you spiritual mercies in abundance, instead of temporal, He has heard your prayer. You may pray, like Paul, thrice, that the thorn in the flesh may be taken away from you—God's answer is given, and it is, "My Grace is sufficient for you." Christ prayed that God might hear Him, He was heard in that He feared, but He had not the cup taken from Him.

No, but He had an angel to comfort and strengthen Him. And this was, in Truth, an answer though not such as the prayer seemed to require. You have had an answer and if God has heard you but once, pluck up courage and go again! Many do not pray expecting an answer because they pray in such a sluggish spirit. Begging is a hard trade—a man that succeeds in it must throw his heart into it—and so is praying. If you want to win, you must pray hard. They called some of the early Christians on the Continent, "Beg-hards," because they did pray hard to God. And none can prevail but those who pray hard. Slothful souls may not expect an answer.

Then there are so many, again, who pray in a legal spirit. Why do you pray? Because it is my *duty*? Children of God know it is their duty to pray, but they pray because they believe in the efficacy of prayer! I should not expect God to hear me because the clock struck such and I began to pray from a sense of duty. No, I must go, not because the clock strikes, but because my heart *wants* to pray. A child does not cry because the time to cry has come, nor does a sick man groan because it is the hour of groaning—they cry and groan because they cannot help it. When the new-born nature says, “Let us draw near unto God,” then is the time and the place.

A legal spirit would prevent our expecting answers to prayer. Inconsistencies after prayer and a failure to press our suit will bring us to doubt the power of prayer. If we do not plead with God again and again, and again, we shall not keep up our faith that God hears us. “Oh,” says one, “we have no time to pray at that rate.” What do you do with your time? It caused Domitian to be greatly despised when it was reported that he spent hours in killing flies. It was told, to the discredit of Artaxerxes, that he spent whole days in making handles for knives!

What shall be thought of us, when we confess that we have no time to pray—but there is time for trifles! Princes of the blood royal and yet no time to be at court? Kings of a Divine race and yet no time to put on your crowns and wear your robes of State? Time to play with toys and roll in the dust with the beggars of earth, but no time to sit upon the Throne of Glory and to offer the sacrifice of praise unto the Most High? Shame on such Christians! May God give us true shame for this and from this day forward may we be much in prayer and expect gracious answers.

**IV.** Alas, this morning time rebukes me, but eternity commends, and therefore I shall go on just a few minutes longer and that by way of EXHORTATION. Dear Friends, let us believe in God’s answering prayer! I mean those of us who have believed in Jesus. And because we have God’s promise for it. Hear what He says, “You shall make your prayer unto Him and He shall hear you.” Know that the Lord has set apart him that is godly for Himself—the Lord will hear when I call upon Him. “He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him.”

“Call upon Me in the day of trouble and I will deliver you and you shall glorify Me.” “It shall come to pass that before they call I will answer. And while they are yet speaking, I will hear.” “All things whatever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive.” “Everyone that asks receives. And he that seeks finds. And to him that knocks it shall be opened.” “Whatever you shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.” “If you shall ask anything in My name, I will do it.” “And whatever we ask we receive of Him because we keep His Commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.”

How is it possible after this that God should refuse to hear us? Is He a God and can He lie? Have we promise upon promise and will He break them all? God forbid, Brethren! If there is a God and if this Book is His Word, if God is true, prayer must be answered. And let us, on our knees, go to the sacred engagement as to a work of real efficacy. Again, prayer must be answered because of the Character of God our Father. Will He let His children cry and not hear them? He hears the young ravens and will

He not hear His own people? He is a God of Love. Would you let your sick child lie and pine and not go in to answer its groanings?

Will a God of Love close His ears against His people's cries? Do you think He will let the tears stream down your cheeks when you are petitioning and not put them into His bottle? Oh, remember His loving kindness and you cannot, I think, doubt that He hears prayer! A God that hears prayer—this is His memorial throughout all generations. Do not rob Him of His Character by distrusting Him! Then think of the efficacy of the blood of Jesus. When you pray, it is the blood that speaks. Every drop of Jesus' blood cries, "Father, hear him! Father, hear him! Hear the sinner's cry!" That blood was sprinkled on the Mercy Seat that the Mercy Seat might be an efficacious Mercy Seat for you! Do not doubt the blood of Christ!

What? Can He die and yet that blood have no more efficacy in it than the blood of bulls or of goats? You will not think this. Then do not doubt that prayer prevails! Think, again, that Jesus pleads. He points to the wound upon His breast and spreads His pierced hands. Shall the Father deny the Son? Shall prayers offered by Christ be cast out from Heaven's register? Oh, these things must not—*cannot* be! Besides, the Holy Spirit Himself is the Author of your prayers. Will God incite the desire and then not hear it? Shall there be a schism between the Father and the Holy Spirit? You will not dream of such a thing!

Oh, believe me when I review my own personal experience during the fifteen years that I have known something of the Savior! It leads me to feel that it is as certain that God hears prayer as that twice two make four! As certain as that the rock, falling by the law of gravitation, seeks the earth. We have not the time to give instances in proof but I hope your own experience furnishes them. May I beseech you by the love you bear to Jesus, do Him the honor of believing in the prevalence of His plea! By the light and life you have received of the Holy Spirit, do not discredit Him by thinking He can teach you to pray a prayer that will not be accepted before God!

Let us as a Church pray more. O that the Spirit of prayer would come down upon us! Let us expect greater blessings! I was led forth in prayer this morning beyond the usual limits. I do not know how the time fled, but I do know that we have the petitions. Let us stand on our watchtower and look. Let us meet again and again at special meetings and let us cry mightily unto the Most High, pouring out our hearts like water before Him and He will open the windows of Heaven and give us greater blessings than we have ever had before—great as those already received have been!

This very afternoon let the season of prayer begin and let it be well sustained. It is to Believers that these words are spoken. May God lead you who are not Believers to trust in Jesus. Amen.

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# POSITIVISM

## NO. 3161

A SERMON  
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IN THE YEAR 1875.

***“We know...And we know...And we know.”***  
***1 John 5:18-20.***

IT is remarkable how throughout the whole of John's Epistle he continually uses the word, "know." It has quite refreshed me to carefully read through the Epistle and to observe how, as the clock strikes the same note again and again, John seems to have kept to this monotone—"We know, we know, we know." In this age, when it is fashionable not to know anything, when the professedly learned would hold us in a state of perpetual doubt and our great poet tells us that there is more faith in honest doubt than in half the creeds—and everybody seems to be bewitched with what is called "modern thought"—it is quite cheering to one's ears and delicious to one's heart to hear the bell strike out again and again, "We know, we know, we know"! After all, there is something certain somewhere, some grip for our anchor, some foundation to build our eternal hopes upon—something that can be trusted, something besides cloud and will-o'-the-wisps! "We know, we know, we know." Take your pencils and read through this first Epistle of John and underline the word, "know," and you will feel the force of our remark. Look at the second Chapter—"Hereby we do *know* that we *know* Him." "He that says I *know* Him." "Hereby *know* we that we are in Him." In the 13<sup>th</sup> verse we read, "Because you *have known* Him." "I write unto you, little children, because you *have known* the Father. I have written unto you, fathers, because you *have known* Him that is from the beginning." "We have an unction from the Holy One and you *know* all things." "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." And so in the third Chapter, verse after verse. "The world knows us not, because it *knew* Him not." "We *know* that when He shall appear, we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is." The fifth verse "You *know* that He was manifested to take away our sin." And so it is—on, on, on, all through the Chapter—"we know," "you know," and "they know."

And why is this? It seems to me, first, that John had the echo of his Master's words ringing in his ears. He laid his head upon his Master's bosom and caught his Master's spirit. Yes, more—his Master's thoughts! Yes, more—his Master's very words! Continually as you read John's first Epistle you are reminded of passages in his Gospel. The Epistle seems to

be the essential extract of this Gospel. John, the Beloved of Jesus, reproduces his Master more fully than any other Apostle. Listen to the Master's words in the 14<sup>th</sup> Chapter of John, fourth verse—"I go to prepare a place for you. And where I go *you know*, and the way *you know*. Thomas said unto Him, Lord, we know not where you go, and how can we know the way?" (Seventh verse)—"If you had *known Me*, you should have *known My Father* also; and from henceforth you *know Him* and have seen Him." Hear how the *know* rings out! Again, attend to our Lord's prayer in the 17<sup>th</sup> Chapter of John—"Now they have *known* that all things whatever You have given Me are of You." "They have *known* surely that I came out from You." "O righteous Father the world has not *known You*: but I have *known You*, and these have *known* that You have sent Me." The words of Jesus had so fastened upon John's mind and had so deeply impressed his heart, that when his soul needed words, it caught at those which had rooted themselves so firmly among the most happy memories of his life! I attribute the preponderance of the word, "know," which constitutes itself an idiom in the Epistle, to the fact that the expressions of the Master had been treasured up by the servant.

Furthermore, John is one in whom we see very little of mental conflict. Thomas had brain in excess of heart and hence he had his doubts, and exclaimed, "Except I put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe." By-and-by he became a grand believer and, indeed, a very leader in true Doctrine, for he was the first that ever inferred the Deity of Christ from His wounds when, looking at the scars, he said, "My Lord and my God." John was too intimate with Christ to doubt. And he had too much heart to be a questioner, too much of earnest, intense, loving life to be subject to those diseases which spring from preponderance of intellect over affection. His soul was, like his Lord's, on fire with Divine Love, and it burnt up the chaff of doubt too rapidly for it even to have seemed to be there! It had only to be scattered over the flame to vanish at once. It is very beautiful to notice how positive John is in his writing. I like the commencement of his Epistle—it is so different from the wavering talk which we hear now-a-days! He begins thus, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon (that is, intensely gazed upon) and our hands have handled of the Word of Life; that which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." Is not this true "positivism"? Where will you find it if you do not find it here? Speak of dogmatism! Here is dogmatic teaching, indeed! He does not hesitate, or fear, or doubt for one moment! His evidence is too sure and his conviction too firm! And hence it is that he rings out that bell so, clearly, "We know, we know, we know."

The full assurance expressed by the word, "know," arises from the fact that perfect love always casts out hesitancy and doubt which are a form of fear and, as John tells us, "Perfect love casts out fear, because fear has torment." Love cannot endure a doubt. If love is crossed with doubt,

it becomes jealousy, and that is cruel as the grave. A man had better meet a wolf in the depth of winter, or a bear robbed of her whelps, than a man in his jealousy, for his fury burns like coals of juniper which have a most vehement flame. Love must have certainty. Those whom we dearly love must be beyond suspicion as to their reciprocal affection. As to a doubt whether there is a Christ, or whether He is the Son of God, or whether He loved us and gave Himself for us, this may be indulged in by those who love not—but where love is supreme it sits in state like God upon the cherubim—and the Dagon of doubt falls down and is broken in pieces! If the church of the present age loved Jesus better, she would speak much more confidently about Him and, in so doing she would speak more like the oracles of God. But where the dampness of lukewarm affection settles down, the cold chill of doubt is sure to follow—and it is in these wintry nights of declining love to Jesus that the frost of unbelief binds up the rivers of spiritual life. If the Lord quickens the love of His Church, as soon as it is done, her sons say, as John did, “We know, and we know, and we know”—and the grand old positive spirit of Luther and of Calvin, blazing with the enthusiasm which came with Whitefield and Wesley, will come back to the Church—and God will bless the world thereby!

I am about to speak upon the forms of Christian knowledge. “We know”...“and we know”...“and we know.” *Here I note, first, that Christians have this knowledge in seven different forms, of which the one draws on the other like golden links of a precious chain.*

**I.** *And, first, we know, that is to say, we have INSTRUCTION. And herein we are saved from ignorance.* The Christian is not ignorant of the Gospel and its great primary Truths of God, but he knows them by the teaching of the Holy Spirit and by searching the Word. That use of the term, we have frequently in this Epistle. I will give two examples. The 10<sup>th</sup> verse of the Fifth Chapter—“We know that the Son of God is come, and that He has given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true.” We know the fact of Incarnation and the mission of our Lord Jesus Christ, for we have been so informed by the Scriptures. In the 16<sup>th</sup> verse of the Fourth Chapter we have another instance—“We have known and believed the love that God has to us.” We know the love of God, for it is revealed and we accept the witness of the Spirit concerning it.

We know the great facts of the Gospel and this is no small blessing. Myriads of our fellow creatures are unaware of the first principles of the faith, scarcely knowing that there is a God, and altogether ignorant of the wondrous plan of Redemption by the blood of Jesus. Even in this (so-called) Christian country, there is much ignorance about these things. I wish that Christian people would more frequently question others about what they know of Christ. No book is less read, in proportion to its circulation, than the Bible—and certainly no book is less understood! With all the preaching we have—and some of it is very excellent—there is a great ignorance of the rudimentary truths of the Gospel of Jesus Christ everywhere! One is surprised to find that the language which is used in the

pulpit is not understood at all by the mass of the people. They do not know where the preacher is—he is somewhere up in the clouds—they learn nothing from his big words! They suppose it is all right, and very good, and they listen to it—but as far as instruction is concerned, many a preacher might almost as well speak in Syrian! “Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound.” It is a happy thing to know that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has come in the flesh, that He took upon Himself the sins of His people, that He bore the wrath of God on their behalf, that by believing in Him, men are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the Law of Moses. It is a blessed thing to know that “in Him we have redemption through His blood,” and sanctification and eternal life! It is a blessed thing to know the Holy Spirit—to know that He converts the soul and comforts, illuminates, guides and sanctifies. It is well to know something of the future life. To know the Doctrine of Election, the Doctrine of Effectual Calling and the Doctrine of the Eternal Security of the Saints. Many there are who have not found out these Truths of God, but if we have done so, it is not a thing to boast of, but a matter to be very thankful for! I am afraid the Bible is so common that we are not duly grateful for it. And the preaching of the Gospel has become so usual a thing to us that we are not sufficiently mindful of the high privilege conferred upon anyone who is permitted to hear it. Be glad, dear Friends, that so far as instruction in the Gospel is concerned, we are not left in the dark, but we can say, thanks be to God, *we know*, for we have been taught—some of us from our youth up. We know, for we have searched the Scriptures. We know, for we have listened to a Gospel ministry. We know, for we have weighed, judged and studied these things for ourselves.

**II.** *There is a far higher knowledge than this, which I shall speak of secondly.* By knowing is frequently meant APPREHENDING and understanding. This kind of knowledge is opposed to a mere hearing of Doctrine and facts without understanding their inner meaning. To wit, a man may know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that He died, but He may not understand the great Truth of Substitution and why Jesus died. Now, I do not say that any very deep understanding of the Truth is necessary to salvation, but I do say that it is an inestimable privilege to be able to go deep into these things and to know not merely the facts, but the reason of the facts—and the teaching of the facts. A nut is very well, but I prefer to crack the shell and get the kernel. It is delightful to read the Word, but to meditate upon it and understand it is the great matter! In instruction we are like the cow when cropping the grasses. But *apprehension* is like the same creature ruminating—when she lies down and chews the cud! It is then that the real nourishment is gained. John uses the word, “know,” in that sense in the second clause of the 20<sup>th</sup> verse of our text—“And we *know* that the Son of God is come, and has given us an understanding that we may *know*.” That is, He has taught us what is meant by His coming. From our very childhood we knew that Jesus came

in the flesh, but perhaps it is only a little while ago that we understood how—

**“He bore, that we might never bear,  
His Father’s righteous ire”—**

and how He stands as our Representative before the Throne of God at this moment. We know the Doctrine of Imputed Righteousness as a matter of fact, but, perhaps, we have not even now entered into the full sense of our acceptance in the Beloved. I urge upon everyone who knows the Truth of God to pray daily for a deeper understanding of its innermost meaning, that he may know the marrow and fatness of the Covenant, may dig into the mines of Revelation and turn up those masses of gold which surface readers never discover! The Scriptures do not at once yield up the whole of their wealth even to a student. He must dig and dig, and dig and dig again. Jerome used to say, “I adore the plenitude of Holy Scripture.” And well he might, for there is a mighty fullness in it. I think it was Henry Martin who, when he had to translate the Bible into the Persian language, said that he never knew the Word so well as when he had to go over every syllable of it. You remember Uncle Tom spelling “L-e-t let, n-o-t not, y-o-u-r your, h-e-a-r-t-s hearts be troubled,” and so on, and how he said that every letter of it was sweet. After you have thought over a verse for hours, you feel persuaded that you have found out its full teaching. Perhaps you have looked to learned authors and noticed the correct text and many good thoughts thereon, and yet further on a new meaning pops up—and perhaps weeks after, when that text has been abiding under your tongue like a sweet morsel, you all of a sudden say, “I never saw this before! Here is something fresh and still more wonderful! Now I know the inmost sense of this delightful Scripture.”

How I wish that all Christians in this sense *knew*, so that they could say “We know, we know, we know.” We ought not merely to assert our belief in an orthodox creed, but we should know the meaning of it. We should not merely confess that such-and-such are our doctrinal sentiments, but we should go into the Truths of God like bees into the cups of the flowers and find out where their honey lies! O that we could all feel that we have gone into the secret caves of Revelation, the Spirit of God holding a flaming torch and leading us into all Truth! O that we might all see the innumerable sparkles of those precious gems which glitter in the deep places where the lion’s whelp has not trodden, far down where only the Spirit of God can lead—and where only an eye that has been touched with heavenly eye-salve can see! Oh, for a Church made up of people who understand and, therefore, know!

**III.** *We know by instruction and we know by apprehension, but there is a sweeter sense than this. We know, in a third sense, by personal acquaintance.* You will find that meaning in such passages as the Second Chapter, at the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> verses—“I write unto you, fathers, because you have known Him that is from the beginning.” Our text is another specimen. “We know that the Son of God is come, and has given us an understanding that we may know Him.” I will not quote all the texts—



there are many of that kind. Thus we know the Lord Himself! A friend comes to you and he says, "Do you know such a person?" You say first, "I know there is such a person"—that is instruction. Being further asked, "But, do you know him?" You answer, "Well, I know that he was a fine tall man, a soldier in the infantry, and that he went to the Crimea." That is a sort of knowing him by apprehension, but does not fully answer the question, "Do you know him?" You say, "Well, I cannot say that I know him, for if I were to see him, I could not recognize him, I have never even spoken to him." To be acquainted with a man is a higher order of knowledge than the former, and in that sense Believers know God, know Jesus Christ and know the Holy Spirit. They are acquainted with God! "No, man has seen God at any time," but we have spoken to Him and He has spoken to us. We have not heard His voice with these ears, but we are sure that we have heard Him in our hearts. Our spirits know His voice. We have sometimes been bowed down with terror as He has spoken and brought us under the spirit of bondage. But now we know the sound of His voice as a Spirit of Love and we respond to it, crying, "Abba, Father."

We know the voice of Jesus. We are like the sheep who will not follow a stranger, "for they know not the voice of strangers." But we know Jesus, and when He speaks to our souls we answer to His call. We not only know His voice, but we know *Him*. We have come into personal contact with the Christ of God, not in mere imagination, but in fact. As surely as we live, the eternal God in Jesus Christ has looked upon us and has touched us—no, more, has worked a miracle on us and has made us new creatures, "begotten us again unto a lively hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." I speak not of you all. I speak only of those of whom it is true that they do know the Lord. The Lord Jesus has become our familiar Acquaintance. We tell Him all our griefs. There is not a trouble but we carry to Him, not a sorrow but we pour it into His bosom! And He, on the other hand, reveals His heart to us, for "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him."

True Believers, especially full-grown Believers, when they are advanced in the Divine Life, know the Lord Jesus Christ as they know their friends—yes, as they know their very selves! They speak with Him as a man speaks with his friend. They even know Him as they cannot know their friends, for they have received Him into themselves and they have become one with Him. They have eaten His flesh and drunk His blood—and He is in them and they in Him with an intimate knowledge excelling all other knowledge beneath the sun! Though they do not profess to know all that is to be known of Christ, for there is a love of Christ that passes knowledge, and heights and depths that are beyond all mortal ken, yet they do know Him and their daily aspiration is to know Him more and more fully!

See, then, that as apprehension surpasses instruction, so acquaintance rises far beyond apprehension. May you and I know with this third knowledge and live in the sweet enjoyment of it all our days!

**IV.** *Out of this rises a fourth degree of knowledge, namely, that of CERTAINTY as opposed to skepticism.* When we are under instruction, doubts may arise. When we apprehend and understand, doubts may still trouble us. But when we come to be acquainted with Jesus, they are less likely to haunt us. Out of fellowship with Jesus springs the higher state of absolute certainty as to Divine things! John himself was very certain. I read to you the commencement of his Epistle just now, and you saw how confident he was. And we find him writing all through his Epistle with equal strength and force of assurance. He says in the Third Chapter, the fifth verse, “You know that He was manifested to take away our sin, and in Him is no sin.” And in the 24<sup>th</sup> verse, “And hereby we *know* that He abides in us, by the Spirit which He has given us.” In the Fifth Chapter read verse nineteen—“We *know* that we are of God.” And few as he felt that his brethren were and the whole world engaged on the other side! In the spirit of Athanasius, he cries, “The whole world lies in the Wicked One.” He allows no force to the evidence even of a contradicting world, because one man abiding in the Truth has more weight in his witness than millions under the power of the Father of Lies!

Now Brothers and Sisters, this is a blessed state to get into—that of certainty! I am utterly amazed at hearing it continually asserted that the thoughtful public teacher must make great allowances for “the spirit of the age, which is one of earnest skepticism.” I do not believe it! The spirit of the age is that of thoughtlessness and trifling! But what have I or any other Christian to do with the spirit of the age? The spirit which is in us by which we ought to speak is the Spirit of God—not the spirit of the age! In what spirit are Christian ministers to speak? The spirit of the first century, while the first century lasts, I suppose? The spirit of the second century when the second century comes in and so, from age to age the spirit of the Christian is to alter? Can it be so? You remember when they condemned Leighton because he did not speak according to the times? He replied, “If all of you are speaking for the times, let one poor Brother speak for eternity.” Was he not correct? Surely the Spirit of the Truth of God never changes, for the Truth of God is Immutable! Surely the Spirit of God never alters, for He is Divine! Have we one medicine for one age and another medicine for another? Does it run thus—“Go you into all the world and *adapt the Gospel* to every century?” I find it not so written! Our standing orders are, Preach *the Gospel*, the *Gospel*, the *same Gospel* to every creature, thoughtful or thoughtless, philosophical or ignorant, civilized or uncivilized. *Semper idem* is the motto which the Gospel may write above her temples! There let it stand. She cannot alter. For her to alter were death to the Truth of God and treason to Christ! Though we believe not and though the age grows doubting, He abides faithful—He cannot deny Himself!

Ah, Brothers and Sisters, if you are not certain about these things, may God grant that you may be certain! Oh, to be uncertain whether the Savior loved me and gave Himself for me—it would be as death to my soul! Some find delight in pulling down, as far as they can, the eternal

pillars of the Temple, but to see a sacrilegious hand laid on the least of them is painful in the extreme! There hangs my hope on yonder bloody tree where the Incarnate God offered up expiation for my sin! If you can disprove the Doctrine of Atonement, my comfort is gone! I care no more to live, there remains nothing for me. Therefore is my soul driven back by sheer necessity to fundamental Truths of God and cannot be content till she casts away the rubbish of human opinion and gets down to the rock against the sheer granite of eternal Truths which God has spoken, which are, “yes,” and, “amen,” in Christ Jesus! Labor after this Brothers and Sisters! Let it not be to you a question whether there is such a thing as regeneration—it cannot be a question if you, yourself, are regenerate! It will not be a question whether there is such a thing as justification if you are justified! You cannot doubt as to sanctification if you are consciously sanctified, any more than angels in Heaven will doubt whether there is a Heaven while living there and enjoying the glory of it! May we get up to this fourth point, which is that of *absolute certainty* as opposed to skepticism.

**V.** *But now, fifthly, there is a knowledge of another kind, very useful in these days, namely, that of DISCERNMENT as opposed to a readiness to receive erroneous teaching.* That meaning was intended by John. Read in the Second Chapter, beginning at the 18<sup>th</sup> verse—“Little children, it is the last time: and as you have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time. 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. But you have an unction from the Holy One, and *you know* all things.” He does not mean that the saints know everything, but they judge, they discern, they know the Truth of God from error. When Doctrine presents itself to you, you know whether it is of Christ or of antichrist, and act accordingly. You are able to judge, to discern, and to distinguish. In the Fourth Chapter you have it again, at the second verse—“Hereby know we the Spirit of God (or discern the Spirit of God). Every spirit that confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.” “Hereby,” says he in the sixth verse, “know we the Spirit of Truth and the spirit of error.” We know which is which, even as our Lord says—“A stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers.” And again, “I know My sheep, and am known of Mine.” There is a spirit of discernment and it is needed much now-a-days. It comes to us in the following way—instruction, apprehension, acquaintance, certainty—these bring discernment to detect the false from the true.

Very delightful, too, is it to my mind to see how the least instructed Christian who does not know his Lord and love Him, is not to be led astray. Mere professors like to hear a man who can speak fluently. And if he will use very pretty phrases and talk about waterfalls, and the rippling rills, and the skies, and the clouds and Heaven knows what besides of mimic poetry, they mightily cry up the orator! The child of God thinks

not so, for he has another way of judging. He says when he hears such rhetoric, "There was nothing for me." "What do you mean? There were plenty of flowers." "I cannot eat flowers," he says. He judges whether he was fed or not, and he knows what he can eat. Nobody teaches sheep what is good for food and what is not—they know by instinct. I do not suppose they could preach a sermon upon healthy herbs and unhealthy plants, but they know by some means—and so do Believers. They could not write it down. They could not compose an essay upon discernment, but they know what they can feed upon and they know what they cannot feed upon—and they have very sure tests within them. "Ah," says the Believer, "that will not do for me. There is no Christ in it. Away with it." They listen to some humble preacher who loves Jesus Christ and lifts Him high, and they say, "Ah, well. He puts his *h*'s in the wrong places and his grammar is deficient, but we were blessed, for when he exalted our Master and preached of Him, our very hearts danced within us for joy!" I have felt just that myself—I have sat and cried as if my heart would break to hear Jesus Christ spoken of by a plain working man—but have felt indignant when I have listened to a learned thinker confusing the minds of the simple by words worth nothing at all!

Yesterday I was in a certain place, needing refreshment. It was pressed upon me to purchase something which was said to be very good to eat. And as far as I could make out, when I partook of it, it was *nothing* beaten up and blown out to a great size and a little sugar powdered over it! And it reminded me of the sermons that I have read in which there was nothing whatever—only blown out extensively, developed into a great size and a little sugar of rhetoric put to it! Hungry souls cannot feed on wind! They will not have it. They very soon go away. Of course the fine fashionable people—the empty professors who look for words, only, say, "Oh, you must not be uncharitable. We cannot expect doctrine in every sermon," and so on. Thus like the wild asses they sniff up the wind and are satisfied! But not so the people of God—they feel that time is too short and eternity too long—and Hell too terrible, and Heaven too precious—to have their Sundays frittered away by pretty little essays which have as much connection with Mohammedanism as with the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ! There are plenty of such preachers around—and an abundance of gentlemen who will pat them on the back and say, "These are highly intellectual brothers and are fit to occupy large spheres."

Our business is to preach Jesus Christ—and if we cannot preach Him, let us take to tailoring, or plowing, or cobbling, or some other honest way of earning one's livelihood! To preach anything else but Christ crucified is to betray our Lord and Master! And most assuredly to bring upon ourselves confusion and condemnation in the Last Great Day of account! Dear Brothers, may we have given to us the spirit of discrimination that we may know the precious from the vile, for if we do so as preachers we shall be as God's mouth! And may we as hearers have the same discrimination, that we may always be able to receive that which is of God, and

to reject at once with solemn determination that which is according to the spirit of the world and not after Jesus Christ!

**VI.** *I pass on from that form of knowledge to another, which is this—knowledge in this Epistle is frequently meant ASSURANCE in opposition to anxiety.* That is the frequent use of the term, here, as in the Second Chapter, the third to the eighth verses—“Hereby we do know that we know Him if we keep His commandments. He that says, I know Him, and keeps not His commandments is a liar, and the Truth is not in him. But whoso keeps His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby *know* we that we are in Him.” Then in the 14<sup>th</sup> verse of the Third Chapter—“*We know* that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren.” In the 24<sup>th</sup> verse—“Hereby we *know* that He abides in us, by the Spirit which He has given us.” Far too seldom do Christians reach this point. They should do so and they should come up the ladder by the steps I have described, but many seem to think that it is almost necessary for them to always say most timorously, “I hope I am in Christ. I trust I am saved.” They dare not say, “I know that I am in Him, and that His Spirit is in me.”

Now, if they have never reached this rung of the ladder, God forbid we should condemn them, for some of God’s children remain trembling and doubting for many a day, yet they should not be content to be there. It ought to be the desire and aim of every one of us to know whether we are saved or not, because it is not a question that we can afford to leave in doubt. Any person here who has invested his money in any commercial enterprise, who should have it hinted to him this evening when he reaches home, that it is an unsound concern, would not be at all likely to be quiet until he had discovered whether it was so or not. And, therefore, our soul’s eternal interests, which are far more important, cannot be allowed to remain in suspense. As soon as ever the question is raised, a sensible man will be unsatisfied till it is settled! “Can it be settled?” someone asks. “Can it be?” Oh, Brothers and Sisters, believe me—many of us do know our calling and election! Why? Because God has given us Infallible tokens. He says, “Whoever believes on the Lord Jesus Christ has everlasting life.” We do believe in Him! We trust Him with all our hearts and God has said that we are saved and have everlasting life! Shall we doubt God? Then “we know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren.” If we feel a hearty love to God’s people, Inspiration tells us that we have passed from death unto life! Shall we doubt it? No, we will believe it!

“Well,” says one, “that seems to me to be presumption.” Do you think so? Suppose you promise your children tonight that you will take them out tomorrow morning and one of them says to you, “Well, Father, I hope you will.” There is no joy in his countenance—why? Because he says he does not think you will. He is afraid it would be presumption to believe you! Do you not think it is presumption in him to doubt you? Look at that other little one. You say, “Jane, I shall take you out tomorrow.” She claps her hands with delight! The thoughts of doubting you never enters

her little head. Is she presumptuous? What? Presumptuous to believe her father? Surely it never can be presumption to believe God! To disbelieve God and to think highly of yourself—that is presumption! But to trust God and to believe His Word—is there any presumption in that? “Ah,” says one, “but if I knew for certain that I was saved, I am afraid that I would grow careless.” Why? Full assurance is the very thing that makes men watchful! They feel it such a great joy to be loved of God that they are afraid of doing anything to grieve Him! The man who does not know whether he has any money or not is not likely to be very watchful over the box which may, perhaps, contain something, or may not. But if he knows that he has a treasure there, he will take good care that nobody shall rob him of it! Brothers and Sisters, if we were slaves under the spirit of bondage and had to be whipped to do what was right by the fear of being sent to Hell, that would be one thing—but the children of God are not slaves—they are sons and daughters and because God’s everlasting love to His own dear children can never turn into hate, do they, therefore, disobey their heavenly Father? God forbid! Assurance is the mainspring of holiness in a Christian!

**VII.** *The last work is this. There is another knowledge, namely, the knowledge of UNSTAGGERING FAITH which knows a thing which is not AS YET.* You have an instance in the second verse of the Third Chapter. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it does not yet appear what we shall be, but *we know* that when He shall appear we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is.” Why, O great Apostle, did you not say, “We *hope* that when He shall appear”? No, no! He did not hope it at all—he knew it! He was sure of it. But do we not generally say, “We trust that when Christ shall appear it will be so?” So far true, but oh, it is better when faith reckons the things that are not as though they were. A man will take a thousand pound check from his neighbor and say, “I have the money.” “My dear Sir, you have not! You have only a piece of paper.” “Ah,” he says, “but it has a good name to it. It is as good as gold.” Surely the promise of a God that cannot lie is as good as the check!

I bless God that for some little time instead of worrying myself about a thousand things which concern this Church, and the College, and the Orphanage, and the Colportage—whenever I have any sort of trouble, it has been my sweet privilege to breathe a prayer to God and leave all my anxieties at His feet. I do the best I can to keep things right and then I leave them with the Lord. If the works are not His work, then let them go to pieces! If they are, then He will attend to them. I am an instrument in His hands and as such I do the little I can, and leave the rest to Him. It is wonderful how smoothly things go when we trust them with the Lord! Your fidgeting and worrying do all the mischief! Something gets between the wheels and they will not work—and I will tell you what that something is—it is your own finger—and when you feel such a squeeze that you cannot bear it, it is a lesson to you. Take your finger out and let it alone. The best way to do with a great trouble is to pray to God about it and then put it on the shelf and never take it down again.

You have come here on a week-night, some of you, with a heavy burden. All the time the preaching is going on, and the praying, and singing you have lost your load, or have not felt it. But just as you get outside, you say, "I have left my burden inside! Let me go and take it up again!" And you feel it on your mind as heavily as ever! Beloved, this is not the way to trust God. The way to trust Him is to cast your care on Him altogether. "All things work together for good to them that love God." Be sure that when you pass through the rivers they shall not overflow you, and through the fires, they shall not burn you. Be sure that as your days so shall your strength be. Be sure that God will bring you through, for He will deliver His people out of all troubles and give them a sure admittance into His eternal Kingdom and Glory. We should speak with certainty of troubles and trials—and deliverance from them—and of all the future we should say, as our text has it, "We know, and we know, and we know." That is how Paul spoke. "We know that all things work together for good." He did not say he thought it and he hoped it, but, "we know." "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," and by its assuring power "we know, and we know, and we know."

Now, dear Hearer, if you are unconverted, what do you know? If you know not the Lord, what do you know? Nothing that is of any use to you spiritually, by any true knowledge. Oh that God might make you know this—that you are lost by nature and, unless forgiven, you will be lost forever and ever! And when you know that, I pray the Lord, by His Spirit, to make you know that there is a Savior—and that He is able to save unto the uttermost! And then may He make you know in the fullest sense that He loved you and gave Himself for you! So may you know Him and be found in Him when He comes in the clouds of Heaven. Amen.

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